

***Latinos of Boulder County, Colorado,  
1900-1980***

**Volume I:  
*History and Contributions***

**Chapter Six:  
*Being Chicano, Migrant Workers,  
and New Jobs, 1966-1980***

by

**Marjorie K. McIntosh**

Distinguished Professor of History Emerita  
University of Colorado at Boulder

Written for:  
**Boulder County Latino History Project**

With assistance from:  
**Longmont Museum**

Endorsed by:  
**Department of Ethnic Studies,  
University of Colorado at Boulder**



**Old John Publishing**  
Palm Springs, California

Copyright © 2016 Marjorie K. McIntosh

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Marjorie K. McIntosh asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work.

McIntosh, Marjorie K. (Marjorie Keniston)  
Latinos of Boulder County, Colorado, 1900-1980  
Volume I : History and Contributions / M.K. McIntosh.  
332 pages. 229 cm.  
Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-9863873-3-3 (hardcover)  
978-0-9863873-2-6 (paperback)

1. Hispanic Americans--Colorado--Boulder County--History.
2. Colorado--History, Local--20th Century.
3. Boulder County (Colorado)--History.

2015961054

References to Internet Web sites (URLs) were accurate at the time of writing. Neither the author nor Old John Publishing is responsible for URLs that may have expired or changed since the manuscript was prepared.

## Chapter 6

### **Being Chicano, Migrant Workers, and New Jobs, 1966-1980**

The period between 1966 and around 1980 was a time of turmoil and change throughout the United States. Reacting against the social and political conservatism of the post-World War II era, many groups began defining their own identities and demanding their full civil and human rights. Chicanos, African Americans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans pushed for an end to racist attitudes and policies and fought for a more equal and visible place in government, the law, the educational system, and other settings. Chicano leaders of *El Movimiento* tried to unite all people from Spanish-speaking backgrounds—regardless of their economic or educational level, national origins, and how long they had been in this country—into a powerful force that could wrest improvements from the hands of generally recalcitrant institutions dominated by Anglos. Puerto Rican nationalists wanted either statehood or independence. The women’s movement rejected discrimination based on sex and promoted female empowerment. People living in poverty insisted that they deserved the same rights in hiring, education, and politics as did the wealthy. Some of these initiatives benefited from the “War on Poverty” instituted by President Lyndon Johnson in 1965, which offered financial support for local projects designed to lessen economic disparities and make the country more inclusive. The Vietnam War and a compulsory draft were increasingly unpopular, leading to huge nation-wide protests.

Some Boulder County people were active in the loosely-defined Chicano movement, although they did not always use that term in describing themselves. A central feature of local concern was establishing and

celebrating what it meant to be “Chicano.” As part of the effort to create ties among all Latinos, members of established families reached out to migrant workers. The self-awareness and confidence of some Chicanos was enhanced by a striking increase in job opportunities at middling and even upper levels. Projects operated by the federal government’s Office of Economic Opportunity [OEO], the administrative wing of the “War on Poverty,” drew many Latinas and Latinos into positions where they gained work experience, sometimes a formal education, and training in community organization. The federal government was thus important in this period as it had been during the “New Deal” era of the 1930s and early 1940s. Large employers like the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant and the International Business Machines Corporation [IBM] offered semi-skilled manufacturing jobs and positions for Latino engineers and scientists, computer programmers, managers, accountants, and secretaries.

Expanding employment opportunities drew in new families who contributed to a marked rise in the Latino population. In the decade between 1965 and 1975, the number of Spanish-surnamed adults mentioned in *Polk’s City Directories* for our three communities more than doubled (rising from a total of 1,219 to 2,542), with particularly rapid growth in Longmont and Boulder.<sup>1</sup> By 1980, the county’s Latino population differed in significant ways from what it had been in 1966.

### A. Creating An Inclusive Chicano Identity

During the later 1960s and 1970s, questions of cultural definition and identity came to the fore among Boulder County’s Chicanos as they did elsewhere in the country.<sup>2</sup> Although such issues had been explored previously, they assumed new importance within the context of the push for Chicano self-realization and empowerment. Local Chicanas/os were now focusing on who they were and what it meant to come from a Spanish-speaking background. What was their ethnic and racial heritage, and what terms should they use to describe themselves? What economic, religious, and cultural contributions had their people made

<sup>1</sup> App. 1.2.

<sup>2</sup> For broader attempts to define what *Chicanismo* entailed and the often limited role for Chicanas within that movement, see Acuña, *Occupied America*, pp. 329-332, and Ernesto Chávez, “¡Mi Raza Primero!,” pp. 5-7.

to the United States in the past, and what was their role today? Rather than trying to assimilate themselves to the dominant Anglo culture of the country and hiding their customs from public view, why did they not celebrate their traditions for everyone to see and appreciate?<sup>3</sup> Why were Latino children in the schools often neglected or—if they spoke Spanish—punished? Further, if there really was a shared identity among all Chicanas/os, did established local families not have an obligation to help newer arrivals and migrant workers, rather than distancing themselves from them?

Definitional words acquired new significance. In Boulder County, older ethnic descriptors like “Hispanic” or “Spanish-American” were discarded by some Chicanas/os, because those terms emphasized the European side of what was now coming to be acknowledged as a more complex racial and cultural mixture.<sup>4</sup> The terms “Mexican” or “Mexican American” were too specific to cover people from all national or state backgrounds. Those who called themselves “Chicanas/os” commonly used the word both to express pride in their own shared culture and to indicate their social and political activism. Some people did not want to be termed “Chicanos,” a label which they saw as reflecting values that threatened the possibility of acculturation into the Anglo world and created a public perception that all Latinas/os were radicals. Even some local activists whom we might term “Chicanos” still referred to themselves as “Mexican Americans” or “Hispanics.”

Patsy Cordova was a student at Longmont High School “when the *la raza* movement hit our town in about 1967, 1968. I remember all of a sudden there was a pride to being, the new word was ‘Chicano.’ It was a very political term and the movement was very politically minded. My parents were even shocked that I would have anything to do with it . . . though my mother is very political by nature.”<sup>5</sup> That statement shows that Boulder County people were becoming aware of *la raza* concerns at least in general terms, and it illustrates a gap between young and potentially activist members of Latino households and their somewhat more conservative parents. The Chicano movement accentuated generational divisions within some Latino families.

A feature of this new Chicano self-awareness was an effort to document

<sup>3</sup> These attitudes helped to weaken the cultural embarrassment felt by some earlier Latinos: see Ch. 5C above.

<sup>4</sup> See Ch. 1A above.

<sup>5</sup> Cordova, Patsy, interview, c. 1987.

and celebrate the past. In 1976-7, two Boulder women, Jessie Velez Lehmann and Regina Vigil, together with Manuel Arcadia, a graduate student at the University of Colorado associated with KGNU Public Radio in Boulder, set up a project called “Boulder’s Chicano Community: Where Is It?” Supported by a grant from the Colorado Humanities Program, the group wanted to preserve and publicize the stories of some established Boulder families.<sup>6</sup> Over the next 18 months, the project recorded 13 audio interviews, some in Spanish, and prepared two films. The first, “Los Inmigrantes,” featured excerpts from videographed conversations with local people and showed them dancing in costumes to Mexican music; the second, “Boulder’s Chicano Community,” had still shots of photographs and other documents, with a voice-over narrative. Over the next few years, volunteers took “Los Inmigrantes” around to other communities in Colorado, encouraging Latinas/os there to record their own histories.

One of the motivations of the Boulder project was worry that local Latinas/os were trying to assimilate, including not teaching their children Spanish, rather than honoring and maintaining their own cultural heritage. Jessie Velez Lehmann criticized the tendency of some Boulder people to keep their heads down, to avoid being noticed by the Anglo community around them. She spoke about her fear that the Spanish language and meaningful customs were being lost.<sup>7</sup> That fear was justified. An example of the linguistic transition across three generations comes from the family of Maria Medina of Boulder, who was born in a Spanish-speaking community in New Mexico in 1891.<sup>8</sup> Although she had lived in Colorado for most of her life, she did not speak English at the time of her interview in 1978. Her children knew English and some Spanish, but her grandchildren could neither speak nor understand Spanish, so Maria was completely unable to communicate directly with them. Roy Maestas, another New Mexican, was born in 1909 and as a child moved with his parents to a Spanish-speaking area in southern

<sup>6</sup>“Boulder’s Chicano Community, 1978 KGNU radio interview,” and see Ch. 1B above. The project was co-sponsored by the Canyon Park Community Center, the Migrant Action Program, and the Women’s Resource Center, all branches of the OEO (see section C below). Although Jessie, who had come to Boulder 15 years before, was the prime mover of the project, she generally described herself as a Mexican American, not as a Chicana (Lehmann, Jessie Velez, interview, 1978).

<sup>7</sup> Lehmann, Jessie Velez, interview, 1978.

<sup>8</sup> Medina, Maria, interview, c. 1978.

<sup>9</sup> Maestas, Roy, interview, 1978.



*Illus. 6.1. Phil and Eleanor Hernandez in Mexican costumes, Boulder, 1948*

Colorado.<sup>9</sup> He learned some English at school but had to drop out when he was 14 to go to work in the mines. In the next generation, after the family's move to Boulder, Roy's children already spoke English when they started school, and they saw no reason to maintain the older language. His grandchildren knew no Spanish when Roy was interviewed in 1978. When Phil Hernandez's parents dressed him and his sister in Mexican clothing for a special occasion when they were young, it had cultural meaning for older members of the family, but not for the children. In Longmont, however, use of Spanish remained more common, due in part to the ongoing arrival of new immigrants.<sup>10</sup>

Other Chicanos were meanwhile taking steps to make Latino culture more visible and hence more accepted and even respected by Anglos. They organized a Mexican Fiesta dinner, Cinco de Mayo festivities, and performances by Mexican dance groups, open to all.<sup>11</sup> Activists pressured the schools to become more supportive of Latino children, and they

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Ben Rodriguez's popular Spanish-language radio station in the 1950s: Vol. II, Illus. 4.7.

