Mexican immigration to the United States increased tremendously from 1900-1925 as factors such as the Mexican Revolution and the recruitment of Mexican laborers by American industry drew Mexicans north. A significant number of Mexicans settled in Dallas and in the face of Anglo discrimination and segregation in the workplace, public institutions, and housing, these immigrants forged a community in the city rooted in their Mexican identity and traditions. This research, based heavily on data from the 1900, 1910, and 1920 census enumerations for Dallas and on articles from Dallas Morning News, highlights the agency of the Mexican population – men and women – in Dallas in the first three decades of the twentieth century.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Wearing white shirts to symbolize peace, carrying American flags, and holding up banners and signs boasting positive messages, nearly half a million people participated in the massive immigration march held in Dallas, Texas, on April 9, 2006. The participants, of whom a majority were of Mexican descent, marched in response to proposed changes to immigration law HR 4437 and to student walkouts at Dallas-area high schools. HR 4437, introduced by a Republican United States Representative from Wisconsin, Jim Sensenbrenner, intended to make every violation of immigration law a federal crime and make illegal immigrants ineligible for legalization. The immigration march began at the Cathedral Shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe at the corner of Ross Avenue and Pearl Street in an area of Dallas once known as Little Mexico, or La Colonia (see fig. 1.1). For several decades, the Cathedral Shrine hosted a congregation comprised of primarily Mexican Americans and was a vital part of the lives of thousands of Mexican Americans in Dallas.¹

Little Mexico, the area in which the church stood, served as home to a flood of Mexican immigrants entering the United States during and after the Mexican Revolution in the 1910s. These immigrants formed in Little Mexico a nucleus of Mexican culture that thrived for nearly fifty years until the urbanization and commercialization efforts of the city of Dallas slowly ate away at the bustling neighborhood. The neighborhood eventually became “ground zero for some of the most explosive growth in Dallas.” Little Mexico—and consequently, vestiges of Dallas’ early Mexican history—eventually

disappeared completely amidst the construction of high-rise condominiums and congested roads, tollways, and freeways.²

Fig. 1.1. The April 9, 2006, immigration march in Dallas, Texas. Sacred Heart Cathedral is on the right. Photo courtesy of Mike Itashiki.

Despite the gradual dissection and bulldozing of Little Mexico, Mexicans and Mexican culture maintained an increasingly strengthening presence in the city of Dallas. The 2006 immigration march showed not only the persistence of the immigration debate into the present day but also the sheer number of people of Mexican ancestry still residing in the North Texas area. In 1980, one in every eight Dallas residents was Hispanic. By 2000, the statistic changed to one in three. By 2004, Hispanics had become the largest single ethnic group in Dallas, comprising nearly 42 percent of the Dallas population, or nearly one in every two Dallas residents. The Catholic diocese of

Dallas, moreover, grew from 200,000 in 1990 to 950,000 in 2007, with Hispanics accounting for most of that growth.\(^3\)

Despite their irrefutable and ever-growing presence, historians have yet to conduct serious scholarly research concerning the Mexican population in Dallas. The city itself occupies a unique geographic location. As historian Michael Phillips pointed out, Dallas has an “ambiguous geographic position on the hinge of the South, the West, and the Mexican borderlands.” As such, Dallas boasted from its inception a noteworthy mix of cultures, traditions, and histories. Mexicans may not have been among the original 300 families brought in to inhabit the land that would one day become Dallas County, but they eventually became an inextricable part of the story of Dallas.\(^4\)

What little written history of Dallas exists largely omits any traces of ethnic, racial, or gender history. Michael Phillips argued that “academic neglect of Dallas… represents amnesia by design.” Specifically, Phillips maintained that the leaders of Dallas consciously and feverishly worked to whitewash the history of the city and wipe

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\(^3\) “A New Show of Power,” *Dallas Morning News*, April 30, 2006; “High Hopes, Growth Pains Greet Bishop,” *Dallas Morning News*, April 30, 2007. The term “Hispanic” is used here because it is the term used in the newspaper article cited. However, the term is inaccurate for the purposes of this research as it is a term created by the census bureau of the United States in the 1970s and 1980s for classification purposes. The terms “Mexican,” “Mexican American,” and “Latino” will be used interchangeably from this point forward because the population studied is from Mexico specifically. “Hispanic” will only be used if the source cited utilizes the term. See Laura E. Gómez, “The Birth of the ‘Hispanic’ Generation: Attitudes of Mexican-American Political Elites Toward the Hispanic Label,” *Latin American Perspectives* 19 (1992): 45-58. For an interesting and recent examination of Mexican race versus Mexican ethnicity, see Laura E. Gómez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2007).

away any trace of conflict; indeed, “city leaders transformed the community into a laboratory of forgetfulness.” Phillips went on to argue that a central feature in Dallas mythology was the belief that white represented progress and that people of color represented savagery. Finally, Phillips pointed out that writers of Dallas history neglected to mention the presence of women, as well; they were, on the rare occasions writers included them, “passive witnesses to male ambition.” Journalist Darwin Payne argued that because Mexicans in Dallas were less numerous than blacks, they were much less apparent as a factor to be considered. He also argued that they largely kept to themselves, mostly because of the language barrier. Consequently, a widespread belief took hold that Dallas had no real history—or at least no interesting history. Despite their best efforts, however, censorious Dallas city leaders could not completely erase all of Dallas’s ethnic and racial history. Mexicans, Jews, and blacks were all actors on the historical stage of Dallas.5

The unpublished historiography regarding the Mexican-origin population in Dallas is astonishingly scarce. Four master’s theses from Texas universities contain limited examinations of the Mexican population in Dallas. In 1936, Southern Methodist University sociology student Ethelyn Clara Davis completed a master’s thesis entitled Little Mexico: A Study of Horizontal and Vertical Mobility. In it, Davis examined the lives of Mexican immigrants in Dallas based on the information she drew from over fifty life histories of Little Mexico residents. She also traced the development of three Mexican “colonies” in Dallas based on the addresses of Mexican children in Dallas from the

Dallas School Census since 1915. Davis did some of the earliest research on Little Mexico and provided attitudes and perceptions contemporary to its existence. Her approach to identifying Mexican communities in Dallas, however, was seriously flawed in that it relied on school records. Due to the seasonal nature of theirs and their parents’ work, not all Mexican children attended school all the time or, in some cases, at all.6

In 1973, Robert Ryer Schermerhorn, also at Southern Methodist University, completed a master’s thesis entitled *An Occupational History of Mexican Americans in Dallas, 1930-1950*. In it, Schermerhorn traced the history of Mexicans in Dallas from its founding to 1950, but focused mainly on the period from 1930 to 1950. Relying almost exclusively on the city directories of Dallas, Schermerhorn conducted a page-by-page search for persons with Spanish surnames, looking at the occupations they performed and the industries in which they worked. He admitted, however, that city directories were not necessarily the most reliable sources because they only included residents over 18 years of age; Spanish surnames could easily be confused with Anglo surnames and vice versa; Spanish-surnamed women who married Anglo men took their husbands’ names; and not all persons with Spanish surnames were of Mexican descent. Schermerhorn concluded, however, that these problems would only minimally affect his findings. Thus, Schermerhorn looked at the mobility or stasis of the Spanish-surnamed within their given professions and whether they possessed company loyalty. He found that Mexicans worked mainly for cleaners and tailors, clothiers and department stores,

