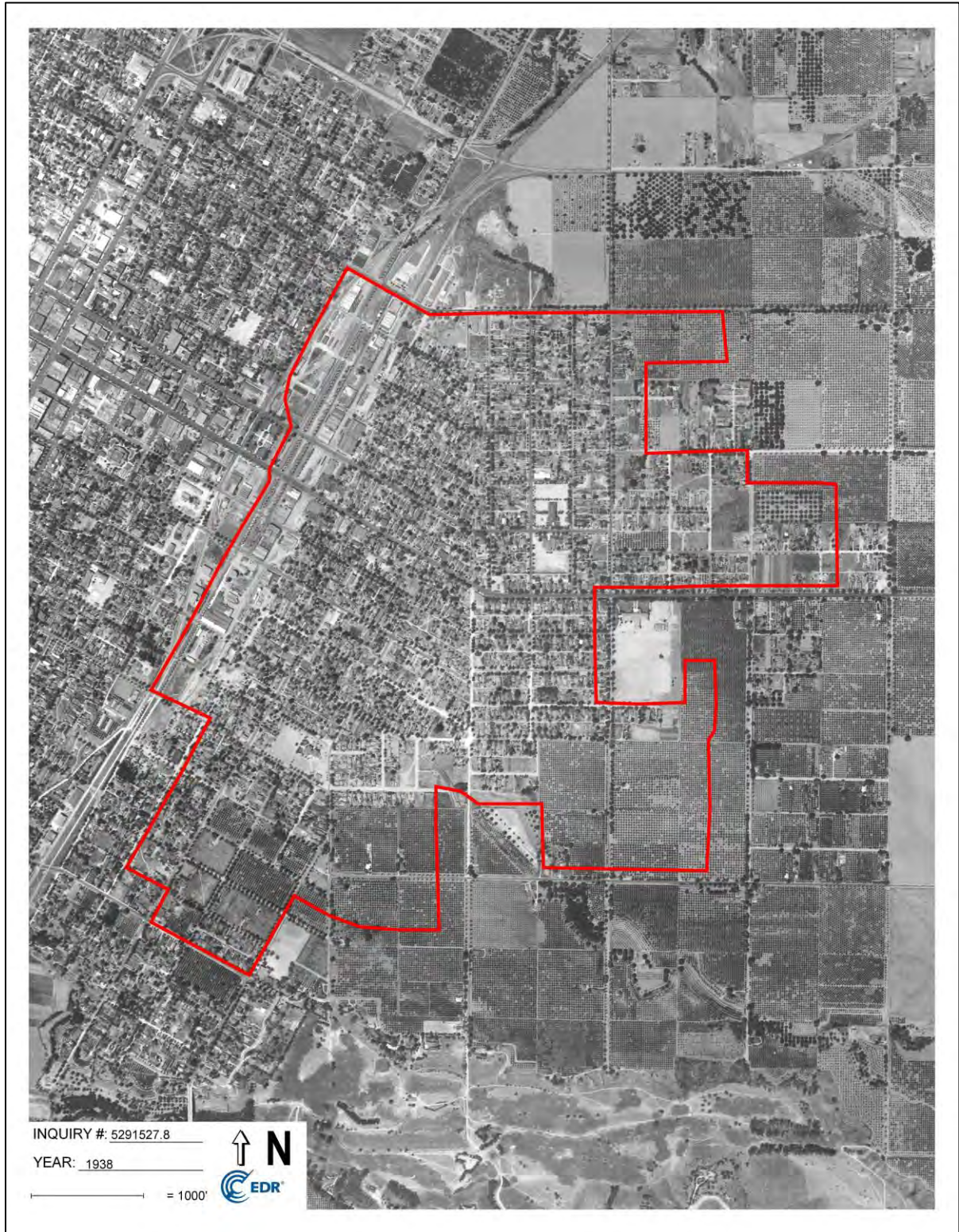
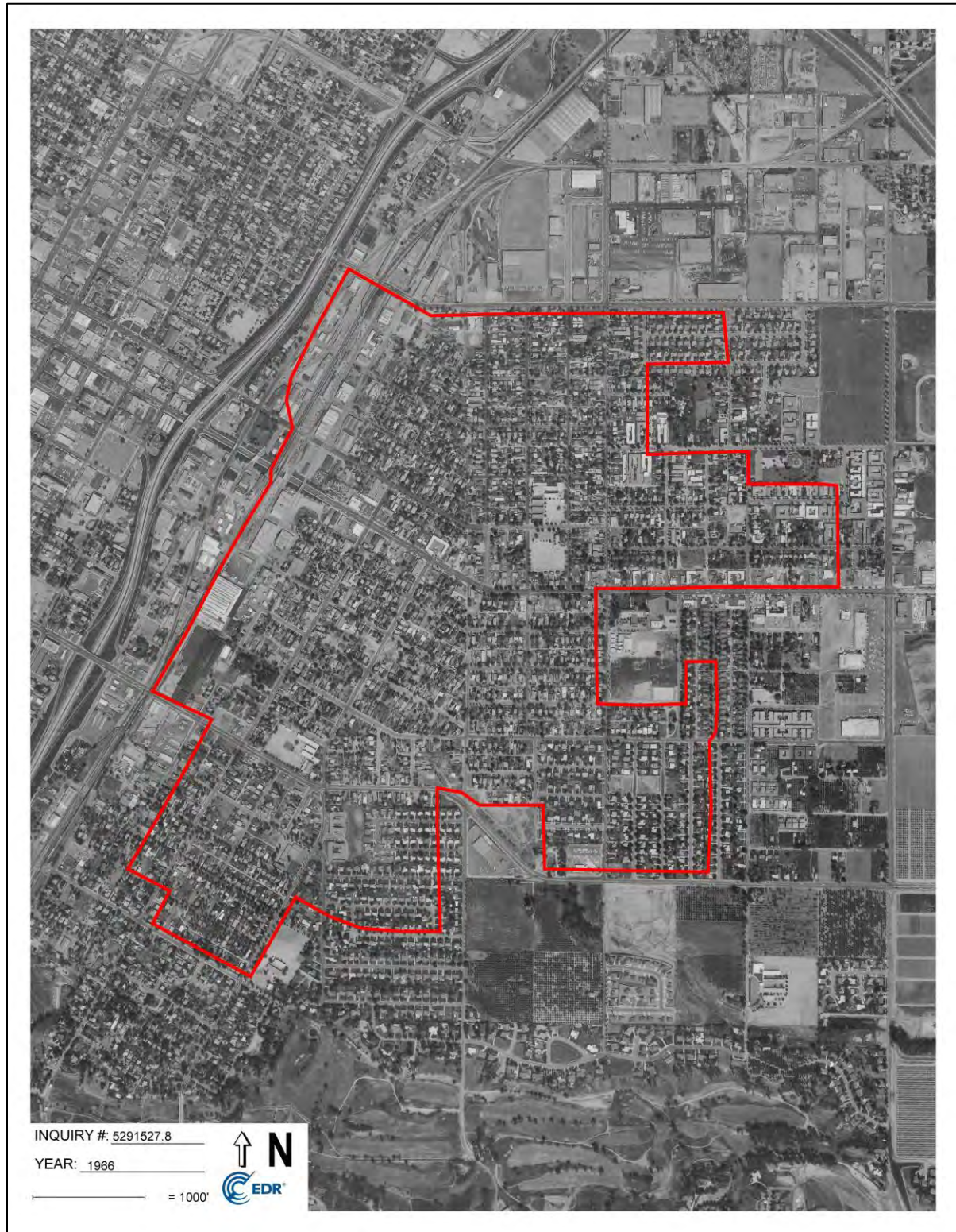


Figure 25 1938 aerial photograph shows agricultural fields and groves around the Eastside neighborhood



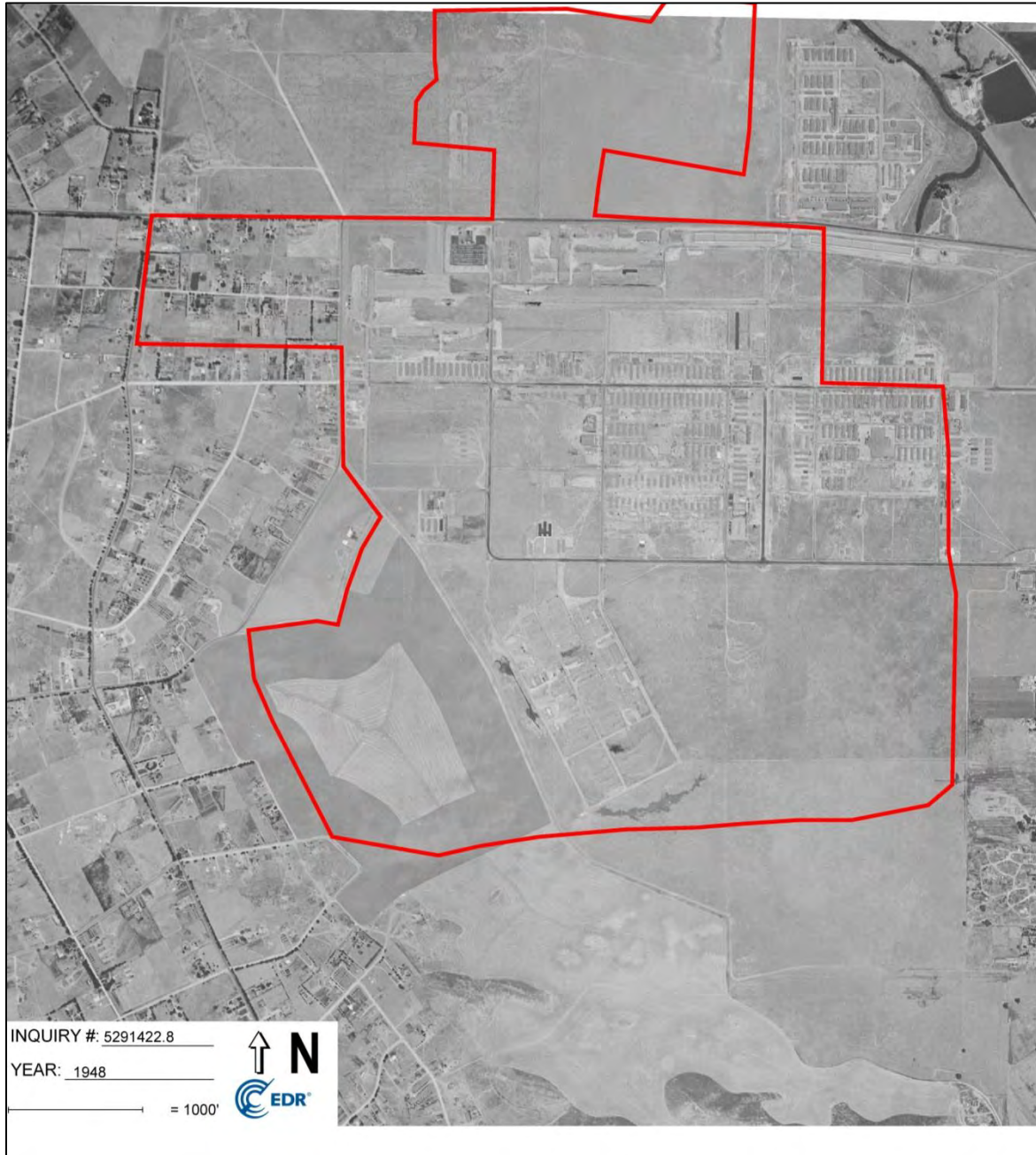
Source: Environmental Data Resources, 2018

Figure 26 1966 aerial photograph shows new construction and housing tracts in the place of former groves in Eastside



Source: Environmental Data Resources, 2018

Figure 27 1948 aerial photograph of Arlanza, with Camp Anza as one of the neighborhood's earliest built resource environments



Source: Environmental Data Resources, 2018

Figure 28 1959 aerial photograph shows Arlanza transformed by postwar housing boom



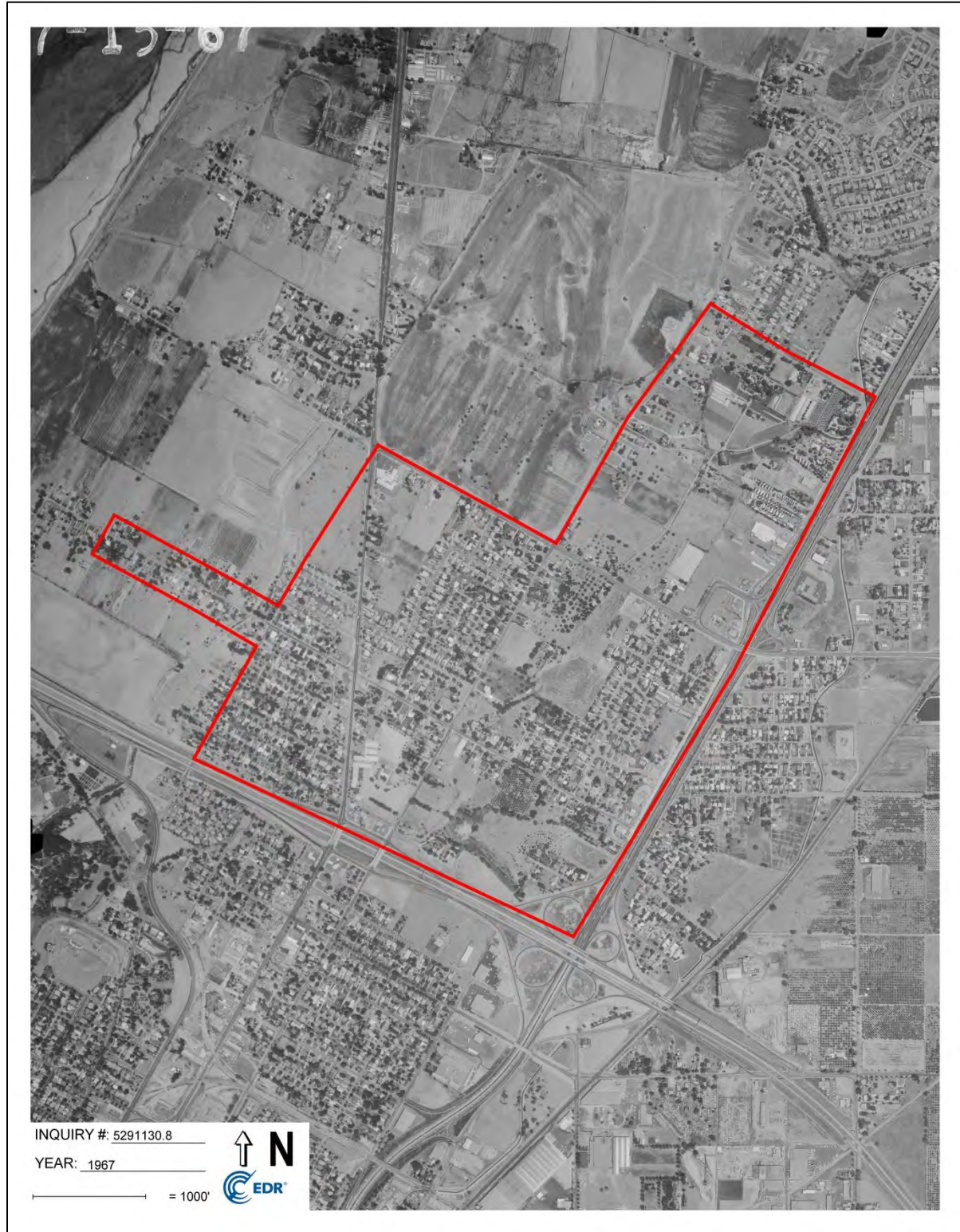
Source: Environmental Data Resources, 2018

Figure 29 1938 aerial photograph shows a sparsely developed Northside neighborhood



Source: Environmental Data Resources, 2018

Figure 30 1967 aerial photograph shows Northside neighborhood transformed by postwar housing and construction boom



Source: Environmental Data Resources, 2018

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Subtheme #2: Community Building and Mutual-Assistance Organizations

“I am very much concerned about my fellow man and very much want to do something about our social problems, the problems we are confronted with daily.”
— Jesse Ybarra, Community Settlement House Director, 1969⁷⁰

In Latino neighborhoods throughout the United States, exclusion from the outside often translated into active community building efforts from within: “Barrios and colonias developed and survived through a combination of force and choice.”⁷¹ As provisional settlements became permanent, self-contained neighborhoods, as Gilbert Gonzalez wrote, “The village was home, neighborhood, playground, and social center.”⁷²

The focus became the extended family, church, and community social life. Latinos “developed communities that included churches, sports teams, entertainment groups, and *mutualistas* – mutual aid societies – which took care of the community members and helped provide funds for labor organizing.”⁷³ These descriptions aptly describe the development of Riverside’s Latino neighborhoods.

Throughout California, as well, numerous mutual assistance leagues and organizations emerged as the Latino community grew. Many groups were locally based, others were chapters of national groups, such as the Riverside branch of the Alianza Hispano Americana, which was founded in 1894. Among the many groups to emerge in the early twentieth century, membership and goals varied:

Some organizations were exclusively male or female; others had mixed membership. Most developed as representative of the working class, but others were essentially middle or upper-class, or reflected a cross-section of wealth and occupations.

Although each *mutualista* had its special goals, they all provided a focus for social life with such activities as meetings, family gatherings, lectures, discussions, cultural presentations, and commemoration of both U.S. and Mexican holidays.⁷⁴

The range of assistance provided by mutual aid societies reflected the level and degree of need among the Latino community:

Most provided services, such as assistance to families in need, emergency loans, legal services, mediation of disputes, and medical, life, and burial insurance. Some organized libraries or operated *escuelitas* (little schools), providing training in Mexican culture, Spanish, and basic school subjects to supplement the inferior education many Chicanos felt their children received in the public schools.

Mutualistas helped immigrants adapt to life in the United States. Many mutualistas became involved in civil rights issues, such as the legal defense of Chicanos and the struggle against residential, school, or public segregation and other forms of discrimination. Some engaged in political activism, including support of candidates for public office.

At times, mutualistas provided support for Chicanos on strike. Coalitions of Chicano organizations were formed, such as *La Liga Protectora Latina* (Latin Protective League) and *El Confederación de Sociedades Mexicanas* (Confederation of Mexican Societies) in Los Angeles.⁷⁵

In Riverside, with one of California’s oldest Mexican-American settlements, mutual aid societies were the bedrock for the community from its earliest years.⁷⁶

As elsewhere, mutual aid societies in Riverside served the dual purpose of providing a social network while also protecting and advocating for the rights of community members. Some were founded by people outside the community, such as the Community Settlement House, which arrived in Riverside in 1911.

As early as 1902, Mexican natives and Mexican-Americans in Riverside established a worker's union/mutual aid society, *Sociedad de la Vella Union de Trabajadores*. In 1907, the *Superior de la Unión Patriótica y Beneficia Mexicana*, "dedicated to aiding fellow Chicanos during hard times."⁷⁷ Overall, such mutual assistance organizations, clubs, and recreational institutions became part of the social fabric and a way of building community.

Through the 1920s, new groups included the Mexican Colonia of Casa Blanca, and the Mexican Honorary Welfare Commission. In Riverside, as elsewhere, mutual assistance organizations provided more than material support to the Latino community. As Vicki Ruiz noted, "Forming patriotic associations, mutual aid groups, church societies, and baseball teams, Mexican immigrants created a rich, semiautonomous life for themselves."⁷⁸ According to Ruiz, women became the central force behind community building and organizing efforts:

As farm worker mothers, railroad wives, and miners' daughters, [Mexican women] negotiated a variety of constraints (economic, racial, and patriarchal). ...Mexicanas claimed a space for themselves and their families building community through mutual assistance while struggling for some semblance of financial stability. ...Whether living in a labor camp, a boxcar settlement, mining town, or urban barrio, Mexican women nurtured families, worked for wages, built fictive kin networks, and participated in formal and informal community associations.⁷⁹

Although the groups might diverge in goals and approach, mutualistas and other groups often joined forces in community events and fundraisers.

La Alianza Hispano Americana (Hispanic-American Alliance)

Mutual assistance societies helped fill the gap in material and social resources for many community members. One of the early groups, founded in 1920 in Riverside, was a branch of the national *Alianza Hispano Americana*, one of the largest and most prominent Mexican-American mutual aid societies in the American southwest. At a time when agricultural workers had no insurance or job security, one of the critical services provided by the *Alianza Hispano Americana* was employment and life insurance. Members paid monthly dues in return for a variety of benefits, including unemployment or funeral expenses.

During the Great Depression, the *Alianza Hispano Americana*, in conjunction with the Mexican Colonia of Casa Blanca, and the *Comisión Honorífica Mexicana* (Mexican Honorary Welfare Commission), staged parties and dances as fundraisers to aid the community. In a show of solidarity, the City waived permit fees for these events to maximize earnings. The *Comisión Honorífica Mexicana* also provided legal advice and economic assistance to farm workers.

Figures 31 and 32 Riverside Alianza Hispano Americana chapters, circa 1925



Source: Courtesy of Riverside Metropolitan Museum

Sociedad Progresista Mexicana (Mexican Progressive Society)

An important, long-term mutual assistance group in Riverside was the *Sociedad Progresista Mexicana*. With two groups in Riverside, Chapter No. 26 in Casa Blanca and Chapter No. 55 in Eastside, the *Sociedad Progresista Mexicana* provided a range of social and economic services to the community, including life insurance. As Simona Valero recalled, a branch of the *Sociedad Progresista Mexicana* was formed in Riverside

when our families, Mexican families, had no social life whatsoever. You just couldn't walk into any restaurant or even a barber shop. The motto of the Sociedad was "*Educacion, respeto y patriotismo*." That's education, respect and patriotism.⁸⁰

In this way, one of the organization's goals was preserving the language, customs, and traditions of Mexican culture. The group came together to offer charitable contributions to local causes, such as the City of Hope, and also provided yearly scholarships to Mexican-American students. As Valero recalled, the City had many mutual aid societies, but the *Sociedad Progresista Mexicana*

was one of the ones that really bloomed. There was a small death benefit to it, but the members only paid, let's say, like \$40 dollars or \$50 dollars a year and if the beneficiary died they received a thousand dollars. ...And we still have those members in Casa Blanca. I belong to it. We still have 32 members.⁸¹

For over 53 years, one local member of the group—and three-term state president—was John Valero. A native of San Luis Potosi, Mexico, Valero "found comfort in attending meetings of the *Sociedad Progresista Mexicana*" when he arrived in Riverside in 1942.⁸² In Riverside, Valero met his wife Simona. Settling in Simona's native Casa Blanca, the couple raised four children. After working as a bracero in the 1940s, John spent many years as an employee of Riverside City College, working as a custodian. In 1970, Valero was elected state president of the *Sociedad Progresista Mexicana* at a time when membership spanned 68 chapters and 18,000 members.

Figure 33 John Valero, president, and Chapter 26 of the Sociedad Progresista Mexicana



Source: Courtesy of Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

Community Settlement House

Some important assistance organizations originated from outside the community. One example was the Community Settlement House, established in 1911 in Riverside. An outgrowth of the American Settlement Movement, Casa Blanca's Community Settlement House initially provided one volunteer social worker and a paid nurse to serve the community. The organization evolved and expanded through the years to encompass a wide range of services. As described by the Riverside County Mexican American Historical Society, the Community Settlement House was one of the most important spaces for the Latino community throughout its existence. It was where community members went to speak and read English, take classes in arts, crafts, cooking, and prenatal care. A well-baby clinic was also provided to the community.

In addition, the Community Settlement House offered tutoring as well as toy and book loans through a small library. Services offered for seniors included transportation to appointments, assistance with shopping and social services, as well as recreational and social events. (The Community Settlement House is described in more detail below.)

Postwar Mutualistas and Community Building

During the postwar period, many Latino families in Riverside experienced gradual increases in standard of living, access to services, and political power. Greater resources also propelled more mutual aid societies and neighborhood improvement organizations into action. In 1956, the *Riverside Daily Press* took note of the range of groups in Casa Blanca. The Ysmael Villegas American Legion Post 838, established in 1949, "dedicated itself to a program of community services and has had an active role in almost every improvement effort" (described in more detail below).⁸³ In 1951, the Casa Blanca Welfare Association was formed to provide services "aimed at improving health of children and educating residents in health measures. The association has provided milk for school children and aided residents in meeting medical and dental bills."⁸⁴ In 1954, the Casa Blanca Improvement League was created.

In 1956, Casa Blanca neighborhood groups joined forces to author a response to a *Saturday Evening Post* article about their neighborhood entitled "The Slum That Rebelled."⁸⁵ Residents took issue with a contention in the article that changes to the neighborhood had come suddenly, and through the actions of a few residents. In a letter signed by Villegas American Legion Post 838, its auxiliary group Los Vagabundos, La Sociedad Progresista Mexicana, La Beneficia Sociedad, and the Mexican Association of United Workers, Casa Blanca residents explained the long history of community advocacy and improvements. The response by these groups served not just to correct the record but also to illustrate the cohesiveness already well established in the community.

Casa Blanca Home of Neighborly Services

In 1956, the national organization, Home of Neighborly Services, opened its seventh California branch in Casa Blanca. The Casa Blanca Home of Neighborly Services opened at 7665 Railroad Street (currently, the primary address is 7680 Casa Blanca Street). The facility became an important center for social life and assistance in the community, with many educational programs and field trips for children. As of 2018, the organization still operates at 7680 Casa Blanca Street.

In the summer of 1957, the *Riverside Daily Press* featured a photograph of children from the Casa Blanca community heading for the organization's annual Play Day in Elysian Park in Los Angeles. The newspaper described the field trip and the activities of the Home of Neighborly Service:

City of Riverside
Latino Historic Context Statement

The bus loads Casa Blanca youngsters for the second annual Play Day at Elysian Park in Los Angeles on Saturday in which Southern California's seventh Home of Neighborly Service centers took part. ...About 46 young people went from Casa Blanca last year. Registration this year was nearly 100. A modest fee is charged per registrant. Activities at Play Day are arranged according to age level and include hiking, games, singing and social dancing.

Figure 34 Casa Blanca Home of Neighborly Service, 1957



Source: Shades of Riverside, Riverside Public Library

Figure 35 Casa Blanca Home of Neighborly Service, circa 1956



Source: Shades of Riverside, Riverside Public Library

Casa Blanca Community Services Center (Casa Blanca Opportunity Center)

Funded through the County's Economic Opportunity Board, the Casa Blanca Community Services Center opened on 21 March 1966 as an anti-poverty agency, offering support and assistance center for the primarily Latino residents of Casa Blanca. Originally known as the Casa Blanca Opportunity Center, the office was an outgrowth of federal anti-poverty measures launched under the administrations of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson. Between 1964 and 1968, the director of the federal Office of Economic Opportunity was Robert Sargent Shriver. In 1966, Shriver travelled to Riverside to visit community members and farm laborers in Casa Blanca, to learn more about their needs and to see the Office of Economic Opportunity's local projects in action.⁸⁶ With federal funding in jeopardy, Shriver also came to encourage citizens to take over the program at the local level, a step that was ultimately taken.

For many years, the Community Services Center was staffed by Simona Valero and Georgette White. The office was originally based out of the Home of Neighborly Service. It ultimately moved to an office in the Casa Blanca Elementary School. The office was funded through the Economic Opportunity Board, with an annual operating budget of \$13,000.

Ultimately, the success of the program rested with its staff members, Valero and White, who were engaged with and understood the community. As White said, "'people in the community don't know us as the Community Services Center, they know us as Mrs. Valero or Mrs. White.'"⁸⁷ Casa Blanca resident Carl Rotert explained that, "'if you run shy on food or clothing, they always help. Without the center, a lot of people would not get help. And for the Spanish-speaking people, if they get a notice from welfare and don't understand it, they can always go to the center and get the papers interpreted.'"⁸⁸

While a number of other organizations provided support to the community, the Community Services Center was an all-purpose agency. In essence, the assistance they provided depended on what the clients needed:

Their job at the center, Mrs. Valero says, includes 'helping poor people with problems in housing, employment, health care, legal aid, interpreting, and transportation. ...I help people with any problem that they have.'⁸⁹

Figure 36 Casa Blanca Community Services Center and Simona Valero, 1972

CENTER HELPS CASA BLANCA

CENTER FOR PROBLEM SOLVING

"People need more in Casa Blanca," says Mrs. Simona Valero, one of two workers at the Casa Blanca Community Services Center at 2985 Madison St. "That's why the center is more important here than it would be in a middle-class section of the city."