<sup>11</sup> E.g., "Mexican holiday planned," "2-year-old wears a Mexican costume," "Local woman demonstrates traditional South American dances," "Chicano Fiesta de la Gente planned," and "Los Aztecas celebrate Cinco de Mayo." In Boulder County, there is no indication that Cinco de Mayo festivals served as venues for incipient political activism, as they did in Corona, CA (Alamilla, *Making Lemonade*, pp. 153-159).

organized special conferences for young people in an effort to build an affirming identity.<sup>12</sup> In religious terms, most Chicanos did not abandon their Catholic faith, but some pushed the local churches to adopt a more liberal theology, hire Spanish-speaking priests, and offer the Mass in Spanish.<sup>13</sup>

Another concern was the economic, social, and cultural gaps among Boulder County's Latinos, which stood in the way of a shared Chicano identity. The distance between established families and newer arrivals, already visible in the 1950s, had become greater by the late 1960s and 1970s. Whereas many families who had come prior to 1940 had by this time found ways of navigating adequately within the Anglo-based community and some had attained middle class status, the newcomers—mainly from Mexico—generally spoke no English and lacked the skills (and sometimes the necessary immigration papers) to do anything other than manual labor. Most older Latino families in Longmont and Lafayette interacted rarely if at all with recent Mexican immigrants or migrant workers.

Tom Abila, who moved to Boulder's Water + Goss Streets neighborhood in 1947 when he was 13, distinguished sharply in a later interview between "originals" (meaning the town's older families, including himself), and newcomers.<sup>14</sup> He praised the earlier families and what they had achieved but spoke disparagingly about the "aliens" and "wetbacks" who had come into the U.S. illegally and were willing to work for lower wages. Indeed, immigrants without papers were always subject to exploitation by employers, who could offer exceptionally low wages and unsafe working conditions to people who had the threat of arrest and deportation hanging over their heads.<sup>15</sup> Divisions between different generations of immigrants were by no means unique to Boulder County or to Latinas/os. In many settings, the most recent arrivals are disliked by the previous wave of immigrants, who have generally assimilated to the new culture at least to some extent and do not want to be lumped in the minds of the dominant group with the poverty-stricken and more obviously foreign immigrants who have just come.

Separation along class-based lines was becoming even more pronounced during the 1970s. This stemmed largely from the arrival

<sup>12</sup> See Ch. 7A and "Mexican-American youth conference scheduled."

<sup>13</sup> See Vol. II, Ch. 5C.

<sup>14</sup> Abila, Tom, interview, 1978.

<sup>15</sup> For this situation at the turkey plant in Longmont, see section C below.



of well-educated Latinas/os from elsewhere in Colorado, other parts of the U.S., or Spain who were attracted by opportunities in businesses like IBM, the new federal research facilities in Boulder, or the University of Colorado.<sup>16</sup> These middle class newcomers were generally welcomed by local Latinas/os with college degrees and formed common Chicano pressure groups with them.<sup>17</sup> Many urban residents who had achieved success in what was still an Anglo dominated public environment adopted the affirming features of the ethnic identity first visible in Boulder during the 1950s and early 1960s, validating the ability to function effectively in Anglo contexts while maintaining some features of their Latino heritage at home and with friends.

Local activists now felt they needed to bring the challenges that confronted all Latinas/os to public attention. In doing so, they were assisted by the growing willingness of local papers to report on these concerns. At Boulder's Congregational Church in 1968, Phil Hernandez, a Boulder native who was then the head of United Mexican American Students at the university, talked about the problems faced by Mexican American school children; Lupe Salinas gave a presentation at the church the following year about housing problems.<sup>18</sup> The *Boulder Daily Camera* published a long and thoughtful report on the state of local Mexican Americans in 1973, and two years later the paper described their concerns about the police.<sup>19</sup> Dr. Floyd Martinez spoke to the *Camera* in 1978 about the need for funding for Longmont's Mental Health Center, which served many poor Latinas/os, criticizing the city for cutting its allocation.<sup>20</sup> Despite these efforts, however, the local Latino community remained segmented for the rest of the twentieth century, based upon such factors as how long people had lived in this area, country or state of origin, economic and educational level, marriage patterns and number of children, types of health care utilized, and how they defined themselves in ethnic or cultural terms.

<sup>16</sup> Acuña has suggested that the growth of a Chicano middle class in the U.S. during the 1970s was good in that "it gave Chicanos more of a voice in government and society." It was bad, however, in that these people "often developed social and economic interests differing from those of the working class," and they might be coopted by the mainstream ruling class (*Occupied America*, p. 339). For a more positive assessment, see Manuel Gonzales, *Mexicanos*, esp. pp. 181-193.

<sup>17</sup> Emma Peña-McCleave, conversation with Marjorie McIntosh, July 20, 2013.

<sup>18</sup> "Mexican-American school problems discussed"; "Mexican-American housing problems discussed."

<sup>19</sup> "Report on State of the Mexican-Americans," and "Police a major Chicano concern."

<sup>20</sup> "Latino doctor backs funding" and "Latino doctor criticizes decision."

## B. Reaching Out to Migrant Workers

A particularly vulnerable group of Latinas/os were the migrant workers—many of them Mexican nationals—who throughout the second half of the twentieth century provided most of the labor for Boulder County's farms. Following the crops across the growing season, these people usually remained in the area only temporarily. Prior to around 1970, Anglo members of the community, established Latinas/os, and the press had generally turned a blind eye to the deplorable living and working conditions of the men and families who came into the county each summer. In July, 1968, the *Longmont Times-Call* printed an illustrated feature article about how migrant workers enjoyed moving around between jobs; the next day the paper described local farmers' dissatisfaction with their mobile employees.<sup>21</sup> In 1969, the paper reported disapprovingly about an attempt by migrant workers in Fort Lupton, a farming community 10 miles southeast of Longmont, to obtain better conditions.<sup>22</sup>

But in the early 1970s, some local Chicanos—joined by socially concerned Anglo allies—turned their attention to migrant workers. Their activities were assisted by several OEO programs created in the mid- to late 1960s. Part of their task was to document the problems faced by mobile agricultural laborers, problems that had plagued field workers since early in the century. The key issues were housing and working conditions. The accommodations provided by farmers for their migrant workers were rudimentary and often unsanitary. Large families might be housed in small wooden shacks with just two rooms and no indoor plumbing; they had to carry water from a nearby ditch or pump it from a well, and they used an outhouse. Others lived in "barracks," where each family had a single room for sleeping and as many as 20 families shared a single kitchen and a few toilets.<sup>23</sup>

Agricultural work required people to be out in the sun with no shelter from early morning until the evening, sometimes with a break during

<sup>21</sup> "Migrant workers love Colorado, life of travel"; "Farmers concerned about irresponsibility."

<sup>22</sup> The laborers had set up a protest camp at the end of the summer and refused to vacate it: "Migrants refuse to move," "Winter looking bleak for migrants," and "Fort Lupton migrant workers to leave camps."

<sup>23</sup> Housing for more settled agricultural workers was also poor: see Vol. II, Ch. 2A.

the hottest part of the day. Migrant children of all ages commonly went to the fields with their parents, as there was no place else for them to be. Some farmers were still providing only short-handled hoes, which forced workers to remain in stooped positions.<sup>24</sup> A photo in a little booklet prepared by migrant teens in Longmont in summer, 1977 shows two adults bent down over their short hoes, a toddler in the field with them, and a teenaged boy smiling broadly while holding a long-handled hoe.<sup>25</sup> Adelpha Sanchez, aged 13, who took the photo of her family, provided this text to go with it: "They can only use those little hoes. This man, their foreman, whatever you call him, sometimes when he wants to he gives one or two of them long hoes. My brother, I think he's showing that he got one today. You know, 'cause it's harder with the little hoes. With the big ones you can just be standing up and with the little ones you gotta be bent down all day." Migrant workers were not covered by insurance against injuries or ill health and could be fired if they were unable to carry out their jobs. Bob Rangel's father had to sign an insurance waiver when he was hired, as was common for migrants; when one of his arms was cut off in an accident at work, the farmer said he did not need him anymore, and the family had to move on.<sup>26</sup>

Local efforts to improve conditions for temporary farm employees started around 1970. Colorado Rural Legal Services was a statewide project of the OEO that provided free legal assistance to farm workers and acted on their collective behalf.<sup>27</sup> In 1970, a group in Boulder County called Farm Workers United, backed by Colorado Rural Legal Services, publicized the shocking housing and sanitary conditions in which some migrant workers and their families were living.<sup>28</sup> The next year the *Longmont Times-Call*, in a startling reversal of its previous reporting, published a sympathetic illustrated article about the difficulties of migrant life.<sup>29</sup> Over the next few years, public health officials ordered some of the farmers to clean up and modernize the housing they provided; in response a few simply refused to provide any housing at all, leaving their workers to find whatever accommodations they could. The City of Longmont began creating some public housing for migrants:

<sup>24</sup> See Ch. 5A and Illus. 5.1 above, and Murray, "Abolition of El Cortito."