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food services, general services, hospitals, hotels, manufacturers, and utilities, and the
numbers of those who moved up within their professions roughly equaled the number
who stayed at the same job level or moved down within their professions. The most
valuable part of the Schermerhorn thesis are the detailed tables of findings from his city
directory research from 1930 to 1950.\textsuperscript{7}

More recent theses on Mexican barrios in Dallas are also available. In 1992,
the University of North Texas. This study examined Mexican immigration to Texas and
the areas in which Mexican immigrants settled in North Texas. Guzmán focused almost
exclusively on Mexican women from Little Mexico and drew much of her information
from interviews with these women and their descendants. Guzmán ultimately
concluded that Mexican Americans on the whole encountered difficulties adapting to
American life and that Mexican women in particular suffered more than Mexican men.
Some Mexican women, however, were able to become successful, like Anita Martínez,
a former resident of Little Mexico and the first Mexican American woman elected to the
Dallas City Council.\textsuperscript{8}

In 1996, Leigh Ann Robinson Ellis completed a thesis for the Master of Arts in
Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Texas at Arlington entitled \textit{The Place of
Borders and Between: Little Mexico, 1900-1950 Dallas, Texas}. Ellis examined the
community cycles of Little Mexico and the possible future residential patterns. Although
\textit{The Place of Borders and Between} provided significant background information on the

\textsuperscript{7} Schermerhorn, “An Occupational History.”
\textsuperscript{8} Jane Bock Guzmán, “Dallas Barrio Women of Power” (M.A. thesis, University of
North Texas, 1992).
formation of Little Mexico and the seeds of its demise in the form of city planning, the fact that it was not based in historical research detracted from its usefulness. Each thesis, therefore, ineffectively and incompletely deals with the history of Mexicans in Dallas.9

The published works concerning the history of Dallas also contain major flaws and omissions. Most of the contributions to this body of literature are aimed at a general audience of tourists, such as Diaper Days of Dallas by Ted Dealey, Big D: Triumphs and Troubles of an American Supercity in the 20th Century by journalist Darwin Payne, and Dallas Rediscovered: A Photographic Chronicle of Urban Expansion, 1870-1925 by William L. McDonald. Needless to say, the published historiography regarding the Mexican-origin population in Dallas is virtually nonexistent.10

Mexican Americans in a Dallas Barrio is the product of the time sociologist Shirley Achor spent living in a Dallas barrio in the 1970s. She found that in the barrio, residents rented substandard dwellings along unpaved and crumbling streets and sidewalks from racist white property owners. The city of Dallas denied the barrio the attention it deserved and needed and consequently, the residents created a voluntary association to cope with the problems in their community. Further, Achor found that there was a high rate of dependency among the residents of the barrio, especially because children and the elderly accounted for more than half of its population. One-

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fourth of the families in the barrio lived below the poverty level and malnourishment was common among the children in the neighborhood. The girls married young (around age 15) and newlywed couples often lived with their parents. Large families predominated because women did not know how to limit family size. Finally, the residents of the barrio belonged mostly to the Catholic Church and tradition. However, this work deals with a relatively recent population of Mexicans in Dallas and provides little in the way of their historical background in the city.\textsuperscript{11}

Along the same lines, anthropologist Rachel H. Adler spent time becoming familiar with the lives and experiences of immigrants to Dallas from a town in Yucatán, Mexico, and published her findings in a study called \textit{Yucatecans in Dallas, Texas: Breaching the Border, Bridging the Distance}. Throughout the book, Adler provided an historical background of immigration from Mexico to Texas, analyzed the meaning that crossing the United States-Mexico border had for the immigrants with whom she conversed, investigated the immigrants' maintenance of social ties across borders, and looked at migration as a gendered process, evaluating the different meanings migration carried for both men and women. \textit{Yucatecans in Dallas, Texas} is a very recent publication, as was the research Adler conducted among the Mexican immigrants. Thus, it does not bear much weight on an historical examination of Mexicans in Dallas. It could, however, provide useful comparisons from past to present concerning the tight-
knit community life of Mexican immigrants in Dallas and their motives for leaving home and forging new existences in a foreign environment.\textsuperscript{12}

In \textit{Women and the Creation of Urban Life: Dallas, Texas, 1843-1920}, historian Elizabeth York Enstam argued that women helped build urban life in Dallas and in turn, their efforts changed ideas about gender. Women in early Dallas were originally very active in the family farms and businesses and had duties that took them into the public sphere. During and after the Civil War, women began organizing into women’s voluntary groups and found new avenues into the public sphere. It was through these organizations that women began engaging in activities aimed at reforming Dallas city life. Enstam also interestingly argued that as Dallas grew, it splintered into many different racially- and class-defined neighborhoods and that elite white women themselves helped define these neighborhoods. Furthermore, the white women of Dallas helped their husbands form an influential group of city leaders. Although focused primarily on the history of white women in Dallas, Enstam dedicated some of her study to the roles black women played. She chose, however, not to include the history of Hispanic women because “understanding their experience required more than analysis of city directories and manuscript censuses or perusal of news stories and the records of voluntary associations.” Moreover, she argued, that Mexican immigrants did not form a visible community in Dallas until 1917, thus almost falling out of her time range. She went on to justify her decision in stating that effective Hispanic participation in Dallas public life did not come until the 1960s. Nevertheless, her study provided an interesting

\textsuperscript{12} Rachel H. Adler, \textit{Yucatecans in Dallas, Texas: Breaching the Border, Bridging the Distance} (Boston: Pearson, 2004).
point from which to compare the lives of Anglo, black, and Mexican women in Dallas and their involvement in public life.¹³

Joseph Michael Phillips’s dissertation at the University of Texas, *The Fire This Time: The Battle over Racial, Regional, and Religious Identities in Dallas, Texas, 1860-1990*, became *White Metropolis: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion in Dallas, 1841-2001*. The latter work explored the idea of whiteness in Dallas politics and its hierarchy of power. It also looked at how the white power brokers of Dallas both offered and denied whiteness to Mexicans, Jews, and even lower-class whites. Phillips also argued that later Dallas leaders purposely tried to eliminate any and all traces of conflict—racial or otherwise—from public memory. He also importantly pointed out that there was a lack of cooperation among ethnic groups in Dallas. Despite his flair for the dramatic, Michael Phillips nevertheless created the sole useful history of a multi-ethnic and multi-racial Dallas that contains shades of black, white, and brown and contributes to a barely-populated canon of literature concerning Mexicans in Dallas.¹⁴

Thus, much remains left unsaid about the history of Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans in Dallas during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Who were these Mexican immigrants? How old were they? What was their marital status? When did they leave Mexico? Why did they leave Mexico? Why did they end up in Dallas? Where in Dallas did they live? What kind of work did they do and how many of them worked? Did they receive educations? Were they literate? Did they

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learn the English language? Did they seek naturalization? What roles did Mexican men and women occupy, and did those roles change over time? These questions seem basic, yet they have remained unanswered until now.