Mrs. Georgette White, her co-worker at the anti-poverty agency, agrees that "problems here are so much worse than in other parts of the city that there is a greater need for a center here."

WORKING OUT of a converted classroom in the former Casa Blanca elementary school, Mrs. White and Mrs. Valero serve as representatives of the county-wide Economic Opportunity Board.

Their job at the center, Mrs. Valero, says, includes "helping poor people with problems in

housing, employment, health, legal aid, interpreting, and transportation."

The center, formerly known as the Casa Blanca Opportunity Center, first opened on March 21, 1966, with offices in the Home of Neighborly Service. In September 1966, the center moved to its present location. The FOB's budget for the center is about \$13,000 a year, which goes to pay the salaries of the two workers and office expenses.

According to Mrs. White, who has worked at the center since Dec. 1, 1968, the center also provides a place where "people can come in and communicate. People in the community don't know us as the Community Services Center, they know us as Mrs. Valero or Mrs. White."


POOR PEOPLE from Casa Blanca just don't go for help in middle-class sections of town because this is their community and they feel more comfortable here. If we were in a middle-class area, a worker would say

to paint the Villegas Park Community Room and straighten out clothing donated to the center. People in the Casa Blanca area say the center has greatly helped the community.

"If you run shy on food or clothing, they always help. Without the center, a lot of people would not get helped. And for the Spanish-speaking people, if they get a notice from welfare and don't understand it, they can always go to the center and get the papers interpreted," says Carl Rotert, of 2873 Grace St.

CATALINA ROJAS, a housewife who lives at 7314 Evans St., says, "I know that the center has helped a lot of people. People can go there, ask questions, and get help with their problems. Most people here wouldn't have any other place to go if there was no center."

The center is equally valuable, she says, because Casa Blanca residents are familiar with it. "At other places we wouldn't know what to expect. But at the center, we know."



SIMONA VALERO

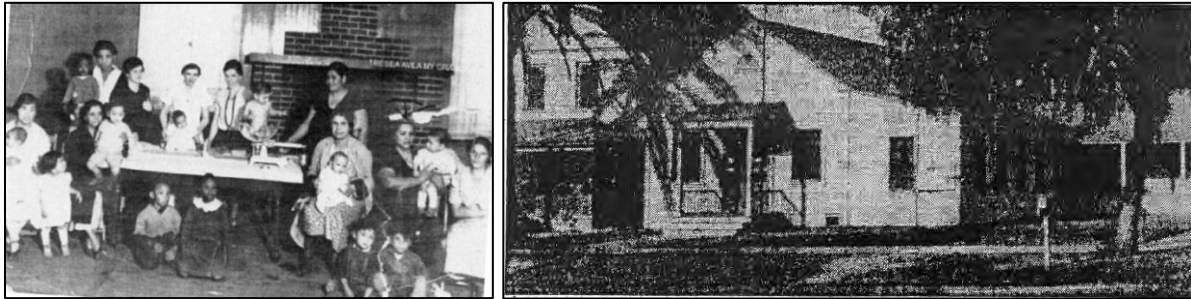
Source: *El Chicano*, 26 January 1972

Spotlight on: Community Settlement House and Director Jesse Reyes Ybarra

For over a century, the Community Settlement House in Riverside has served the Latino community. From 1959 through 1981, Jesse Reyes Ybarra served as one of the organization's most influential and respected executive directors.

The Riverside branch of the Community Settlement Association was founded in 1911 by Mrs. Kate Wheelock.⁹⁰ Wheelock was the wife of Arthur Wheelock, an early teacher of music and history in the Riverside City School District and later district supervisor from 1928 to 1941. The organization's mission was to assist foreign-born immigrants, mostly Mexicans working in the citrus groves, and their families, with their transition and the process of "Americanization."⁹¹

Figure 37 Community Settlement House, 1917 (left) and 1920 (right)



Source: Courtesy of Riverside Co. Mexican-American Historical Society and Winship & Lazzaretto, 2016

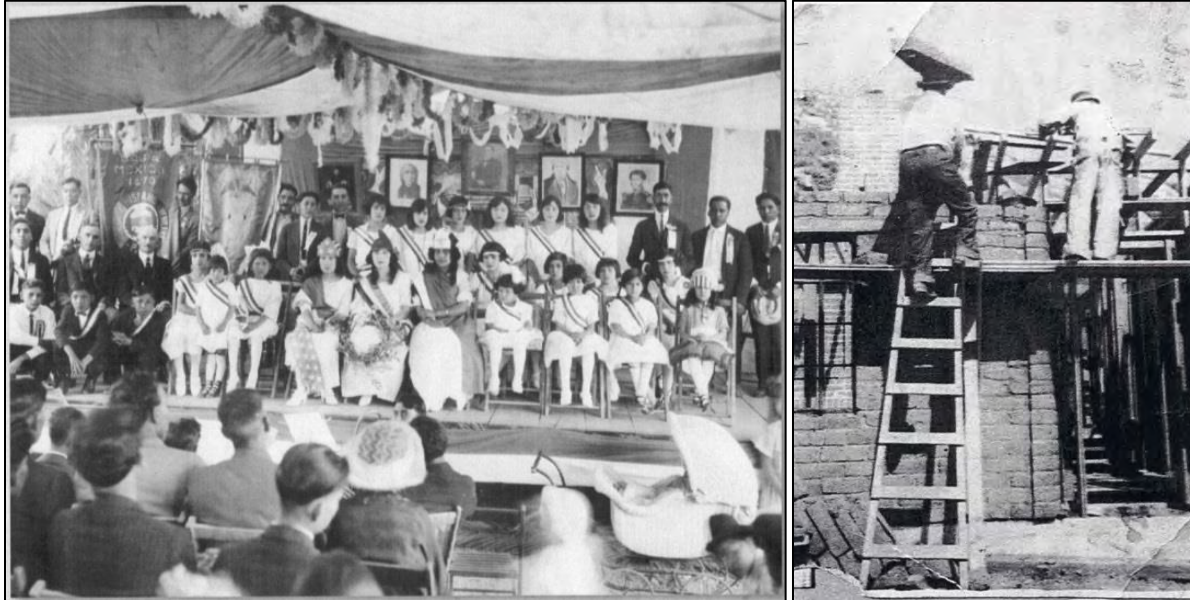
Upon opening in Riverside, the Community Settlement House provided one volunteer social worker and one paid nurse to serve the community. Services evolved and expanded along with the times to encompass a wide range of services for community members. As described by the Riverside County Mexican American Historical Society, the Community Settlement House was where people came to learn to speak and read English, to take classes in arts, crafts, cooking, and prenatal care. A well-baby clinic also provided services to the community. For children and students, the Community Settlement House offered tutoring and provided toy and book loans through a small library. Services offered for seniors included transportation to appointments, assistance with shopping and social services, as well as recreational and social events such as yearly celebrations and festival for Cinco de Mayo and 16 de Septiembre (Mexican Independence Day).

The first permanent location for the Community Settlement House was in a former Presbyterian mission on Fourteenth Street in Eastside. When it opened, "by newspaper accounts, the need was so great that over 1,000 people had come to the Community Settlement House for assistance."⁹² By 1917, a larger, City-owned campus opened at 2933 East Thirteenth Street. As Riverside historian Tom Patterson noted in 1981:

The new facilities occupied a former pool hall, fish market, and store in Lincoln Park in the heart of Riverside's Eastside Community. The facilities included a nursery school, a clothing store, bathing facilities, laundry facilities, classrooms/recreation hall, a transient cottage, and a maternity cottage. All of these services were immensely popular; eleven babies were born in the maternity cottage between May and September of 1927 alone.

In 1932, the clothing store served 1,477 customers and stocked the racks with merchandise made or repaired by the primarily Latino women who participated in sewing classes at the Settlement House.⁹³

Figure 38 Cinco de Mayo at the Community Settlement House, ca. 1935 (left); Gregory Avila and community member building the new Community Settlement House building in 1947 (right)



Source: Riverside County Mexican American Historical Society and Riverside Metropolitan Museum

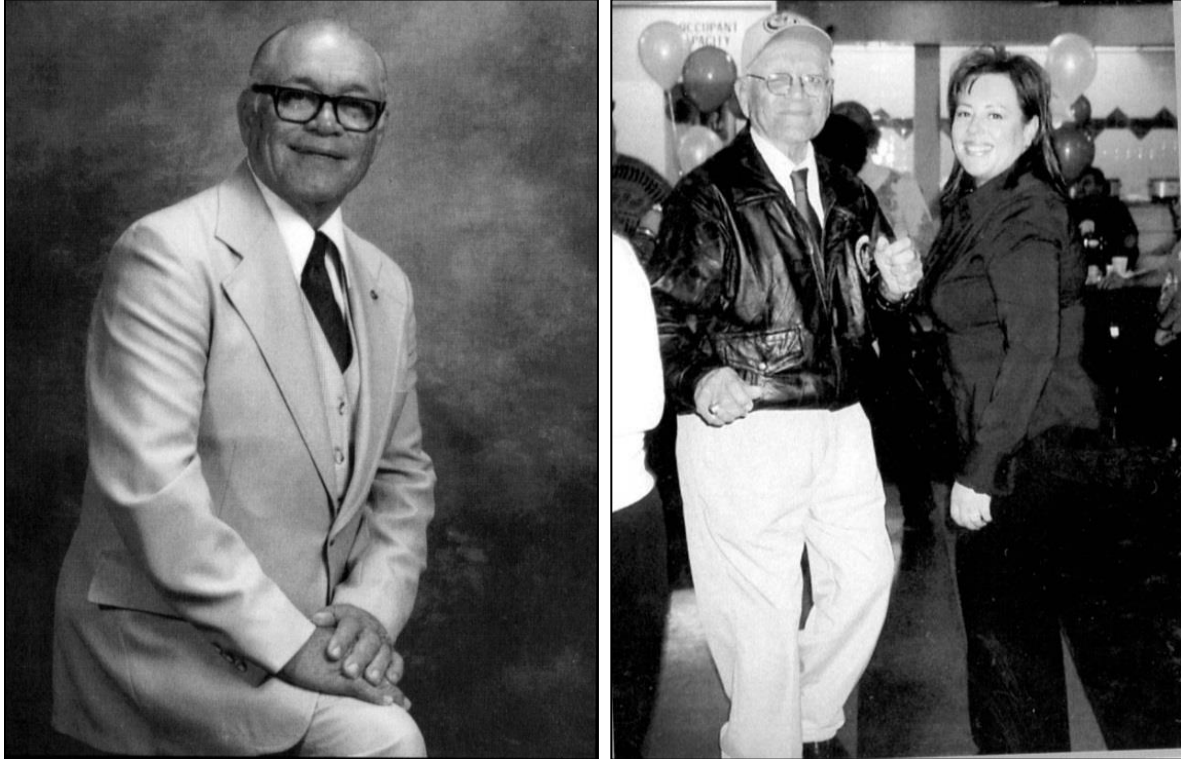
In 1941, city funding for the Community Settlement House was ended by Riverside Mayor Walter D. Davison. Mayor Davison also asked the organization to “vacate the City-owned buildings on Thirteenth Street in Lincoln Park. At that time, operations ceased and the Community Settlement Association was disbanded.”⁹⁴ Upon reorganizing in 1943, under new leadership, the Community Settlement House launched a survey of residents “to determine what services were most needed. The result of the study concluded that residents needed health clinics/prenatal care, sewing instruction, citizenship classes, and social etiquette classes.”⁹⁵

After using a temporary building on the grounds of Irving Elementary School, the new Community Settlement Association board raised \$25,000 for a lot on Bermuda (formerly Mariposa) Avenue. “In 1947, the first adobe building, designed by architect G. Stanley Wilson opened for service. It housed the offices and served small programming needs.”⁹⁶ Although the facilities have since expanded, the 1947 adobe, located at 4366 Bermuda Avenue, survives.

In 2011, the Community Settlement Association “celebrated its 100th anniversary of service to the Latino community of Riverside.”⁹⁷ In December 2017, the 1947 building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places for its importance in ethnic heritage and for the Latino community in Riverside. The organization’s evolution and expansion through the 1950s was chronicled in the National Register of Historic Places nomination:

By 1957, funding for the Community Settlement House was coming from local businesses, individual donors, and regional foundations. It provided a wide range of community services including citizenship classes, sewing classes, a nursery school and parenting classes, a toy loan program, and many other services. The Community Settlement House was also the meeting place for various community groups such as Boy and Girl Scouts, numerous teen organizations, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. In later years, services were expanded to include senior citizens programming, gang prevention programs, after-school programs, legal-aid clinics, job assistance, and crisis counseling.⁹⁸

Figure 39 Jesse R. Ybarra, decorated World War II veteran, community leader, and Community Settlement House director, shown in ca. 1975 (left) and ca. 2006 (right)



Source: Courtesy of Riverside County Mexican American Historical Society and Luana Ybarra Hernandez

JESSE R. YBARRA, DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY SETTLEMENT HOUSE (B. 1916, D. 2007)

From 1959 to 1981, the director of the Community Settlement House was Jesse R. Ybarra, a beloved and well-respected civic leader throughout the Inland Empire (and beyond). Ybarra was “instrumental in giving the community direction” and assistance, working closely with City, county, police, health and school boards.⁹⁹ As Riverside County community relations specialist Andres Soto said, “One word to describe Jess is commitment... He cares not only about what happens to the Eastside but the city of Riverside.”¹⁰⁰

Born in Texas in 1916, Ybarra was the son of Asencion and Maria Ybarra. Ascencion was a mine worker who died in a mining accident when Ybarra was young. During World War II, Ybarra served as a medic in the 86th Infantry. On 13 April 1945, Ybarra’s division crossed the Rhine River into Hagen, Germany, in a fierce battle. For his exceptional valor and bravery, Ybarra received the Bronze Star.

Upon completing his service, Ybarra returned to Texas and finished his education. He attended college with support from the GI Bill, receiving his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. Ybarra worked at the Mexican Christian Association in San Antonio for many years until accepting the directorship of Riverside’s Community Settlement House. Ybarra moved with his wife, Velia, and two daughters, Luana and Azalia, to settle in Riverside, which he made his permanent home.

As director of this key institution for the community, Ybarra went above and beyond the call of duty to serve all community members: “Ybarra’s day, technically, runs from 9 to 5 but it’s a rare day that he isn’t still on the job long after five. People bring their problems to him throughout the day. They

come to him for everything from financial problems to what to do about a problem child, he said. Some just drop by his office to chat.¹⁰¹

One area of focus for Ybarra was on improving inter-racial and inter-neighborhood communication. As he said in 1969, “The big problem now is what can we do to better understand each other, how can we best live together as Americans regardless of racial or ethnic backgrounds.”¹⁰² In order to address this issue through the Community Settlement House mission, Ybarra actively encouraged inclusion for staff and board members: “We have an integrated staff, an integrated board, working in an integrated community,” he said in 1969. “This is the only way we can solve our problems. Everyone must work together.”¹⁰³

Ybarra designed initiatives to improve communication between the generations, with a youth group at the Community Settlement House called *Los Norteños*, (The Northerners), a co-ed group devoted to community service and social activities. As director, Ybarra took

a personal hand in all of the [organization’s] programs, from counseling to the children’s toy loan library. ‘He’s been the person that has really made the Settlement House run. He always wants to be helpful to the people he’s trying to serve. I don’t know what we’d do without him.’¹⁰⁴

Assisting Ybarra throughout his tenure was Dorie Anderson. According to Linda Salinas-Thompson and Luana Ybarra Hernandez, Anderson was a “vital part of the community. She was aware of who needed help and was there for that person. ...These two leaders were such a big part of our lives... Many of us grew up at the Settlement House, it was our second home.”¹⁰⁵

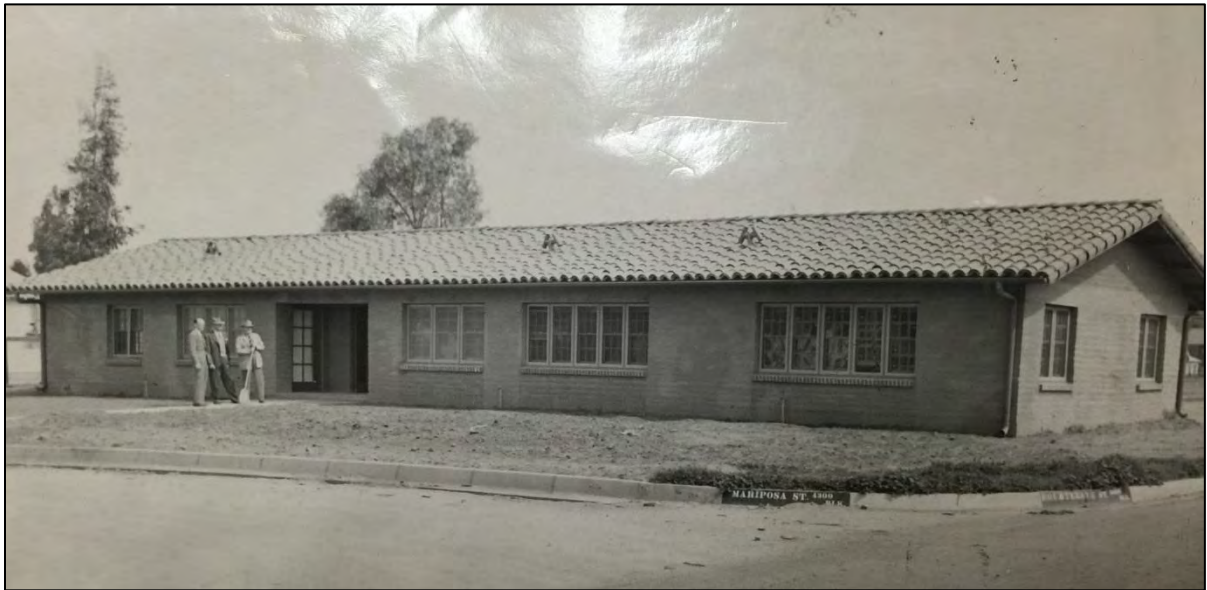
In addition to his work at the Community Settlement House, Ybarra served as chairman of the Brown Baggers, a Riverside-based Chicano civil rights group, and was an active member of the American GI Forum, MAPA, Eastside Community Action Group, American Civil Liberties Union, NAACP, and the American Legion Post 79, among others. As he said in 1969, “I work with all organizations in the community...It could be the most militant or the most conservative. My job is to work with the minority and the majority, to bring both groups together for the good of the community.”¹⁰⁶

In terms of Ybarra’s own leadership style, he managed to be as outspoken as he was well respected. In circa 1971, Ybarra penned an editorial for the local *Press-Enterprise*, observing that “As a Mexican-American and a member of a minority group, there are a certain number of reservations I have about Riverside’s centennial celebration.”¹⁰⁷ The reason for his reservations, Ybarra said, was the ongoing discrimination and marginalization of Mexican-Americans, who had to “hyphenate our citizenship so as to identify ourselves and be recognized.”

His civil rights work included seeking equal opportunities for Chicanos and people of color. In the mid-1970s, he joined in calls for an investigation of the City’s hiring practices. The issue regarded the hiring of an Anglo-American director for the Riverside Parks and Recreation Department, after a Mexican-American interim director was passed over for the job. This effort was led by the Coalition de la Raza, a key civil rights group in Riverside that united a range of organizations. Through the Coalition de la Raza and the Brown Baggers, Ybarra and other Chicano leaders joined forces to write to the Equal Employment Commission. Joining this coalition was Alberto Chavez, director of UC Riverside’s Chicano Student Programs department.

By the time of his death in 2007, Ybarra was widely recognized and honored by leaders throughout the state for his work in community support, civic engagement, and civil rights work. Ybarra, a decorated veteran of World War II, was interred at the Riverside National Cemetery.

Figure 40 Architect G. Stanley Wilson's Community Settlement House, 1947



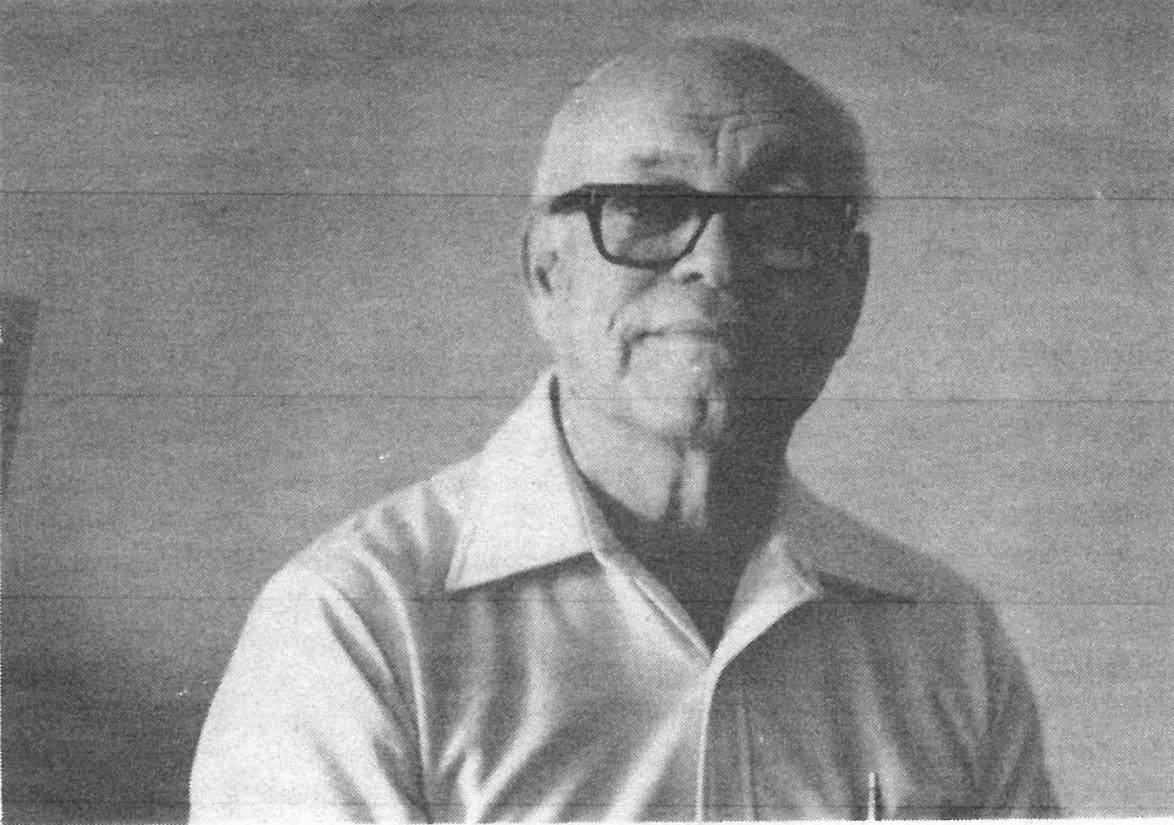
Source: Winship & Lazzaretto, 2016

Figure 41 Jesse Ybarra, his wife Velia, and their two daughters, Luana and Azalia, 1959



Source: Courtesy of Luana Ybarra Hernandez

Figure 42 Jesse Ybarra profile in *La Semana*, 21 October 1982



Jesse R. Ybarra

Personality Closeup

By Bill Medina

This week's personality close up will be featuring Jesse R. Ybarra. Mr. Ybarra was born in San Antonio, Texas, September 18, 1916, the son of Asension y Maria Ybarra. Marrying Velia Gallegos in 1942, they later had two children, Azalia Hardy and Luana Hernandez who both are married and presently live out of town. Jesse Ybarra went to schools in San Antonio, dropping out of school in the eighth grade to pick cotton, he

community.

One of Mr. Ybarra's first hurdles in Riverside was the integration of it's schools. Jesse Ybarra was a member of a special committee formed during the sixties to bring about the integration of Lowell Elementary School in Riverside. He indicated that it was unfortunate that the RUSD (Riverside Unifted School District) headed by superintendent Miller at

Source: *La Semana*, 21 October 1982, courtesy of Luana Ybarra Hernandez

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4.2 Theme #2: Making a Living

Subtheme #1: Citrus and Agriculture Workers

For many decades, citrus-related agriculture was the primary industry of Riverside, until residential and commercial development consumed most of the vast orange groves in the late 1940s and 1950s. The age of the orange began in Riverside in the 1870s, when Eliza Tibbets introduced the Washington Navel Orange. The crop transformed Riverside and the surrounding region. By 1880, an expansive citrus industry was already well established. Much of Riverside was covered or surrounded by orange, lemon, and lime groves. Citrus crops required vast areas of land, as well as a variety of support industries, including packinghouses, warehouses, labor camps, and the railroad lines.

As of 1882, among the half-million orange trees in California, an astonishing 50 percent were growing in Riverside.¹⁰⁸ As the citrus industry boomed, so did Riverside. In just one decade, between 1880 and 1890, orange production grew eighty-fold, from 19 train carloads in 1880 to over 1,500 carloads by 1890 (with an estimated 286 boxes of oranges per carload).¹⁰⁹ By the mid-1930s, the United States Department of Agriculture heralded the introduction of the navel orange as “one of the outstanding events in the economic and social development of California.”¹¹⁰ The success was due to the skill of the farmers, the railroads, as well as boosterism of the region as an unrivalled “tourist destination and a livable community.”¹¹¹ Above all, the success of the citrus economy was due to citrus workers—large pools of low-wage labor, living nearby, and available on short notice for picking, sorting, packing, and grading.

From the beginning, citrus work meant long hours, physically demanding work, and low wages. The earliest citrus laborers in Riverside had been the local Native American population. By the 1880s, Chinese immigrants had become the main source of citrus labor, working as pickers, packers, and irrigators. As increasingly restrictive immigration laws first slowed then halted Chinese immigration, Riverside citrus producers turned to Japanese immigrants. Japanese citrus laborers began in the early 1890s. By 1900, nearly 3,000 Japanese laborers were employed in Riverside in the citrus industry alone. Riverside also had a sizable Korean workforce, who participated in citrus work and seasonal labor; the Korean settlement, on the edge of Eastside near Cottage and Pachappa, was one of the earliest Korean settlements on the US mainland. The original site of the Korean settlement, Pachappa Camp, is now a City Point of Cultural Interest, designated in December 2016.