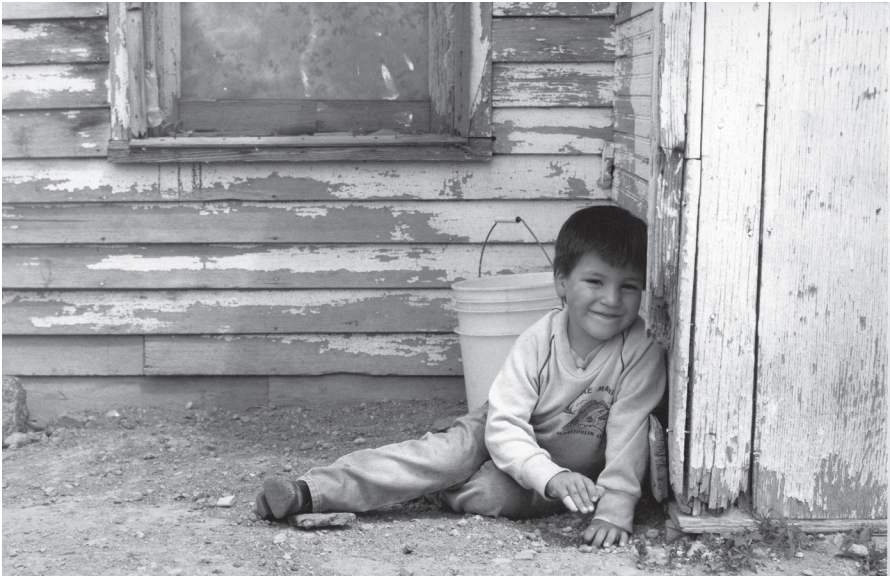
<sup>25</sup> *Como Ellos Lo Ven*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>26</sup> Rangel, Bob, interview, 1979.

<sup>27</sup> For the OEO, see section C below.

<sup>28</sup> "Farm Workers United worried about migrant housing."

<sup>29</sup> "Hardship of migrant living."



*Illus. 6.2. Migrant worker child outside house near Longmont, 1990*

Casa Vista, succeeded by Casa Esperanza.<sup>30</sup> But a set of powerful photos taken in rural areas around Longmont in May, 1990 make clear that some accommodations for migrant workers and their families remained poor.<sup>31</sup>

Other efforts to improve conditions for migrants included a special Community Action Program set up for east Boulder County's farm workers in 1970, again under the auspices of the OEO.<sup>32</sup> The following year, a team of Latino and Anglo lawyers with Colorado Rural Legal Services and the Colorado Migrant Council, another OEO program, brought suit against a local farmer for maltreating his foreign workers, claiming he was running a forced labor camp.<sup>33</sup> Tivi Gauna, a staff member of the Colorado Migrant Council, noted that some farmers exploited their Mexican workers not only by giving them very bad housing but also by restricting their freedom.<sup>34</sup> "Some of the men who live in shacks for this

<sup>30</sup> "Longmont, film of places of historical importance," a video made in 2013, which also displays the only migrant worker barrack still in use.

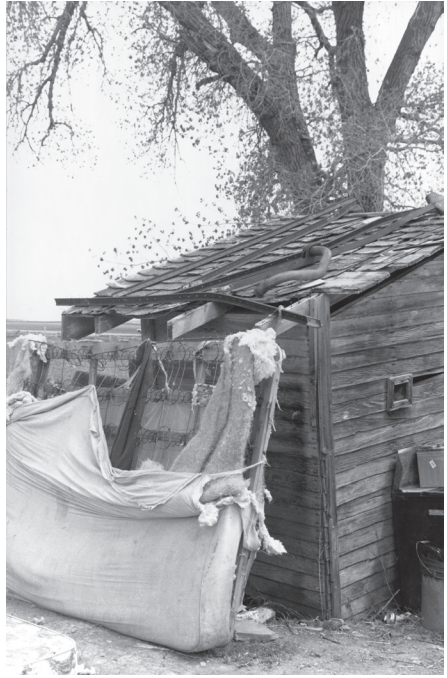
<sup>31</sup> See also "Six children in doorway."

<sup>32</sup> "Better season planned for migrant workers."

<sup>33</sup> "Valley farmer charged with mistreating aliens," "New action filed in alien case," "Suit filed to improve migrant workers' lot," "Area farmer denies labor camp charges," and "A different kind of poor."

<sup>34</sup> Gauna, Tivi, interview, 1979.

*Illus. 6.3. Backyard of migrant worker housing near Longmont, 1990*



one farmer told me they weren't allowed to leave. The farmer wouldn't even take them to town to shop. They weren't allowed to have visitors. A lot of them complained about it. Most didn't say anything." Medical care also improved gradually.<sup>35</sup>

Another form of assistance to migrant workers and other needy families grew out of the work of Sister Carmen Ptacnik, a Daughter of Charity and native of Mexico who was assigned to Immaculate Conception Parish in Lafayette in 1970.<sup>36</sup> Through her work with poor people in the parish, she came to know many of the migrant families living around Lafayette and Erie who did not speak English. She began collecting food, clothing, and household goods for them, gradually expanding her activities and the number of volunteers who helped her. After she retired in 1976, her work was institutionalized in the Sister Carmen Community Center in Lafayette, which continues to provide clothing and food banks, a thrift shop, and classrooms.

Migrant workers' children and the educational challenges they faced received particular attention. These children might attend multiple

<sup>35</sup> See Vol. II, Ch. 3B.

<sup>36</sup> "Sister Carmen Community Center."

schools over the course of the growing season, and even if they remained on one farm all summer, they often left school early in the spring for planting and started late in the fall, after the harvest.<sup>37</sup> (The laws pertaining to work and schooling for children of migrant families were far less stringent than those for settled farm laborers.) Chicano activists and committed educators in the 1970s tried to persuade local schools to be flexible in responding to the needs of migrant children. A few schools created special programs for them, to help them stay caught up with their peers even as they moved between schools or attended for less than the full year. Esther Blazón was instrumental in setting up an English-as-a-Second-Language program for migrant children at Columbine Elementary in Longmont in 1974.<sup>38</sup> Summer programs were created for both younger children and teens.

The ability of migrant children to participate in such programs depended on how long their families remained in the area and hence was always at the mercy of the weather. A painful illustration comes at the back of a photo album prepared by a summer school in the St. Vrain District.<sup>39</sup> After a series of nicely labeled pictures showing children and teens engaged in a variety of interesting activities, the final page has no photos. Instead it contains two sticky notes with the following written on them:

1) Aug. 2, 1986.

Terrible hail storm destroys 75% of crops.

No jobs for workers. Guess we will just move on . . . . .

2) Adiós, Amigos

Adiós, Colorado

In several summer projects during the later 1970s, young people from migrant families interviewed local Latinas/os, took photographs, wrote about their experiences, and produced little books.<sup>40</sup> Some of the pieces shed troubling light on the lives of these children. Paula Torrez, age 15, whose family was working the fields outside Longmont in the summer of 1978, said:

We leave at around five thirty in the morning and we come back at around twelve and we sleep for around two hours. We go back at

<sup>37</sup> For examples, see "Sugar beets brought early Hispanics to Longmont."

<sup>38</sup> "Woman of purpose: Esther Blazon."

<sup>39</sup> "Migrant Summer School Program records."

<sup>40</sup> *El Aguila, Segunda Mirada, and Como Ellos Lo Ven.*



three and we come back at seven thirty. We get paid by the acre. We do the first hoeing and then the second hoeing. The first hoeing you take out every other sugar beet and the weeds, and the second hoeing you take out only the weeds. I started doing it when I was twelve.<sup>41</sup>

Adelpha Sanchez wrote in 1977:

We started hoeing the beets and pickles and cabbage and onions, and we're going to start picking them pretty soon. I'm not going to pick them 'cause my dad doesn't let me. He says that I should stay home and clean house and make supper 'cause my mom comes tired from work. So I do it. That way when she comes from work everything is ready.<sup>42</sup>

The teens who participated in these projects heard some inspirational stories. The group who talked with Benny Rodriguez in 1979 learned how he had worked his way up from washing cars at a Chevrolet dealership in Longmont to having his own body shop.<sup>43</sup> Nothing, he said, is more satisfying than being your own boss. Maria Velasquez, director of the program for Bilingual Teacher Aides at Aims Community College, talked about her childhood living in deep poverty with a single parent mom and ten siblings, all of whom did hand work in the fields as the family followed the crops in California.<sup>44</sup> Maria, who did not speak English as a child, was miserable in school and dropped out in seventh grade to start doing full-time farm work to help her family. After marrying at age 17 and having her children, she took a factory job but later went back to school, got her GED, and was hired as a Head Start teacher, leading to her current position. The girls who talked with Mary Martinez, a Licensed Practical Nurse at the Longmont hospital, and those who later videographed an interview with her were told about her work in the fields as a child, her determination to become a nurse, and her successful struggles as an adult to get the necessary training.<sup>45</sup>

Some of the young migrant workers were encouraged to become activists. Secundino Herrera, a former farm laborer who fought against injustice all through his life, said to the five young people who interviewed him in 1979,

<sup>41</sup> *Segunda Mirada*, p. 8.

<sup>42</sup> *Como Ellos Lo Ven*, p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> Rodriguez, Benny, interview, 1979.

<sup>44</sup> Velasquez, Maria, interview, 1979.

<sup>45</sup> Martinez, Mary, interviews, 1979 and 1988. See also Vol. II, Ch. 6A.

I think migrants should be treated with kind of special attention, with more consideration. . . . They should live better, have transportation, medical assistance, everything, considering that human beings shouldn't live where they put the pigs and hogs, or in a chicken coop. Many farm employers humiliate migrant people. People don't have an appreciation for what we do.<sup>46</sup>

He encouraged the teens to stand up for their rights.

Look, kids, at what we should be doing. Our people, especially Mexicans, the migrants—we should take the initiative steps to defend ourselves, so employers will know that we already know our rights, and that we have hearts in our bodies just like them, . . . and the mentality to understand, to react.

### C. Empowerment through New Opportunities for Work

One factor in the ability of local Chicanos leaders to address the problems confronting their fellow Latinas/os was the opportunities for higher status employment and leadership training that emerged during the later 1960s and 1970s. Programs set up under the OEO were key, because they not only assisted Latinas/os, they employed them. In Boulder County, the ones that had the greatest impact were the Community Action Program, with its many sub-projects, and Head Start. Professional and technical positions also expanded greatly in the later 1960s and 1970s, as did well-paid manufacturing jobs.