From the answers to these questions, other questions arise. In what kinds of institutions did Mexicans in Dallas participate? Did the residents of Dallas deny them access to any of the public facilities in the city? How did the communities of Mexican immigrants in Dallas compare to communities of Mexican immigrants in other urban settings like Houston or El Paso? How did Anglos in the United States—and more specifically, Dallas—perceive Mexicans? How did they perceive the areas in which Mexicans lived? What was the fate of these areas of Mexican settlement?

In addition to answering these questions, this work also seeks to respond to the flawed argument historian Michael Phillips made in his recent *White Metropolis* concerning Mexican Americans’ “quest” for whiteness. Many of the assertions Phillips put forth accurately conveyed the racial and ethnic environment of Dallas. Phillips aptly pointed out that the uncertain promise of whiteness the white elite of Dallas made to the ethnic and working-class elements of the city was powerful. He also accurately concluded that the racial bottom line in the United States—and Dallas—rested on the division between black and everyone else and that marginalized groups like Mexican Americans occupied an uncomfortable middle ground in the racial hierarchy of the city. Skin color truly did split the city, as Phillips argued. The split was obvious in the racially defined neighborhoods dotting the city in the early twentieth century; indeed, the split is
still obvious in the racially defined neighborhoods that continue to dot the city now, in the early twenty-first century.\textsuperscript{15}

Nevertheless, the main argument of \textit{White Metropolis} is inaccurate in its depiction of Mexican Americans. While the African American and Jewish populations of Dallas may have strived for the perks of whiteness, the same was not true for the Mexican and Mexican American population of Dallas. Phillips postulated that for those who “fell between the extremes of whiteness and blackness… social acceptability depended on moving closer to the white ideal.” He rooted his contention in the argument made by whiteness scholar David R. Roediger that whiteness is founded on the denial of identity. As this work will show, the Mexicans and Mexican Americans of Dallas never sought to deny their identity; in fact, they reinforced and perpetuated a distinctly Mexican identity through their recreation of the \textit{patria} (homeland) in the heart of Dallas.\textsuperscript{16}

The little that exists concerning the history of Dallas and its residents often overlooks—whether unintentionally or deliberately—its ethnic past, while aggrandizing the progress made by the white elite. The written history of Dallas portrays non-elites as “simply the passive victims or beneficiaries of elite actions.”\textsuperscript{17} The reality of the situation is much different, however. Mexican immigrants to Texas left homes, families, networks, and histories in Mexico to cross a border into a country promising hope, security, and a future. Traversing a foreign land peopled by strangers with light skin speaking a different language, many Mexicans resolutely settled in Dallas and forged

\textsuperscript{15} Phillips, \textit{White Metropolis}, 7-9.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 173. Quote in Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{17} Phillips, \textit{White Metropolis}, 6.
new lives for themselves. Facing discrimination at nearly every turn, Mexicans occupied not only the lowest rungs in employment but also the lowest rungs in housing, education, and society. Writing in 1931, international relations expert and researcher for the Council on Foreign Relations Charles P. Howland surmised:

American antipathy does not give a chance to... Mexican immigrants, who would be willing to take over American civilization. In limiting the professional, occupational, and educational fields for these newcomers, in virtually prescribing their place of domicile, in paying Mexican labor lower wages for longer hours than ‘white’ labor in the same industries, it acts in economic discrimination.18

Thus, white Americans acting in discrimination perpetuated the non-assimilation of Mexican immigrants by forcing them into the lowest echelons of every facet of life. Despite these unceasing and prejudiced attempts by white Dallas residents to keep Mexicans in a world apart, Mexicans persevered and lived simple yet dignified lives in the tiny corners of the city that white discrimination and segregation forced them to occupy.19

In her master’s thesis, Ethelyn Clara Davis cited an interview she conducted in the early 1930s with an unnamed Mexican man. He responded to her basic questions by saying:

I was born on the sixth day of September, 1901, in Victoria, Tamaulipas. My mother and father were born in the same town, but are not living now. I have also lived in San Antonio, but moved to Dallas in 1918. I reached the third grade in school. I am married and have six children, from one to twelve years of age. We speak Spanish at home. I am a laborer and have been working since I was six years old. I belong to the Catholic Church. I do not read any books, but sometimes read newspapers... I should like to have more money so I could buy a home and some

furniture. I earn $40 a month. I came to the United States for adventure. My friends are Mexicans; we eat Mexican food; and I do not belong to any organizations. I have fully realized my ambition in coming to the United States, and I have not been disappointed. I have not been back to Mexico and do not want to go even for a visit.  

This biographical sketch, unadorned though it may seem, described most of the Mexican immigrants who called Dallas home from 1900 to 1925. They led simple lives and had simple dreams, but they were by no means simple people. They worked hard to earn money to provide for their families and to build, piece by piece, rooted existences for themselves. 

Much of the existing written history of Dallas wrongly portrays Mexicans as passive actors in the creation of the city. However, Mexicans laid the railroad tracks that brought industry to North Texas. They staffed the hotels that hosted businessmen interested in investing in the city. They laid the pipeline that helped industrialize Dallas. They toiled in the cement factories that helped build up the now-famous Dallas skyline. Mexicans performed this daily backbreaking labor for less pay than they were due and at the end of the day returned to the squalid living conditions into which white elites cornered them. Yet, they should not be considered passive actors in the birth and growth of Dallas. While steadfastly embracing and perpetuating their Mexican heritage and traditions, Mexicans in Dallas actively engaged in a daily battle against segregation and discrimination. In doing so, they forged ethnically defined communities in which they lived, worked, loved, and died.

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CHAPTER 2

EL SILENCIO: THE FOUNDING OF DALLAS AND ITS FIRST MEXICAN RESIDENTS, 1841-1909

Throughout the twentieth century, the population and size of Dallas grew significantly. Its tale began in 1841 when a Kentucky investment group, the Texas Land and Emigration Company, obtained an empresario grant from the Republic of Texas for ten million acres (including all of what would one day become Dallas County, except for a ten-mile strip on the eastern border). The company was to recruit Anglo settlement through land surveys, assist housing construction, and promote immigration to the area. The Peters Colony, as the company came be known, offered heads of families 640 acres and bachelors over seventeen years of age 320 acres if they would build a house, fence fifteen acres, and stay for three years. The land seemed perfect for occupancy and growth: it lay at a natural crossing in the Trinity River, the Republic of Texas was planning a military road through the area, boats could come from downstream and stop there, the land was fertile, and the climate was mild. In 1846, settlers created Dallas County and ten years later, Dallas was officially incorporated.¹

The settlement grew steadily from its inception. By 1860, Dallas boasted 8,775 residents, including 2,888 white adults—most of whom were farmers—and 1,074 slaves. In 1870, the Houston and Texas Central Railroad (H&TC) proposed a transcontinental line terminating in California that would miss Dallas by just eight miles. A committee of five Dallas men enticed the railroad to pass through Dallas by promising