In the early twentieth century, a new wave of anti-immigrant sentiment, this time aimed at the Japanese, drove them out of the citrus labor market throughout California. Mexican laborers came to replace Chinese and Japanese laborers as the majority workforce. In Riverside, these jobs were provided through the citrus industry and railroads, as well as nearby cement plants and rock quarries. By the end of the 1910s, Mexican immigrants had “replaced all other ethnic laborers in California’s citrus districts” and became “the nucleus of the industry’s workforce from 1919 up to the [late twentieth century].”¹¹² This influx suited the growers’ needs, as they had wanted a reliable, available, low-wage work force. In order to retain workers, the California Fruit Growers Exchange established an Industrial Relations Division to “oversee recruitment, housing, and Americanization programs among Mexican workers and their families. The Exchange and its manager intended to make this group of workers a permanent fixture on the citrus landscape.”¹¹³ (Later, the California Fruit Growers Exchange also actively lobbied to maintain healthy levels of Mexican immigration, during World War I and following passage of the 1924 Immigration Restriction Act.)¹¹⁴

Figures 43 and 44 Arlington Heights groves (top) and citrus workers in Riverside (bottom), ca. 1910



Source: California Citrus Heritage Recording Project, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Growth of the Latino Workforce in Riverside's Citrus Industry

During the labor shortage of the 1910s, Mexican workers “were uniquely pursued as permanent labor” and “aggressively recruited by ranchers.”¹¹⁵ In 1919, in the *First Annual Report of California Citrus Institute*, J.D. Culbertson described the ranchers’ view of their Latino workforce:

According to ranch managers, boards, tin, iron, canvas, sacks, and other materials found near the ranch quickly became walls, floors, and canopies in the resourceful hands of Mexican workers. Culbertson found it remarkable that out of the self-constructed ‘impoverished sordid-looking camp’ that preceded company-constructed housing the ‘best type’ of Mexican labor emerged each Monday morning. He described the laborers as ‘men with clean washed clothing—jumpers and overalls, as well as shirts and bandanas—showing the wholesome effects of soap and water. These men could be depended upon for a full-measure day’s work.’¹¹⁶

The push-pull factors of the Mexican Revolution (driving people out) and US policy and practice (attracting people in) impacted the character of the workforce. In California, by mid-1920s, Mexican and Mexican-American workers “constituted fully two-thirds” of the citri-culture work force and “citrus growers and other agribusiness groups swore that they could not do without their loyal, tireless, and reliable” Mexican workers.¹¹⁷ Both men and women participated in this workforce, with men most often serving as pickers, and women working in packing and grading jobs. As noted by UC historian Catherine Gudis, through trade journals such as *The California Citrograph*, growers actively sought incentives to maintain “a cheap, dependable, and reproducible labor force. One [writer] advised readers to ‘encourage substantial home life of Mexican families so that there may be a more uniform supply of labor’ and another explained that having a home attracts ‘the reliable Mexican, who wants to make his home here permanently.’”¹¹⁸

The value placed on Mexican and Mexican-Americans as workers did not translate into generous benefits and treatment, however. In fact, in order to attract and retain Mexican workers, growers developed discriminatory housing practices that tied workers to the land and indebted them to their employers. In one example, at Sespe Ranch in Ventura County, white and Japanese workers were offered segregated residences for rent, ranging from \$6.00 to \$6.50 a month. Mexican workers, in contrast, “were required to build and finance the construction of their own houses,” thereby deliberately binding them to the ranch.¹¹⁹

Figure 45 Riverside citrus packinghouse, ca. 1910 (left); citrus packers, Victoria Avenue Packinghouse, 1928 (right)



Source: Riverside Metropolitan Museum and California Citrus Heritage Recording Project, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Figure 46 National Orange Company Packinghouse, 3604 Commerce Street, Riverside



Source: California Citrus Heritage Recording Project, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

During this time, the United States Department of Agriculture joined calls for permanent settlements of citrus workers, given the threat of World War I labor shortages to agricultural output and productivity. In this way, for many ranchers, housing policy for workers ultimately became

a form of social control designed to enhance profits. What is remarkable, though, is the degree to which it forced the growers, however reluctantly, to recognize Mexican workers as permanent members of their own community, not floating aliens or homing pigeons.¹²⁰

For citrus workers, establishing a fixed home base was feasible, given the extended work cycle. Compared with other crops, the citrus cycle was relatively extended, lasting up to eight months out of the year. This gave workers more time in one place, and more stability as a result. In citrus towns like Riverside, the result was the establishment of permanent citrus *colonias* or small neighborhoods. When the citrus season wrapped up for the year, “citrus families would often make the migrant circuit north picking grapes and cotton in the San Joaquin Valley or perhaps heading southeast to the rich agricultural fields near Coachella. However, they had a home and community awaiting their return.”¹²¹

Throughout California, the itinerant work schedule for farmer workers came about through the rancher’s wish to shift the economic risk of ranching to their laborers. Rather than employing (and paying) a stable workforce year round, ranchers opted for a large, flexible supply of low-wage laborers who could arrive with the harvest and move on when it was completed.

Given the unpredictability of agricultural production, this model helped lessen economic risks for farmers, though in turn it made the life of workers difficult and unpredictable: “As a consequence, the livelihoods of citrus workers were tied to a choreographed movement between the region’s agricultural crops.”¹²²

Figure 47 Jameson Packing Plant, Riverside, ca. 1940



Source: Courtesy of Riverside Public Library, Shades of Riverside

The migrant worker's life was described by Blas Coyazo, an Inland Empire citrus worker:

Sometimes we went up to Fresno to pick grapes, some years we used to do that. Stay a couple of months over there and pick grapes and finish the grape season, it's only about a month. And then from there...its time for the cotton in a place called Corcoran.... And that would keep us away for a couple of months, or maybe three months, in the meantime, the oranges were coming to season here again, and that's why we came back to wait for the season to start again and pick oranges.¹²³

Long-time Riverside resident Steve Solis remembers a similar lifestyle. Solis and his family members worked in the packinghouses in Riverside. When the citrus season finished, Solis recalled, family members "would travel down to Orange County and work down there. If it was light around here, all my aunts and my uncles would travel up north and pick grapes. So, wherever there was any work, they would finish up and then they would go elsewhere."¹²⁴ Solis's grandfather, who emigrated from Oaxaca around the time of the Mexican revolution in 1910, was "a picker all his life. He picked in the orchard."¹²⁵

For Latinos in Riverside, the itinerant schedule of the farm worker affected education, housing, and social integration. In response to the absence of students during portions of the year, the city school district instituted an attendance fee, which proved prohibitive for many Latino families. Apart from the itinerant schedule, the work itself was difficult and physically demanding. Ordinarily, men and their sons would head out to the fields by four o'clock in the morning each day:

Each picker took his picking sack and clippers. The clippers were usually modified to stay attached to his hand. He also took a canteen of water, often made from a hollowed out gourd, and a lunch of tacos...

Figure 48 Members of the Venegas, Lozano and Vasquez families, working the apricot season in Hemet, ca. 1940 (left); Manuel and Robert Venegas, 2018 (right)



Source: Riverside Co. Mexican-American Historical Society and *Riverside Press Enterprise*, 16 July 2018

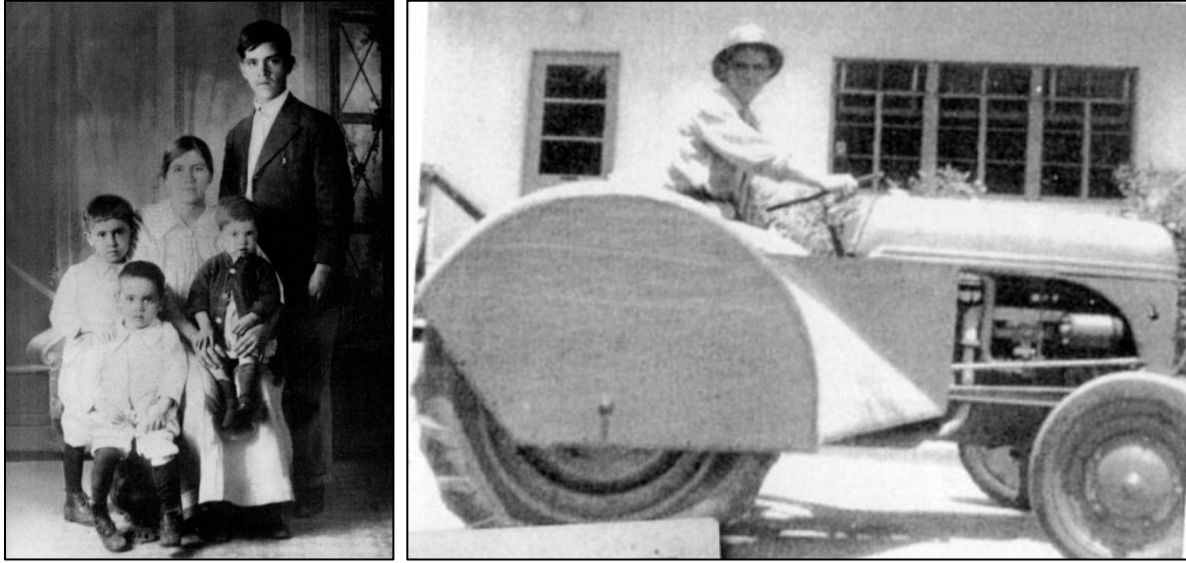
Upon arrival, which might take from fifteen minutes to two hours, someone was designated to ‘*haler las brazas*,’ or light a cooking fire. At lunch time, workers warmed their tacos by throwing them directly onto the embers.

Pickers worked at a furious pace, since they were paid by the amount of fruit picked. In the 1920s and 1930s, pickers received 3-5 cents per box of picked fruit. One full picking sack, weighing about fifty pounds, equaled roughly one box of fruit. On a day with good groves and good weather, most pickers averaged about 60 boxes of fruit. Some very fast pickers could fill 100 boxes per day. This exclusive group received the name ‘*campeones*,’ or champions.¹²⁶

For many agricultural workers in Riverside, the citrus industry provided long-term employment spanning decades. Many Latinos, among others, earned a living and set the stage for the forward advancement of their families through agricultural work. Juan Jose Machuca, for example, worked as a citrus worker for over 40 years. Born in Mexico, Machuca came to Riverside as a young man. He was a member of the Lady of Guadalupe Shrine and the *Sociedad Progresista Mexicana*.¹²⁷

Another long-time citrus worker in Riverside was Henry Bermudez.¹²⁸ A native of Mexico, Bermudez moved to the United States with his family in the late 1910s, at the age of seven. For over half a century, Bermudez worked for many ranchers in Riverside’s citrus industry, becoming well respected for the breadth of his experience and knowledge in all aspects of the industry. His first citrus job was at the Arlington Heights Packinghouse on Dufferin Avenue, Riverside. For a period of time, Bermudez worked as a grove irrigator during the days, and at night worked part-time at the Arlington Heights Packinghouse to make “fruit crates for the packing and shipping of oranges, lemons, and grapefruits.”¹²⁹ At times, this activity turned into a family event for Bermudez and his wife Maria: “Some evenings Maria would take the children, Linda, Dorothy, and Evelyn to help in assembling the wooden crates, mixing paste for the labels, and pasting the labels on the crates.”¹³⁰ For many years, Maria also worked in the citrus industry as a packer for the Blue Banner Packinghouse.

Figure 49 The family of Henry Bermudez, before leaving Mexico for Riverside in the 1910s (left); Henry Bermudez at work in Riverside citrus industry, ca. 1950



Source: Courtesy of Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

Another early agricultural and citrus worker in the Latino community was Jess Avila. After marrying in 1927, Avila and his wife Lupe settled in Eastside, at the corner of 13th Street and Park Avenue.¹³¹ From their home in Eastside, the Avilas raised four daughters and one son, Mary Lou Avila de la Torre, Catherine Avila Sanchez, Stella Avila Sanchez, Gloria Avila Vasquez, and Rudy Avila. Avila picked grapes and migrated according to crop rotations throughout the state. In his citrus farming work, Avila was in charge of planting and nursing orange seedlings for Blackman Ranch. In addition to advising ranchers on the optimal timing for harvesting and transplanting of trees, Avila prepared hybrid plantings for oranges, grapefruit, and lemons.

The examples of Bermudez and Avila show just a few of the many ways in which citrus workers could advance and distinguish themselves. Another means of advancing was becoming a crew chief or field foreman. Both positions required being bilingual as well as bicultural, to “effectively interact with both Euro American and Mexican pickers.”¹³² From the 1930s through the 1950s, one of Riverside’s best-known field foremen was Melchor Rangel.¹³³ Melchor was a native of Guanajuato, Mexico, who came to Riverside in 1914 as a young boy with his family. Among crew chiefs, two well-known men were Alejo Chagolla (otherwise known as “Alejo grande,” or big Alejo) and his nephew Alejo Chagolla (“Alejo chico,” or little Alejo). The two relatives “pooled their resources, bought two flatbed trucks, and became crew chiefs.”¹³⁴

For women, jobs in the packinghouses were “highly prized [among] newly arriving immigrant families. ...Some women became champion packers, earning the right to pack the best grades and sizes of fruit.”¹³⁵ With the need to lift heavy boxes, and the highly repetitive nature of the work, many women suffered back injuries or repetitive strain illnesses. The most desirable job in the packinghouse was as a grader, a position paid by the hour rather than by the piece. In this way, a hierarchy emerged along racial lines for citrus workers in the early twentieth century. Typically, Italians and Italian-Americans pruned trees and supervised Mexican and Mexican-American pickers. In Arlington in the 1920s, an Italian-owned citrus packinghouse opened at Dufferin Avenue and Harrison Street.

With numerous nearby employers offering consistent work, many Riverside Latinas worked in packinghouses for decades. One long-time packinghouse worker was Virginia Rodriguez Solorio.¹³⁶ Born in 1916 in Casa Blanca, Solorio was the second eldest daughter of Zeferino and Guadalupe Rodrigues. After attending Chemawa Middle School, Solorio worked for over half a century as a packer at Victoria Avenue Packinghouse, Arlington Heights Packinghouse, and Royal Citrus Packinghouse.

Although Latinas were most often selected to work as graders and packers in citrus packinghouses, many also took to the fields to work as pickers. One such long-time field worker in Riverside was Ilaria (Lala) Alfaro. Born in the Eastside community in 1930, Alfaro stopped attending school at a young age in order to help support her family. As a child, she started working in the fields. Over the years, her work took her to nearby Hemet, where she cut and gathered apricots. She also worked in the grape orchards and potato fields, “filling the bag that was tied onto her waist, weighing sixty pounds when it was full.”¹³⁷

From these beginnings, Alfaro advanced to become an assistant and inspector with the United States Department of Agriculture.¹³⁸ In the postwar period, Alfaro left agricultural work and began over two decades working in an electronics supply warehouse. Alfaro passed away in 2012 at the age of 81, survived by her children, many grandchildren, and extended family members.¹³⁹

Figure 50 Long-time Riverside agricultural worker, Ilaria (Lala) Alfaro (b. 1930, d. 2012)



Source: Courtesy of Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

Although ranchers actively sought Latino labor, the community at large proved reticent at best to accept Latinos into society. Open discrimination against Mexicans and Mexican-Americans was rampant in Riverside during this period. As long-time Arlington residence Vince Arellano recalled, though citrus work was plentiful, “picking oranges was the only job to be had” for Latinos in Riverside.¹⁴⁰ In his 1939 book, *Factories in the Field*, pioneering historian Carey McWilliams noted the social and economic stratification that emerged around the citrus industry:

Throughout the citrus belt, the workers are Spanish-speaking, Catholic, and dark-skinned, the owners are white, Protestant, and English-speaking. The owners occupy the heights, the Mexicans the lowlands. ...The whole system of employment, in fact, is perfectly designed to insulate workers from employers in every walk of life, from the cradle to the grave, from the church to the saloon.¹⁴¹

This “insulation” included every area of life for Mexican and Mexican-American laborers, from schools, to housing, to churches, whether official or de facto segregation (a topic explored in more detail below). (At the same time, Japanese and Italian farm laborers had less trouble leaving citrus work and integrating into larger society, in terms of employment, education and housing.)

In the 1920s, the continuing citrus boom further fueled the growth—as well as permanent roots—of Riverside’s Latino community. In 1921 alone, approximately \$121 million worth of fruit was sold to the wholesale trade by the California Fruit Growers Exchange. The 1920s and 1930s became the citrus industry’s most expansive decades. The strong citrus industry helped buoy the economy during the hard times of the depression.

Beginning in the 1930s, and accelerating during World War II, new employment opportunities started to open up, providing a path out of agricultural work. This translated into a labor shortage for ranchers. Faced with this crisis, ranchers throughout the United States advocated for creation of the Bracero Program, which was established in 1942. For Riverside citrus growers, the Bracero Program “quickly proved a godsend.”¹⁴² By 1945, the number of Mexican nationals working as braceros in local citrus farms had reached over 3,200. In addition to helping ranchers with the citrus harvest, braceros cost less than their Mexican-American counterparts, though, as historian Paul A. Viafora pointed out, “Chicano wages had never been high.”¹⁴³

Figure 51 Riverside citrus workers, ca. 1940



Source: Courtesy of Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

Figure 52 Mary Bermudez and coworkers at Riverside packinghouse, ca. 1950



Source: Courtesy of Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

In the postwar period, Riverside citrus groves remained productive but were gradually scaled back. As throughout California, in Riverside, Cold War-era investment in the aerospace industry, coupled with a pressing housing shortage, led to a construction boom, and many acres of former agricultural lands gave way to large-scale housing tracts.

Even with the postwar housing boom, Riverside remained a center for citrus ranches and therefore citrus workers. As of 1952, a number of packinghouses had been constructed, including the Blue Banner Company Fruit Packinghouse (3165 Fourth Street), the Blue Goose Growers (3040 East Ninth Street), the Evans Brothers Packing Company (3345 Commerce/Pachappa Avenue), the McDermont Fruit Company (3141 Ninth Street), and the Riverside Consolidated Growers Packinghouse (3302 Commerce and 3069 Fourth).

Ultimately, the citrus industry did contract, and employment opportunities diversified for Latinos. For example, as of 1936, an estimated 90 percent of ethnic minorities living in Riverside worked in agriculture. By 1948, just 12 years later, just 33 percent of ethnic minorities living in Riverside reported working in agriculture. By 1956, this number dropped again to just 20 percent.¹⁴⁴ In a series by the *Riverside Daily Press*, a variety of jobs were noted among Eastside residents, including civil service jobs, construction work or industrial work and manufacturing.¹⁴⁵

The postwar decline of the itinerant work schedule was reflected in school enrollment. Historically, at the Latino-majority Casa Blanca Elementary School, “We used to open school in September with one third of the pupils registered...the rest were away in harvest camps, working,” Principal Madden explained to *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1956. “This year we opened with four hundred and ten pupils, our full attendance. Casa Blancans are no longer transients.”¹⁴⁶

Citrus-Related Expansion and Construction in Riverside

Citrus packinghouses, along with other associated buildings, became the predominant built forms of the citrus industry early Latino neighborhoods such as Casa Blanca, Eastside, and Arlington Heights. Typically, large packinghouses were located near major transportation routes, such as the Santa Fe railroad line. For example, in Casa Blanca in the 1890s, even a partial list of packinghouses reveals the strength of the industry and its influence as a local employer.

According to City of Riverside Directories from 1893, packinghouses present in Casa Blanca included:

- The Earl Fruit Company Orange Packinghouse (at the corner of Pliny and Evans Streets)
- Indiana Avenue Orange Packing Company Storage (at the corner of Pliny and Evans Streets)
- B.S. Moulton's Orange Packinghouse (at the corner of Madison and Evans Streets to the southwest of the Casa Blanca railroad station)
- Keystone Orange Growers Association Orange Packinghouse (corner of Cary and Evans Streets), and
- The Pattee & Lett Company Orange Packinghouse (at the corner of Madison and Evans Streets at the railroad tracks)

This same year, in 1893, the Arlington Fruit Association and the Arlington Heights Orange and Lemon Company formed the Arlington Heights Fruit Company. The combination of the two companies formed the largest packinghouse in the area. Brands packed by the company included *Black Hawk*, *Spanish Girl*, *Barbara Worth*, *Squirrel* and *Superfine*. By 1903, several new packers and shippers had arrived in Casa Blanca, including the Victoria Avenue Citrus Association.

Similarly, with its location near transportation lines and citrus groves, the Eastside became a leading packing and shipping center for agricultural products. Citrus packinghouses, along with other associated buildings, became the predominant built forms of the citrus industry associated with the Eastside. The large packinghouses were located near major transportation routes, such as the Santa Fe and Union Pacific railroad lines. According to Sanborn maps and City Directories, by 1893, Eastside also had become home to many fruit packers and shippers, including:

- J.Z. Anderson Fruit Company, F.B. Devine, and Porter Brothers Company (Eighth Street between Pachappa and Vine Street)
- Brown & Raley, Cook & Langley and Earl Fruit Company (Pachappa Avenue and Ninth Street)
- California Fruit Company (Thirteenth Street and Pachappa Avenue)
- Ford & Tasker, Silver-Brown Fruit Company and Twogood Fruit Company (Seventh Street and Pachappa Avenue)
- Germain Fruit Company (corner of Pachappa and Eleventh Street)
- Griffin & Skelly (Pachappa Avenue and Twelfth Street)
- Orange Growers Packing Company (Pachappa Avenue and Fourteenth Street)

In the opening years of the century, new packinghouses came to Riverside. For example, by 1908, over a dozen additional packinghouses had been constructed in Eastside along the Santa Fe and Union Pacific railroad tracks and depots, thus creating a "packinghouse row." Among those packinghouses were the Sutherland Fruit Company Packinghouse (132 East Fifth Street), La Mesa

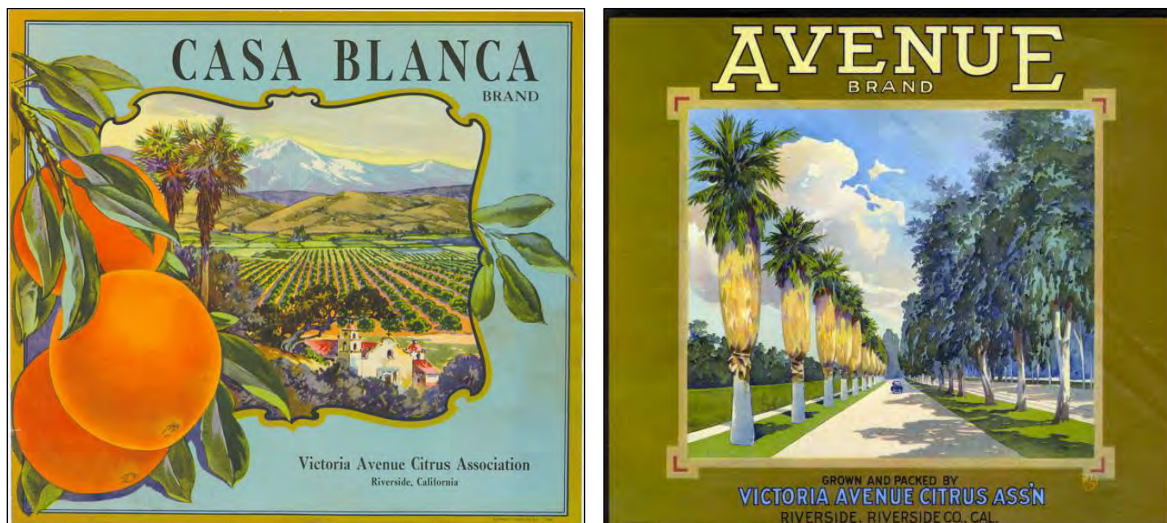
Packinghouse, later called Monte Vista Citrus Association (103 Fourth Street), and the Independent Fruit Company Packinghouse (136 East Seventh Street).

With citrus expansion in the 1920s and 1930s, much of the land in and around Riverside was covered in groves. As noted in topographic maps of the area, even into the 1940s much of Casa Blanca remained rural with citrus groves planted adjacent to the community. Groves extended from Lincoln Avenue past Victoria Avenue on the south and stretched as far north as Arlington Avenue.

By the 1950s, with the postwar residential and industrial expansion, the gradual decline of the citrus industry is noted on available Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps and other historic maps and aerial photographs. Most of the packinghouses had been removed or replaced by fewer, more dominant, citrus companies. By 1952, eight packinghouses remained in Casa Blanca; this number still represented a solid employment base, but it was a marked decrease from earlier years. By this time, the Victoria Avenue Citrus Association had taken over the entire corner of Evans and Pliny Streets.

By 1952 in Eastside, packinghouses included the Blue Banner Company Fruit Packinghouse (3165 Fourth Street), the Blue Goose Growers (3040 East Ninth Street), the Evans Brothers Packing Company (3345 Commerce—now Pachappa—Avenue), the McDermont Fruit Company (3141 Ninth Street), and the Riverside Consolidated Growers Packinghouse (3302 Commerce Street).

Figure 53 Casa Blanca's Victoria Avenue Citrus Association, citrus labels



Source: Riverside Public Library Citrus Label Collection

Subtheme #2: Pioneers in Commerce, Business, and Education

In the early twentieth century in Riverside, Latinos had severely limited job prospects. Large pools of low-wage labor were needed for agricultural work and for constructing the railroads and the cities themselves. As Riverside's Latino community became established, opportunities gradually became more diverse. This shift was not due to a rollback in discrimination, but rather due to the grit and resourcefulness of early entrepreneurs to capitalize on opportunities and establish a greater degree of independence from citrus work.

In Riverside's Mexican-American and ethnic neighborhoods, many residents co-opted and adapted spaces to start businesses and offer goods and services. In neighborhoods like Casa Blanca, one factor facilitating the flowering of local shops and vendors was the relatively high rate of property ownership. Citrus farmers had sold lots to workers in Casa Blanca at extremely low prices, to encourage them to establish permanent roots near the groves and packinghouses. This level of ownership made it possible for early entrepreneurs to adapt and use portions of the family home or property as they wished, for shops or homegrown businesses. In this way, the spaces reflecting these stories might be modest (or no longer extant), but they represented significant first steps for many families toward economic independence and upward mobility.

The expansion into new areas of employment was mirrored for Latinos in California in the early twentieth century. For example, between 1910 and 1940, Mexican-American workers in the state "entered nearly every occupation classified as unskilled or semi-skilled" and, during the 1920s, they "constituted up to two-thirds of the work force in many industries."¹⁴⁷ Apart from agricultural work, "manufacturing, transportation, communications, and domestic and personal service had become the other major sectors of Chicano employment. ...They also held blue-collar positions in construction, food processing, textiles, automobile industries, steel production and utilities."¹⁴⁸ This expansion, was seen as part of the overall "Mexican problem," however, in particular during the Great Depression. Overcoming employment discrimination would be a decades-long battle for Latinos in Riverside and beyond.

In early twentieth-century Riverside, one major employer was the Crestmore Cement Company in Rubidoux, adjacent to Riverside. Prior to World War I, the Crestmore Cement Company employed "a small colony of Italians, a contingent of Armenians, and about two hundred Mexicans."¹⁴⁹ A 1914 *Riverside Daily Press* article, titled "How Cement Plant Cares for its Mexicans" highlighted the company's workers' camps, which offered family housing, running water, bathing facilities, and stoves. It is worth noting that, among the 200 Mexican laborers employed by Crestmore Cement in 1914, most were "of American birth" and lived in the workers' camp with their families. The *Riverside Daily Press* commented that, at the worker's camp,

the Mexicans...preserve their traditions and mode of life of the land whose language they still speak. Their camp is built in grounds enclosed by a spiked fence, the house forming the sides of a square. In the center is a band stand which forms a social center, where all Mexican national holidays and religious festivals are observed with characteristic gayety. Little gardens such as are seen beside every school house nowadays are nearby and enclose beds of lettuce and radishes and patches of beans which each tenant has the right to cultivate.¹⁵⁰

Back in the City itself, Latinos had already established permanent, cohesive communities and neighborhoods by the 1910s. Shops, restaurants, and small commercial areas emerged along principal thoroughfares and near places of employment. Often times, forays into business meant utilizing available spaces in the family property or home. Such was the case for Simona Valero's

father, who had arrived in Riverside's Casa Blanca neighborhood in 1911. Mr. Valero grew up on a hacienda in Mexico, where he learned how to cut hair and play the violin, among other skills. He worked in the citrus industry, in irrigation, but also operated the first barbershop in Casa Blanca for many years out of the family home. As Valero's daughter Simona recalled, "half of [the living room] was a barber shop and then the other half was our living room."¹⁵¹ In the 1930s, a similar enterprise was located at 7526 Evans Street, where a residence had been converted to accommodate a cantina, pool hall, boarding house, and store. The building later reverted to use as a private home.

Figure 54 Victor Mendoza and his wife Lola, owners of Mendoza Market



Source: Courtesy of Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

One pioneering Latino attorney in Riverside in the late 1910s was Miguel Estudillo.¹⁵² A native of San Bernardino, Estudillo had an ancestry with roots in the Spanish era of Alta California. His grandfather was Don Jose A. Estudillo, who held a number of civic and political posts in California from the 1820s through the early 1850s. Estudillo was born in San Bernardino but educated in San Diego, where he served as Deputy Court Clerk. In 1893, following the establishment of Riverside, Estudillo was appointed Clerk of the Board of Supervisors. Soon thereafter, he became a practicing attorney. In 1904, Estudillo was elected to the California State Assembly, and in 1908 to the California State Senate. During his time serving in the state legislature, Estudillo secured funding for the Agricultural Experiment Station near Mt. Rubidoux. He was also a vocal supporter of the establishment of Yosemite National Park, for which he earned the praise of John Muir. Estudillo's tenure as City Attorney in Riverside spanned two different appointments across decades. He was appointed in 1918 and again in 1941. He retired in 1949.