#### *The impact of OEO programs*

OEO projects required that local people from among the communities being served should be appointed to their boards and hired as staff members wherever possible. Although these programs relied heavily on volunteers, since they had shoe-string budgets, their policies for hiring paid staff were flexible, designed to bring members of under-represented groups into active participation in dealing with poverty.<sup>47</sup> OEO employees were not required to have formal educational qualifications, and they received on-the-job training plus—in some cases—the time

<sup>46</sup> Herrera, Secundino, interview, 1979, for this and below.

<sup>47</sup> For people remodeling space for an OEO center in Longmont in the late 1960s, see "Horace Hernandez and other volunteers." For the relaxed style of these organizations, see "A Head Start strategy planning meeting."



and financial support with which to get their GED or even a college degree. The Latinas/os who worked with these programs also learned about community organizing, and they acquired the experience and confidence that helped them move into leadership roles in other areas too. An impressive number of Latino leaders in Colorado around 2000, women and men working in a variety of different fields, received their initial jobs and training through the OEO programs of the later 1960s and 1970s. The OEO was closed at the national level in 1981, largely for political reasons, but several of its programs were still functioning under different administrative systems in the 2010s.

Although OEO positions were open to both men and women, they had a particularly profound impact on Latinas, who had previously faced limited options for public involvement. The women who worked with these programs were there on their own, not as appendages of their husbands, and some gained considerable visibility. The fact that their marriages survived these transitions again indicates flexibility and adaptability in the relationships between spouses.

In the short run, OEO employees gained an income, interesting work outside the home, and a chance to contribute to the community. Virginia Alvarez grew up on farms around Longmont, where her parents, Mexican immigrants, had jobs.<sup>48</sup> At Longmont High School, she was too poor to join the clubs that made Anglo young people feel part of a group. But when the OEO was created, she was hired by the Community Action Program in a project for senior citizens. She worked mainly with Latinas/os, making them welcome, organizing lunches, and setting up activities, including little trips. She later described the satisfaction she had gained, as a woman in her 20s and 30s, from helping elderly people remain active and connected with others.

In some cases, OEO work led to further education and leadership roles. Esther Blazón was one of 14 surviving children of a father from Mexico and a mother from Texas.<sup>49</sup> Her parents were migrant farm workers, following the crops seasonally, so Esther lived and went to school in many different places while growing up. The family eventually

<sup>48</sup> Alvarez, Virginia, interview, 2013.

<sup>49</sup> Blazón, Esther, interview, 2013, and "Woman of purpose: Esther Blazon." In that interview, she credited her husband, Hank, for his support and encouragement even when some people in the community in the 1960s wondered why he was letting her get an education and start working. Noting that Hank was continuing his education too, Esther said that together they became role models for other Latino couples.

settled near Longmont. Esther married when she was in her junior year of high school and dropped out when the first of her three children was born. Her teachers did not encourage her to stay in school or return to it: they told her she was “not college material.” As her children got a little older, however, she began feeling restless, wishing she could do more than just stay at home. So, with her husband’s backing, she went back to Longmont High and took the necessary courses to graduate fully, rather than simply doing a GED. (She had to start over again in ninth grade, because the school district had lost her records.) She also began volunteering with Head Start, which her children attended. She was then offered a position as a Family Coordinator with Head Start, and while in that job, she met a man who administered scholarship programs at the University of Colorado. He encouraged her to try for a college degree, connecting her with a funding program for migrant workers’ children and supporting her as she tackled university classes. After receiving her bachelor’s degree from the University of Colorado, Esther worked as a bilingual teacher with the St. Vrain Schools and took part in *El Comité*, a Latino action group formed after two young men were shot by the Longmont police in 1980.<sup>50</sup> Later she went on to earn a master’s degree in counseling from the University of Northern Colorado and worked for 25 years as a mental health specialist with Latino families.

The benefits of engagement with OEO programs were even more pronounced for Emma Gomez Martinez, another highly capable and energetic woman.<sup>51</sup> Emma’s parents had moved from Aguilar, a Spanish-speaking community in the southern Colorado coal mining area, to Erie in 1929, and she and her five brothers and sisters all finished high school, an uncommon pattern in that generation. After graduation in the mid-1940s, Emma went to Boulder to find work, but there were few opportunities even for a well-educated young Latina: she was hired first by a laundry and then as a hotel maid. While in Boulder she met John Martinez, who had grown up in the town, joined the military in World War II, and recently returned; he was currently going to college, thanks to the G.I. Bill. Five years after their marriage in 1947, the couple settled

<sup>50</sup> See Ch. 7C below. For her graduation from the University of Colorado, see “Esther Blazón and family, 1974”; for her graduation from U.N.C., see “Esther Blazón and family, 1980”

<sup>51</sup> The account in this and the following paragraphs is based upon information in “Martinez, Emma Gomez, letter to her children,” “Biographical sketch, Emma Gomez Martinez,” and “Profile, Emma Martinez.”

in the Water + Goss Streets neighborhood of Boulder.<sup>52</sup>

At first Emma was mainly occupied with raising their five children, but in the early 1960s she was asked by Ted Tedesco, the city manager of Boulder, to serve as an interpreter for Spanish-speakers who were moving into this area from other states. In 1965, Tedesco, impressed by her ability, asked her to join the board of the newly created OEO programs for Boulder County and to recruit other Latino members. Shortly thereafter, she was hired as a Neighborhood Aide and Counselor by the Community Action Program. Her initial charge was to examine the status of poor, Spanish-speaking families in the county; she documented many cases of discrimination in housing, employment, and education. Later Emma, assisted by a tiny staff and many volunteers, set up operation in three quonset huts—built originally for returning veterans at the university—in a little park alongside what was then called Water Street. Under her leadership, the Canyon Park Community Center ran programs for children, provided health information and services, and offered job training through its Manpower Program. Over the following years Emma was named as program coordinator, director of the Boulder Center projects, assistant director for the county-wide OEO, and—after her “retirement”—chair of the county OEO’s Board of Directors.

Emma used her energy and talent on behalf of her neighborhood as well, mobilizing Latinas/os and others to take public action. She later described an incident after she and John had settled in the Water + Goss Streets region in the 1950s:

A group of speculators had approached the city of Boulder to name this area that I’m speaking about as a ghetto, and they wanted to eliminate it. The reason that they wanted to eliminate the ghetto where these families resided was because Water Street was planned on being converted to Canyon Boulevard, and the property would become very expensive. Well, John and I started a petition and recruited many of our neighbors and we took it to the city that we were against this urban renewal plan because this is where we resided. It was our community.<sup>53</sup>

Their efforts were successful.

Emma went into action again in the late 1960s, when Water Street was being rebuilt as Canyon Boulevard, designed to let traffic move more quickly across town. As the concrete sidewalks were being poured,

<sup>52</sup> For this area, see Vol. II, Ch. 2B.

<sup>53</sup> Martinez, Emma Gomez, interview, 2013.

a group of parents noticed they were only 24 inches wide, not broad enough to allow children to walk along them safely when going to school. They came to Emma as a spokesperson for the community. Researching the construction plans, she found that the sidewalks were supposed to be wider, whereupon she wrote and circulated a petition among the neighbors and presented it to the construction manager and the City Council. After some discussion, the sidewalks were re-poured at their proper width. Emma also fought repeatedly to save the area around the quonset huts as a park, the only place with playground equipment for neighborhood children, and she organized the local community to do periodic cleanups and maintenance. Eventually the city of Boulder acquired the land, preserving what was for 40 years called Canyon Park.

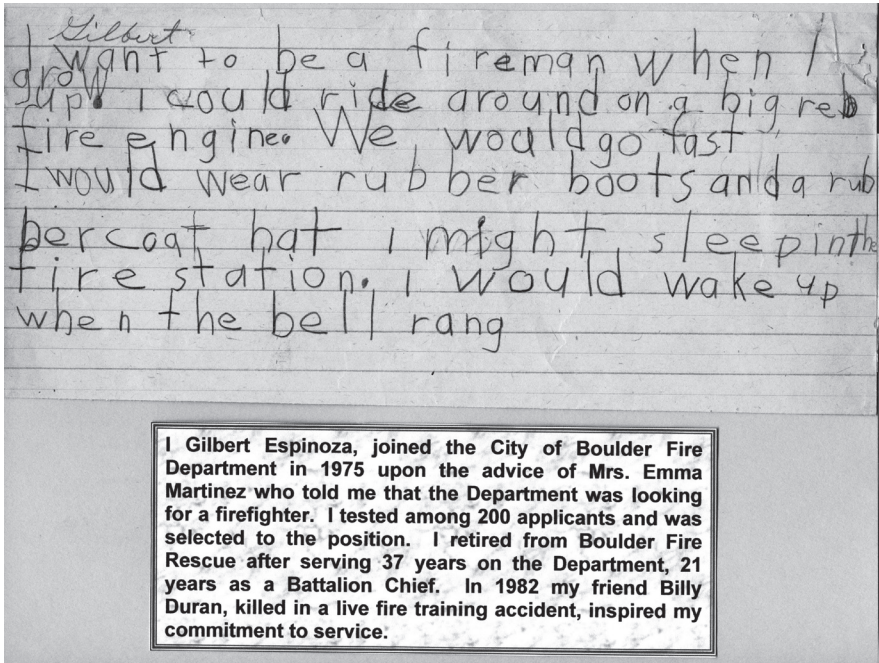
Starting in the 1970s, Emma applied the leadership experience she had gained through OEO work to other organizations. She contributed to a rather amazingly long list of groups throughout Boulder County devoted to the well-being of people living in poverty or experiencing educational or legal challenges, especially children and young people.<sup>54</sup> A statement written in 2013 says that “During her service on these Boards and Commissions, Emma was often the lone voice for the poor and disenfranchised of our community.” She and her husband also operated several successful Mexican restaurants, in Boulder and the Denver suburbs. It was a fitting recognition of her lifetime of involvement with the community that in 2013 Canyon Park was renamed the Emma Gomez Martinez Park.<sup>55</sup>

While Emma may have been exceptionally dedicated and forceful, she was by no means alone in the impact that OEO programs had upon her life. Some people were pulled into community service work by Emma herself. Virginia Maestas said that although she had volunteered occasionally with Head Start when her daughter was enrolled in the program, she had not considered a paying job with OEO, in part because she had not finished high school.<sup>56</sup> But Emma motivated her in two ways. Virginia was extremely impressed when Emma prepared her petition about the Canyon Boulevard sidewalks and took it door-to-door: that was “my first real contact in terms of what we could do as *Mexicanos* to

<sup>54</sup> “Biographical sketch, Emma Gomez Martinez,” for this and below.