¹ Phillips, White Metropolis, 2, 20-22; McDonald, Dallas Rediscovered, 3-4, 10; Payne, Big D, 5-6; For more on the history of Dallas, see Philip Lindsley, A History of Greater Dallas and Vicinity, Vols. I and II (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1909).
the H&TC board 115 acres of land in Dallas County, a free right-of-way through the city, and $5,000 in cash. In 1872, the H&TC became the first railroad in Dallas; telegraph lines and a population boom followed soon thereafter. Two other railroads would eventually pass through Dallas on their way to California and San Antonio: the Rock Island Railroad and the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad (MKT or Katy), respectively. By 1890, Dallas was a trade, railroad, and financial center in the Southwest and cotton was its principal industry.²

In 1859, Lucio Bamares, a sixteen-year-old laborer, was the first recorded person of Hispanic origin in Dallas. Additionally in 1859, people living in San Antonio discovered that they could purchase flour in Dallas at a fair price from Dallas farmers. This news brought persons of Mexican descent to North Texas, “speaking in a foreign tongue, dressed in unusual looking clothes, and driving oddly shaped wagons called ‘carretas.’” In 1875, historian Robert Ryer Schermerhorn located two Spanish-surnamed men in Dallas, F. Gonzáles, a merchant, and T.C. Rivera, a physician. It is unclear, however, if these two men were of Mexican descent. Nevertheless, the years leading up to the turn of the century brought more persons of Mexican descent to Dallas.³

Immigration from Mexico was not a new option in the early 1900s. Indeed, Mexicans inhabited what is now the American Southwest—including Texas—even before the arrival of Anglos. The Spanish arrived in the New World in the 1500s and

reigned supreme over Mexico until the Mexicans won their independence in 1821. In 1848, Mexicans concluded yet another war, this time with the United States. The signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo put an end to the Mexican-American War and established the Río Grande as the boundary between the United States and Mexico. The Río Grande was no longer a mere geographic feature, but an undeniable boundary denoting the end of one country and the beginning of another.4

The Mexican immigrants crossing the border into the United States in the early twentieth century were not a triumphant group. As historian Carey McWilliams summarized:

...when Spanish-speaking people re-invaded the borderlands three hundred years later [at the turn of the twentieth century], their leaders were landless peons who forded across the Río Grande at the dead of night. Their wardrobe—indeed their worldly possessions—consisted of the clothes they wore. No taffeta-trimmed hats for them; no blue, purple, and yellow feathers; no gold and silver ornaments; no mattresses, sheets, and pillowcases. For these latter-day conquistadores were Mexican *cholos* who came to chop brush, to build railroads, to work in copper mines, and to pick cotton in lands which De Oñate and Juan Bautista de Anza had mapped and charted, explored and colonized...The first invaders came in search of gold and silver; the second in search of bread and a job. What the second invasion lacked in color, splendor, and majesty, was more than offset by the capacity of the peons for hard work and endurance.5

Many Mexicans entering the United States at the turn of the century arrived to work on railroads and other industries. At the ports of entry like Laredo, Eagle Pass, El Paso, and Brownsville, men made a living contracting Mexican labor for American companies. These men, along with the allure of higher wages, enticed Mexican

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5 Ibid., 151-52.
laborers to cross the border; as they followed the work, they drifted further away from the border and from their native Mexico.\(^6\)

Mexican immigrants to Texas shared many general characteristics. Drawing mainly from the peon, or laboring, classes, they had every intention of returning to Mexico once they saved enough money. Most of the immigrants came from the central plateau of Mexico from the states of Michoacán, Guanajuato, and Jalisco. The immigrants mainly originated from the central plateau because, most simply, it housed 75 percent of the entire Mexican population. Additionally, the hacienda system had deep roots there, its hacendados vehemently challenged land legislation, and its local agrarian commissions were subject to local political influence. Mexicans in the central plateau, in other words, had little hope of receiving land or escaping the enslaving hacienda system. Thus, Mexican immigrants in Texas consisted mostly of unskilled workers. As such, they earned an average of $2.00 to $3.00 per day of work.\(^7\)

In the last three decades of the nineteenth century, the government of the United States began passing laws regulating immigration for the first time since the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798. In 1875, Congress passed the first exclusion law in the history of the United States, barring prostitutes and convicts from immigrating to the United States. In the 1880s and 1890s, however, the Industrial Revolution taking place in the United States established the need for unskilled labor, which many immigrants

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provided. Moreover, the type of immigrants arriving in the United States began to change in this period; once hailing from western Europe, the immigrants who arrived in the last two decades of the twentieth century came from eastern and southern Europe and Asia—areas culturally different from the prevailing Anglo-Saxon culture of the United States. Thus, in 1882, the United States Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which barred the entrance of persons of Chinese ancestry.  

Only some of the legislation passed in this period had application to Mexican immigration. In 1885, Congress passed the Alien Contract Labor Law to protect the local labor market by prohibiting the admission of persons who had been brought to the United States under a contract to perform services. In 1891, Congress created the Bureau of Immigration, the predecessor of today’s Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), as part of the Department of Commerce and Labor (now the Department of Labor). Also in 1891, Congress expanded the Alien Contract Labor Law by excluding anyone who came to the United States relying on an advertisement of guaranteed employment upon arrival and authorizing for the first time the deportation of aliens. The “open door” policy regarding immigration to the United States thus kept the door to America wide open as long as the policy benefitted the economic well-being of the

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country; when the policy became detrimental to American economic interests, however, that door slowly began closing.  

The absence of a border patrol (created in 1924) and surveillance of any kind along the border contributed to the free flow of Mexican immigrants across the Río Grande. In 1900, Mexicans in the United States numbered 103,393 (1 percent of the population) and 237 Mexican immigrants legally crossed into the United States. The population of Dallas numbered 42,638.

The 1900 census for Dallas included a total of sixty persons of Mexican descent, forty-one of whom were men and nineteen, women. The average age of this population was 28.7. Two percent were divorced, 27 percent were married, 63 percent were single, and 7 percent were widowers. The sixteen who had spouses had been married for an average of nearly eleven years. Those who reported having children had an average of almost two children. The average year of immigration for those Mexicans in the 1900 census was 1885, although most arrived in 1888. Twenty percent had completed the naturalization process.

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11 Twelfth Census. In the 1900, 1910, and 1920 censuses, the data in the columns for place of birth of the resident, place of birth of their mother, and place of birth of their father aided in locating persons of Mexican descent living in Dallas. Any
Most Mexican immigrants in Dallas worked for a living, a trend that persisted throughout the next two census enumerations. Thirty-eight of the sixty persons of Mexican descent, or 63 percent, performed some form of labor. The youngest worker was 17; the oldest, 64. Most of those who worked, 42 percent, were food vendors in the streets, selling candy, chili, fruit, or tamales. Day laborers constituted 13 percent of those who worked, farmers and farm laborers 11 percent, dressmakers 8 percent, and railroad laborers 5 percent.\textsuperscript{12}

The Mexicans in Dallas in 1900 were more literate than were the Mexicans in Dallas in the next two census enumerations in 1910 and 1920. Thirty-three percent of the Mexicans in Dallas at the turn of the century could not read whereas 50 percent could read. Thirty-five percent could not write whereas 48 percent could write. Seventeen percent could not speak English and a significant 67 percent had learned the English language.\textsuperscript{13}