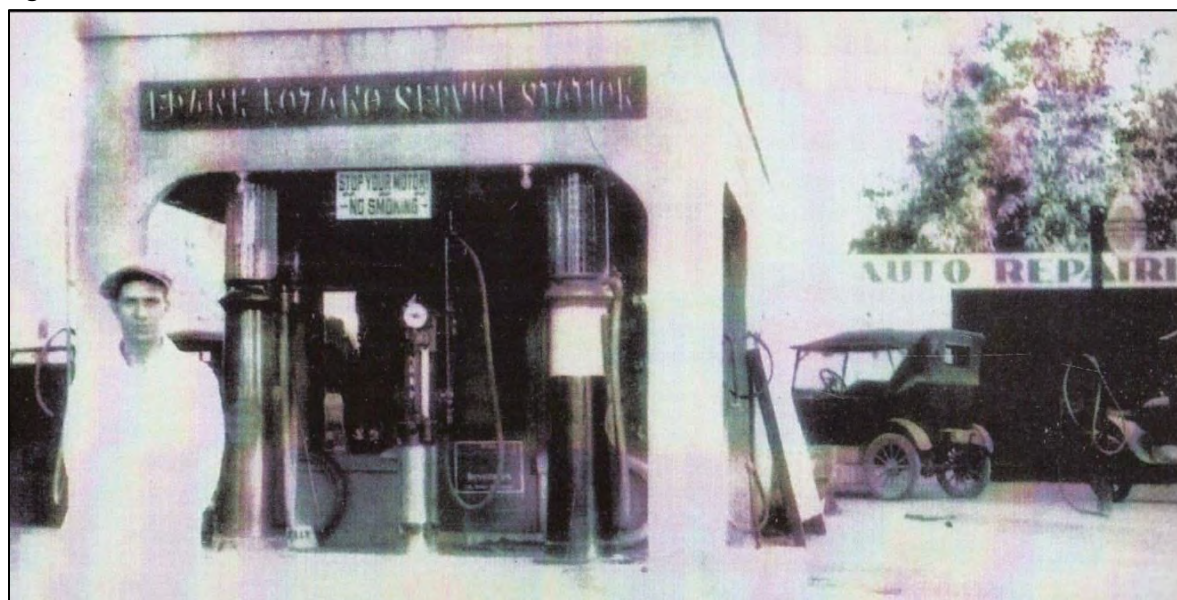
Commercial Boom of the 1920s

By the 1920s, Riverside's growing Latino community had put down permanent roots in all areas of life and commerce. Faced with discrimination from the outside, Latino neighborhoods became stand-alone, self-sufficient communities, with a variety of shops, restaurants, bars, and other services. With the rise of the automobile, a number of garages and other auto-support businesses were established. Throughout Casa Blanca, commercial areas emerged near the intersections of Madison and Evans, along Pliny and Cary Streets, as well as adjacent to packinghouses near the railroad tracks. The businesses along Madison and Evans Streets, which included Mendoza Market, Ahumada Market, a barbershop, a billiard hall, and restaurants, formed the "hub" or downtown of Casa Blanca. As facilities opened, they often became multi-functional spaces for community gatherings, meetings, and celebrations.

One of the earliest and longest running Latino-owned grocery stores in Riverside was Mendoza Market, established in 1920 by Victor Mendoza. Mendoza came to the United States from Michoacan, Mexico, in 1913. He married his wife Lola in 1914, and the two opened their first market on Bunker Street in 1920. Two months later, the Mendozas converted a residence at 7450 Evans Street for use as Mendoza Market, where it remained for 25 years. As he adapted the residence, Mendoza constructed an extra room for the neighborhood's first post office.¹⁵³ In 1945, Mendoza Market moved to 3199 Madison Street, near the train tracks (the building currently operates as El Amigo Market). Mendoza Market was one of the earliest and longest-running Latino-owned shops in Riverside, serving the children, grandchildren, great grandchildren of long-time patrons for over half a century.

In the Eastside neighborhood, another pioneering Latino business owner in the 1920s was Frank Lozano, who opened his first business, a gas station, on Park Avenue between 11th and 12th Streets (the building does not appear extant).

Figure 55 Frank Lozano Service Station, ca. 1925.



Source: Courtesy of Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

Great Depression and World War II Era

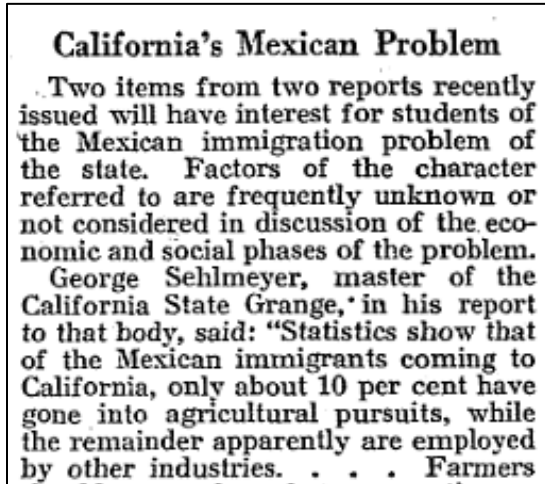
After the boom of the 1920s, the Great Depression reversed many of the economic and professional gains made by Latino families. Riverside's first Mexican-American City Council member, Johnny Martin Sotelo, recalled that, during the Great Depression, his family lost the grocery store they had founded and operated in the Eastside neighborhood. Following this loss, Sotelo's family "joined a growing stream of itinerant farm workers, harvesting crops throughout California."¹⁵⁴ Repatriation resulted in many Latinos leaving Riverside, voluntarily as well as involuntarily.

Latino-owned businesses suffered as a result of repatriation. In 1936, Mendoza Market in Casa Blanca nearly closed. Victor Mendoza was deeply in debt at the time, with many customers either gone or unable to pay their bills. The store was saved as "friends came forth to help him. After the Depression, business started growing again, people started coming back from Mexico. After WWII, everyone was working, people had money, business really started picking up."¹⁵⁵

In this climate, Mexican natives and Mexican-Americans were actively restricted from moving out of agricultural labor, in particular during the Great Depression. Commenting on the “Mexican problem” in the *Riverside Daily Press*, an editorialist wrote that

Farmers should remember that every time a Mexican displaces an American workman the buying power of labor is broken down just that much... If it is absolutely necessary, as contended, that in some sections in California this type of labor is necessary to harvest farm crops, measures should be taken which would prevent this labor which may come into California from entering other industries.¹⁵⁶

Figure 56 Riverside’s “Mexican Problem” and employment restrictions, 1931



Source: *Riverside Daily Press*, 14 January 1931

Although the Great Depression brought setbacks, the decade ultimately brought a wider variety of employment opportunities. Employment with the Works Progress Administration, which had an office in Riverside, provided a path out of agricultural work for some members of the Latino community. Community leader and activist Josephine Lozano left agricultural work in the late 1930s to take a position as a seamstress for the Works Progress Administration in downtown Riverside. This position led to a supervisory role, and the experience helped spark a career of civil rights organizing and activism for Lozano in the postwar period.¹⁵⁷

As Latino entrepreneurs opened businesses, several areas became commercial hubs. In Eastside, along Park Avenue and University Avenue, a small concentration of Latino- and African-American-owned businesses had emerged by the 1940s. One early Mexican-American owned business along Park Avenue was Chavarrias Store, at 4098 Park Avenue (now Tony’s Market). From 1939 to 1985, the store was owned and operated by Tony and Mary Chavarrias. A native of Mexico, Tony Chavarrias came to the United States with his parents as a toddler. He opened the store with the help of his father. For many years, at Christmas, Chavarrias “would insist that children living in the Eastside area should receive a Christmas stocking full of hard candy, nuts and an orange. This tradition continued until he retired in 1985.”¹⁵⁸

One block away from Chavarrias Market, at 4120 Park Avenue, Checkie’s Café was a popular restaurant in the 1940s, run by Checkie and Helen Hernandez. Neighborhood restaurants provided important social and gathering spaces for the community. A similar gathering place in Casa Blanca was Manuel’s Café, owned by Manuel Reyes, Sr. In the late 1930s, Reyes established the shop at the corner of Cary and Evans Streets, on a lot Reyes purchased from World War II veteran and community leader Augustine Flores. Manuel’s Café became a popular meeting place in Casa Blanca.

In his early years, Reyes worked as a crew supervisor for the Blue Banner Company. Reyes was an active community leader, serving for many years on the Sociedad Progresista Mexicana. After moving to Eastside in the mid-1940s, Reyes worked for the City of Riverside, from which he retired after 20 years of service.¹⁵⁹

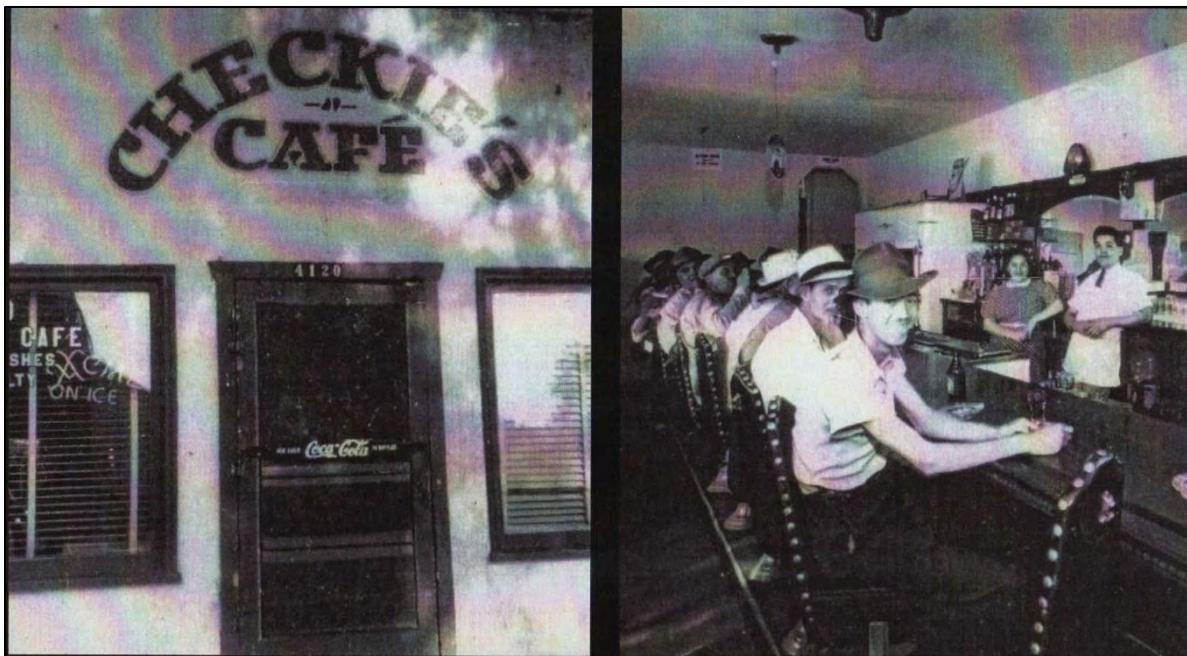
As modest as the enterprises may appear, the flowering of Latino-owned businesses in the 1920s through 1940s in Riverside was significant on a number of levels. First, it reflected a time of transition, when more people managed to leave the confines of citrus and agricultural work and gained more personal and professional autonomy. Second, it reflected the emergence of businesses in the community, for the community, at a time when Latinos were widely excluded from frequenting Anglo-American establishments throughout Riverside.

Figure 57 Chavarrias Market, 4098 Park Avenue (now Tony's Market), ca. 1950



Source: Courtesy of Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

Figure 58 Checkie's Café, with Helen Hernandez and the café cook behind the counter, 1946



Source: Courtesy of Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

Figure 59 Manuel Reyes and his wife Jesse (left and lower right), Manuel's Café



Source: Courtesy of Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

In the early 1940s, new employment opportunities started to provide a path out of agricultural work. As the war drew thousands of recruits—but also triggered industrial expansion—the labor shortage worsened. “Chicanos thus managed to gain entry to jobs and industries that had been virtually closed to them in the past. These new opportunities liberated many Chicanos from dependence on such traditional occupations as agriculture.”¹⁶⁰

In Riverside, expansion of war facilities at nearby March Army Air Field, for example, brought many new jobs. In present-day Arlanza, Camp Anza was constructed in 1942. The base served as a staging area and point of embarkation during World War II, with over 625,000 troops passing through the base. (In the 2010s, a portion of the decommissioned base, including the 1942 Officers’ Club, was restored and preserved as the Home Front at Camp Anza project, offering affordable housing and services to veterans. The project won the California Governor’s Preservation Award in 2016 and the California Preservation Foundation award in 2017.)

In addition to defense-related work on the home front, employment opportunities were opening up in a number of nearby industries, such as Kaiser Steel in Fontana, the Food Machinery Corporation, and Hunter Engineering, which experienced a significant expansion of its Riverside facilities in this period.

As has been well documented, the war prompted a significant labor shortage throughout the United States. In the popular imagination, stories of “Rosie the Riveter” are well known, as women throughout the United States stepped in to fill the labor shortage, thereby securing a new degree of personal and professional freedom. Similarly, in this era, many Latinos (and Latinas) were able to obtain employment that, just a few years prior, had largely been largely out of reach.

In this way, as war-related production geared up, “for the first time, large numbers of ethnic Mexican men were hired in relatively well-paid industrial jobs, many in the defense industries.”¹⁶¹ In Riverside, this included positions at nearby March Army Air Field and Camp Anza, among other defense-related facilities. At the same time, as more Mexican men joined the armed services, this opened up new work opportunities for Mexican women in war-related industries, “especially in textile, aircraft, ship building, and food processing plants.”¹⁶² Many women found employment at Camp Anza and Camp Hahn outside of March Army Air Field as warehouse and supply workers.

Figure 60 The “Camp Anza Girls,” ca. 1944 (left); Restored Officers’ Club, 2016



Source: Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society and City of Riverside

In addition to defense-related jobs, thousands of Latinos from Riverside joined the call to defend the United States as part of the armed forces (a topic described in more detail below). For Latinos, serving their country during World War II gave them tremendous pride in their identity as Americans and Mexican-Americans. For a generation of Latinos, service during World War II awoke a new sense of empowerment and inspired many to work for—and expect—equal treatment and equal rights.

Ultimately, this shift opened up opportunities in all areas of life. Among the scores of Riverside Mexican-Americans who belonged to this generation, John Martin Sotelo captured the sentiment in 1956 for the *Riverside Daily Press*. Sotelo was a native of the Eastside neighborhood, born in 1925 to farm laborers. He cited his experience serving in World War II as formative for his life: “We proved something during [WWII]. We worked together, Mexican-American and Anglo, and we had a nice team. I found out for the first time that I was as good as Anglos.”¹⁶³ Indeed, as Sotelo recalled to a reporter in 2008, “When I got back from World War II I felt much more American.”¹⁶⁴

He also noted that greater opportunities were available for Latinos following the war: “The fellows that came back [from World War II], some went to school on the GI Bill and they got into halfway decent positions away from picking oranges... When we got back from World War II, this gave us the feeling to try to get more involved in the community, so we took part in things.”¹⁶⁵

Indeed, by 1963, Sotelo had been elected as Riverside’s first Mexican-American city councilperson, a post he held for a decade (a topic described in more detail below).

Postwar Boom and Upward Mobility

As elsewhere throughout Southern California, Riverside experienced a postwar population and construction boom. Although agriculture remained a large part of the economy, Riverside had become a metropolis by the postwar period. In one snapshot from 1956, for example, the City had become home to “more than 95 industries that hire in excess of 9,000 people” as well as “two daily newspapers, three hospitals, ninety churches,” as well as five bus lines, three railroads, and two airlines.¹⁶⁶

Industrial concerns that arrived or expanded in this period included Bourns Incorporated, Rohr Corporation, and Lilly Tulip Corporation, all of which “greatly augmented job opportunities for local Chicanos,” eventually leading to “an exodus from the barrios and a diffusion of Chicano residential patterns.”¹⁶⁷ This level of growth, along with an emerging civil rights movement and new sense of

empowerment, slowly translated into expanded employment and business opportunities for Riverside's Latino community.

While 1945 ended outright hostilities, it ushered in a long and costly Cold War with the Soviet Union. During the Cold War, vast sums were invested in defense and military spending throughout the United States, in particular in regions with existing manufacturing and aerospace industries. Communities throughout Southern California and the Inland Empire saw tremendous growth due to defense-related spending. Following 1945, as economic diversification accelerated in and around Riverside, pre-war agricultural fields gave way to curvilinear streets and large-scale housing tracts.

Although agriculture remained a large-scale employer, the numbers of Riverside Latinos employed in the fields and farming dropped dramatically. The decline of the citrus industry also opened "new job opportunities in the public and private sectors" and "liberated the Chicano from citrus domination."¹⁶⁸ Along with the new job opportunities came a "modicum of social change," though it was "at times superficial, sporadic, and painfully slow for Chicanos."¹⁶⁹ As the *Riverside Press Enterprise* noted in 1972, in the pre-World War II era,

In employment as well as education, the chicano was confined by segregation, limiting him to jobs in the fields and packinghouses. Consequently, Mexican-Americans had become well-entrenched as the farm labor force for Riverside and surroundings areas by the 1920s. Few of them were able to break out of this pattern to enter skilled or professional jobs.

'All a Mexican could do was work in the fields,' said an older Mexican-American man who picked oranges for 15 years before becoming an insurance salesman. 'There was nobody working in offices or working as a doctor or lawyer. Nobody. Not even a Mexican working as a garbageman for the city. So you got to be 15 or so and you went to work in the fields because there was nothing else for a Mexican to do.'¹⁷⁰

By the 1950s, the *Riverside Daily Press* had taken note of, and began chronicling, the changing landscape for employment among Riverside's Latino and minority populations. For example, as of 1956, in a survey of professions held by Eastside residents (still a predominantly Mexican-American and African-American community at the time), the *Riverside Daily Press* noted a variety of employment options, including civil service jobs, construction work or industrial work and manufacturing.¹⁷¹ This overall trend was mirrored throughout California. Between 1930 and 1970, the rate of Latinos employed in professional or technical positions more than tripled (from 4 to 13.7), and the rate of Latinos employed as managers, proprietors, or officials doubled (from 3.7 percent to 7.2 percent).¹⁷² Although the numbers remained low, the upward trend was significant.

In terms of earning power, upward mobility among some members of Riverside's minority groups was also becoming apparent: "We knew minority group members had improved their living standards greatly in recent years, but even so the extent to which this had happened surprised us," said Juan Acevedo, director of the Riverside Community Settlement Association.¹⁷³ (A well-known community leader, Acevedo was a one-time member of the Youth Authority Board for the State of California as well as a founding member of the American GI Forum in Riverside.) In just one metric, family incomes had risen from an average of \$100 a month in 1948 to \$4,000 to \$7,000 annually.

As incomes rose for Latino and ethnic communities, more businesses were established. By the 1950s, for example, the Eastside's local commercial enterprises included general stores, retail clothing businesses, gas and oil companies, restaurants, machine shops, warehouses, and storage facilities. Many of these businesses were locating in one or two story wood-framed or concrete buildings of utilitarian design along Park Avenue and University Avenue.

Later, as immigration diversified, between 1960 and 1980, median incomes of Latino residents in Riverside showed an uncommon decrease.¹⁷⁴ As of 1960, the income of Latino families in Riverside stood at approximately 74 percent of the citywide median. As of 1980, this number had dipped to 50 percent. For families in Eastside, this annual salary translated into an average of \$11,720, or 56 percent of the citywide median of \$21,075.¹⁷⁵ According to Professor Paul Wright of UC Riverside, this drop in income was reflective of the volume of new arrivals from Latin America and their relatively lower wages initially earned upon arriving in the United States.

In Riverside, in the postwar period, the Latino community in neighborhoods such as Arlanza and Northside increased. By the 1970s and 1980s, immigration also started to increase from Central and South America, among other places. With this expansion, many new Latino-owned businesses, as well as entrepreneurs, educators, civil servants, and civic leaders emerged. The following presents just a few of the countless Latino businesses and professionals during the postwar period.

One early Latino-owned business still operating in Arlanza is Mars Barbershop. The barbershop was established by long-time community member, Mars Macias, in a former Camp Anza building. Mars Barbershop continues to operate out of its original location on Cypress Avenue. For over four decades, Macias has been not just a barber in Arlanza, he has been *the* barber in the community: “Everyone seems to know Mars, and he has cut the hair of most of the men in the neighborhood for over 40 years. His barbershop is located in what is believed to be the Camp Anza finance office building.”¹⁷⁶

Figure 61 Mars Macias and Mars Barbershop, Cypress Avenue, Arlanza



Source: Teurlay, *Riverside's Camp Anza and Arlanza*, 2008, p. 123, and Google Earth

In the postwar period, the former Camp Anza was home to another successful Latino-owned business, Leo and Mela's Market. In 1951, Leo Thomas Lueras and his wife Mela opened the grocery market in a converted Camp Anza barracks building. The young couple adapted a portion of the building for their family home, and used the front portion for their store. With Arlanza's residential settlement expanding dramatically, the store thrived, quickly becoming a neighborhood institution. The store also served as Arlanza's first US Post Office substation. In 1960, Leo and Mela expanded their shop into a new building at 8041 Cypress Avenue. Born in 1924 in New Mexico, Leo Lueras was raised in Los Angeles, where he met and married his wife Mela. The young couple moved to Riverside in 1948.¹⁷⁷ In the 1950s, Leo and Mela expanded their work into real estate, initially acquiring investment properties, then establishing a highly success real estate company, Leo T. Lueras Real Estate. The Lueras couple became well known as real estate professionals and developers as well as community leaders in Riverside. Leo served as a commissioner of the Arlanza Fire Department, chairperson of the Riverside Urban Redevelopment Board, and as a senior member of the Riverside Board of Realtors. He also founded the Business Association of Arlanza.

Figure 62 Mela and Leo Lueras, at their Arlanza real estate office, ca. 1960 (top); Leo and Mela's Market, Cypress Avenue, Arlanza (bottom)



Source: Teurlay, *Riverside's Camp Anza and Arlanza*, 2008, p. 118

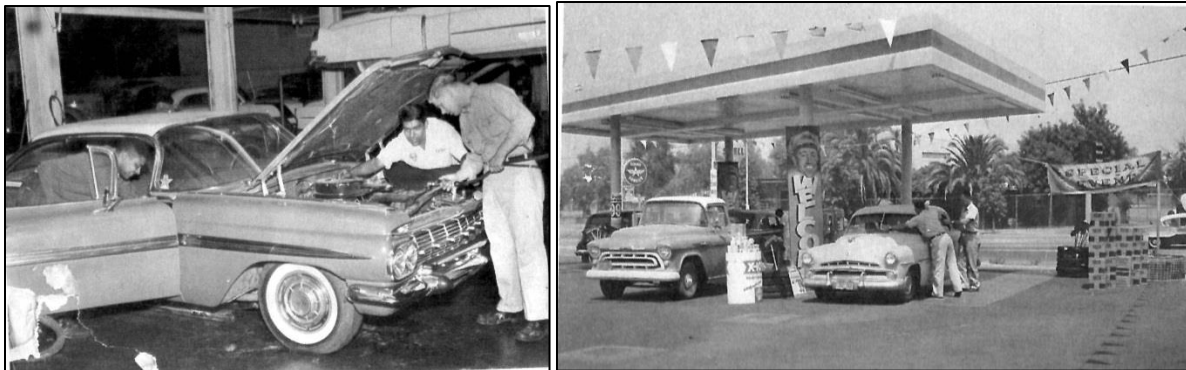
In the early 1950s, Eastside native and World War II veteran John Martin Sotelo established the Victoria Shell Station and Victoria Towing Company at 14th Street and Victoria Avenue (now an Arco Gas Station, with the original building and service island extant). For nearly 50 years, Sotelo managed the gas station and towing company, which he expanded in a facility on Prospect and Vine, until his retirement in 2004. Sotelo also became the first Latino business owner to join the “Jaycees,” or Junior Chamber of Commerce in Riverside (Sotelo is described in more detail below).

Another long-time Latino-owned business in postwar Riverside was Carlos’s Market.¹⁷⁸ Owned and operated by Jesus (Jess) Carlos, the shop occupied the property at 2993 Fourteenth Street. For a number of years, the Carlos family lived in the attached residence. Born in Zacatecas in 1911, Jess Carlos moved to the United States in 1917. By the postwar period, Carlos and his family had settled in Riverside, where he purchased the supermarket.

Prior to his ownership, the property had been occupied by Ferias Market and Ramirez Market. Carlos’s Market carried Mexican staples and specialties, such as dried chili pods and *pan dulce*. Also active in civic affairs, Carlos was the first Mexican-American elected to serve as the president of the Community Settlement Association. Between 1961 and 1968, he served as a member of the City’s Parks and Recreation Commission.¹⁷⁹

In Casa Blanca, another long-time establishment since 1950 is Leon’s Mexican Restaurant (7778 Evans Street), a grocery store and restaurant run by Richard Leon and his family. Another staple in Casa Blanca was the Ahumada Market and Restaurant, originally located on Madison Street.

Figure 63 John Martin Sotelo and the Victoria Shell Station and Victoria Auto Towing, ca. 1960



Source: Courtesy of Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

Among the many Latino-owned businesses in the postwar period, one that became a community-wide institution is Zacatecas Café. Founded in 1963 by Oscar and Josephine Medina, the café was originally located at the corner of Park and University Avenues. The café quickly became a favorite with the Latino community and an important gathering place not only for meals and celebrations, but for community organizations, political meetings, and other gatherings. In 1979, famed *New Yorker* writer Calvin Trillin praised Zacatecas Café as offering some of the best Mexican food in the United States.

In 1985, Zacatecas Café moved to 2472 University Avenue, where it remained for over twenty years. In 2016, Zacatecas Café moved to its current location at 3767 Iowa Street. The café continues to be run by the Medina family.

In the professional services industry, one entrepreneur who turned a home-run business into a half-century old institution in Riverside is Richard Leivas.¹⁸⁰ Born in 1933, Leivas’s mother came to the United States from Mexico in the 1920s, his father was a second-generation American of Mexican

heritage from Blythe, Arizona. In 1951, at the age of 17, Leivas convinced his parents to allow him to volunteer with the US Army Airborne division. His parents agreed, and Leivas joined the army just as the Korean War was entering its second year. In 1952, after volunteering to serve, Leivas arrived in Inchon, Korean, where he advanced to the position of Battalion Ammunition Sergeant.

After returning to the United States, Leivas settled in Riverside in 1956. He attended college through the GI Bill and began an extended career in the grocery business. At the same time, Leivas had become adept at tax return preparation. After starting out by helping friends and family with their tax returns, Leivas quickly built up a clientele throughout Riverside, San Bernardino, and Colton. In 1956, Leivas started a tax return preparation service out of his home, with his 13-year-old daughter Susan assisting and learning the business.