<sup>55</sup> “Request to rename park,” “Canyon Park renamed in Emma Gomez Martinez’s honor,” “At dedication of Emma Gomez Martinez Park,” and “Dedication of Emma Gomez Martinez Park.”

<sup>56</sup> Maestas, Virginia, interview, 1978, for this and below.



*Illus. 6.4. Gilbert Espinoza's aspirations and career, 1955 and later*

improve our plight." Emma later organized a conversation with Virginia and a few of her friends over coffee one day and gave them a pep talk about the programs OEO was operating, pointing out that part-time positions were available. Virginia first took a job as a substitute Head Start teacher and then moved to a regular position with an OEO program at a neighborhood center in Lafayette. She later obtained her GED and by 1978 was working as a bilingual aide in a public school kindergarten. At age 46 she began taking college classes; after receiving her bachelor's degree, she worked as an elementary school teacher.<sup>57</sup> When Doris Ogeda Gonzales was 19, she met Emma Martinez, who found jobs for her and "helped her climb the ladder."<sup>58</sup> Phil Hernandez's first job was with Head Start, an opening he heard about from Emma, who was his aunt.<sup>59</sup> She also encouraged Gilbert Espinoza, who had wanted to be a fireman

<sup>57</sup> Maestas, Virginia, interview, 2013.

<sup>58</sup> Gonzales, Doris, interview, 2013. For another example of Emma's influence, see Lehmann, Jessie Velez, interview, 1978.

<sup>59</sup> Phil spent his subsequent career as director of Equal Opportunity Employment programs for the University of Colorado and several divisions of Colorado's state government.

since he was a child, to apply for a position with the Fire Department, leading to his 37 years of service.

People were drawn into OEO programs through other kinds of personal contact as well. Ricardo Garcia and his wife Anna came to Boulder in 1970 so he could attend the university.<sup>60</sup> They lived at first in the quonset huts along Canyon Boulevard, which Ricardo described in his 1977 interview as “a very nice little *barrio* where people were friendly to each other.” Later Ricardo helped to organize the group that applied for and received a \$500,000 grant from the Federal Housing Administration to build the low-income residential complex known as Alvarado Village, sponsored by St. Thomas Aquinas Chapel at the university.<sup>61</sup> The Garcias’ children were in Head Start, but Ricardo and Anna did not take active part until his sister sent Ruth Rodriguez to talk with them. Ruth, a Head Start teacher, stressed how important it was for Chicanos to be involved in their children’s education. She encouraged them to join the Parent Advisory Council, because that group interviewed potential teachers and advised on the school’s content and approach. Ricardo and Anna went onto the Council and later participated in the Follow Through program. He was then elected to the Boulder Human Relations Commission, where he worked on such issues as police harassment of Latinos, lack of recreation facilities, and attacks on Chicano students at the university by community people or the police. For the rest of his career, Richard promoted forms of teaching that meet the individual needs of all children, including bilingual approaches.<sup>62</sup>

The OEO’s insistence that people who were assisted by their programs should also help to run them plus the lack of fixed criteria about educational level and previous experience thus enabled some highly competent people—especially women—to move into positions that served the community. People looking for similar jobs in the 2010s face far more restricted opportunities, based upon formal education, specialized training, and/or prior work. When one sees what valuable and often sustained contributions the OEO-trained people of the later 1960s and 1970s made to their communities, it seems unfortunate that the door has now been largely closed to people who lack rigidly defined qualifications.

<sup>60</sup> Garcia, Ricardo and Anna, interview, 1977, and Garcia, Richard, interview, 2013.

<sup>61</sup> For St. Thomas Aquinas, see Vol. II, Ch. 5C.

<sup>62</sup> In 2013, Richard was founder and director of the Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition and chair of the Board of Directors of The Community Foundation Serving Boulder County; see also Ch. 7B below.



*Other types of expanding employment*

Boulder County's Latinas/os gained additional authority and public legitimacy between 1965 and 1980 thanks to other kinds of new employment. These positions, which generally required at least a high school education, were filled by both local people and newcomers. The number of jobs for professionals and technical workers increased at Rocky Flats (which produced plutonium triggers for hydrogen bombs), the University of Colorado, the national research labs in Boulder, and the Federal Aviation Administration's air traffic control center in Longmont. Especially important was the large research and production plant founded between Longmont and Boulder by IBM.

These developments caused a substantial increase in the number of employees from Spanish-speaking backgrounds in Boulder County and the range of jobs they held. The 488 Spanish-surnamed workers whose occupations are listed in the three *City Directories* in 1965 had jumped to 903 in 1975, and the distribution of positions they held, by category of employment, had shifted markedly.<sup>63</sup> Whereas 31% of those employees in 1965 were unskilled laborers and another 20% were service workers, ten years later only 15% were laborers and 17% service workers. Instead, there was a rise in nearly all other classifications, with the exception of skilled craft workers. We will look here just at a few types of employment that had a particularly marked impact.

Although Rocky Flats had opened in 1952, production increased across the 1960s. Run initially by the Dow Chemical Company on behalf of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, Rocky Flats eventually employed thousands of semi-skilled or skilled workers from around the region, including some from Boulder County. At the time, jobs at the plant seemed to offer good opportunities: wages were high, and workers got good benefits. John S. Chavez, who worked at Rocky Flats for many years and was a union steward for the United Steelworkers, believed he was serving his country.

Initially there was some racial/ethnic discrimination in Rocky Flats' hiring. When Al Cardenas of Boulder applied for a job in the late 1950s, Dow Chemical's managers said that minority candidates were generally not qualified to do the work and could not pass the tests.<sup>64</sup> Out of some 1,200 employees, Al remembered that only nine were Hispanic and nine

<sup>63</sup> See App. 3.3.

<sup>64</sup> Cardenas, Alfonso, interview, 2004. Al did pass and was hired.

John was being interviewed by a reporter for one of the T. V. stations in Denver. They wanted to know about the hazards of his job at Rocky Flats. He always defended what he was doing and said it wasn't any worse than being a police officer or fighting fires.

Dad was a union steward for the United Steelworkers. He knew that there were a lot of criticisms regarding his work there. Rocky Flats employed many Hispanic men and women who like Dad were loyal American citizens and believed in what they were doing.



*Illus. 6.5. John S. Chavez, Jr. at Rocky Flats, 1976*

African American. Later, however, the number of Latinas/os increased. By 1975, at least 29 people from our three towns worked there.<sup>65</sup>

The drawback for employees at Rocky Flats was that many were exposed to massive amounts of radiation. They routinely handled ingots of uranium, their hands and faces were only a short distance away from the plutonium they were putting into the “buttons” that would become bomb triggers, and some worked with beryllium, which was particularly dangerous. The extent to which Dow Chemical and the Atomic Energy Commission were aware of the long-term risks to their employees is disputed, but some of the workers later died of radiation exposure, mainly berylliosis.<sup>66</sup>

Others workers, however, survived with no serious harm, especially if they were not employed inside the buildings that processed radioactive materials. When Frank Archuleta of Lafayette was drafted for the Korean War, having been a paratrooper in World War II, he was reassigned to

<sup>65</sup> “Occupations and Employers, Three Towns, 1975.” For Polk’s *City Directories*, see Ch. 3, note 62 above.

<sup>66</sup> See Vol. II, Ch. 3B.



Rocky Flats as a member of the Security Force; he remained there for the next 36 years, retiring as manager of the force.<sup>67</sup> John Martinez, Emma Gomez Martinez's husband, likewise worked at Rocky Flats for more than 30 years. Hank Blazón, Esther's husband, who had grown up on a farm near Longmont and had a certificate from an electronics school in Denver, did a four-year apprenticeship as a machinist at Rocky Flats.<sup>68</sup> Mounting concern about the danger and pollution caused by Rocky Flats, expressed through increasingly large protest marches (numbering as many as 15,000 people), a fine of \$18.5 million imposed on the later operator of the plant for massive safety violations, and the ending of the Cold War all contributed to the decision to cease production in 1989.

Many more Latinas/os found jobs at the large manufacturing plant and research unit established by IBM in 1965. At its peak, in the later 1970s and 1980s, it had around 8,000 employees. Until 1971, IBM hired relatively few Latinas/os, and they were not promoted to higher positions.<sup>69</sup> But then a group of five employees, including Cookie Chavez (a graduate of the University of Colorado) filed a federal discrimination suit against IBM for lack of advancement opportunities. At about the same time, Joe Martinez joined IBM's Human Resources office.