Overall, the Mexicans in Dallas in 1900 were mostly single men, although those who were married had been so for many years. Most arrived well before the census enumeration in 1900, and as such, 20 percent had completed the naturalization process. The percent of Mexicans naturalized in both 1910 and 1920 would not come close to this figure. Over half of the Mexican population in Dallas worked for a living in persons with Mexican ancestry whose race was listed as anything but “white,” “other,” or, in rare occasions, “Mexican,” were stricken from the database created from the information in the census records. Census enumerators at this time considered Mexicans white for the purpose of the census count. Phillips, \textit{White Metropolis}, 10.\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Twelfth Census}.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid. The 33 percent of non-literate Mexicans in addition to the 50 percent of literate Mexicans totals 83 percent. Census enumerators did not record the literacy status of the other 17 percent of the Mexican population. These omissions account for the missing percentages throughout the rest of this work. Oftentimes, those residents whose literacy information was not recorded at all were children under the age of six.
non-professional occupations in the service and railroad industries, mostly. Most of the Mexicans could read and nearly half could write, showing high instances of literacy. It can be inferred, therefore, that these immigrants were not necessarily of the agricultural laboring class like those immigrants fleeing unstable conditions in Mexico during the Mexican Revolution of the 1910s. Finally, over half could speak English, suggesting the immigrants' willingness to learn or assume facets of American culture. Their English-speaking ability also underscored the fact that most had been in the United States for many years and had had time to learn the language. Like the rate of naturalization, the rates of Mexican immigrants who could speak English would be nowhere near as high in 1910 and 1920.\textsuperscript{14}

Nineteen women constituted 32 percent of the total population of Mexicans in Dallas in 1900. The average age of these women was nineteen. Thirty-two percent were married, 63 percent single, and 5 percent widowed. Of those who were married, they had been so for an average of nearly eight years. The average year of immigration among these women was 1888, although most arrived in 1898. None of the women were naturalized.\textsuperscript{15}

At the turn of the century, many people believed women did not belong in the workplace. In accordance with Mexican cultural traditions, most Mexican women in Dallas did not work for a living. Mexican men often resented women—especially their wives—working or wanting to work. Mexican men believed that women's work consisted solely of raising children and keeping house. Mexican cultural tradition was not the only prevailing school of thought dictating women's "proper" place, however.

\textsuperscript{14} Twelfth Census.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
Men in general—Anglos included—believed that women belonged in the home.
Families socialized their children along gender lines, training the boys for school and work and the girls for marriage and family. Indeed, “women’s assigned role fit neatly into a set of societal expectations of the home.” On the rare occasions when women entered the workforce in the early twentieth century, moreover, they worked in industries and positions deemed “appropriate” for women—for instance, as domestics, laundresses, and seamstresses.\(^\text{16}\)

In Dallas in 1900, only four of the Mexican women worked for a living: three as dressmakers and one as a nurse. Interestingly enough, the dressmakers all lived together at 196 Jackson Street. Nineteen-year-old Mattie Sánchez listed herself as head of the household and twenty-one-year-old M. Matszu and thirty-year-old J. Rameas listed themselves as boarders. Sánchez and Matszu were single and had arrived in the United States in 1898 whereas Rameas had been married for three years and arrived in the United States in 1888. None of them could read, write, or speak English. The nurse, twenty-four-year-old Carmen Kunzleman, lived and worked at St. Paul’s Sanitarium on Bryan Street. She and her parents had been born in Mexico and

she immigrated to the United States in 1888. A widower, Kunzleman had two living children. She also knew how to read, write, and speak English.\textsuperscript{17}

Rates of literacy and school attendance were middling for Mexican women. Four of the women were of school age and one actually attended school in the year prior to the census enumeration. In terms of literacy, four could not read or write and nine could read and write. Two could not speak English whereas eleven could speak English.\textsuperscript{18}

Taken as a whole, Mexican women in Dallas were mostly single adolescents who had only recently arrived in the United States. The fact that none had completed the naturalization process mirrored a trend present in both the 1910 and 1920 censuses as well—women were generally naturalized less often than were men. Also, the four Mexican women who were employed took jobs typically occupied by women, especially Mexican immigrant women in the early 1900s in Dallas. The one nineteen-year-old female who had attended school by the enumeration of the 1900 census constituted the lowest percentage of women in school of the data collected from the 1900, 1910, and 1920 censuses. However, nearly half of the women in Dallas in 1900 could read and write and of those who could not, two were just two years old. Over half could speak English—the highest this statistic would be among the data collected from the three censuses. A greater proportion of Mexican women in Dallas in 1900 tended to be more formally educated than their later counterparts in Dallas in 1910 and 1920.\textsuperscript{19}

Of the forty-one Mexican men listed as living in Dallas in the 1900 census, the average age was 32.8. Two percent were divorced, 24 percent married, 66 percent

\textsuperscript{17}Twelfth Census. Diacritical marks were added. Names are spelled exactly as census enumerators spelled them in the census.  
\textsuperscript{18}Ibid. School age is defined as 6-18. 
\textsuperscript{19}Ibid.
single, and 7 percent were widowers. Those who were married had been so for an average of ten years. The average year of immigration was 1884, but most arrived in 1891. Twelve of the men (29 percent) were naturalized.\textsuperscript{20}

Thirty-four of the men (an overwhelming 83 percent) worked for a living, ranging in age from seventeen to sixty-four. Railroad employees accounted for 5.9 percent of the workers, candymakers 8.8 percent, day laborers 14.7 percent, farmers and farm laborers 11.8 percent, and food vendors 38.2 percent. The other workers labored as cooks, electricians, horseshoers, and plumbers. One of the men, sixty-four-year-old Utorio Mones was a teamster. Born in Mexico of Mexican parents and immigrating to the United States in 1867, Mones was the head of his household and had been married for eighteen years with no children. He could not read or write, but he could speak English and he owned rather than rented his home. Thus, many Mexican men worked in some capacity, though most were food vendors in the streets. Only in the coming years would the railroads, cement companies, pipelines, and streetcar companies complementing widespread industrialization employ the majority of Mexican men in Dallas.\textsuperscript{21}

Rates of literacy and school enrollment among Mexican men were not much higher than were those of Mexican women. None of the men reported having attended school in the year prior to the census enumeration. As for literacy, sixteen of the men (39 percent) could not read and twenty-two could read (54 percent). Seventeen (41

\textsuperscript{20} Twelfth Census.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid. It is likely to assume that the wives, sisters, mothers, or other female acquaintances of the male food vendors prepared the food that the men sold in the streets. Women may not have sold the food, but they had a hand in the business nonetheless.
percent) could not write and twenty-one (51 percent) could write. There were eight who could not speak English (20 percent) and thirty who could (73 percent). Sixteen of the men (39 percent) classified themselves as heads of household.22