The family business flourished and expanded into one of the most established tax preparation and bookkeeping companies in Riverside. Leivas's daughter Susan, who still runs the business in Riverside, has also served as the treasurer of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Figure 64 Zacatecas Café (left) and owners Oscar and Josephine Medina (right), circa 1970



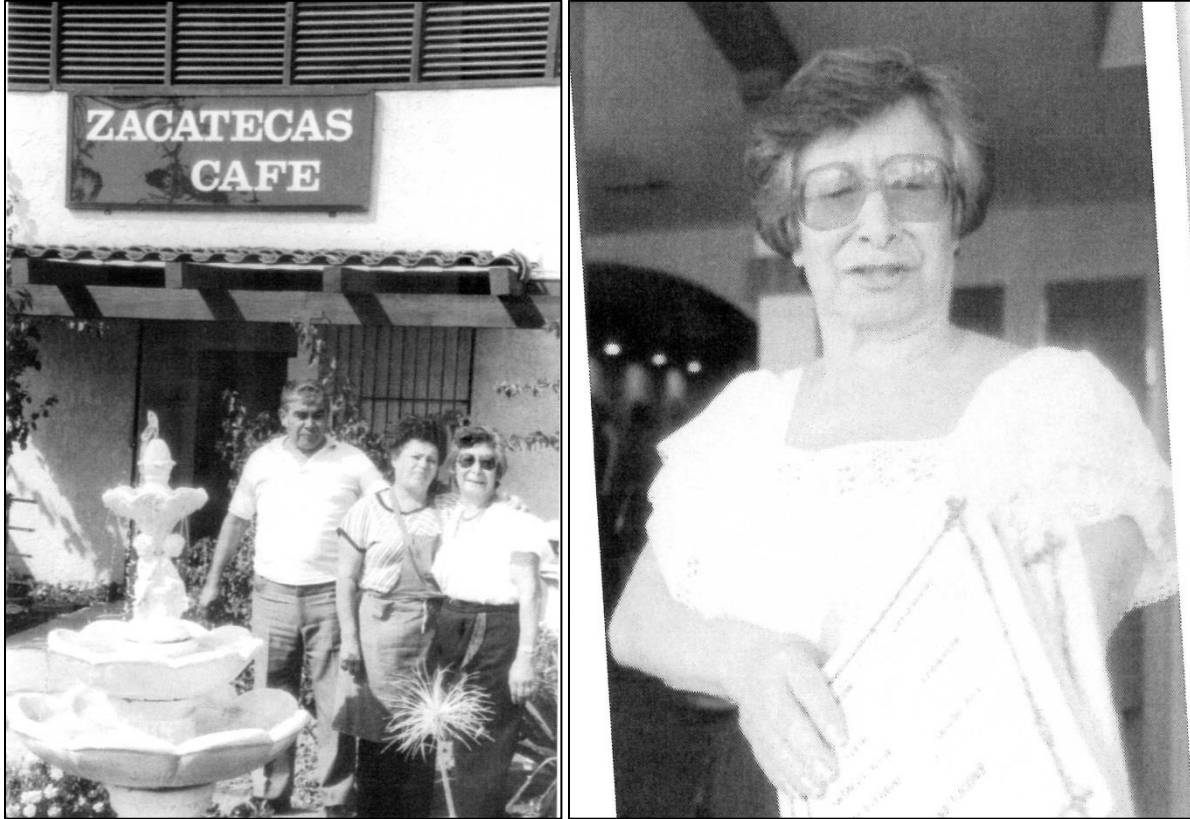
Source: *Riverside Press Enterprise*, 24 April 2013

Figure 65 Jess Carlos (left); Huell Howser, Raymond Buriel, and Eusebia Buriel at Zacatecas Café, 2007 (right)



Source: Riverside Co. Mexican-American Historical Society & "Road Trip with Huell Howser," 2007

Figure 66 Oscar and Josephine Medina, with Josephine's sister Olga, Zacatecas Café (left); Josephine Medina (right)



Source: Courtesy of Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

Spotlight on: Professor Eugenio Cota-Robles

One of the earliest Latino faculty members at UC Riverside was Eugenio Cota-Robles. Born in 1926, Cota-Robles was the son of Mexican parents, both teachers, who came to the US during the Mexican Revolution. After graduating with a degree in biology, Cota-Robles joined the UC Riverside faculty in 1958. Cota-Robles remained active in social issues, working for UC Riverside's Educational Opportunities Program to identify ways to increase Latino enrollment. In 1968, Cota-Robles and UC Riverside professor Carlos Cortés helped design the university's Chicano Studies program. Cota-Robles later worked in the Office of the President of the University of California.

Figure 67 "Chicano of the Month: Eugenio Cota-Robles," Yearbook 1967, *El Chicano Newsletter*

EL CHICANO

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CHICANO OF THE MONTH



Eugenio Cota-Robles

can-American youth, he helped organize the Citizens Committee for Justice, and argued before the state Assembly for stricter regulations on police use of weapons. He has been involved in the G.I. Forum for a number of years, and now serves as the president of the Riverside chapter.

The project closest to Dr. Cota-Robles' heart is one which he helped start and now directs, the Educational Opportunities Program at UC Riverside. "I looked at the list of graduating seniors," he recalls, "and noticed there weren't many with Spanish surnames. I decided we had to do something about that."

Due to efforts such as Cota-Robles', enrollment of disadvantaged minority students will have more than tripled in the past several years. Special counseling, tutoring, and preparation programs have been set up to increase the students' chances of success. According to Cota-Robles, opportunities for Chicano students are becoming increasingly available at the University. We might add, largely thanks to people like Eugenio Cota-Robles.

Yearbook 67

While making outstanding contributions in his chosen profession, Dr. Cota-Robles has also been active in community affairs. "With my father's outlook and background," he states, "it was natural for me to be concerned with social problems." Always interested in politics, his first full scale involvement came in the 1960 campaign of John Kennedy. He remained active in California Democratic Club affairs, and serves currently as Riverside County Chairman for McCarthy.

Dr. Cota-Robles' involvement in Chicano affairs has been extensive. He has worked on a wide range of problems as a member of the Riverside Community Relations Commission. Following the shooting of a Mexican-American youth,

"Something happened to me back in the second grade that's always kind of bugged me." A shy smile; a "what the hell" shrug. "They changed my first name from Eugenio to Eugene. I guess Eugenio was too much for them. They had to make it Anglo." A shaking of the head. "You know," they do that to a lot of Mexican-Americans.

In Mexico, both Cota-Robles' parents had been teachers, so education was always encouraged in his home. Following a stint in the Navy during World War II, he attended college with the assistance of the G.I. Bill. Although his father wanted him to be a dentist, Cota-Robles was more interested in biology and decided to follow his own wishes. His choice proved correct; since 1958 he has been a professor of biology at the University of California at Riverside.

Eugenio Cota-Robles was born in Arizona in 1926, the ninth of eleven children. His youth was spent in poverty, not uncommon in the days of depression. His parents came to the United States during the Mexican Revolution. "My father," says Cota-Robles, "was a contradiction -- Catholic revolutionary." Somewhat typically, relationships in the large family were close. Spanish was spoken in the home; English was learned in the school.

Source: *El Chicano*, Yearbook 1967 (UC Riverside Extension)

Spotlight on: Professor John Raymond Buriel

Dr. John Raymond Buriel was a pioneering scholar and professor of psychology and Chicano Studies at Pomona College. Born in 1948, he was born and raised in the Eastside neighborhood. His mother Eusebia came to Riverside in 1922 and worked in citrus packinghouses for many years. At the age of 20, Dr. Buriel enlisted in the US Marine Corps and served in Vietnam. After returning to Riverside, with help from the GI Bill, Buriel completed bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees at UC Riverside. In 1977, Buriel joined Pomona College for what was initially a two-year appointment. In 2008, he recounted that "I figured this will pay for the bills for two years while I get some publications. [Campus administration ultimately] said, 'This is what we had always been wanting for Chicano Studies. Why don't you stay and we'll make you a tenure-track professor in Chicano Studies, the first one.'"¹⁸¹

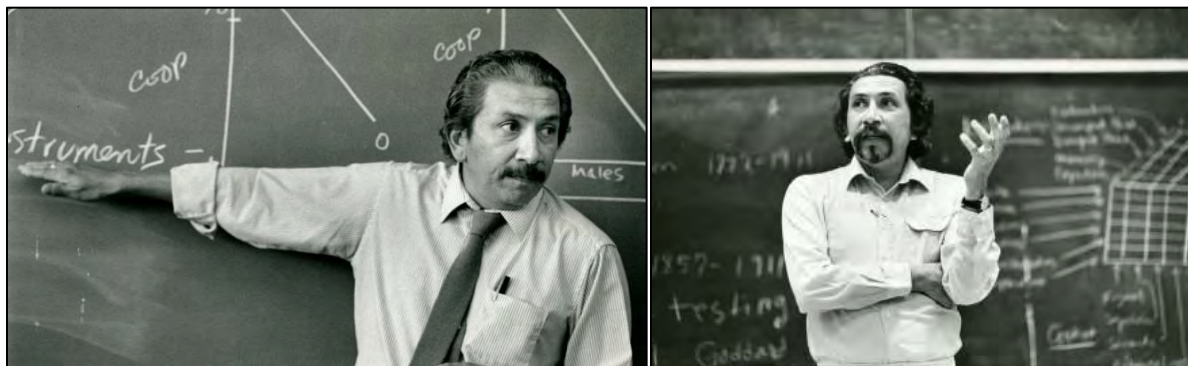
For the next 39 years, Dr. Buriel served on the faculty of Pomona College, becoming a pioneer in the field of Chicano psychology and behavioral sciences. On 21 June 2017, Dr. Buriel passed away after a battle with cancer. In its tribute to Dr. Buriel upon his death, Pomona College wrote:

A beloved mentor and inspiring educator...Buriel was a two-time recipient of the Pomona College Wig Distinguished Professorship Award for Excellence in Teaching in 1991 and 2007. ...He was among the earliest and most ardent advocates for diversity initiatives at Pomona College, serving on a number of committees and task forces and establishing himself as an indispensable mentor to diverse groups of faculty, staff and students.¹⁸²

In a tribute published in *The Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, William Perez described the contributions of "trailblazing researcher, teacher and mentor" Raymond Buriel:

Dr. Raymond Buriel made significant contributions to the study of acculturation and adjustment of Mexican immigrant families, with a special emphasis on the characteristics of immigrant students that are conducive to academic success. His seminal and widely cited publications on the psychological development of children who serve as language and cultural brokers for their families were among the first to illustrate the myriad of developmental assets of immigrant students. Buriel's reputation as a mentor and advocate for countless undergraduate students, graduate students, and early career scholars was legendary. Affectionately referred to as "Papa Buri" by his Latinx undergraduate students, his legacy will continue to be felt in psychology and education. Many of his students now hold academic, research, policy, and administrative positions in major institutions and are leaders in their fields.¹⁸³

Figure 68 Dr. Raymond Buriel, Pomona College



Source: Pomona College, 2017

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Subtheme #3: Latinos in the Military

“We proved something during [WWII]. We worked together, Mexican-American and Anglo, and we had a nice team. I found out for the first time that I was as good as Anglos.”

—John Martin Sotelo, *Riverside Daily Press*, 15 August 1956

Throughout the United States, Latinos have played a “long and distinguished role in military history, serving in the American Revolution and in every military operation since then.”¹⁸⁴ In World War II, an estimated 500,000 Mexican-Americans served in the conflict.¹⁸⁵ Given the community’s over century-long presence in Riverside, scores of local Latino residents have served in conflicts extending back to World War I. During World War II, as veteran and long-time resident of Arlington Henry Robles recalled, “nearly 94% of those able to serve from Arlington’s Mexican-American population did so, and four men returned as Purple Heart recipients.”¹⁸⁶ This applied throughout the City, as well, as “virtually every Mexican-American family in Riverside had sons in World War II and Korea.”¹⁸⁷

The service and patriotism of Latino veterans has been well documented. Among books exploring the topic are *Legacy Greater Than Words*, based on oral histories with over 400 Latino veterans; *Undaunted Courage: Mexican American Patriots of World War II*, including profiles of 500 veterans; *Among the Valiant: Mexican Americans in WWII and Korea*; and *Piloto: Migrant Worker to Jet Pilot*, about a migrant farm worker who becomes a pilot in the US Air Force. As illustrated in these narratives, Latino heroism was “especially prominent during World War II.”¹⁸⁸ In World War II and other conflicts, numerous Latino veterans returned home with awards for bravery and exemplary service. Many of these Latino veterans were from Riverside.

Figure 69 The Diaz family, Casa Blanca, ca. 1915. Isidro (far left) served as a private in the US Army during World War I

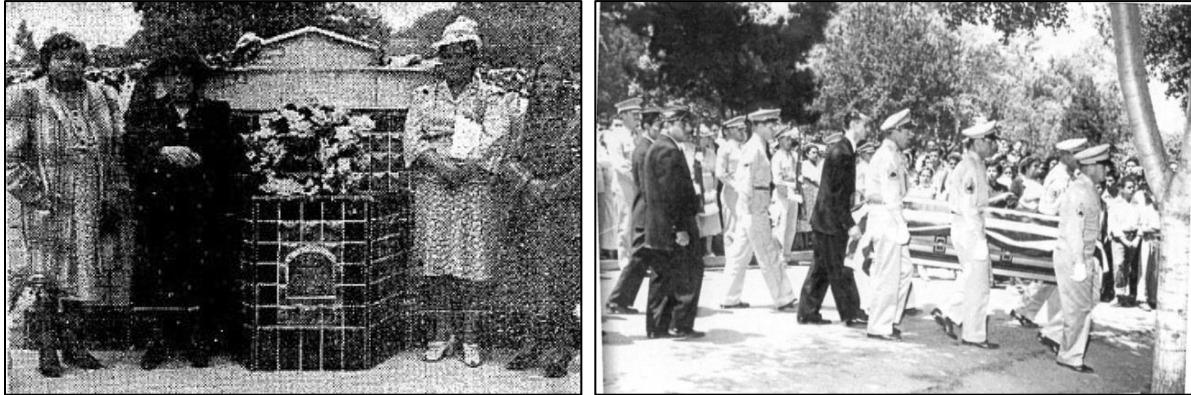


Source: Riverside Public Library and Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

At the same time, Latinos lost children, friends, and family members in the war. Indeed, Latinos “suffered a disproportionate number of casualties” in World War II and other conflicts.¹⁸⁹ In Los Angeles, for example, Latinos represented just one-tenth of the total population but one-fifth of all war casualties.¹⁹⁰ In Riverside, five fallen soldiers from the Eastside neighborhood are memorialized at Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine: Dario Vasquez, Venturo Macias, Gus Cabrera, Manuel Rangel, and

Theodoro Molindo. On July 21, 1945, a memorial for these five soldiers was inaugurated at Lincoln Park in honor of fallen Eastside soldiers. The *Riverside Daily Press* was on hand for the event, along with Gold Star Mothers Maria Mollindo, Elizabeth Rangel, Delfina Vasquez, Inez Cabrera, and Cornelio Macias. Casa Blanca native and Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Ysmael “Smiley” Villegas was among those who died in battle during World War II (described in more detail below). After the war, American Legion posts were named for Dario Vasquez, who died in North Africa in 1943, and Villegas, who died in the Philippines one day shy of his 21st birthday.

Figure 70 Gold Star Mothers in Lincoln Park, 1945 (left); Smiley Villegas, burial at Riverside National Cemetery, 1978 (right)



Source: *Riverside Daily Press*, 21 July 1945 and Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

Serving the United States catalyzed a generation of young Latinos in Riverside—and throughout the country—into political action. Their experiences in World War II empowered veterans to assert their rights for equal treatment:

The distinguished record of military service by Mexican Americans—combined with virulent racism during the war—heightened their drive to protect and expand civil rights. As a result, in the 1940s and 1950s, the Latino struggle for equality expanded rapidly and took multiple forms—from grassroots organizing to litigation. These efforts produced major court victories, progress in Latino electoral influence, and new organizations.¹⁹¹

In terms of the “virulent racism” during this era, two events in Southern California highlight the challenges facing Latinos. The first was the 1942 Sleepy Lagoon case. In this case, a group of 22 Mexican-Americans were unjustly accused, in an argument based on racism, and sentenced for the murder of a youth named José Díaz. As noted in Los Angeles’s *Latino Los Angeles Historic Context Statement*, “During the trial, the press portrayed the defendants as Mexican thugs, while police captain Ed Ayres characterized ethnic Mexicans as biologically criminal and prone to violence.”¹⁹² In 1944, the case was overturned.

The second event involved the notorious Zoot Suit Riots in Los Angeles in 1943. This event spanned ten days in which “thousands of white servicemen and civilians roamed the streets of downtown, physically assaulting and tearing the clothes off zooters.”¹⁹³ Rather than protect the Mexican-Americans who were being attacked, the police arrested more than 500 Mexican-Americans; many who had been attacked were charged with “disturbing the peace or vagrancy.”¹⁹⁴

Fueled by such events and ongoing racism, returning veterans became more assertive and vocal in fighting for equal rights: “Returning Chicano servicemen refused to accept the discriminatory practices that had been the Chicanos’ lot. The GI generation furnished much of the leadership for postwar Mexican American civil rights and political activism.”¹⁹⁵

Latino Heroism and Military Honors

Among Riverside's Latino community, nearly every family had children or relatives who served in the armed forces through the major conflicts of the twentieth century. While numerous veterans served, this section recounts a few stories of veterans from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.¹⁹⁶

Figure 71 High Mass at Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine for the safe return of World War II soldiers, 1945 (left); Victory parade including Latino veterans (right)



Source: Courtesy of Riverside Metropolitan Museum and Riverside Public Library, Shades of Riverside

STAFF SERGEANT SALVADOR J. LARA, WORLD WAR II, MEDAL OF HONOR

A native of Casa Blanca and one of five siblings, Staff Sergeant Salvador J. Lara served in the US Army during World War II. Born in 1920, he attended school in Riverside before enlisting in the US Army in his early twenties. During World War II, Lara served in Unit 602d Ordnance Armament Maintenance Battalion, 45th Infantry Division. In 1944, his division was dispatched to Italy.

During a battle in Aprilia, Italy, Staff Sergeant Lara fought valiantly and was wounded in action. He subsequently passed away in September 1945. His remains are buried at the Lorraine American Cemetery and Memorial in Saint-Avold, Moselle, France.

In March 2014, President Barack Obama posthumously bestowed the Medal of Honor on Staff Sergeant Lara, in recognition of his exemplary performance and valor during a battle in Aprilia between May 27 and 28, 1945. Lara's brother Alfonso accepted the award on his brother's behalf. Lara also received Bronze Star and Purple Heart medals for exceptional service and bravery.¹⁹⁷ The Casa Blanca Branch of the Riverside Public Library is named for Staff Sergeant Lara.

Figure 72 Salvador Lara, circa 1944 (left); Alfonso Lara and President Barack Obama, 2014 (right)



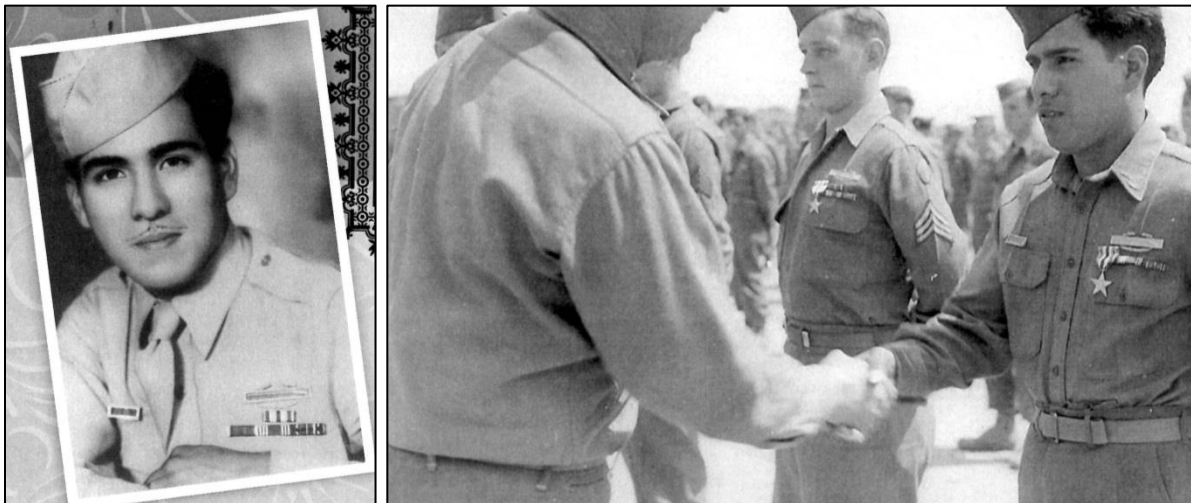
Source: American Battle Monuments Commission and Riverside Co. Mexican-American Historical Society

ANDREW MELENDEZ, SR., WORLD WAR II, SILVER STAR, PURPLE HEART, AND BRONZE STAR

Born in 1924 in Casa Blanca, Andrew Melendrez Sr. attended Casa Blanca Elementary School and Chemawa Junior High School. Orphaned at an early age, raised by an aunt and uncle, Melendrez worked as a migrant farm worker and citrus picker until joining the US Army during World War II. Between 1943 and 1945, Melendrez Sr. served in Company H, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry Division. His division served in France, Germany, England, Belgium, and Holland.¹⁹⁸ Part of his service was spent in Belgium at the Battle of the Bulge, which last for six weeks between December 1944 and January 1945. Melendrez Sr. was awarded the Silver Star, the second highest military honor, for his bravery during this battle. Melendrez Sr. was also honored with a Bronze Star and Purple Heart.

Melendrez's son Andrew, Jr., went on to become a well-known local businessman and respected Riverside City Councilmember, currently representing the 2nd Ward Eastside district. For many years, Councilmember Melendrez has represented the 2nd Ward Eastside District once led by John Sotelo.

Figure 73 Andrew Melendrez, Sr., US Army, World War II



Source: Courtesy of Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

CORPORAL DARIO G. VASQUEZ, WORLD WAR II, BRONZE STAR AND PURPLE HEART

Born in 1919, Dario G. Vasquez and his family moved to Riverside when he was a boy. Corporal Vasquez was one of seven children born to Porfirio and Delfina Vasquez, who had immigrated to the United States in the early 1910s during the Mexican Revolution.¹⁹⁹ After settling in Riverside, the Vasquez family acquired a lot in the Eastside neighborhood, where Porfirio built the family home on 11th Street. In addition to his construction and carpentry skills, Porfirio was a highly skilled gardener and landscaper. Porfirio's son Gilbert recalled that his father preferred working for himself. With his landscaping, gardening, and varied contracting skills in high demand, Porfirio was able to run a successful landscaping business out of his home for many years, serving clients throughout Riverside.

Corporal Vasquez attended Longfellow and Irving Elementary Schools and University Junior High School, where he was class president. By the time he graduated from junior high, the Great Depression was underway, and Vasquez spent his teenage years working to help his family.

In 1941, three months prior to Pearl Harbor, Vasquez enlisted in the US Army. His younger brother Gilbert was just eight years old at the time. In December 1941, Gilbert recalled his brother coming home for a visit after completing basic training. It was 7 December 1941. Gilbert recalled that Vasquez was outside washing his car, listening to the radio, when the announcement came that all enlisted men should report for service. Vasquez went inside and got ready, and the family drove him to the train station in Colton to say goodbye.

Once Corporal Vasquez was deployed in Europe, the family was able to track his whereabouts through letters home. His division spent time in Ireland before being deployed to North Africa. His unit, the 1st Armored Division 6th Infantry, was fighting German troops to protect the Suez Canal. Less than two years after enlisting, on 2 April 1943, Corporal Vasquez was killed in fierce fighting against the Germans. Word of his death arrived a month later, and it would take many years for the family to learn where he was laid to rest. His burial place and memorial are located in Tunisia, at the North African American Cemetery in Carthage.

For his valor and bravery in battle, Corporal Vasquez received the Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, American Defense Service Medal, American Campaign Medal, European-African-Middle East Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal, and Combat Infantryman Badge.

Figure 74 Corporal Dario Vazquez (left); at the gardens of the family home (right), ca. 1941



Source: Courtesy of Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

YSMAEL “SMILEY” VILLEGAS, MEDAL OF HONOR, AND DARIO VILLEGAS

Born just one year apart, in March 1924 and June 1925, Ysmael (better known as “Smiley”) and Dario Villegas were natives of Casa Blanca. The Villegas family roots in Riverside extend back to 1910, when the family patriarch arrived at the age of 12. A native of Michoacan, Mexico, Villegas had come to the United States to escape the unrest of the Mexican Revolution. He earned a living as a picker in the citrus groves and as a musician in a local band. In the early 1940s, Dario and Smiley enlisted in the US Army and left Riverside to serve in World War II. After training at Camp Roberts, the two brothers departed for the Philippines.

On 20 March 1945, Smiley Villegas was killed in the battle of Luzon in the Philippines, the day before his 21st birthday and only six months prior to the end of the war. The details of his death reflected extraordinary valor and bravery:

On March 20, 1945 his unit was in a forward position when they clashed with a strongly entrenched unit of the Japanese Army. Move from man to man, while under scathing and direct fire, he encouraged his men to drive forward. Smiley took the initiative himself and in a rapid succession made direct frontal attacks on six fox holes containing Japanese gunners.

He was on his way to the sixth [fox hole] when a hail of enemy bullets killed him. Inspired by his gallantry, his men gained the crest of the heavily defended hill and swept the Japanese from the field.²⁰⁰

For his heroism, Villegas received the Congressional Medal of Honor. He became the first Riverside County recipient of this honor. In 1949, based on his mother’s request, Smiley Villegas was brought home from the Philippines

in a flag-draped casket guarded by a military escort. The body lay in state at the Casa Blanca Elementary School Auditorium. A rosary was said for Smiley at a memorial service held in the school auditorium with family and friends remaining with his body throughout the night. Saturday morning his body was taken to St. Anthony’s Catholic Church, in Casa Blanca, for a high requiem mass. The forty-man detail included a 24-man honor guard, a seven-man firing squad, a three-man color guard, and six staff sergeants carrying Smiley’s body to the grave.

Smiley’s friends and school classmates were named by the Villegas family as honorary pallbearers. They were Modesto Escalera, Marcelino Macias, Eleuterio Medina, Fred Garcia, Felix Negrete, Tony Castro, Andrew Melendrez, Sr., and Augustine Flores.²⁰¹

Villegas was initially interred at Olivewood Cemetery in Riverside. In 1978, the US Army asked the family if they would permit Villegas’s remains to be interred as the first soldier laid to rest in Riverside’s National Cemetery. The family agreed, and the service took place on 11 November 1978.

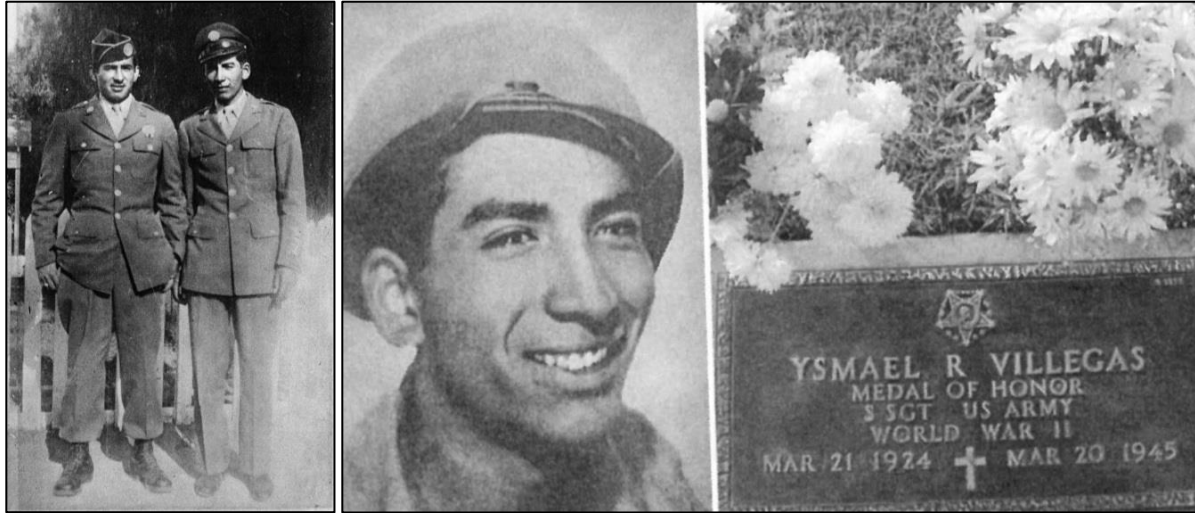
In addition to the Villegas grave site in the National Cemetery, Villegas’s exemplary service and sacrifice are memorialized for a school, a park and recreational fields, and an American Legion Post carrying his name. A mural of Villegas survives at Villegas Park in Casa Blanca. In 1995, a bronze statue of Villegas was unveiled in downtown Riverside. In 2004, the City of Riverside named Smiley Villegas’s birthday, March 21st, as Staff Sergeant Ysmael Villegas Day.