In 1972, the company began a deliberate program of aggressive affirmative action recruitment for both professional/technical employees and manufacturing workers. It made jobs in the manufacturing division attractive to Latinos, African Americans, and Native Americans by providing higher wages and more extensive benefits than were normally available, and it allowed people who came in at an entry level to move up, including into management. For its research division, IBM cultivated young computer programmers, engineers, and skilled technicians from among the growing number of Latino students graduating from the University of Colorado and other institutions. It sent agents to talk with students of color in other states, especially Texas and California, and it hired people from foreign countries, including Spain. Claude Lamory, a Latino in Human Resources, brought in people of color as accountants

<sup>67</sup> "Archuleta, Frank and Cora, biography." He was also a Lt. Colonel in the Colorado National Guard.

<sup>68</sup> Blazón, William ("Hank"), interview, 2013.

<sup>69</sup> This paragraph and the next report information from Emma Peña-McCleave (based upon her own work experience at IBM, that of her husband, and recent discussions with other former employees), as described in a conversation with Marjorie McIntosh, July 30, 2013. For the IBM plant in 2013, when it had many fewer employees, see "Longmont, film of places of historical importance."

and lower-level managers.<sup>70</sup> By 1975, IBM was hiring 71 Spanish-surnamed people from our three towns, making it the largest single employer among those listed in the *City Directories*.<sup>71</sup> Many of these employees lived in nearby Longmont and became part of the Chicano activist group there.

Several people interviewed by the BCLHP had been long-time IBM employees. In 1974, Hank Blazón went from Rocky Flats to IBM, where he received further training in machine maintenance and took engineering courses.<sup>72</sup> Later he worked in the research labs, and when the company closed the manufacturing division, he re-trained to do computer work and scheduling. Heriberto (“Beto”) Moreno was born in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico but was brought across the border by his grandparents as a child.<sup>73</sup> Becoming a U.S. citizen when he was 18, Moreno studied mechanical engineering at the University of Texas at El Paso. When he graduated in 1974, he was recruited by IBM and remained there until his retirement. He and his wife Marta (also from El Paso) settled in Longmont, where they were to be founding members of El Comité in 1980.<sup>74</sup> Augustine Eliseo Cordova, who had been active in the Chicano student movement at the University of Colorado in the mid-1970s, was invited to IBM as a software engineer in 1977.<sup>75</sup> He too remained with the firm until he retired.

Because of the new working opportunities, the number of Latino professionals, paraprofessionals, and technicians increased greatly in this period. In our three towns, the *City Directories* list only 37 professional people with Spanish surnames in 1965 but 101 in 1975; in 1965 there were 12 paraprofessionals and technicians but 60 in 1975.<sup>76</sup> In the latter year, the University of Colorado in Boulder employed 67 Latinas/os, 29 of them in faculty, counseling, or administrative positions; another 74 Latinas/os worked for the Boulder Valley or St. Vrain Valley public schools, 29 of them as teachers. The federal government’s labs in Boulder, including the National Center for Atmospheric Research and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, employed 16 more. Additional positions were provided by municipal governments,

<sup>70</sup> Augustine Eliseo Cordova, conversations with Marjorie McIntosh, July 17, 2013.

<sup>71</sup> “Occupations and Employers, Three Towns, 1975.”

<sup>72</sup> Blazón, William (“Hank”), interview, 2013.

<sup>73</sup> Moreno, Heriberto (“Beto”), interview, 2013.

<sup>74</sup> See Ch. 7C below.

<sup>75</sup> Cordova, Augustine E., interview, 2013, and see Ch. 7B below.

<sup>76</sup> App. 3.3. For below, see “Occupations and Employers, Three Towns, 1975.”

which together hired 48 Latinas/os; 18 people worked as laboratory, electronic, or medical technicians or draftsmen.

Other jobs were opening up too. By 1975, unskilled Latino workers were employed not only in construction (39) and food processing firms (34), but also by Slack Horner Foundries (35) and Red Dale Coach's manufacturing division (20).<sup>77</sup> Only eight people said they owned businesses when asked by *City Directory* representatives about their employment, but nineteen were managers and seventeen worked in sales. Miguel Medina moved to Longmont in the late 1960s and set up his music shop, Casa Medina, which became a cultural center for local Latinas/os.<sup>78</sup>

Several earlier types of work were still present in 1975.<sup>79</sup> Great Western Sugar employed five Latinas/os in its processing plant and seven in its agricultural research center. Strikingly, however, not a single other person described himself as a farm laborer. (Because migrant workers were not permanent residents, they were not included in the *City Directories*.) Rather surprisingly, 24 men said they were coal miners. Since few mines were still producing coal, some of them were probably doing clean-up and maintaining security for ones that had closed.

Longmont Turkey Processors, which hired 13 male and 4 female Latino laborers and 2 supervisors in 1975, continued to provide an unpleasant and high-risk working environment. Lucia Villagran's husband, who had been a field worker in New Mexico, came to Longmont in 1967 because a relative of his who was already employed at the plant found him a job.<sup>80</sup> Lucia soon began to work there too. Although she enjoyed the regularity and sociability of the job, including the picnics in Roosevelt Park for employees, the work was dangerous. Her husband was injured when a hose broke loose and hit him, and she herself fell onto the cement floor and hurt her knee after tripping over a hose. She was sent first to the factory's nurse, who told her to get back to work; when her family protested to the manager a few days later because she was unable to walk, he agreed to have her see a doctor. She had to use a cane for three months, and the company denied her benefits from then on. When a neighbor cut his finger badly while on the job, his family had to hire an attorney to force the company to pay his medical bills.

<sup>77</sup> "Occupations and Employers, Three Towns, 1975."

<sup>78</sup> Medina, Miguel, interview, 2013, and see Vol. II, Ch. 4B.

<sup>79</sup> "Occupations and Employers, Three Towns, 1975."

<sup>80</sup> Villagran, Lucia and Lily, interview, 2013, for this paragraph.



*Illus. 6.6. Turkey processing at the Longmont plant, 1960s*

As part of a summer program for migrant worker teens in 1979, several of the young people interviewed one of the managers of the turkey plant.<sup>81</sup> After taking them on a tour of the facility, he said that it offered good employment for temporary workers, since the factory needed extra employees during the summer. Although he admitted that conditions in the plant were cold and damp, as was necessary when working with meat products, he emphasized the training given to employees and noted that most of the accidents were minor—just cuts and falls. He mentioned also that the workers were unionized.

To balance that account, the teens wanted to hear from an employee of the turkey plant. They decided to interview Manuel Rodriguez, the 19-year-old brother of one of them, who was at the plant for a second summer.<sup>82</sup> He had started working that year in a freezer unit, but when he quit because the work was so cold, he was rehired to load the turkeys “from the trailer-trucks onto the hooks which move them slowly to their deaths, upside down.” Manuel complained about many aspects of how employees were treated. They were paid by contract (their pay based on how much work they did), and the amount they received was too little. Working conditions were terrible. When he developed eye and

<sup>81</sup> Bine, Tom, interview, 1979.

<sup>82</sup> Rodriguez, Manuel, interview, 1979.

lung problems from the dirt, dust, and feathers, the company said at first it would send him to a doctor but then refused. Further, the plant was frequently raided by officials of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, who each time took away 15 or 20 Mexican employees who lacked formal papers. Because so many of the workers were “illegals,” they could not protest against how they were treated. The union was so weak that Manuel did not even bother to join it.

Latinas continued their movement into the labor force in the later 1960s and 1970s. In 1975, 200 were reported by the *City Directories* as employed outside the home, as compared with 99 a decade earlier.<sup>83</sup> As before, they constituted somewhat under a quarter of all Latinas/os whose occupations we know, but the nature of their employment had continued to move up, away from the earlier preponderance of domestic service workers. Because more women were now graduating from high school and some were going to college, they qualified for a much wider range of jobs. Whereas in 1955, 65% of the women whose occupations are known in these three towns were service workers, unskilled laborers, or “helpers”/“employees,” by 1975 that figure had dropped to 44%. In Boulder, 24% of the 90 Latinas listed held professional positions in 1975; 16% were paraprofessionals, technicians, or administrative support/sales workers; and another 16% were machine operators. Some novel kinds of work for women had appeared. Starting around 1970, Becky Archuleta Ortega became a technical specialist for Ball Corporation Aerospace Systems in Boulder; her job was to check over the designs for the thermal blankets that covered space satellites, supervise their construction, and go to the launch sites to fit them into place or carry out repairs.<sup>84</sup>

The percentage of women within the total known Latino/Latina workforce was by no means the same in all three towns. Only 8% of Lafayette’s workers as recorded by the *City Directories* were female, unlike the 21% in Longmont and the 31% in Boulder. That suggests that family patterns in Lafayette had remained fairly traditional, with the great majority of women working exclusively within the home and perhaps experiencing stronger male dominance. Lafayette’s Latino community had received relatively little new immigration in the previous decades, and the older families may have preserved earlier economic and social

<sup>83</sup> App. 3.3, “Occupations and Employers, Three Towns, 1965,” and “Occupations and Employers, Three Towns, 1975.”

<sup>84</sup> “Archuleta family history.”

ways. Longmont had many new arrivals, both middle class families and poor households in which women had to take paid employment to help make ends meet. The more highly educated and economically secure families in Boulder—older residents and newcomers alike—had apparently moved to the pattern of higher status female labor found among many local Anglo families as well.

In some families that had been in this area for several generations, an underlying change that facilitated Latinas' ability to take demanding jobs outside the home was what appears to have been a marked decline in the birthrate.<sup>85</sup> We do not have quantified evidence, but personal narratives suggest that whereas many immigrants to Boulder County prior to 1940 had very large families (8 to 10 children were common), the size dropped thereafter. By 1980, Latinas with a high school or college education seem to have had about the same number of children as their Anglo peers, though new immigrants generally had larger families.