In general, Mexican men in Dallas in 1900 were older than were the Mexican women and more often than not, single. The fact that Mexican men and women were almost equally as likely to be single is unique and would not be repeated in the 1910 and 1920 censuses. That most Mexican men arrived in the United States in the late 1880s and early 1890s meant that they had been in the United States longer than had the women. As such, they had had more time to familiarize themselves with the American government and its policies—thus, more Mexican men than women were naturalized. That over three-quarters of the men worked shows that Mexican men were the breadwinners in the Mexican community in Dallas. This statistic sets up a trend mimicked in the 1910 and 1920 census findings of Mexican men working and Mexican women largely working as homemakers and mothers. Over half of the Mexican men could read and write and nearly three-quarters could speak English. These relatively high rates of education levels again suggest that those Mexican immigrants present in Dallas in 1900 were not necessarily of the agricultural labor class of Mexico and had perhaps obtained education in their native country. Unfortunately, these high rates do not repeat themselves in the 1910 and 1920 censuses. Thus, Mexican men in Dallas in 1900 were older than were Mexican women, only slightly more educated, and more often employed outside the home.23

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22 Twelfth Census.
23 Ibid.
The sixty-person Mexican population in Dallas in 1900 consisted of seventeen heads of household—sixteen men and one woman. Their average age was 36.5. Fifty-nine percent were married, 35 percent single, and 6 percent widowed. On average, they arrived in the United States in 1882, but most came in 1880. Thus, they had been in the United States an average of seventeen years. Eight of the seventeen heads of household had been naturalized. All seventeen worked outside the home. Two were candymakers, one was a day laborer, one a dressmaker, one an electrician, one a farm laborer, one a farmer, one a plumber, one a railroad laborer, one a teamster, and seven were food vendors. In terms of literacy, eight could not read (47 percent) and nine could read (53 percent). Nine could not write (53 percent) and eight could write (47 percent). Three could only speak Spanish (18 percent) and fourteen knew how to speak English (82 percent). Fourteen of the heads (82 percent) rented their homes and two owned their homes (12 percent).²⁴

On the whole, Mexican heads of household comprised the older segment of the Mexican population in Dallas. They had been in Dallas longer and as such, had acquired familiarity with the English language and boasted high rates of naturalization. That 100 percent of the heads of household worked indicates that they were the breadwinners in their homes. Furthermore, over three-quarters of the heads rented their homes rather than owning them. There are many possible explanations for this occurrence. Some of the Mexicans may not have planned to stay in the United States permanently. Others may have faced wage discrimination at the hands of Anglo

²⁴ Twelfth Census. The data for these conclusions derived from the column titled “Relation to the Head of Household” in the census in which Mexicans self-classified themselves as heads of household.
employers and as such, did not earn enough money to own a home. Still others could have been victims of Anglo housing authorities in Dallas who made the home-owning process especially difficult for non-white residents. Finally, some of the Mexicans may have been transitional, or in the process of moving even further north in search of work.\textsuperscript{25}

In 1900, therefore, there was an almost insignificant number of Mexicans in Dallas—their sixty-person population comprised only .1 percent of the total 42,638-person population of the city. These residents, however, provided interesting data against which to compare the data obtained from the 1910 and 1920 censuses, when more and more Mexicans made their homes in Dallas. Mexicans in turn-of-the-century-era Dallas were relatively well educated and had noteworthy rates of naturalization (as compared to the rates in 1910 and 1920), suggesting that they intended to stay in the United States.\textsuperscript{26}

“Dallas,” sociologist Ethelyn Clara Davis wrote, “had little to offer the first [Mexican] immigrants. Not until they had been in the United States several years and needed a city for headquarters did the Mexicans find their way here.” The small number of Mexicans in Dallas in 1900 did not immediately form a community like the one that would emerge in Little Mexico. In 1900, the sixty Mexican-origin persons residing in Dallas lived mostly on Young, Jackson, Houston, and Canton streets, each of which lay

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Twelfth Census.}
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
just south of where La Colonia would be. Mexicans would not begin to settle in the area of Little Mexico until the mid-1910s.\textsuperscript{27}

Mexicans would also come to live in a company town called Cement City in West Dallas. Cement City lay three miles south and west of the Dallas County Courthouse on the Texas and Pacific Railroad line in West Dallas. It sat on the land that was once home to La Reunion, a failed utopian colony founded by Victor Considerant in 1855. In the 1880s, Emil Remond, a former La Reunion colonist, bought a parcel of land north of the old colony and began experimenting with the rich deposits of chalk, limestone, and shale present there. Remond, along with another former colonist named Philip Frichot, exhibited examples of his cement and brick making at the Texas State Fair. In 1900, a group of Galveston investors led by Jens Moller bought the land and started the Texas Portland Cement & Lime Company, the first cement company in North Texas. In 1903, Iola Portland Cement Company of Texas bought Texas Portland, but five years later Texas Portland acquired the plant back from Iola. Texas Portland then announced plans to expand both the plant and production and to create a town. A post office opened in 1907 and other services followed soon after. On April 28, 1908, they incorporated the city of Cement. Housing employees of the Texas Portland Cement Company and Lone Star Cement Plant, Cement City continuously claimed 500 to 1,000 residents, as stipulated by its incorporation papers.\textsuperscript{28}

Dallas may have had a relatively tiny population of Mexicans in the first decade of the twentieth century, but the flood of Mexican immigrants into other areas of Texas

\textsuperscript{27} Twelfth Census; Map of Dallas, 1901, Texas/Dallas History & Archives Division, Dallas Public Library. Hereinafter T/D DPL. Quote in Davis, “Little Mexico,” 2.
\textsuperscript{28} Incorporation papers, Folder 1, Cement City Collection, T/D DPL.
resulted in governmental actions that affected Mexicans everywhere in the United States. On March 3, 1903, government officials amended an 1885 labor act to exclude “unskilled” labor. At every point of entry along the Mexican border, contractors working for railroad companies had made livings bringing Mexican laborers to do work for those companies in the United States. Mexicans, contractors argued, were “better laborers than negroes or foreigners of any other nationality.” Hence, after the 1903 amendment, labor contractors merely created their own interpretations and definitions of “skilled” and “unskilled,” arguing that Mexican track repairers and construction workers were indeed “skilled” workers. Moreover, contractors asserted that they were unable to find enough workers of the caliber of Mexicans; as such, they continued to import Mexican labor, even in the shadow of the prohibitive 1903 amendment. To do this, they counted on the fact that the border officials had “winked at, more or less” labor regulations. Thus, for many years following the 1903 legislation, the number of Mexicans in Texas gradually climbed as contractors brought more and more in for work.29

On August 24, 1906, however, Attorney General Charles H. Robb rendered a decision that railroads could no longer bring Mexican labor into the United States for work because these laborers were unskilled. Mexican laborers had completed much of the railroad construction in Texas and the new decision worried railroad companies who feared the deportation of the “unskilled” workers they had already brought north. After Robb made his announcement, moreover, border officials began turning back groups of Mexicans attempting to enter the United States. His decision stated in no uncertain terms that “ordinary hands commonly employed in the maintenance of tracks of

railroads are not skilled workers,” and that under no circumstances were unskilled laborers under contract allowed into the United States. Nevertheless, a tiny population of Mexicans emerged in North Texas and laid the foundation for future Mexican immigrants to Dallas.  