Following the war, Dario returned to Casa Blanca. He recalled the neighborhood as having grown busier and more populous, as new residents continued to arrive in Casa Blanca. Braceros settled in the neighborhood with their families. At the time, most of the residents of Casa Blanca were farm workers. Dario recalled that it was very difficult for Mexican-Americans to obtain jobs in any field other than agriculture, due to discrimination. For his part, Dario enjoyed participating on the Casa

Blanca Aces baseball team, “the only team in the history of Riverside to be undefeated.”²⁰² Upon leaving the army, Dario worked in civil service at San Bernardino Norton Air Force Base, a position he held for 35 years until retiring.²⁰³

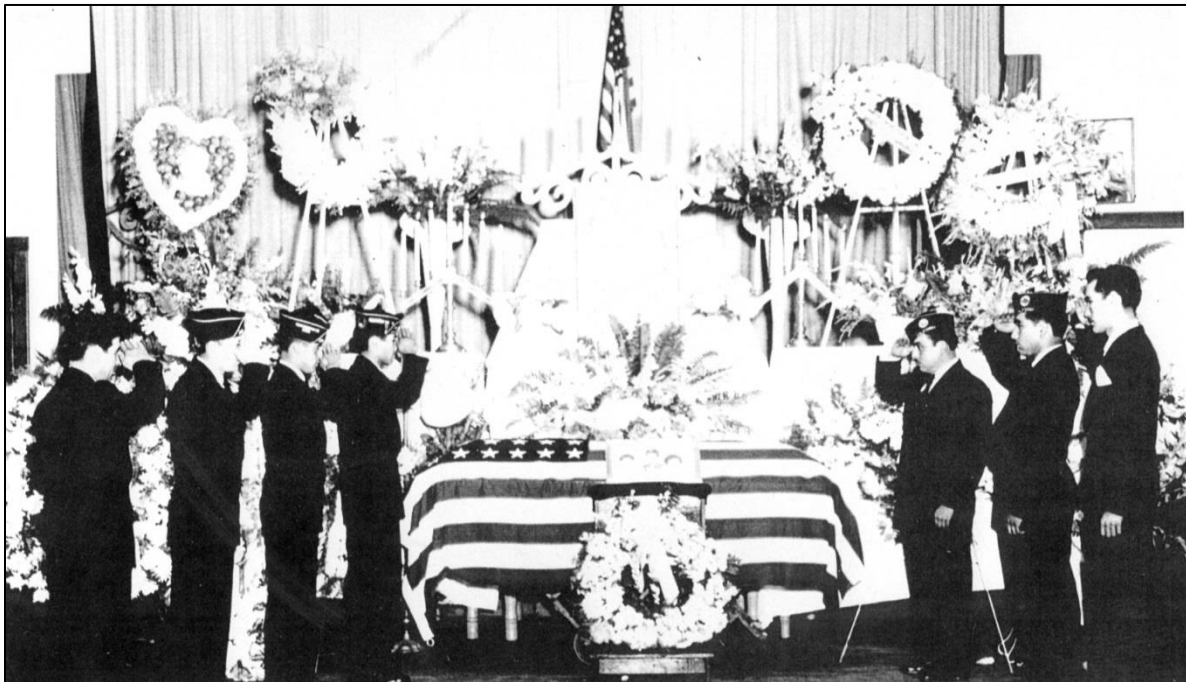
While Dario was also a decorated World War II veteran, he focused his efforts through his lifetime on securing and memorializing his brother’s legacy. In the 1990s, the family succeeded in commissioning a memorial and bronze statue of Smiley at Riverside City Hall. Dario Villegas passed away in March 2009.

Figure 75 Dario and Smiley Villegas, circa 1942 (left); Staff Sergeant Villegas gravestone, Riverside National Cemetery (right)



Source: Riverside Metropolitan Museum and Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

Figure 76 Memorial service for Staff Sergeant Villegas, Casa Blanca School Auditorium, 1949



Source: Courtesy of Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

SERGEANT JESUS S. DURAN, VIETNAM WAR, MEDAL OF HONOR AND BRONZE STAR

One Riverside youth who enlisted to serve in the US Army in the Vietnam War was Eastside resident Sergeant Jesus S. Duran. Born in 1948, Duran was a native of Juarez, Mexico, the sixth of twelve siblings born to Librada and Crescencio Duran, Sr.

After moving to the United States when Duran was a boy, the family settled in Riverside's Eastside neighborhood in 1963. Duran attended North High School and, in 1968, was married in a ceremony at the famed Mission Inn. That same year, Duran joined the US Army's Company E, 2nd Battalion.

For his heroism in the Vietnam War, the Medal of Honor was bestowed on Duran posthumously by President Barack Obama. In the award bestowed to Duran's daughter, Tina Duran-Ruvalcaba, in his honor, Duran was praised by President Obama for his "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty":

Specialist Four Jesus S. Duran distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving as an acting M-60 machinegunner in Company E, 2d Battalion, 5th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) during combat operations against an armed enemy in the Republic of Vietnam on April 10, 1969.

Specialist Four Duran's extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.

After returning from the war, Duran worked as a corrections officer at a juvenile detention center, "dedicating personal time to mentoring youths."²⁰⁴ Duran passed away in 1977 at the age of 28. Survived by son Jesus Jr. and daughter Tina, Duran is buried at Olivewood Memorial Park in Riverside.

Figure 77 Jesus S. Duran, circa 1968; Duran's daughter Tina and President Barack Obama, 2014



Source: Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

4.3 Theme #3: Making a Life

Since the earliest years, Latino neighborhoods in Riverside have forged their own distinctive social, religious, and cultural groups and organizations. This included everything from meeting halls and club buildings, churches, parks and recreational spaces. Resourcefulness was key, as available spaces were adapted and used by many different groups. Early Latino residents of Arlington, for example, recalled transforming dirt courtyards into festive sites for parties, as well as appropriating a building on McKenzie and Andrew Streets for “wedding receptions and Army send-off parties.”²⁰⁵ Also in Arlington, a small field at Indiana Avenue and Van Buren Streets became known as “The Diamond” and provided a popular space for baseball games.

As civic and institutional services and buildings were added in Latino and ethnic communities, these spaces provided important venues for cultural and community events, parties, and political meetings. New institutions added in the 1920s such as churches and schools—even as they reflected the era of segregation—ultimately benefited the community and fostered cultural and social life.

In his groundbreaking study of citrus workers in nearby Corona, scholar José Alamillo noted a similar pattern for Mexican-Americans in that town:

In spite of the hardships of life in this single-industry town, Mexican men and women challenged, transformed, and expanded the arena of leisure for their own purposes. Leisure spaces included saloons, pool halls, baseball clubs, churches, Cinco de Mayo festivals, and movie theaters. Employers, city officials, and social reformers all made concerted efforts to control the lives of working men and women in the community, including how and where they spent their leisure time. Despite these efforts, Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans used certain leisure activities to build ethnic and worker solidarity and forge relations with employers, city officials, and Anglo residents to achieve greater power in the community.²⁰⁶

The following sections explore three areas of Making a Life: (1) Religion and Spirituality; (2) Recreation and Sports; and (3) Cultural Development. Limited information is available on some of these topics; as additional information becomes available, through research or collection of oral histories, these sections can be expanded as needed.

Subtheme #1: Religion and Spirituality

As noted in the 2015 study, *Latinos in Twentieth Century California*:

The Latino experience of religion and spirituality in California over the course of the twentieth century has been varied and nuanced. Though the majority of Latinos to this day are Catholic, it is not the only religion practiced by the different nationalities that make up the community. Mainline Protestantism, as well as more evangelical and charismatic denominations, has attracted Latinos.²⁰⁷

This diversity of faith is reflected in Riverside. While Catholicism was embraced by a majority of Latinos, a number of other faiths and churches have also contributed to spiritual, social and cultural life. This religious diversity was a natural byproduct of settlement patterns, which assembled followers of many different faiths, resulting in numerous churches. Residences and meeting halls often served as the first home to religious institutions. Through the first half of the twentieth century, it became common for each neighborhood to have its own church, and usually several.

Spanish Colonial Revival, Mission Revival, and Gothic Revival were the predominant architectural styles of church buildings.

Religious groups and churches that served the Latino community in Riverside typically served a multitude of purposes. Churches and parish halls offered a place to gather for worship, but they were also adapted for a range of community needs. They became spaces for community meetings, fundraisers, dances, movie nights, and gathering places for the PTA and charitable organizations. In terms of cultural life, churches, parish halls, and church grounds became the sites for significant annual events, including Easter celebrations, Cinco de Mayo and 16th de Septiembre festivals, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and posadas and Christmas-related events.

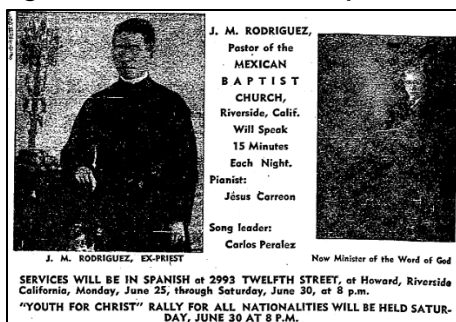
While the following sections focus on long-term churches that are represented in the available literature, Latino neighborhoods throughout Riverside are sure to have had additional religious institutions that served their communities in a similar fashion. Subsequent research, including oral histories with community members, will continue shedding light on groups, organizations, and churches that contributed to religious and spiritual life in Riverside's Latino community.

Churches in Latino and African-American Neighborhoods

In the Eastside neighborhood, the extraordinary number of religious buildings was a result of the religious and cultural diversity of its residents. Christian denominations included Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, and various evangelical sects. The church was a major source of inspiration among Latino and ethnic communities, often serving as a focal point for social life and support in segregated communities. Some of the churches serving the Eastside community included Saint James Church of God in Christ (2843 Eleventh Street), Saint Ignatius Church (4482 Grove Avenue), and the Iglesia Apostolica Church (2995 Cottage Street).

Other religious institutions located in Casa Blanca included a church constructed at 7442 Diamond Street in 1933. Still in operation, the building served initially as a Pentecostal Mission. Over the years, the church name changed to the Church of God of Prophecy. With services offered in Spanish, the church was started by early Casa Blanca residents Jose Jimenez and his wife Concepción. Through the years, the Jimenez couple was widely known as leaders of the Church of God of Prophecy, preaching throughout California and in Mexico. The couple had 10 children, three of whom followed them into church service as bishops and ministers.²⁰⁸ Other Casa Blanca churches included the Mexican Presbyterian Church (7539 Emerald Street) and Mexican Baptist Church (7247 Marguerita Avenue), both of which had active congregations. In the postwar period, the Friendship Baptist Church offered services behind a residence at 7414 Diamond Street. Among several Catholic parishes in the City, Arlington was home to St. Thomas Catholic Church on Jackson Street and Magnolia Avenue (the building has since been replaced and is no longer extant).

Figure 78 The "Mexican Baptist" Church, Eastside, 1945



Source: *Riverside Daily Press*, 23 June 1945

By the postwar period, Riverside was home to two Our Lady of Guadalupe Churches: the shrine in Eastside (though officially known as Saint Francis of Assisi until 1957) and a church in Arlington on Indiana Avenue, which offered all services in Spanish.

Latinos in neighborhoods throughout Riverside established and participated in numerous centers for religious life, both through formal institutions and smaller, community- and home-based centers. In this way, churches contributed not just to the spiritual life but also the social and cultural life of parishioners.

Over the years, the role of the church in Latino society shifted. In the postwar period, more second and third generation Latinos more easily identified “with American culture rather than the culture of their home country,” or their parents or grandparents home country.²⁰⁹ The churches in Riverside adapted to these changes, creating special events, such as dances and movie nights, and support groups for teenaged boys and girls.

In the 1960s, another shift took place during the Chicano Civil Rights Movement: young Chicanos and activists were American and felt American, but they also began to revisit and embrace all aspects of their heritage, including religious customs and traditions, which became “a point of pride and means of forging a unique identity.”²¹⁰

CALVARY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

In addition to Saint Anthony’s Church (described below), an early long-term religious institution in Casa Blanca was Calvary Presbyterian Church, located at 3187 Madison Street. Leading the Calvary Presbyterian Church for many years was director and Pastor Alejandro Trujillo. Ordained as an elder of the Presbyterian Church in 1924, Trujillo began at Calvary Presbyterian Church in 1936. In 1944, he was ordained as a reverend, in a ceremony led by Reverend Paul L. Warnshuis, “superintendent of Mexican churches.”²¹¹ From 1921 until well into the postwar period, the Calvary Presbyterian Church and school remained an important institutional anchor and source of community activities and support (the building has since been demolished). In 1938, Calvary Presbyterian Church was expanded to include a House of Neighborly Service.

One of the young residents mentored by Reverend Trujillo who followed him into the ministry was Casa Blanca native Tony Hernandez.²¹² Hernandez attended school during the Great Depression. With the encouragement of Trujillo, Hernandez completed his education in Riverside schools, then applied to and was accepted at the Chicago Theological Seminary, from which he graduated after four years of study. Upon his ordination, in the early 1940s, Hernandez was appointed pastor of a Spanish-speaking congregation at the First Presbyterian Church of San Bernardino. In addition to this mentorship of young congregants, Reverend Trujillo participated in initiatives to bring together congregations of color in Riverside. At an “interracial breakfast” in June 1945, Reverend Trujillo delivered an address at the Eastside Second Baptist Church at Twelfth and Howard Streets.

Latinos in the Catholic Church

Extending back to the Spanish era, the principal religion among the Latino community was Catholicism. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries throughout California, the Spanish established Catholic missions not only to convert Native Americans but also to assert their political power and military presence. Missions became local engines for economic growth through the Spanish era, until secularization in the 1830s during California’s Mexican era.

The role of the Catholic Church underwent another shift, following the Mexican-American War and California’s entrance into the United States. With more Anglo-Americans arriving in California, early

Mexican-American natives of California, or *Californios*, slowly became a marginalized minority group. Because the Catholic Church “made little effort to minister to Mexican-Americans” during this period, this community “maintained a separate religious identity,” with traditional customs, often practiced in homes or makeshift neighborhood sanctuaries.²¹³

In the twentieth century, the pressure was building for the Catholic Church to address the increasing diversity of its congregations. In the Latino community throughout California, congregants requested services that more closely reflected their heritage and religious traditions, including services in Spanish. Often times, however, these requests were rebuffed: “In the early part of the century, as nativism became heightened in the face of increased Mexican immigration, the Church was hesitant to affiliate itself with Spanish-speaking priests out of fear that this would make it appear foreign and therefore undesirable to the Anglo population.”²¹⁴ In this environment, segregation was common.

Even so, the Roman Catholic faith remained the focal point of family and social life for a majority of Riverside Latinos. Religious holidays were celebrated, and people throughout the community marked the major milestones of family life with First Communion, confirmation, and marriages in the church.

In the late nineteenth century, many Catholic parishioners in Riverside attended St. Francis de Sales, extant as of 2018 at 4268 Lime Street. Founded in 1886, St. Francis de Sales is the oldest parish in Riverside.

Figure 79 St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church, Lime Street



Source: Diocese of San Bernardino, 2018

Until the 1920s, Catholic residents of primarily ethnic neighborhoods such as Eastside, Arlington/Arlington Heights, and Casa Blanca, among others, would have to make the trek to St. Francis de Sales by foot, in the days before automobile ownership was the norm or before public transportation was available. Apart from the logistical inconvenience, there were also significant cultural differences in how Catholic Mass was practiced in traditionally Anglo-American and Latin-American congregations.

Within the Latino community, momentum started gathering for new neighborhood churches and services that more closely reflected their religious traditions, customs, and language. From outside the Latino community, discrimination and the wish for segregation provided another factor in the establishment of separate churches.

The 1920s would bring construction of several Catholic churches in Latino neighborhoods: Saint Anthony's Church, dedicated in 1927, and Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine Church, opened in 1929. By the postwar period, another church in the Arlington neighborhood dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe was located at 9398 Indiana Avenue. Through the 1950s, Arlington's Our Lady of Guadalupe had an active congregation, with many yearly festivals and fund raisers and all services in Spanish. The church was led by Pastor Edmund Krolicki for a number of years.

With the opening of Catholic churches in Latino neighborhoods, a host of festivals and celebrations reflective of Mexican traditions started to flourish throughout the City. The yearly feast for Our Lady of Guadalupe was celebrated at multiple locations each December. Spanning several days, these events typically included a great feast of *comida mexicana*, dancing, games, the naming of a royal court, and culminating in high mass. In addition, the churches themselves offered important community spaces for other celebrations, such as Cinco de Mayo, 16th de Septiembre (Mexican Independence Day), and other events. Neighborhood churches also facilitated the establishment of Catholic Youth Organization branches, which offered opportunities for young people for social gatherings and mutual assistance.

Figure 80 Arlington's Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Indiana Avenue, 1953 and 1954



Source: Riverside Independent Enterprise, 11 December 1953 and 12 December 1954

SAINT ANTHONY'S CONGREGATION AND CHURCH, 1924

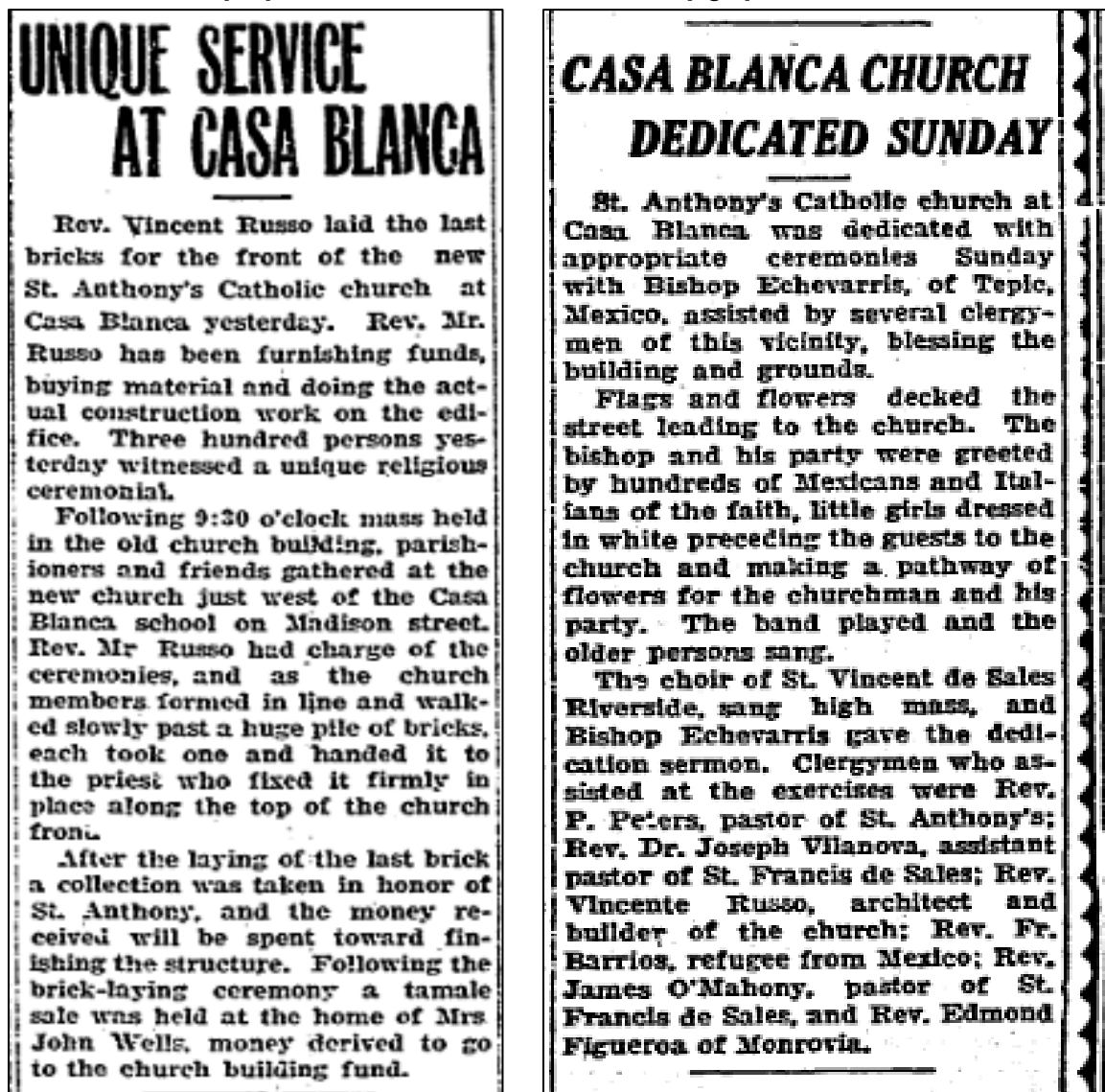
Saint Anthony's Church is one of the oldest surviving churches built for and located within a Latino neighborhood in Riverside. Located at 3056 Madison Street, the congregation was established in 1921. In the next few years, fund raising and drafting of architectural plans were led by Reverend Vincente Russo, with a high degree of community participation. Finally, in 1924, the first brick was

laid for construction of the new Mission-Revival style parish and church. The *Riverside Daily Press* noted the “unique” service celebrating the laying of the church cornerstone:

Three hundred persons yesterday witnessed a unique religious ceremonial. Following...mass held in the old church building, parishioners and friends gathered at the new church just west of the Casa Blanca school on Madison Street. Rev. Mr. Russo had charge of the ceremonies, and as the church members formed in line and walked slowly past a huge pile of bricks, each took one and handed it to the priest who fixed it firmly in place along the top of the church front.²¹⁵

Three years later, on 1 November 1927, Saint Anthony’s Church held its opening mass and became one of Riverside’s earliest Catholic sanctuaries serving a primarily Mexican-American (but also Italian-American) community in Casa Blanca. (The original church was demolished and replaced by the current modern building in 1975-1976.)

Figure 81 *Riverside Daily Press* announcement for laying of St. Anthony’s Catholic Church cornerstone, 1924 (left) and dedication ceremonies, 1927 (right)



Source: *Riverside Daily Press*, 25 February 1924 and 1 November 1927

Dedication ceremonies brought together church leaders from Riverside, Monrovia, and Mexico, as well as the choir of nearby St. Vincent de Sales. To assist in the ceremonies, Bishop Echevarris from Tepic, Mexico travelled to Riverside, “blessing the building and grounds.” Leading St. Anthony’s Church at the time was Reverend Paul Peters. Assisting Peters at the dedication ceremonies were Reverend Dr. Joseph Villanova of St. Francis de Sales, Reverend Vincente Russo; Reverend Father Barrios, “refugee from Mexico,” among others.

Flags and flowers decked the street leading to the church. The bishop and his party were greeted by hundreds of Mexicans and Italians of the faith, little girls dressed in white preceding the guests to the church and making a pathway of flowers for the churchman and his party. The band played and the older persons sang.²¹⁶

From its earliest years, Saint Anthony’s became the spiritual center for Catholic life and practice in Casa Blanca. The location chosen for the church was Madison Street, in the center of the Casa Blanca community. In 1975, the 1923 church was demolished, and a new building constructed.

St. Anthony’s Church also offered residents a more convenient neighborhood venue for family celebrations and ceremonies, such as weddings, first communions, baptisms, and funeral services. Through the first half of the twentieth century, Saint Anthony’s Church became a significant community gathering place for church as well as social events and celebrations, including a yearly Easter festival, Cinco de Mayo festival, youth dances, music performances, and *jamaicas* or charity bazaars, throughout the year. Early parishioners were primarily Mexican-American and Italian-Americans from Casa Blanca.

In the partnerships seen so often in Riverside Latino communities, the parish hosted a wide variety of gatherings and meetings for community organizations. The Catholic Youth Organization held local and regional meetings in the church parish hall, as did the Casa Blanca Improvement League and PTA. In the postwar period, Saint Anthony’s hosted gatherings for youth associations, teenage girls and boys, Las Venturias (for girls) and Los Vagabundos (for boys).

One long-time figure at St. Anthony’s Church who became well respected and engaged in the community was Reverend Luis Grimaldi Balderas. Reverend Balderas led the congregation at St. Anthony’s for a number of years in the postwar period.

Figure 82 Reverend Balderas (second from left), with Atanacio and Francisca Bailón and Herman Gruhn, 1957



Source: Riverside Independent Press, 4 March 1957

Figure 83 Confirmation class of Saint Anthony's Church, Ahumada Market, circa 1921



Source: Courtesy of Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

Figure 84 Saint Anthony's Church under construction, ca. 1925



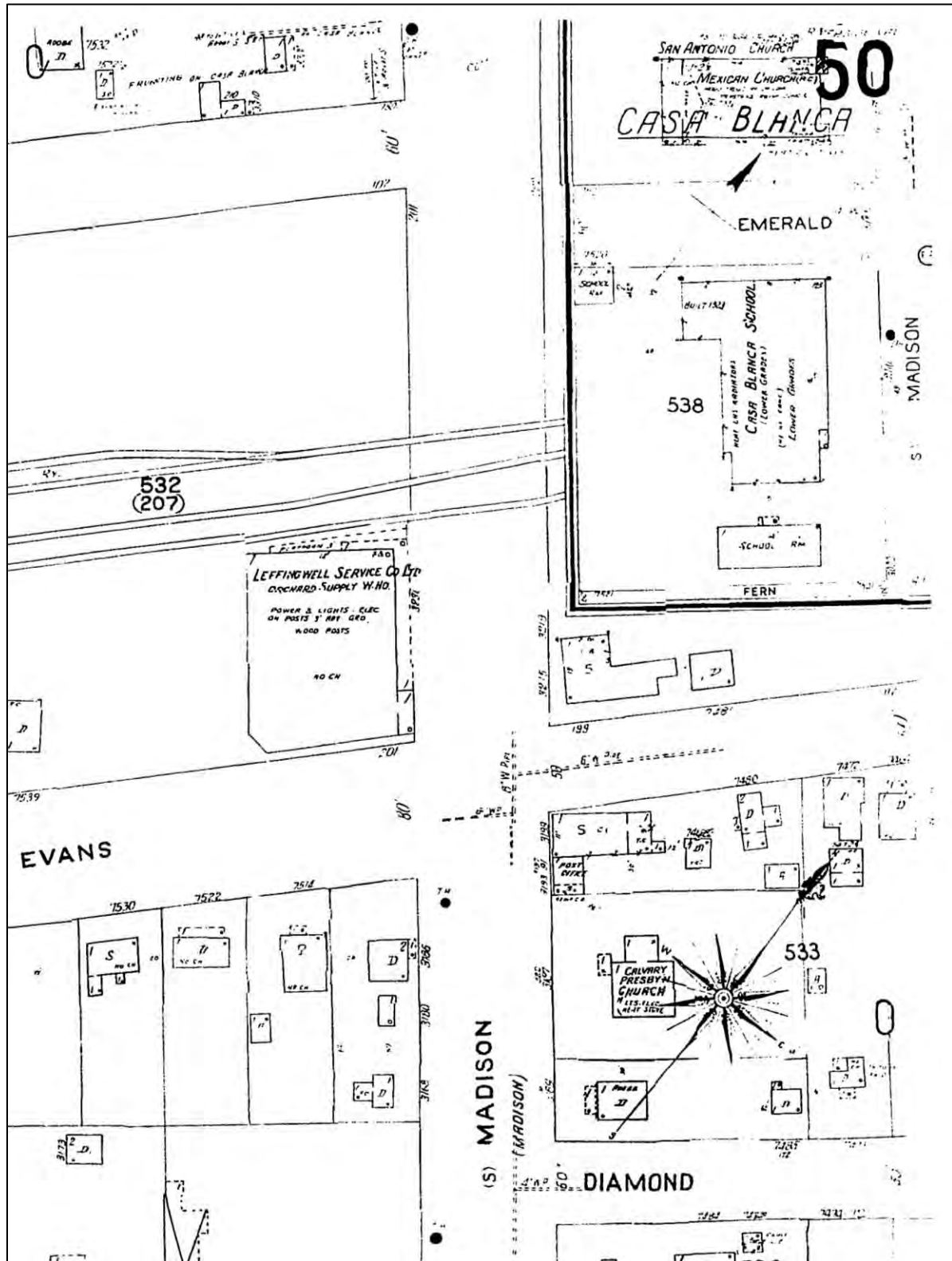
Source: Riverside Metropolitan Museum

Figure 85 Saint Anthony's Church confirmation class, circa 1930



Source: Riverside Public Library, Shades of Riverside

Figure 86 “San Antonio Mexican Church” and Casa Blanca School appear in inset, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1952. Calvary Presbyterian Church is north of Madison and Diamond Streets



Source: Los Angeles Public Library

CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE SHRINE (ORIGINALLY ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI), 1929

The Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine has been a significant center for religious, cultural, and social life for Riverside's Latino community for nearly a century.