By the end of the 1970s, leaders from Spanish-speaking backgrounds in Boulder County had created a Chicano identity for themselves and others. They were proud of their ethnic and cultural heritage and celebrated it publicly. They felt an obligation to articulate the challenges facing those who had not enjoyed the same opportunities, and they attempted to correct some of the problems faced by migrant workers. Although Latino educators created special educational initiatives for Spanish-speaking children and those from migrant families, such programs lasted for no more than a generation or two. By the 2010s, bilingual classrooms and activities for migrant worker children had been severely reduced in the Boulder Valley and St. Vrain Valley Schools Districts, even though the ongoing arrival of new immigrants and temporary field workers created a constant demand. Several of the people most heavily involved with the Boulder County Latino History Project had started their educational work in the 1970s and were bitterly disappointed that opportunities for Latino children had been cut back so sharply. The reductions derived in part from budgetary problems in the school districts, but they were promoted by some School Board members who believed that all Latino children should be put immediately into regular English-only classrooms.

The middle class newcomers who settled in Boulder County in the later 1960s and 1970s joined with local people who had attained

<sup>85</sup> See Vol. II, Ch. 1A.

comparable levels of academic and/or occupational success in forming a pool of natural leaders. But local Chicano activists were not drawn only from those families. Some factory workers, craftsmen, housewives, and others were equally committed to change, and they worked effectively with more highly educated Latinas/os in trying to bring it about. In Lafayette and Longmont, only 8% - 11% of the Latinas/os whose occupations are known in 1975 worked as professionals, para-professionals, and technicians, as contrasted with 34% in Boulder.<sup>86</sup> Yet as we shall see, Chicano activism was strong in all three communities.

<sup>86</sup> "Summary, Occupational Analysis, Longmont, 1926-1975," "Summary, Occupational Analysis, Lafayette, 1926-1975," and "Summary, Occupational Analysis, Boulder, 1926-1975."

## List of Illustrations, with Credits

All the images listed below are hyperlinked to their original online sources. They can be viewed by clicking on the underlined blue text at the end of each entry. Those that have a reference number beginning with “BCLHP” are on the Boulder County Latino History website:

<http://bocolatinohistory.colorado.edu/>

It contains hundreds of additional photos and other types of material as well.

- 6.1. Phil and Eleanor Hernandez in Mexican costumes, Boulder, 1948. Courtesy of Tom Martinez. [BCLHP-FP-052](#).
- 6.2. Migrant worker child outside house near Longmont, 1990. Photo taken at migrant farm east of Longmont, off highway 119, May, 1990; Denisse Yamashita Allaire, photographer. Courtesy of Longmont Museum. LM, 2014.002.008.  
<http://longmont.pastperfectonline.com/photo/F3379038-AA34-4C51-99AD-611947901296>
- 6.3. Backyard of migrant worker housing near Longmont, 1990. Photo taken at migrant farm east of Longmont, off highway 119, May, 1990; Denisse Yamashita Allaire, photographer. Courtesy of Longmont Museum. LM, 2014.002.002.  
<http://longmont.pastperfectonline.com/photo/F1EDA17E-53E9-4465-B624-292725823461>
- 6.4. Gilbert Espinoza’s aspirations and career, 1955 and later. Courtesy of Gilbert Espinoza. [BCLHP-FP-079](#).
- 6.5. John S. Chavez, Jr. at Rocky Flats, 1976. Courtesy of Mary Ellen Chavez. [BCLHP-FP-110](#).
- 6.6. Turkey processing at the Longmont plant, 1960s. Courtesy of Longmont Museum. LM, 1995.028.004.  
<http://longmont.pastperfectonline.com/photo/9FE03D84-E659-4AB1-8A88-524464283954>



# Sources

## Explanations

Most of the items listed below are hyperlinked to their original online sources. They can be viewed by clicking on the underlined blue text at the end of each entry.

**BCLHP Collection, Carnegie Library.** Materials collected by the Boulder County Latino History Project, 2013-2014. Deposited at Carnegie Branch Library for Local History, Boulder Public Library.

**BCLHP references.**<sup>1</sup> These provide the ID number for items accessible on the Boulder County Latino History website, [bocolatinohistory.colorado.edu](http://bocolatinohistory.colorado.edu). It contains hundreds of other sources, which can be searched in various ways.

If a given item contains multiple pages on the website, only the initial ID number is shown here; the following pages are linked to that one.

**Carnegie Library.** Carnegie Branch Library for Local History, Boulder Public Library.

**LM.** Longmont Museum.

**LPL.** Lafayette Public Library.

**MROHP.** Maria Rogers Oral History Program, Carnegie Branch Library for Local History, Boulder Public Library.

**Valdez Papers.** Materials preserved by Euvaldo Valdez concerning two organizations in the 1970s: Mexican Americans of Boulder County United (MABCU); and the Boulder County Council of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). University of Colorado at Boulder Archives, Norlin Library.

Information cited as from a conversation with Marjorie McIntosh on a stated date has been confirmed in writing and approved for use in this study by the authors of those statements.

All websites listed below were last accessed November 10-18, 2015.

<sup>1</sup> For entries with a BCLHP reference:

- Items labelled as FP are family photographs loaned by community members and digitized by the BCLHP. The photographers are unknown unless specified.
- Items labelled as LHS are photos loaned to the Longmont Hispanic Study in 1987-8 by a relative or descendent of the people shown. They were converted into slides by Oli Olivas Duncan for use in public presentations associated with the 1988 publication of *We, Too, Came to Stay: A History of the Longmont Hispanic Community*, which she edited. In 2014, the BCLHP was given permission to make digital copies of the slides, many of which showed unidentified people. The dates, locations, and photographers of these photos are unknown unless specified.

## A. Sources about Boulder County Latinas/os

"2-year-old wears a Mexican costume," *Boulder Daily Camera*, May 4, 1975.  
[BCLHP-SCW-067](#).

Abila, Tom. Oral history interview; Jessie Velez Lehmann, interviewer, 1978.  
Audio and transcript, MROHP.  
<http://oralhistory.boulderlibrary.org/interview/oh0085>.

Alvarez, Virginia. Oral history interview; Esther Blazón, interviewer, 2013.  
Video and transcript, MROHP.  
<http://oralhistory.boulderlibrary.org/interview/oh1875>.

"Archuleta family history." Prepared for Boulder Hispanic Families project, 2012. Becky Archuleta, personal copy. [BCLHP-FP-232](#).

"Archuleta, Frank and Cora. Biography," in *Lafayette, Colorado*, F17.  
[BCLHP-SCW-182](#).

"Area farmer denies labor camp charges," *Longmont Times-Call*, PACE, Oct. 6, 1971. [BCLHP-MKM-227](#).

"At dedication of Emma Gomez Martinez Park," Oct. 11, 2013. Thomas Martinez, personal copy. [BCLHP-FP-143](#).

"Better season planned for migrant workers," *Longmont Times-Call*, May 29, 1970. [BCLHP-MKM-209](#).

Bine, Tom, superintendent, Longmont Foods Turkey Plant. Interview; Olga Rodriguez and José Santana, interviewers, 1979. In *El Aguila*, pp. 14-18.  
[BCLHP-MKM-626](#).

"Biographical sketch, Emma Gomez Martinez," written in 2012. Phil Hernandez, personal copy. [BCLHP-MKM-455](#).

Blazón, Esther. Oral history interview; Linda Arroyo-Holmstrom, interviewer, 2013. Video and transcript, MROHP.  
<http://oralhistory.boulderlibrary.org/interview/oh1879>.

Blazón, William ("Hank"). Oral history interview; Jaime Rios, interviewer, 2013. Video and transcript, MROHP.  
<http://oralhistory.boulderlibrary.org/interview/oh1877>.

"Boulder's Chicano Community, 1978 KGNU radio interview." Carnegie Branch Library for Local History, Boulder, OH 0201. [BCLHP-MKM-049](#).

"Canyon Park renamed in Emma Gomez Martinez's honor," Boulder, 2013, p. 1. *Boulder Daily Camera*, Nov. 8, 2013. Tom Martinez, personal copy.  
[BCLHP-FP-047](#).

Cardenas, Alfonso. Oral history interview; Dorothy D. Ciarlo, interviewer, 2004. Video and summary, MROHP.  
<http://oralhistory.boulderlibrary.org/interview/oh1212>.

"Chicano Fiesta de la Gente planned," *Boulder Daily Camera*, July 23, 1976. [BCLHP-SCW-069](#).

*Como Ellos Lo Ven: Migrant Children Look at Life in Longmont*. Ed. Judith Lessow Hurley, St. Vrain Valley Summer Migrant Education Program, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 1977. Margaret Alfonso, personal copy. Excerpts in BCLHP Collection, Carnegie Library.

Cordova, Augustine E. Oral history interview; Margaret Alfonso, interviewer, 2013. Video and transcript, MROHP. <http://oralhistory.boulderlibrary.org/interview/oh1874>.

Cordova, Patsy. Oral history interview; Oli Duncan, interviewer, c. 1987. In Duncan, ed., *We, Too, Came to Stay*, pp. 23-25. [BCLHP-MKM-696](#).

"Dedication of Emma Gomez Martinez Park." *Boulder Daily Camera*, Oct. 11, 2013. Thomas Martinez, personal copy. [BCLHP-FP-144](#).

"A different kind of poor," *Longmont Times-Call*, Oct. 15, 1971. [BCLHP-MKM-228](#).

*El Aguila: The Eagle* (written and illustrated by migrant teens), IDEAS, Nederland, CO, 1979. BCLHP-MKM-612 through 654. Individual interviews are available online, listed here under the person's name. Margaret Alfonso, personal copy. BCLHP Collection, Carnegie Library.

"Esther Blazón and family, 1974," at her undergraduate graduation from University of Colorado, Boulder. Esther Blazón, personal copy. [BCLHP-FP-021](#).

"Esther Blazón and family, 1980," with her graduate degree from Univ. of Northern Colorado and son Bill's graduation from Longmont High School. Esther Blazón, personal copy. [BCLHP-FP-022](#).