In laying that foundation, Mexicans slowly entered the institutions of the city. Although not many Mexican children went to school, those few who did attended Cumberland Hill School. Located at the northwest corner of School (now Akard) and Caruth (now Munger) Streets, Cumberland Hill was a two-story brick building originally constructed in 1889 on the site of two earlier public schools. The Cumberland Presbyterian Church erected the first school prior to the Civil War. After the city government took over education from religious institutions in 1877, the city acquired the school on Cumberland Hill in 1880. The city of Dallas then built a new structure on the same site in 1883 for $1,900. Cumberland Hill School was one of four “white” schools in Dallas and overflowed with students soon after it opened.

In response to the overcrowding, the city stepped in and built yet another school on the same site. In January 1888, the school board asked the city council to authorize the construction of a new eight-room facility in place of the already existing Cumberland Hill School. In April 1888, the council approved a nearly $20,000 contract. On January 21, 1889, the school, designed by Dallas architects Alonzo B. Bristol and Cortez Clark, opened to 400 students. From its opening, the new Cumberland Hill School was a “melting pot of nationalities, religions and sects.” The number of children in the area

31 Cumberland Hill School File, Folder 22, Box 1, City of Dallas Landmark Records, T/D DPL.
around Cumberland Hill School rose steadily in the years following its opening and in 1892 and 1899, additions were made to the building. Mexicans did not arrive in significant numbers in Dallas until after the turn of the century, but when they did, they settled in the area that would come to be known as Little Mexico. At the heart of this eventual Mexican community lay Cumberland Hill School, an institution that by 1925 had a 95 percent Mexican student population.\(^{32}\)

In their religious lives, Mexicans did not truly have a church of their own in Dallas until 1914. Migration, as sociologist Emory S. Bogardus pointed out, was often a handicap to religious worship. Immigrants were unable to keep up with their religious practices in their new environments—at least not right away, and certainly not within a city and church system that cared little about their spiritual health. Indeed, many Catholic officials viewed Mexican Catholics' religious attitudes as undeveloped and primitive, "meaningful only in personal crises." Some Protestant denominations in Dallas made it their mission, however, to nurture the seriously unmet religious needs of Mexican immigrants, with varying degrees of success.\(^{33}\)

The church Mexicans in Dallas would one day come to dominate—so much so it would be the starting point of the 2006 immigration march—had its beginning in the first decade of the twentieth century as a primarily Anglo Catholic establishment. In 1902, a lavish ceremony took place for the dedication of Sacred Heart Cathedral. The second bishop of the Dallas diocese, Edward J. Dunne, spent eight years planning and directing efforts to raise money for the $150,000 cathedral. He oversaw the purchasing of land at

\(^{32}\) Cumberland Hill School File, Folder 22, Box 1, City of Dallas Landmark Records, T/D DPL; "Speaking the League of Nations!" *Dallas Morning News*, June 7, 1925.

\(^{33}\) Bogardus, *The Mexican in the United States*, 63-64.
the northeast corner of Ross and Pearl Streets (like Cumberland Hill, in the heart of Little Mexico) and the selection of architect Nicholas Joseph Clayton to design the Cathedral building. The first drawings Clayton submitted featured two steeples, one large and one small; however, this design proved to be too expensive. Clayton revised his drawings and resubmitted them twice. Finally, Bishop Dunne approved the revised plans. Ground broke for the cathedral in the fall of 1895 and Dunne authorized construction to begin in 1896. On June 17, 1898, builders laid the cornerstone of what would eventually be Sacred Heart Cathedral.\(^{34}\)

Everything about the cathedral was grand. Twenty-eight parishes in the Dallas Diocese donated the windows of the church, which were “exceedingly admired.” The Ladies of the Altar Society ordered green carpet for the Sanctuary of the cathedral and purchased vestments from France for the Pontifical High Mass that would follow the dedication of the structure. Dioceses from across the country donated various items to the cathedral, like the bishop’s throne, a delicately carved main altar, the altar rail, and the organ. The altar of the Blessed Virgin was made of Italian marble, as was the statue placed in the altar. Two to three thousand electric lights in the sixty-foot-high ceiling and along the perimeter of the walls lit the interior space. Bishop Dunne proclaimed that there would be no church south of St. Louis and west of the Mississippi River to rival Sacred Heart (see figs. 2.1 and 2.2). Construction of the cathedral finished in 1902 and on October 26, 1902, a dedication ceremony attended by over one

hundred prelates from all over the West and Southwest took place. Nearly 2,000 people attended the dedication, which was “one of the most important events in the history of the Catholic Church in the State.” Red, pink, and yellow roses and chrysanthemums decorated the inside of the cathedral and a “dazzling array of the purple of bishops and the scarlet and white, and gold and white of Catholic officials” marched in and out of the church. At the banquet following the dedication, held at the Ursuline Convent, several of the visiting prelates made speeches in honor of the new edifice. Bishop T. Heslin of Natchez, Mississippi, gave a speech entitled, “God Bless Our Country, the Home of Civil and Religious Liberty.” Unfortunately, it would be several decades before the Catholic Church in Dallas would allow its Mexican Catholics the liberties about which Bishop Heslin spoke.35

The Catholic population of Dallas continued to grow in the years following the opening of Sacred Heart Cathedral. Indeed, during Dunne’s tenure as bishop, there were over 62,000 Catholics in the Dallas Diocese. The arrival of traditionally Catholic Mexican immigrants to Dallas only further inflated these numbers. However, Sacred Heart Cathedral kept Mexican Catholics from worshipping there for many years, although the methods by which Mexicans were excluded are unclear. Eventually, the

sheer number of Mexican Catholics overwhelmed the congregation of Sacred Heart—so much so that in 1965, the diocese renamed it Catedral Santuario de Guadalupe (Cathedral Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe).\textsuperscript{36}

Mexicans did not comprise a large part of the Dallas population from its founding to 1909. Their tiny numbers, however, belied their impact on the rapidly industrializing and expanding city of Dallas. The work they performed on the railroads, in cement plants, and as laborers helped bring about Dallas’s rise to the status of “supercity,” so

\textsuperscript{36}“Sacred Heart/Guadalupe Cathedral of the Dallas Diocese Since 1902,” compiled by Frances James, Sacred Heart/Guadalupe Church File, Folder 6A, Box 16, Dallas County Historical Commission Files, T/D DPL; St. Ann’s School File, Folder 38, Box 2, Dallas County Landmark Files, T/D DPL. By July 15, 1990, the 100\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the creation of the Dallas diocese, 52 percent of Catholics in the diocese were Latino and fourteen churches in Dallas offered Mass in Spanish. “Catholic Century,” \textit{Dallas Morning News}, July 15, 1990.
named by journalist Darwin Payne. They may not have devoted their labor to altruistically building up a city whose residents would one day discriminate against them, but they certainly devoted their labor to earning enough money to support their families and homes.

In supporting their families and existences, they in turn laid the foundations for the creation of a Mexican community in Dallas, whether they intended to or not. These Mexican immigrants may have planned to return to their native Mexico upon earning enough money to do so, but in the meantime they recreated Mexico in Texas. This preservation of their Mexican heritage and traditions and their belief that they occupied a temporary status in the United States undermined any need for aspirations to
whiteness. Instead, they focused their efforts on working, earning money, and supporting their families. They contributed the sweat of their brow and the strength of their will to the construction of what would one day become one of the largest cities in the country—and home to a significant and ever-growing population of Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans.