Located at 2858 Ninth Street in Eastside, the church broke ground in 1929, after years of lobbying for a sanctuary honoring the Virgen de Guadalupe, patroness of the Mexican people. In 1927, based on community support and the continuing migration of Mexican citizens to Riverside, Los Angeles Bishop John J. Cantwell agreed to establish a Roman Catholic Mission in the Eastside neighborhood.²¹⁷ Based on the wishes of an early donor, the church was originally (officially) named St. Francis of Assisi, though it was best known among congregants as Our Lady of Guadalupe. This name was made official in 1957, when the church was sanctified as a national shrine and pilgrimage site.

One of the earliest steps toward establishing a sanctuary for the Virgen de Guadalupe occurred in 1921. During a visit to Riverside's St. Francis de Sales by Bishop Cantwell, Cantwell "received the women of the parish and blessed a beautiful new statue of 'Our Lady of Guadalupe' for the Mexican people. This statue was recently purchased by the Mexican society."²¹⁸ The statue would subsequently be relocated to Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine, where it remains.

In 1927, permission was granted for construction of the new church, but Bishop Cantwell attached the caveat that parishioners must raise the money (rather than assume a debt) for its construction. The community came together, "raising money by selling food, donations when possible, and Saint Francis de Sales had already volunteered to sponsor the new mission church."²¹⁹ Two years later, in 1929, ground was broken.

In January 1931, as finishing touches were still being completed, the bells of Our Lady of Guadalupe were blessed in a ceremony officiated by Reverend Monsignor Manrique y Zarate, bishop of the diocese of Hueptia, Mexico, and Reverend Father Federico Martinez, pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe.²²⁰ Hundreds of congregants attended the ceremony. In 1957, the church was officially renamed Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine, making it a national and international pilgrimage site. From the earliest days, services were offered in Spanish.

From the earliest days, Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine served a variety of social, cultural, and religious needs for the community. In the postwar period, the parish opened a private school nearby (the school closed in the late 1960s). Starting in 1955, the yearly Fiesta Ranchera event raised funds for the school (though the school is no longer in operation, the yearly Fiesta Ranchera continues).

According to Nati Fuentes, an Eastside native and community leader who worked with the Office of Economic Opportunity, the construction of Our Lady of Guadalupe was a significant event for the Latino community. Prior to the construction of the church, parishioners who attended St. Francis, as Fuentes said,

did not always feel welcome at the church. At some point, some of the members chose to leave the church and took the statue of the Lady of Guadalupe. The statue was kept in a private home until a new church was built and then the statue was taken to the church.²²¹

Fuentes is the daughter of Otilia Morales, from Guanajuato, and Porfirio Fuentes, from Jalisco, Mexico. According to Fuentes, "the family's life revolved around the church and its community."²²²

Figure 87 Construction of Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine, circa 1929



Source: Riverside Metropolitan Museum

Figure 88 Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine



Source: Diocese of San Bernardino, 2018

Among Eastside residents who helped raise funds for construction of Our Lady of Guadalupe was Mrs. Eusebia Vásquez de Buriel, who moved to Riverside with her family in 1922. In 2008, Mrs. Buriel recalled how Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine had been

at the center of her life for over sixty years. She recalled how the Mexican neighbors chipped in to build their own church in the middle of the Depression. ‘We worked real hard to have our church...the people were all poor, worst than we are now, but everything came up real nice, so we are very proud of...that church.’²²³

In 2007, journalist and television personality Huell Howser toured Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine with Eusebia Buriel and her son, Dr. Raymond Buriel, Eastside native and long-time professor of psychology and Chicano Studies at Pomona College. During the tour, Dr. Buriel recounted the story of the church to Howser, explaining how its construction was a community project from the earliest years:

For the longest time, [residents of Eastside] wanted to have their own church in their own community. ...It was very hard but they pulled together and started to build this church on their own. They didn’t take out any loans—the understanding with the Bishop was that it had to be paid for in cash.²²⁴

Women in the community went door-to-door selling food and held jamaicas to raise money for materials. On the weekends, the men would come to work on the church. As Dr. Buriel explained, “The drivers of the trucks who used to drive the workers to the citrus fields used those trucks on the weekend to go the river bed, pick up sand, and bring it back here. And this was how they built everything on their own.”²²⁵

Throughout her life, well into her nineties, Mrs. Buriel continued to come to the church every morning to help prepare for the day.

Figure 89 Huell Howser, at Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine with Raymond and Eusebia Buriel, 2007



Source: Road Trip through California, Riverside, with Huell Howser, 2007

While having a local neighborhood church was an obvious benefit to the community, new churches in Latino neighborhoods also reflected ongoing segregation and discrimination. In the 1920s, one early congregant of St. Francis de Sales was community leader and activist Josephine Lozano. Lozano recalled that, in the early days, “Although we were segregated as to residence, we weren’t

separated in church. All Catholics attended St. Francis de Sales Church. I was furious when [the] Monsignor announced in Mass one Sunday that a new colonia church was erected and that henceforth all Mexicans would attend ‘their’ church!”²²⁶ As she later recalled, Lozano interpreted this to say, “We don’t want you here.”²²⁷ This experience proved formative for Lozano, who became active in politics and civil rights.

In 1938, Reverend Father Joseph R. Nuñez was appointed pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine. One year into his term, Nuñez helped plan a major fundraiser that brought Anglo-American Catholics and residents to Our Lady of Guadalupe for the first time. Held in July 1939, the event was a widely publicized “Mexican Supper,” open to members of the community, with proceeds going to the church’s charitable work in the community. The event was well attended and covered by the *Riverside Daily Press*, who praised the “real Mexican tamales and enchiladas” offered at the supper:

The tamales were especially good and we learned from Father Joseph Nuñez, who was on hand with Señor Quiróz to welcome patrons of the benefit affair, that the padre’s mother, who recently came from Mexico City to visit him, took a hand in their preparation.²²⁸

Attended by many of the City’s Anglo-American civic leaders, the event also offered some of the first glimpses of Our Lady of Guadalupe by members of the City’s Anglo-American community. After dinner, the group stopped in to admire the church’s shrine:

As it was our first visit we were much interested in the altar... In spite of the fact that the church is named for St. Francis of Assisi, the alter honors that favorite patron of all Mexican people, Our Lady of Guadalupe... The little church is lovely in its simplicity and at night the altar was very pretty as it reflected the colored lights surrounding the statue of Our Lady.²²⁹

Figure 90 May 1940 confirmation class at Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine Church



Source: Courtesy of Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

Figure 91 Festival and parade at Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine, ca. 1957



Source: Courtesy of Riverside Metropolitan Museum

Figure 92 Our Lady of Guadalupe Fiesta Ranchera celebration, 1959



Source: Riverside Daily Enterprise, 6 August 1959

Figure 93 Gilbert Reyes and candidates for Sweetheart of 1959, Janet Espinoza, Emelda Castro, and Virginia Rodriguez, Our Lady of Guadalupe Summer Dance



SWEETHEARTS — Gilbert Reyes greets Janet Espinoza, Emelda Castro and Virginia Rodriguez as the girls, candidates for Sweetheart of 1959, launch ticket sale for Saturday night's dance at the parish hall of Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine Catholic Church, 2858 Ninth St. Proceeds will go to further

the parish youth program. Abbe Chavez and his orchestra will play for dancing. Gilbert will be master of ceremonies. There will be Mexican food and refreshments, according to Mrs. Jess Reyes, general chairman.

Source: Riverside Daily Enterprise, 8 July 1959

Subtheme #2: Recreation and Sports

Throughout the twentieth century, Latino men and women throughout California have distinguished themselves in all areas of athletics. As in other aspects of their lives, this required effort and perseverance, not just in terms of training:

Though the Latino presence in sports increased over the course of the twentieth century, as a group, they often faced racism and discrimination. ...Latinos in turn used sports as a way to counteract these negative portrayals and reach success not otherwise available to them. Sports...became a medium for Latinos to prove their worth in the face of racism.²³⁰

In the postwar period, Latino athletes started to have better access to both facilities and professional opportunities. With the emergence of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement, “Latinos demanded more equality on the playing field. In the 1960s and later, they became increasingly recognized as professional players with real talents, and the first professional star players emerged.”²³¹ In the early years, Latinos participated in a wide range of sports, as members of amateur leagues and as competitive athletes. Athletics provided a venue in which Latino athletes could receive recognition for their efforts and achievements. The City’s English-language newspaper routinely publicized news about games and victories of Mexican-American athletes and teams.

Although Latinos still experienced discrimination, it is interesting to note how the English-language press in Riverside covered Mexican-American athletics. In the *Riverside Daily Press*, for example, what stands out is the frequency and level of coverage of Mexican-American teams during an era that was otherwise marked by segregation, rampant discrimination, and repatriation. A review of local newspapers through the 1920s and 1930s, for example, shows numerous articles celebrating the victories of local Latino baseball teams and boxers in a relatively neutral manner. In this way, athletics provided a rare opportunity for Latinos to receive recognition.

The level of coverage, as well as the number of teams and tournaments, for children and adults, also sheds light on how important athletics became for the Latino community. During the first half of the twentieth century, one sport in particular stood out: “Baseball has been called the American game. A religion. For Mexican Americans in the first half of the 1900s, it was that and more. ‘Along with family and religion, baseball was an institutional thread uniting the community.’”²³²

Athletics provided a venue not only for challenging negative stereotypes but also for gaining a range of leadership and management skills. The skills acquired as managers and coaches, for example, easily transferred to other areas of life. Participating in sports, either as spectator or athlete, was also an enjoyable, accessible form of physical activity and socializing. In Riverside, Mexican-American communities organized boxing and baseball leagues, with teams formed with the sponsorship of sports clubs, mutual-aid organizations, and employers, such as the citrus farmers and packinghouses in Riverside. As teams competed, “families and communities often traveled with their teams; this created a method for socialization and community reinforcement.”²³³

Latinos also participated in a wide variety of other sports as part of citywide leagues and school teams as well as in traditional activities and events. One example is *la charrería*, a popular type of rodeo organized by the local charro association. In the early 1950s, the American Legion’s Mexican-American chapter used sports and social clubs to address a rise in gang activity. One successful initiative in this respect was the establishment of *Los Vagabundos* (the Vagabonds), an automobile enthusiast’s club for young men aged 17 to 25. With the leadership of local resident Frank Salazar, among others, *Los Vagabundos* branched out “into baseball, basketball, and community service activities” and spun off two additional clubs, *Los Águilas* (the Eagles) and *Los Drifters*.²³⁴

Figure 94 The LV Brown Packinghouse Baseball Team, Highgrove, 1928



Source: Courtesy of Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

Figure 95 The Carrasco brothers, Henry, Fernando and Sebastian (front row, on the right) and their Eastside Baseball Team, ca. 1935



Source: Courtesy of Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

Figure 96 Press coverage of winning Casa Blanca baseball teams, adult and children's leagues

SPORTS

J. E. TRACK TEAM AT AZUSA SATURDAY

**Howard and Nordenson
Only Casualties;
Strother Ready**

Riverside Junior college yesterday opened preparations for its initial Orange Empire conference dual track and field meet at Azusa Saturday afternoon with the Citrus Union Owls.

In excellent physical condition and nearer mid-season form than in recent history, Coach Bill Neufeld's Bengal outfit is a prime favorite to knock over the Citrusites. It also stands a splendid chance of winning its following dual meets to retain its conference championship.

The local jaycee's chief point winners will open scheduled competition in a confident but not self-satisfied mood, having reaped a golden

CASA BLANCA TIGERS BEAT BATESMEN 4-3

The Casa Blanca Tigers defeated the Bates Sporting Goods nine for the second time Sunday, but it took them 10¹/₂ innings to gain a 4-3 decision. Castorena pitched shut-out ball in nine innings, the Batesmen scoring three runs in the fourth inning. Strickland hurled good ball for the losers.

Two runs in the ninth enabled Casa Blanca to tie the score and they went ahead to win in an extra session. Claremont plays at Casa Blanca next Sunday.

The box score:

	A	B	R	H	E
Pia, cf	6	0	2	0	0
Johnny, lf	5	0	2	0	0
Castorena, p	5	0	1	0	0
Garcia, c	5	1	0	0	0
Rocha, ss	5	0	2	2	2
Sam, 2b	4	1	1	1	1
Rivera, rf	3	0	0	0	0
Scholder, 1b	4	1	2	0	0
Velasquez, 3b	4	1	1	0	0
x Medina	1	0	1	0	0
Totals	42	4	13	3	

CASA BLANCA BOYS WIN CHAMPIONSHIP

Following Wednesday's game, in which it was pitted against Irving school, Casa Blanca emerged as the winner of the championship in the elementary school baseball contest, waged for the past several weeks.

Casa Blanca, coached by Principal M. B. Madden, won 19 straight practice games in the competition. Martin Cortez acted as umpire throughout.

The first game was with Independiente, which lost to Casa Blanca 1 to 0. The second game, with Liberty, also resulted in a win for Casa Blanca, the score being 13 to 3. Irving was defeated Wednesday by a score of 10-2.

Playing for Casa Blanca were the following: Ernesto Romero and Ernesto Reyes, pitchers; Joe Mezola, rf; Jesus Pacheco, lf; Thomas Magdaleno, 1b; Louis Zamora, cf; Terru Hatta and Henry Torres, 2b; Nello Medina and Masho Hatta, 3b; Tony LaRocca, c; Reyes Juarez, Sam Meyola, Joe Romero and Herman Gomez, substitutes.

Source: *Riverside Daily Press*, 7 March 1933 and 1 June 1932

Baseball²³⁵

As noted above, baseball—whether softball, fast pitch, or hardball, for children and adults, men and women—became a focal point for recreation and socializing for the Latino community. A recent study of Mexican-American baseball in the Inland Empire summed up the importance of the sport:

From the early 20th century through the 1950s, baseball diamonds in the Inland Empire provided unique opportunities for nurturing athletic and educational skills, ethnic identity, and political self-determination for Mexican Americans during an era of segregation. Legendary men's and women's teams...served as an important means for Mexican American communities to examine civil and educational rights and offer valuable insight on social, cultural, and gender roles.²³⁶

Originally, in the founding years in Riverside (and beyond), baseball was one of the activities used to "Americanize" newly arrived immigrants, including Mexican workers:

Social reformers attempted to Americanize immigrants by turning them away from traditional Mexican activities such as bullfighting and towards 'American' forms of recreation and sports. According to historian José Alamillo, these efforts were often directed towards school-age children in order 'to mold them into a submissive working class with Anglo-Protestant and middle class values.' ...Baseball, as the quintessential American sport, was viewed as one of the primary means to this end."²³⁷

In Riverside in the early twentieth century, local citrus growers and packinghouses, including the California Fruit Growers Exchange, encouraged and sponsored the formation of baseball teams. In addition to an interest in Americanization, citrus growers invested in athletics to "increase worker

productivity and foster company loyalty.”²³⁸ Teams were often named for packinghouses. The LV Brown Packinghouse baseball team, for example, was known as “Mahula,” taking their name from the packinghouse’s specialty brand of orange. While the initial objective might have been Americanization, Mexican Americans widely embraced the sport and, in the process, ultimately “redefined the meaning of baseball”:

For some, baseball was one of the few recreational activities they could afford with their low wages from agricultural, railroad, factory, and packinghouse jobs in the Inland Empire. They spent much of their weekends recuperating by playing and watching baseball with family and friends. The team names, jerseys, nicknames, and championship titles conveyed a sense of pride from which they could gain strength and confidence that would extend to other arenas in life.²³⁹

On the surface, it seems baseball was merely a recreational pastime, but for some, it became a vehicle towards empowering themselves and their communities. Mexican American baseball teams generated a positive image of their community under siege from repatriation campaigns, racial segregation, and negative press coverage from the 1930s and 1940s.²⁴⁰

In his pioneering study *Making Lemonade Out of Lemons*, scholar José Alamillo recounts the story of Tito Cortez, who played with the Corona Athletics. Although agricultural work was physically exhausting, as Cortez recalled, “Working inside the [citrus] groves, carrying a heavy sack, climbing up and down the ladder, using a quick eye to pick lemons helped with my pitching and [baseball] training. Everyone used to comment how we would work like a dog all week picking lemons, then played baseball all day on Sundays.”²⁴¹

In Riverside neighborhoods like Casa Blanca, baseball also provided an opportunity for multi-cultural recreation and socializing, as well. In Casa Blanca, as Dario Villegas recalled,

‘we had teams playing baseball with the Mexican teams and the Italian teams...Parents started coming out of their homes to see the games... The streets were all dirt covered roadways which were the baseball playing field. Then we started playing at the Casa Blanca Elementary School ground... The baseball field there was the best back then.’²⁴²

Villegas said that “When the Italian team won, the Mexican team mothers would make tortillas to give to the Italian team. When the Mexican team won, the Italian team mothers made bread to the Mexican team families. Both teams felt they were always winners for they all looked forward to the tortillas and bread being awarded.”²⁴³

In the early twentieth century, Riverside Latinos also joined their Anglo-American counterparts and formed their own teams and leagues, eventually competing in inter-city games and tournaments. As early as 1910, the Arlington Heights Baseball Club and Casa Blanca team were already in existence and playing cross-town matches. Baseball teams included age-classified leagues for children, as well as women’s and men’s teams. Night-time baseball leagues were also very popular. As of 1938, for example, over two dozen teams participated in the Eastside Athletic Union Nightball league.

Local Latino business owners and leaders often provided financial support and sponsorship for teams. One such business leader was Carlos Cano, owner of the Eastside Service and Garage. Cano came to Riverside from El Paso, Texas, in 1930, eventually becoming a business owner and member of the Riverside Junior Chamber of Commerce. For many years, Cano contributed to youth athletics and sponsored an Eastside team in the city league. In the era of segregation, early venues for baseball included school playing fields, as well as the sheltered baseball diamonds of Lincoln Park,

installed in the 1920s. In Casa Blanca, local baseball teams from around Riverside County used the baseball field behind Casa Blanca School for weekly events. Leagues for children, teenagers, and adults hosted games and tournaments throughout the City.

According to the Latino Baseball History Project of California State University San Bernardino, one legendary baseball player and coach from Riverside between the 1930s and 1950s was Ernest “Ernie” Bensor. Born in 1925 in Arizona, Bensor moved with his family to the Casa Blanca community in 1935, during the Great Depression. After attending Riverside schools, Bensor served in World War II in the US Army, as part of the 32nd Infantry Regiment. His military service included combat in Okinawa during World War II.

When he returned to Riverside, Bensor began playing for, then managed and coached, various Casa Blanca fast-pitch softball teams, including the “All Stars” and “Los Vagabundos.” For nearly 40 years, Bensor worked for the Riverside Unified School District. After working as head custodian for Casa Blanca Elementary School and Polytechnic High School for many years, Bensor became the Director of Maintenance for the school district. Bensor also worked with the Riverside Parks and Recreation Department at Villegas Park and served as Casa Blanca PTA president for a number of years. His service included developing and leading programs to help youths at risk, through sports and community service. Bensor passed away in 2007.²⁴⁴ His wife Clara was an active community member as well as secretary for Casa Blanca Elementary School for many years, eventually working for the school district itself. She passed away in 2010.²⁴⁵

Figure 97 Casa Blanca Comets, circa 1949, Ernie Bensor, back row, second from right; (left); Casa Blanca Vagabonds, City Champions, 1959 (Bensor appears second from right, back row)



Source: Santillán, Ocegueda, and Cannon, 2012 and *Riverside Press Enterprise*, 11 August 1959

From the early twentieth century, baseball teams and leagues offered a popular form of recreation and community building for Latinos in Riverside. Games were often scheduled around workers’ schedules, with nighttime baseball leagues and tournaments offering a welcomed and popular form of recreation and socializing. In addition, baseball became a source of community building and a political organizing: “Baseball leagues helped create a cohesive and vibrant community and they were a source of pride. The games became a place for meetings across the region and were integral to discussion and eventually to political organization within the communities.”²⁴⁶ In one example, on the Casa Blanca Aces baseball team, Mexican-American World War II veterans “proudly displayed their military belts as part of their baseball uniform. Displaying military belts on the baseball diamond served as a statement for members of the Casa Blanca Aces to declare their equality against long-standing social discrimination and segregation.”²⁴⁷

In the postwar period, baseball teams and leagues proliferated. Local Latino teams included the Casa Blanca Comets, the Magnolia Maids (for whom Emma Galvan was the “ace Maid pitcher,” after her time spent playing for the Casa Blanca Busy Bees), and the Eastside Sharks, for teenaged boys. Expanded park facilities throughout the City, including at Villegas Park in Casa Blanca, and a growing Latino middle-class increased opportunities for traveling and participating in baseball leagues and tournaments. Throughout California in the postwar period, amateur baseball “remained important to Latino communities. Games continued to be community events, with food and entertainment before and during games. They remained important vehicles for gathering together and maintaining a strong community or neighborhood identity.”²⁴⁸

Figure 98 Casa Blanca All-Stars, with Casa Blanca Elementary School Principal Madden as manager, 1950



Source: Santillán, Ocegueda, and Cannon, 2012

Figure 99 Casa Blanca “Busy Bees,” Fast-Pitch Softball team, 1945-1950



The Casa Blanca Busy Bees fast-pitch softball team played from 1945 to 1950 against women's teams from Colton, Ontario, Corona, and San Bernardino. The Busy Bees are shown here at Escuela Vieja in Casa Blanca. Emma Galvan was a high-profile softball pitcher and proved to be nearly unhittable within the region. From left to right are Stella Galvan, Mary Louise Gutierrez, Jessie Gutierrez, Mercy Chavez, Emma Galvan, Vera Rodriguez, Jenny Gomez, and Kinny Galvan.

Source: Riverside Co. Mexican-American Historical Society and Santillán, Ocegueda, and Cannon, 2012

Boxing

For Latino athletes and spectators in California, boxing was one of the most popular sports in the early twentieth century. In this era,

boxing became associated with Mexican identity in a positive manner. The rise of boxing clubs in the first decades of the century was a testament to the sport's popularity. By the 1920s, boxing clubs and gyms were springing up in Mexican neighborhoods all over California. These informal spaces, such as vacant lots, backyards, abandoned buildings, or small halls, gave amateur players a chance to showcase their skills and develop a following.²⁴⁹

As early as the mid-1920s, boxers from Casa Blanca had constructed their own arena and held fights every Wednesday night. In the 1920s, one of the best known Mexican-American boxers in Riverside was Louie Contreras. In the mid- to late-1920s, Contreras often garnered mention in the sports section of the *Riverside Daily Press*, traveling to regional matches throughout Riverside, San Bernardino, and Los Angeles. "And they do say that Contreras boy who hails from down Casa Blanca way is some clever scrapper, ready to step in and trade punches with an opponent at any time."²⁵⁰ In 1927, Contreras lost a fight to another Casa Blanca boxer, Joe Garcia. Their match was deemed "the best fight on the card."²⁵¹ Although Contreras lost, "a draw would have satisfied the fans, so close was the bout."

In the 1930s, Latino boxers had the opportunity to participate in amateur boxing leagues and matches sponsored by the City Recreation Department. In one such match in 1938, amateur boxers from "Riverside and Casa Blanca" headlined an event held at Evans Park near downtown Riverside. With boxing and musical offerings, the event included Casa Blanca boxers Joe Cabrera, Leno Mesa, and Tony Gomez, as well as Rudy Alfaro and Daniel Avila from Riverside, going against boxers from San Bernardino.²⁵² Other Latino boxers from Riverside in the 1930s included Bobby Espinoza, Red Delgado, and Jesse Alfaro.

Boxing remained popular in the Latino community in the postwar period: "Not only did boxing encourage the formation of new notions of Mexican masculine identity, it also provided young men with a path to success. The popularity of the sport and its reputation as an everyman sport, one that anyone could aspire to and succeed at, made it all the more appealing and a primary means through 'which men's ethnic consciousness was formed.'"²⁵³

One venue that opened in the postwar period (and remains open to this day) is the Lincoln Boxing Club in Eastside. Originally run by Larry Rios, Lincoln Boxing Club became not only an important training venue for competitive athletes but also a place for neighborhood kids to train and learn. Long-time Riverside boxers Joe and Tony Salazar had a great deal of success as competitive athletes and still train athletes and neighborhood youth in Eastside's Lincoln Boxing Club. One of the professional boxers recently who trained at the venue was Josesito Lopez, known as "The Riverside Rocky."

Boxing also became a means for offering shared activities and positive interactions between adults for youth in Latino neighborhoods. Through Los Vagabundos in Casa Blanca, for example, young people participated in a boxing club, basketball, and other activities to keep them engaged and active in the community. Life-long Casa Blanca resident, Valente Glen Ayala, was an active member of Los Vagabundos in the postwar period. In 1970, he became director of Villegas Park, where he designed and led a wide variety of sporting and community events. Ayala was director of Villegas Park for nearly two decades, until retiring in 1988.

Figure 100 Vagabundos member Glen Ayala with young boxers (left); Frank Salazar presents trophy to Angel Ramirez while Jay Chavez and Lilo Fuertes look on (right), 1955



BOXING—Vagabond member Glen Ayala gives some last minute instructions to “featherweight” sluggers Eddie Garcia and Ernest Murillo, as part of the Vagabonds recently-started boxing program for boys.



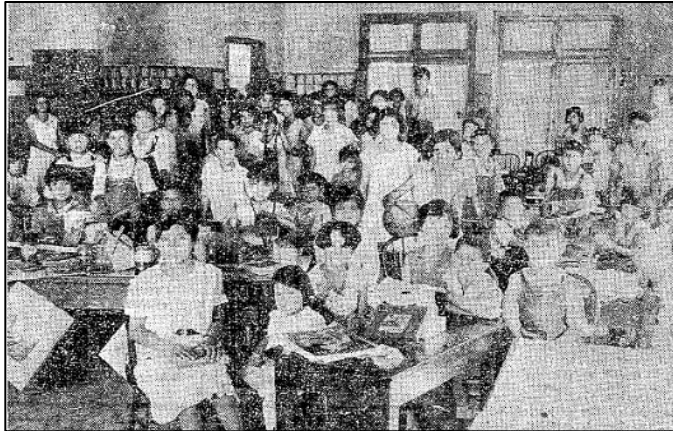
BASKETBALL—Frank Salazar (right) presents a high-scoring basketball trophy to young Angel Ramirez, while Vagabonds' President Jay Chavez and Lito Fuentes look on. The Casa Blanca club sponsored two leagues last season.

Source: *Riverside Independent Press*, 31 May 1955

Children's Recreation and Summer Programs

For Latino children in Riverside, recreational opportunities were provided by local school programs, as well as through community organizations and agencies, often working in concert. During the Great Depression, the Community Settlement House planned and hosted summer programs for children in Casa Blanca and Eastside, with athletic and educational activities, handcrafts, and games. A six-week summer program in 1932, for example, kept costs down through collaboration and fundraising: “Because of the kind cooperation we have had on every hand...this work has been carried on for 1,787 people, including 114 adults, at a total cost of \$22.34 for the entire six weeks. This is but 12 ½ cents per capita for the entire period, and each child made two or three toys, besides other articles.”²⁵⁴

Similarly, athletic programs offered through the Riverside Unified School District provided physical education classes each day, but also team sports and competition. Over the years, students in all levels participated in all-city leagues, as well as internal matches between classes. Starting in 1924, Casa Blanca Elementary School participated in the all-city school football league. As Principal Madden from Casa Blanca Elementary School said, “Athletics has done more to elevate the boys and girls than any other subject taught in the school... School spirit is aroused through athletics...this causes boys and girls to be more loyal to their school.”²⁵⁵ During the Great Depression, the school district also installed night lighting at Casa Blanca Elementary School for evening recreational programs for neighborhood youth.