"Farm Workers United worried about migrant housing," *Longmont Times-Call*, Apr. 24, 1970. [BCLHP-MKM-201](#).

"Farmers concerned about irresponsibility of migrant workers," *Longmont Times-Call*, July 3, 1968. [BCLHP-MKM-196](#).

"Fort Lupton migrant workers to leave camps," *Longmont Times-Call*, Nov. 7, 1969. [BCLHP-MKM-223](#).

Garcia, Ricardo and Anna. Oral history interview; Pauline Romano, interviewer, 1977. Audio and summary, MROHP. <http://oralhistory.boulderlibrary.org/interview/oh0088>.

Garcia, Richard. Oral history interview; Philip Hernandez, interviewer, 2013. Video and transcript, MROHP. <http://oralhistory.boulderlibrary.org/interview/oh1872>.

Gauna, Tivi. Interview; Alex Gomez, interviewer, 1979. In *El Aguila*, pp. 12-13. [BCLHP-MKM-624](#).

Gonzales, Doris. Oral history interview; Jeff Dodge, interviewer, 2013. Audio and summary, MROHP. <http://oralhistory.boulderlibrary.org/interview/oh1920>.

"Hardship of migrant living," p. 1, *Longmont Times-Call*, PACE, Oct. 15, 1971. [BCLHP-MKM-199](#).

"A Head Start strategy planning meeting," 1968. Phil Hernandez, personal copy. [BCLHP-FP-031](#).

Herrera, Secundino. Interview; Maura Diaz, Rosa Garcia, Lorenzo Huerta, Hilda Nunez, and Nati Santana, interviewers, 1979. In *El Aguila*, pp. 39-41. [BCLHP-MKM-652](#).

"Horace Hernandez and other volunteers" remodeling space for OEO Center in Longmont, late 1960s? Phil Hernandez, personal copy. [BCLHP-FP-007](#).

"Latino doctor backs funding of Mental Health Center," 1978, *Boulder Daily Camera*, Oct. 11, 1978. [BCLHP-SCW-024](#).

"Latino doctor criticizes decision to cut funds," *Boulder Daily Camera*, Sept. 17, 1978. [BCLHP-SCW-028](#).

Lehmann, Jessie Velez. Oral history interview; Regina Vigil, interviewer, 1978. Audio and transcript, MROHP. <http://oralhistory.boulderlibrary.org/interview/oh0089>.

"Local woman demonstrates traditional South American dances," *Boulder Daily Camera*, May 7, 1976. [BCLHP-SCW-068](#).

"Longmont, film of places of historical importance" to Latinos, made in 2013. Esther Blazón, narrator; Ana Gonzalez Dorta, videographer and editor. Produced for BCLHP. [BCLHP-MKM-101](#).

"Los Aztecas celebrate Cinco de Mayo," *Boulder Daily Camera*, May 4, 1975. [BCLHP-SCW-070](#).

Maestas, Roy. Oral history interview; Jessie Velez Lehmann, interviewer, 1978. Audio and summary, MROHP. <http://oralhistory.boulderlibrary.org/interview/oh0082>.

Maestas, Virginia. Oral history interview; Regina Vigil, interviewer, 1978. Audio and transcript, MROHP. <http://oralhistory.boulderlibrary.org/interview/oh0083>.

Maestas, Virginia. Oral history interview; Jeff Dodge, interviewer, 2013. Audio and summary, MROHP. <http://oralhistory.boulderlibrary.org/interview/oh1923>.

"Martinez, Emma Gomez. Letter to Her Children." Tom Martinez, personal copy. BCLHP Collection, Carnegie Library. [BCLHP-MKM-446](#).

Martinez, Mary. Interview; Becky Lovato, Olga Rodriguez, and Connie Saldivar, interviewers, 1979. In *El Aguila*, pp. 28-30. [BCLHP-MKM-641](#).

Martinez, Mary. Oral history interview; interviewer unknown, 1988. Video and detailed summary, MROHP. <http://oralhistory.boulderlibrary.org/interview/oh1912>.

Medina, Maria. Oral history interview; interviewer unknown, c. 1978. Audio and summary, MROHP. <http://oralhistory.boulderlibrary.org/interview/oh0080>.

Medina, Miguel. Oral history interview; Jaime Rios, interviewer, 2013. Video and transcript, MROHP.

<http://oralhistory.boulderlibrary.org/interview/oh1878>.

"Mexican holiday planned," *Boulder Daily Camera*, Mar. 26, 1975.

[BCLHP-SCW-066](#).

"Mexican-American housing problems discussed at Congregational Church," *Boulder Daily Camera*, Feb. 24, 1969. [BCLHP-SCW-079](#).

"Mexican-American school problems discussed in Congregational class," *Boulder Daily Camera*, Nov. 18, 1968. [BCLHP-SCW-085](#).

"Mexican-American youth conference scheduled" (part 1), *Boulder Daily Camera*, May 6, 1969. [BCLHP-SCW-081](#).

"Migrant Summer School Program records." LM, St. Vrain School District Records, Box 8. Not online.

"Migrant workers love Colorado, life of travel," *Longmont Times-Call*, July 2, 1968. [BCLHP-MKM-189](#).

"Migrants refuse to move," *Longmont Times-Call*, Oct. 17, 1969.

[BCLHP-MKM-220](#).

Moreno, Heriberto ("Beto"). Oral history interview; Ray Rodriguez, interviewer, 2013. Video and transcript, MROHP.

<http://oralhistory.boulderlibrary.org/interview/oh1897>.

"New action filed in alien case," *Longmont Times-Call*, Sept. 27, 1971.

[BCLHP-MKM-225](#).

"Occupations and Employers of Latino-Surnamed Adults, Three Towns." Compiled by BCLHP from *Polk's City Directories*.

1965, [BCLHP-Occ-005](#)

1975, [BCLHP-Occ-006](#)

"Police a major Chicano concern," *Boulder Daily Camera*, May 6, 1975.

[BCLHP-SCW-107](#).

"Profile, Emma Martinez." *Boulder Daily Camera*, undated clipping, 1980s? Tom Martinez, personal copy. [BCLHP-FP-046](#).

Rangel, Bob. Interview; Carla Lovato, Jose Santana, Marcus Medina, and Andrew Valencia, interviewers, 1979. In *El Aguila*, pp. 31-33.

[BCLHP-MKM-644](#).

"Report on State of the Mexican-Americans in Boulder," *Boulder Daily Camera*, Jan. 28, 1973. [BCLHP-SCW-156](#).

"Request to rename park after Emma Gomez Martinez," 2013. Philip Hernandez, personal copy. BCLHP Collection, Carnegie Library.

[BCLHP-MKM-351](#).

Rodriguez, Benny. Interview; Andrew Valencia, Maura Diaz, Alex Gomez, Lorenzo Huerta, and Theresa Zuniga, interviewers, 1979. In *El Aguila*, pp. 20-23. [BCLHP-MKM-633](#).

Rodriguez, Manuel. Interview; Olga Rodriguez, interviewer, 1979. In *El Aguila*, pp. 18-19. [BCLHP-MKM-631](#).

*Segunda Mirada: Migrant Children Look at Life in Longmont*. Ed. Judith Lessow-Hurley, St. Vrain Valley Summer Migrant Education Program, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 1978. Margaret Alfonso, personal copy. Excerpts in BCLHP Collection, Carnegie Library.

"Sister Carmen Community Center." In *Lafayette, Colorado*, T104. [BCLHP-SCW-176](#).

"Six children in doorway." Photo taken at migrant farm east of Longmont, off highway 119, May, 1990. Denisse Yamashita Allaire, photographer. LM, 2014.002.009.

<http://longmont.pastperfectonline.com/photo/F554CC40-CECD-4D21-9E0B-072378257150>.

"Sugar beets brought early Hispanics to Longmont," *Longmont Times-Call*, March 28/29, 1981. [BCLHP-MKM-239](#).

"Suit filed to improve migrant workers' lot," *Longmont Times-Call*, Oct. 5, 1971. [BCLHP-MKM-226](#).

"Summary, Occupational Analysis of Latino-Surnamed Adults, 1926-1975." Compiled by BCLHP from *Polk's City Directories*.

Boulder, [BCLHP-Occ-009](#)

Lafayette, [BCLHP-Occ-008](#)

Longmont, [BCLHP-Occ-007](#)

"Valley farmer charged with mistreating aliens," *Longmont Times-Call*, Sept. 23, 1971. [BCLHP-MKM-224](#).

Velasquez, Maria. Interview; Rudy Zuniga, Alex Gomez, and Andrew Valencia, interviewers, 1979. In *El Aguila*, pp. 8-11. [BCLHP-MKM-620](#).

Villagran, Lucia and Lily. Oral history interview; Esther Blazón, interviewer, 2013. Video and transcript, MROHP.

<http://oralhistory.boulderlibrary.org/interview/oh1884>.

"Winter looking bleak for migrants," p. 1, *Longmont Times-Call*, Oct. 18-19, 1969. [BCLHP-MKM-221](#).

"Woman of purpose: Esther Blazon," *La Luz* magazine, Aug., 1974. Esther Blazón, personal copy. [BCLHP-FP-030](#).

## **B. Other Books, Articles, and On-Line Materials**

Acuña, Rodolfo F. *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*. 7<sup>th</sup> edit., Boston: Longman/Pearson, 2011.

Alamillo, José M. *Making Lemonade out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor and Leisure in a California Town, 1880-1960*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006.

Chávez, Ernesto. “¡Mi Raza Primero!”: *Nationalism, Identity, and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles, 1966-1978*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Gonzales, Manuel G. *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edit., Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009.

Murray, Douglas L. “The Abolition of El Cortito, the Short-Handled Hoe: A Case Study in Social Conflict and State Policy in California Agriculture.” *Social Problems*, 30.1 (1982): 26-39.