Figure 101 Craft making at the Community Settlement House children's summer program, 1932

Source: *Riverside Daily Press*, 9 September 1932

Prior to the construction of City-sponsored parks, sports and recreational events were an important part of social life for the Latino community in Riverside. As the City's Latino population grew, so did the need for conveniently located parks and community gathering places. While a number of different parks have served the community through the years, this section highlights two of the oldest parks in Latino and ethnic communities.

Lincoln Park and Pool

One of the first City-built parks to serve Riverside's communities of color was Lincoln Park. The 1924 construction of Lincoln Park and Pool grew out of a discrimination lawsuit brought by Frank M. Johnson against the City. Johnson, an African-American resident of Eastside, had been outraged when his daughter was barred from using the Fairmount Park plunge and sued the City under California Civil Code, Sections 51 and 52. As a result of negotiations surrounding his lawsuit between the mayor at the time, Horace Porter, a committee of citizens, and the plaintiff, the City agreed to open Fairmount pool to residents of color, but only on certain days.²⁵⁶ Three years later, the new Lincoln Park and Pool were constructed in Eastside.

With the formal opening in August 1924, Lincoln Park was established along Park Avenue between Twelfth and Thirteenth Streets.²⁵⁷ By this time, the Eastside was a neighborhood comprised primarily of African-Americans and Mexican-Americans. When it opened, the park was welcomed by neighborhood residents and children. In 1927, a new indoor baseball diamond and tennis courts were installed at Lincoln Park. Through the 1930s, the park's facilities included nighttime baseball, which hosted many games and tournaments.

During the era of segregation, the Lincoln Park pool, which opened in 1924, provided one of the few swimming facilities open to citizens of color in Riverside. Beginning in the 1930s, summertime activities included swimming meets for children, with the sponsorship of the nearby Community Settlement House. Free swimming lessons were offered to neighborhood children, for the price of admission to the pool. In the summer of 1941, the pool facilities expanded when the City inaugurated the Lincoln Park Plunge building, with changing facilities, offices, and concessions for the pool. Designed by City Engineer Henry Jekel, the one-story building was commissioned by the Riverside Parks Department. (In subsequent years, during a major redevelopment project at the park, the pool and plunge building were removed.)

Figure 102 Announcement of Lincoln Park Plunge Building, June 1941



Source: *Riverside Daily Press*, 14 June 1941

Recreational spaces such as Lincoln Park became home to annual sporting events and meets for the Eastside community. All-day sports programs brought together neighborhood children for track meets, baseball games, and boxing events. These were very well attended—albeit still segregated—events. In one such all-day sports program, staged in 1933, “several hundred colored and Mexican residents of Riverside” participated in an all-ages sports meet.²⁵⁸ The program was cosponsored by the Community Settlement House and the Colored Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Lincoln Park also provided a recreation and meeting site for many groups through the years, as well as a venue for music. Annual events included the Memorial Day sports carnival, sponsored by the Riverside County Recreation Department.

The postwar boom in Riverside extended to a wide variety of park improvements in Latino- and ethnic-majority neighborhoods. One of the most significant events was the 1952 park improvement bond measure, which provided a total of \$1,000,000 for parks improvements throughout the City. Throughout the 1950s, Riverside’s parks received much-needed investment and expansion, including those in Latino- and ethnic-majority communities.

From the 1930s through the postwar period, one individual who contributed to the development of recreational and educational programs for the City’s Latino and ethnic communities was Mrs. Edith L. D’Eliscu. As an executive with the Community Settlement House and as director of the Riverside County Recreation Department, Mrs. D’Eliscu planned and led a variety of programs in Riverside parks, forming alliances with schools and community organizations to stage sporting events, summer camps, dances, and festivals. Between 1934 and 1948, Mrs. D’Eliscu also served the chairperson of the Riverside County Chapter of the American Red Cross.

In the summer of 1932, with D’Eliscu’s participation, the Riverside County Recreation Department collaborated with the Community Settlement House to put on the first annual “water carnival” and sports meet in Lincoln Park. At the time, the Community Settlement House was located on the grounds of Lincoln Park. Attended by hundreds of participants and spectators, the 1932 event was the first of its kind at the Lincoln Park pool: “more than 130 swimmers and divers from the local Settlement, San Bernardino and Redlands took part in the big event. The first annual swimming meet, which was ably supervised by Director Mrs. Edith L. D’Eliscu and her assisting staff, attracted a

throng of spectators which filled the stands and walks bordering the plunge.”²⁵⁹ The summer event continued for a number of years.

Villegas Park (Casa Blanca Park)

Established in the early 1940s, the Casa Blanca Park was an idea long in the making. Given the level of discrimination and segregation in the City, one of the only pools and recreational spaces provided for people of color was Lincoln Park in Eastside. This was a considerable distance from Casa Blanca. With many children of all ages in Casa Blanca, the need was great for a nearby playground and recreational area.

One of the first official calls for a park in Casa Blanca reported in the local press came in 1937. In the summer of 1937, Riverside Chief of Police Nestor Brule appeared before the City Park Board to “give consideration to the creation of a city park or recreational grounds at Casa Blanca.”²⁶⁰ Although the *Riverside Daily Press* reported at the time that a tentative plan for a park in Casa Blanca was already in place, the conversation on how to move forward with that plan continued in the late 1930s. An idea was put forward to acquire a 5-acre plot of land in Casa Blanca, adjacent to Casa Blanca Elementary School. The investment would be \$1,500, a small amount that City officials nevertheless hesitated on repeated occasions to allocate. By way of comparison, during this era, funding for Fairmount Park ranged from \$19,000 in 1939/1940 to \$25,000 in 1940/1941, and Eastside’s Lincoln Park had an operating budget of \$3,500 in 1939/1940.²⁶¹ In this way, the norm of separate and unequal applied in most areas of daily life for Latinos and people of color in Riverside.

Before US entry into World War II, the park board again requested funding for \$1,500 to acquire five acres for a Casa Blanca park. This funding request also included construction of the new pool building at Lincoln Park. In January 1941, Casa Blanca “was assured of a playground area” when the City agreed to a \$2,000 expenditure to acquire a 5-acre lot near the elementary school for a park and recreation fields.²⁶² The park was official when, in March 1941, the City Council adopted an ordinance establishing the Casa Blanca Park. By May, a small expenditure was approved for water infrastructure, grading a baseball diamond, and installing bleachers, a backstop, and lighting for nighttime baseball games.

Although the US entry into World War II in late 1941 would dramatically shift priorities, Casa Blanca had an official, allocated space for recreation. During World War II, a portion of Casa Blanca Park was utilized by nearby residents as a victory garden for growing and harvesting food. With the end of the war, discussions resumed for redeveloping and allocating funds for Casa Blanca Park.

In 1949, Riverside Mayor William C. Evans expressed his support for a park development program for Casa Blanca. Mayor Evans said ““These folks out there have been kicked around”” and the time had finally arrived to move forward.²⁶³ With a large-scale bond measure providing funding, plans finally moved forward to begin work on Casa Blanca Park. An expanded, modern baseball diamond was added in the late 1940s, along with other features and recreational facilities. Once it was established, Casa Blanca Park provided a vital recreational and meeting space for the community.

The 1950s brought a number of improvements—and the renaming—of Casa Blanca Park. Ten additional acres were acquired for the park in early 1950. In March 1950, the City began accepting bids for the relocation of a former school district building, at 9th and Lemon Streets, to be used as a community center in Casa Blanca Park. During the summer, the building was relocated to the park, repaired, and prepped for use. Still, the facilities and yearly budget lagged well behind what was made available for other parks.

In 1952, in advance of a major bond measure, Casa Blanca Elementary School principal Mabra Madden participated in calls for park improvements in Casa Blanca. By this time, Madden had been principal of Casa Blanca Elementary School for nearly 30 years. He understood the need for a decent recreational facility and programs:

‘I’m thinking of the bond issue from the standpoint of Casa Blanca, where not too much improvement of the park has been possible due to lack of funds,’ he said. ‘Our area has, during a peak period in the year, about 1,000 young people and we very much need the swimming pool and playground equipment proposed for Villegas Park.’²⁶⁴

The bond measure was successful, and a number of significant improvements to Casa Blanca Park continued. Through the early to mid-1950s, park improvements included the annual planting of trees during Arbor Week, repaving of basketball courts, and addition of three new baseball diamonds, playground equipment, horseshoe facilities, and new lighting equipment.

In March 1952, on the request of the Parks Board, the City Council approved the renaming of Casa Blanca Park to Ysmael Villegas Park, in honor of Riverside County’s first recipient of the US Congressional Medal of Honor, Casa Blanca native Staff Sergeant Ysmael “Smiley” Villegas. The same year, the City budget included \$75,000 worth of expenditures for improvements to then-Ysmael Villegas Park.

Villegas Park quickly became an indispensable, multi-use site for many different community events and seasonal gatherings, including sporting events, dances, Sunday evening movie nights, Easter Day programs and Easter Egg hunts, Arbor Day tree plantings, summer programs, Cinco de Mayo festival, Halloween festivities, and a yearly Christmas party, among many other activities. The park also provided a central location for the initiatives and programs of the Casa Blanca PTA and City speakers and conferences.

By 1953, improvements at Casa Blanca Park became a higher priority for the Parks and Recreation Commission, who argued to City Council that the “Casa Blanca park should get attention first,” given that the “‘greatest problem’ of inadequate recreational facilities exists in Casa Blanca.”²⁶⁵ As the year ended, nearly 800 neighborhood children came to Villegas Park for a Christmas party, sponsored by the Ysmael Villegas American Legion Post 838. Subsequent programs held in the park included a program called “Teen Time,” offering a special recreational programs twice a week for teenagers, with table games and dancing each Friday evening.

The long-awaited pool at Villegas Park started construction in 1956, opening in July 1956. That same year, the Park and Recreation Commission approved construction of a new clubhouse in the park, a small, 60’ by 30’ building planned at Marguerita Avenue and Dolores Street, just north of the current community center. A new asphalt blacktop area provided space for music performances and dances. A handball court and basketball court were also added, providing much-needed opportunities for community sports and recreation.

Since that time, Villegas Park has grown with the community, reflecting changes along the way. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Casa Blanca muralists Jim Gutierrez and Roy Duarte were commissioned to create a number of murals at Villegas Park (described in more detail below). One of the Gutierrez murals, entitled “Grandesa Azteca,” is being restored as of July 2018.

Figure 103 Villegas Park Pool opening, 1956



Source: *Riverside Daily Press*, 22 July 1956

Figure 104 Halloween festivities at Villegas Park, 1958



Source: *Riverside Daily Press*, 31 October 1958

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Subtheme #3: Cultural Development

In Riverside, “excluded from the early Riverside mainstream, life in the barrio developed a distinctive character of its own. There Spanish served as the primary language, *la comida* (traditional food) could be found in the local *mercados* (markets), and Mexican customs retained their power. Well into mid-century, traditional healers, known as *Curanderos*, continued their use of herbs and massage to treat illness.”²⁶⁶

In addition to the distinctive culture in Latino neighborhoods, Mexico’s civic and religious holidays were celebrated each year. Those holidays include 16 de Septiembre (Mexican Independence Day), the Feast of the Virgen de Guadalupe, and Cinco de Mayo (celebrating the 1862 Mexican victory over the French). Parades and festivities surrounding Cinco de Mayo stretch back to the early years of the twentieth century in Riverside (as described in more detail below). As historian Steven Moreno-Terrill said, “In terms of leisure and cultural life, one area that is...imperative when discussing the history [of Riverside’s Latino community] are *fiestas patrias*.”²⁶⁷ For Mexican-Americans in Riverside, Cinco de Mayo and 16th de Septiembre are “important cultural practices that served as a form of community-building and the teaching of Mexican culture through various public performances and celebrations.”²⁶⁸ Religious holidays also harkened back to the traditions of Mexico, with annual *posadas* and mass on Christmas eve.

In general, for the Catholic majority in Riverside’s Latino community, the church became the centerpiece of cultural as well as social and religious life. Cultural events were shared community projects, in which a number of groups and organizations came together to plan, sponsor, and stage events. As in other areas of life, cultural development and arts benefited from collaboration between many different groups and venues. As observed by José Alamillo in his pioneering study on labor and leisure in the Mexican-American community:

Mexican working men and women drew upon cultural resources at their disposal—pool halls, sporting events, church-related events, and patriotic events, among others—to build ethnic solidarity, critique social inequities, mobilize oppositional resistance, and to some extent improve the conditions of their lives.²⁶⁹

Thus far, little research has been conducted on the history of cultural development in Riverside’s Latino community.²⁷⁰ Based on available literature, though, Alamillo’s description closely reflects the Riverside Latino experience. In times of limited resources, the community made use of the spaces and amenities available to provide and promote cultural events. Early institutional expansion in Latino and ethnic neighborhoods, such as the construction of churches including Saint Anthony’s Church and the Church Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine in the 1920s, among many others, schools, libraries, and parks, including Lincoln Park in the 1920s and Villegas Park in the 1940s, provided a boost for cultural development as well. Such venues provided a convenient gathering place for cultural events and arts, usually with the participation and sponsorship of mutual assistance organizations, neighborhood groups and improvement societies, churches, PTAs, veteran’s group, and other organizations. Many cultural events were also held at the Community Settlement House over the years.

Figure 105 1935 Play at the Community Settlement House, “Las Estrellas Responden” (The Stars Answer)



Source: Courtesy of Riverside County Mexican-American Historical Society

Figure 106 Mexican Independence Day Queen, Emma Galvan, 1947. Photo inscription reads, “Muy carinosamente para mi prima Carolina Galvan de parte de su prima, Emma Galvan.” (With affection, for my cousin Carolina Galvan, from your cousin, Emma Galvan.)



Source: Shades of Riverside, Riverside Public Library

In the postwar period, one significant addition to Latino and ethnic neighborhoods that aided in cultural development and the arts was the construction of new libraries. One such addition took place in Casa Blanca in the postwar period, when a new library branch was built on Madison Street. From 1957 to 1992, Grace Bailón served as librarian and ultimately branch manager of the Casa Blanca Branch of the Riverside Public Library. With her motto "*leer es poder*" ("reading is power"), Mrs. Bailón became well known as a "storyteller, interpreter, and reader...Mrs. Bailón dispensed wisdom and inspiration to all those she served."²⁷¹ The current Casa Blanca Branch of the Riverside Public Library is named for Staff Sergeant Salvador J. Lara, a World War II veteran awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor by President Barack Obama in March 2014. Similarly, an Eastside branch of the Riverside Public Library, on Chicago Avenue, carries the name of Sergeant Jesus S. Duran, a Vietnam War veteran awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor by President Barack Obama in March 2014.

Figure 107 Junior high students at Casa Blanca Library, 1960



(Staff Photo)

HAPPY READERS — Junior high school students look at the books they won for attendance records in special study classes at the Casa Blanca Library. Sponsoring the program was the House of Neighborly Service. Classes were two nights weekly during the school year with Ramona High School seniors helping in the final weeks. The home's auxiliary provided the books that were given as awards yesterday.

Source: *Riverside Daily Press*, 18 June 1960

Romanticizing Hispanic Heritage and Cultural Appropriation

In considering cultural development in the Latino community, it is worth noting the history of appropriation of Hispanic heritage and culture. As observed in *Latinos in Twentieth Century California*, at times cultural life reflecting the Latino experience came from within the community, as “an expression of that experience, both negative and positive.”²⁷² At other times, Latino culture was appropriated from the outside, “taking the initiative and voice out of the hands of Latinos and placing it in the hands of others.”²⁷³

These layers are also evident in Riverside. Latino culture reflected the experience and lives of members of the community. At the same time, in the early years in particular, Hispanic culture was often appropriated to brand Southern California and to market its goods throughout the United States. (This branding more often relied on Spanish heritage, however, while the history and culture of Mexican workers were marginalized and regarded in a paternalistic manner.)²⁷⁴

In Riverside, as reported in newspapers of the day, Hispanic-themed theatre performances might include the participation of “foreign” Mexican-American children from Riverside’s neighborhoods, in venues that were otherwise off limits to Mexican-American patrons. In another example dating to the Great Depression, during the height of the repatriation program, the Riverside City School District chose a Mexican-themed gala for its yearly teachers’ association banquet. With Casa Blanca Elementary School Principal Mabra Madden serving as master of ceremonies, the gala was “distinctly Mexican in flavor”:

The national colors of Mexico, red, white and green were predominant in the decorations of the club house and tables. ...As a concluding feature, Mexican pinatas, or bags filled with favors and suspended from the ceiling were broken in the Mexican fashion.²⁷⁵

Mexican-American musicians and children participated in the gathering: “A brightly-costumed group of Mexican players, the Reyes orchestra of Casa Blanca, played appropriate music during the dinner,” and children from Casa Blanca and Irving Elementary Schools, costumed in “Mexican attire,” performed dances and songs for the gathering.²⁷⁶ The event took place at the Fairmount Park American Legion Clubhouse. As context, even in the immediate postwar period, this venue continued to deny membership to Mexican-American veterans of World War II.

In the context of the time, the Riverside City School District was not alone. The disjuncture of romanticizing the culture of Spaniards and Mexicans while simultaneously discriminating against their ancestors has been amply explored in the literature and was noted by commentators at the time. José Alamillo pointed to a 1928 commentary in *The Saturday Evening Post* on the topic: “The whole country is steeped in the romance and traditions of the [Mexican] race it is now proposed to bar therefrom. Seven out of every ten of the older cities of the Southwest bear Spanish names given them by Mexicans who long constituted their chief population.”²⁷⁷

With the advent of the Civil Rights Movement, the tide started to shift. As described below, for example, celebrations of Cinco de Mayo were gradually characterized not merely as charming *barrio* events but events that were open to and for the entire City. With time, there was a growing realization that Latino culture and identity forms an integral part of Riverside’s identity. (As of July 2018, the Riverside Art Museum is moving forward with plans for the Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art, Culture, and Industry, a collection that will bring to Riverside “one of the finest Chicano art collections in the world.”²⁷⁸) An awareness of the origins of cultural appropriation offers an important lens through which to examine and understand Latino culture in cities like Riverside and apply the theme of cultural development in historic resource evaluations.

Cinco De Mayo Festival and Parade

“Several spoke during the [Cinco de Mayo] open forum, stressing respect to the American flag and laws, and love and loyalty to Mexico. Anthems of both nations closed the program.”

—*Riverside Daily Press*, covering Casa Blanca’s Cinco de Mayo celebration, 1938

Since the opening years of twentieth century, the Cinco de Mayo celebration has been one of the most important cultural events throughout Riverside’s Latino communities. Marking the 1862 victory of Mexican generals Zaragoza and Diaz against the French, Cinco de Mayo was celebrated in Riverside much as it was in Mexico: as a communitywide event celebrating Mexican culture and history as well as family and community. Through the years, the City has been home to several Cinco de Mayo celebrations, primarily in Casa Blanca and Eastside. These celebrations often spanned the entire week, with days of preparation, fund raising, and events on the day itself, May 5th, and into the weekend. Cinco de Mayo celebrations included the participation of many community organizations, as well as planning committees that operated and worked year-round.

One of the oldest ongoing Cinco de Mayo celebrations in California is in Casa Blanca. The first Casa Blanca parade was said to have taken place in 1907. Celebrations typically included a parade, with the Casa Blanca band, food, and festivities. As Simona Valero recalled in 2011,

‘When my dad came in 1911, they were already celebrating Cinco De Mayo,’ beams [Simona] Valero, 89, a lifelong resident of Casa Blanca whose father came to pick oranges in the local groves. ‘The women swept the dirt streets and watered it down for the parade,’ she says, recalling the early days when a multi-piece band of musicians made of local residents marched down unpaved streets. ‘Something beautiful about that time. At 5 a.m., the band would play while the American flag was raised, first of course. Then we raised the Mexican flag.’²⁷⁹

In the 1919 celebrations, Cinco de Mayo in Casa Blanca was attended by over 500 celebrants. With the neighborhood “gaily decorated in honor of the Mother Country’s liberation from Maximilian,” as the local news reported, Casa Blanca was “thronged with local and visiting celebrants”:

This morning at 6 o’clock, 21 shots of dynamite were fired as a salute in honor of General Ignacio Saragosa, the liberator of Mexico from the rule of Maximilian. The whole day is given over to joyous celebration of the greatest event in Mexican history. There was a program of speaking by prominent Mexican citizens this forenoon, and this will be continued until nightfall. ...The Casa Blanca band is furnishing music, both as a concert program and for the dancing.²⁸⁰

At the 1922 Cinco de Mayo celebration held in the Eastside neighborhood, hundreds of spectators participated in the day’s festival. A “rousing musical program” was led by one Professor Perez, and speeches were offered by Riverside City Mayor S.C. Evans and E.M. Carrasco, president of the Pro Patria Club. The following day, the local newspaper celebrated the event’s success:

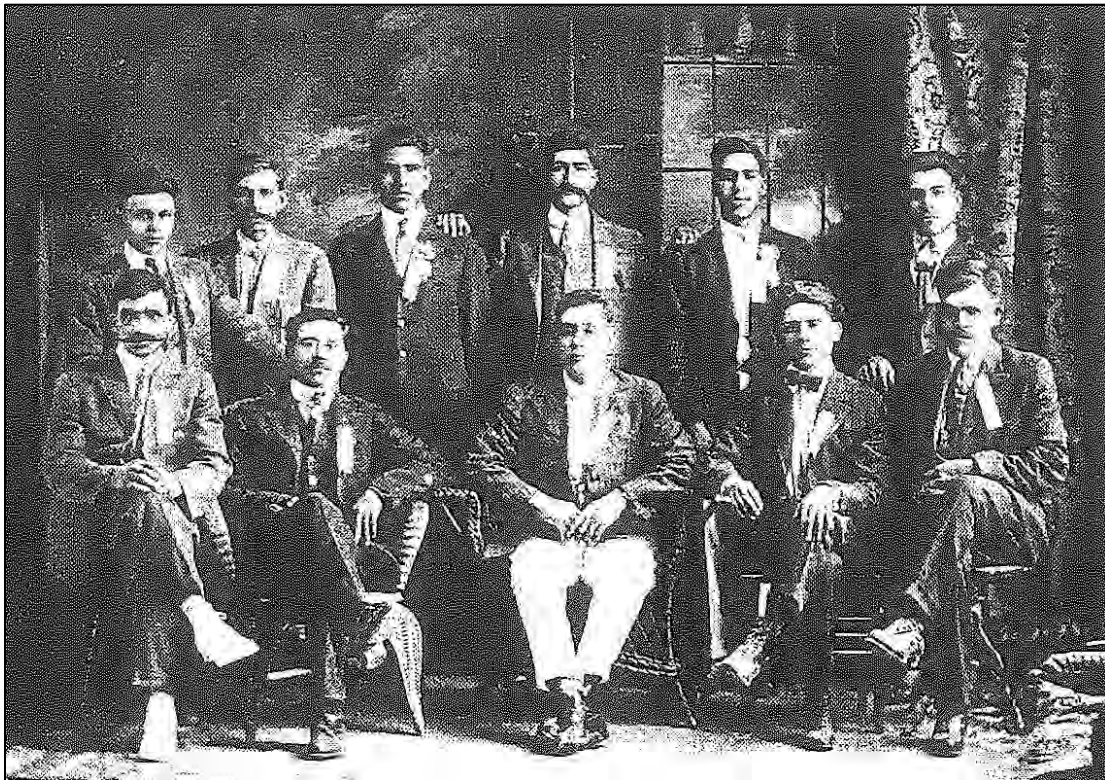
Viva Mexico! Under the auspices of the Pro Patria club of Riverside, the Mexican War of Independence, May 5, 1862, is today being celebrated at Thirteenth and High Streets. During the morning a parade, headed by the Casa Blanca band, wended its way through the city streets there being more than 25 gaily decorated automobiles in line together with about 150 Mexicans on foot. American and Mexican colors unfolded in the breeze while numerous banners added a distinct touch. ...Jose Quiroz as director of the parade covered himself with glory. It was well done and created an unusually fine impression.²⁸¹

Figure 108 Cinco de Mayo band and celebrants, Casa Blanca, 1910



Source: Riverside Public Library, Shades of Riverside

Figure 109 Cinco de Mayo Committee, 1919, with parade director José Quiroz (bottom row, second from left)



Source: Riverside Metropolitan Museum, *Nuestros Antepasados*

As the City's Mexican-American communities grew, Cinco de Mayo celebrations grew with them, and gained renown throughout the region. In 1938, celebrations of Cinco de Mayo in Casa Blanca drew hundreds of spectators throughout the County of Riverside for a "fiesta, parade, patriotic speeches and music during the day. In the evening, a softball game between the CYO and Wildcats will be an event. A dance and 'jamaica' [church bazaar] were held last night."²⁸² General chairman of the event that year was Raimundo "Raymond" Reyes, a musician from Casa Blanca whose orchestra played often in Riverside. A "baby carnival" was also held at Casa Blanca Elementary School for children, with the participation of school Principal Mabra Madden. In 1940, an estimated 4,000 people participated in the Cinco de Mayo celebration in Casa Blanca, with music provided by Reyes and his band. In Eastside that same year, Cinco de Mayo celebrations were held on Park Street.

The postwar period brought a growing Mexican-American middle-class. With expanding community resources, Riverside's Cinco de Mayo celebrations continued to grow in scale and stature. In the Eastside neighborhood, the event came to include many bands and music, booths with games, a variety of *comida mexicana*, and a program featuring a master of ceremonies and the crowning of the Cinco de Mayo queen and her court. By the postwar period, the competition for Cinco de Mayo queen was an event amply covered in the local press. Indeed, in its 21 April 1956 issue, the local *Riverside Independent Enterprise* announced Eastside's Cinco de Mayo event alongside, and on par with, announcements for the St. Margaret's Guild annual bridge benefit tea. (While discrimination was an ongoing, pressing issue in the 1950s, this tone and level of recognition did represent signs of a gradual shift.)

Part of the importance of the Cinco de Mayo celebration was not just the day itself, but the community preparation, planning, and fundraising leading up to it. For example, church bazaars known as *jamaicas* (festivals with dancing, dining, and celebrations) were an anticipated and enjoyable part of the event itself. Consortiums of Mexican-American organizations joined forces to assist the Cinco de Mayo committee with planning. In just one example, as of 1959, led by Fernando Avila as committee president, the Eastside Cinco de Mayo celebration depended on the participation of multiple organizations, including the Latin-American Club, Dario Vasquez Post 750, American Legion, Altar Society from Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine, Trabajadores Unidos Lodge No. 9 from Highgrove, and Our Lady of Guadalupe youth clubs, the "Squires" and "Squirettes."²⁸³

For a short time in the postwar period, the Casa Blanca Cinco de Mayo celebration was scaled back. It was revived in full force in 1954, with the Casa Blanca Parent-Teachers Association taking the lead in planning the event. By 1954, Ysmael Villegas Park was in place to serve as the central venue for the event, which featured an orchestra, dancing, a variety of Mexican foods, and a parade. Booths offered

the sale of popular oxcarts, widely used for all types of patio and table decorations, games, cascarrones (confetti eggs), white elephant sales and a cake walk. Planning for the event, first Cinco de Mayo celebration in Casa Blanca in several years, is in charge of the Casa Blanca PTA with the school faculty, children and all segments of the community cooperating to bring a genuine glimpse of the culture of Old Mexico at carnival time.²⁸⁴

In postwar Eastside, Lincoln Park and the Community Settlement House were common venues for Cinco de Mayo. By the 1950s, the heart of the Cinco de Mayo celebration in Eastside had moved to the new location of the Community Settlement House, on Bermuda Avenue.