The coming of the Mexican Revolution in 1910 brought with it turmoil in Mexico and the arrival of a seemingly never-ending flood of Mexican immigrants. In dramatic yet not entirely untrue language, sociologist Ethelyn Clara Davis described the situation that would soon change the face of Dallas’s ethnic history:

Rebellion, both political and economic, against the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz [sic] and the new determination of the Mexican peon to find his place in the sun, threw the country into a struggle that destroyed the ancient feudal system of agriculture, demolished luxurious residences, and turned populous valleys into temporary deserts. Across the river there was peace and plenty. Hundreds of thousands of people began to escape from the constantly impending danger of pillages and death and found refuge under the flag that for nearly a century they had hated. They came sorrowfully, mourning their separation from their beloved “patria” and confident they would return as soon as peace should be restored.  

37 Phillips, *White Metropolis*.  
CHAPTER 3

LOS PRINCIPIOS: THE MEXICAN COMMUNITY EMERGES, 1910-1919

By 1910, the year of the next census enumeration, Mexican immigration to the United States had continued its steady increase, as had the growth of the population of Dallas. In 1910, 18,691 Mexicans emigrated from Mexico to the United States and Mexicans accounted for 226,466 of the 3,896,542 persons in Texas (5.8 percent). By 1910, the population of Dallas had more than doubled, rising from 42,638 to 92,104.¹

The 1910 census for Dallas featured 330 persons of Mexican descent, 108 of whom were women (33 percent) and 222 men (67 percent). These 330 Mexicans made up .4 percent of the total population of Dallas. Their average age was 26.9. The average age of Mexican women was 22.5 and the average age of Mexican men was 29. Thus, the Mexican population of Dallas continued to be relatively young. Compared to the ages of Mexicans in Dallas in 1900, Mexicans in 1910 were only slightly older. Mexican women were just over two years older and Mexican men were nearly four years younger. The downward trend of the ages of Mexican men would continue into the 1920 census, showing that a younger population of Mexican men headed north to the United States seeking work.²

Thirty-one percent of Mexicans were married, .3 percent divorced, 59 percent single, and 6 percent were widowers. Thirty-eight percent of Mexican women were married, .01 percent divorced, 48 percent single, and 6 percent were widowers. Twenty-seven percent of Mexican men were married, 65 percent single, and 5 percent

² Thirteenth Census.
were widowers. Therefore, the trend of single Mexican immigrants residing in Dallas remained from 1900; however, the gap between the percentage of single Mexican men and single Mexican women had widened considerably since 1900. The number of single Mexican men simply overwhelmed the number of Mexican women—and they continued to do so in the next census enumeration.³

The 330 Mexican immigrants arrived early in the decade between the 1900 census enumeration and the 1910 census enumeration, entering the United States, on average, in 1903. Most of the immigrants, however, arrived in 1908. Of the 256 Mexicans in Dallas who were born in Mexico, only ten (4 percent; nine men and one woman) had completed the naturalization process. Nine of those ten naturalized Mexicans had arrived before the turn of the century, some as early as 1873. The naturalization records for Dallas County from 1872 to 1913 underscore the absence of Mexicans from the naturalization process—only two Mexicans filed their declarations of intention in the years 1900 to 1913. Thus, even though most Mexicans in Dallas in 1910 arrived nearer to the 1910 census rather than the 1900 census, only those who had been in Dallas for several years—and as such had had time and opportunity—sought naturalization.⁴

Very few Mexicans were able to or chose to enroll in school. Fifty-five of the total 330-person Mexican population reported not having attended school in 1909 (17 percent) and twenty reported that they had attended school (6 percent). Twenty-five percent of Mexican women reported not having attended school in the previous year

³ Thirteenth Census.
⁴ Ibid.; Dallas County Naturalization Case Papers and Declarations of Intention, 1872-1913, Reel 1305920, T/D DPL.
and 6 percent had, while 13 percent of Mexican men reported not having attended school and 6 percent had. Although the percentage of Mexican men and women in school was the same, more women reported not having attended school, meaning that women less frequently enrolled in school.\footnote{Thirteenth Census.}

Moreover, few Mexicans learned to read and write. Of the total Mexican population, 38 percent could not read and 41 percent could, while 43 percent could not write and 36 percent could. Forty-two percent of Mexican women could not read and 29 percent could, while 48 percent could not write and 21 percent could. Thirty-seven percent of Mexican men could not read and 46 percent could, while 40 percent could not write and 43 percent could. From 1900, the percentage of women who could read and write fell nearly twenty percent and the percentage of those who could not read and write doubled. The percentage of men who could read and write fell nearly ten percent while the percentage of those who could not read and write stayed about the same. Therefore, women continued to be less literate than were men. Both Mexican men and women, however, suffered from a lack of literacy—over a third of the entire Mexican population could not read and write.\footnote{Ibid.}

Acquiring knowledge of the English language remained a luxury available only to those who had been in the United States for many years. Just under a third of the general Mexican population had learned the English language and nearly half reported that they spoke only Spanish. Twenty percent of Mexican women had learned the English language while 51 percent continued to be solely Spanish-speakers. Thirty-seven percent of Mexican men had learned the English language while 48 percent

\footnotesize{5 Thirteenth Census.}  
\footnotesize{6 Ibid.}
spoke only Spanish. Thus, Mexican men were fifteen percent more likely to have learned the English language, but the number of only Spanish-speaking Mexican men and women was about the same. The low numbers of English-speakers did not belie an inability of Mexicans to learn the language; rather, it underscored the fact that most were very new to the United States and the fact that most assumed they would soon return to Mexico.\(^7\)

Mexicans in Dallas continued to labor in similar industries in 1910 as they had in 1900. Of the 330 total Mexicans, over half—178—worked in some capacity. Twenty-eight percent of those who worked listed their trade/profession as “laborer.” Two industries employed a majority of Mexican workers: cement plants employed 6.7 percent of Mexican workers while railroads employed 44.4 percent. Many Mexicans, 18 percent, continued to work as food vendors or peddlers in the street. Thus, as in 1900, Mexicans performed unskilled occupations; unlike 1900, however, Mexicans worked in new areas like the hotel industry.\(^8\)

Few Mexican women worked for a living in 1910, as in 1900. Eight of the 108 women, or 7.4 percent, performed some form of labor for compensation. Two were at-home washwomen, one was a cook at a boardinghouse, two were cooks for private families, one was a packer at a cracker factory, one was an ironer at a laundry, and one was a laborer on the railroad. These women ranged in age from eighteen to forty; three were married, one divorced, two single, and two widowed. Similar to 1900, however,

\(^7\) Thirteenth Census.
\(^8\) Ibid.
women in 1910 tended to or were forced to occupy professions typically occupied by
women.\footnote{Thirteenth Census.}

Most Mexican men worked for a living in backbreaking, low-paying, and typically
male-dominated industries. Of the 222 Mexican men in Dallas in 1910, an
overwhelming 77 percent worked. Forty-nine of these workers listed their
trade/profession as “laborer.” Of these 170 workers, 2.9 percent worked for a hotel, 7
percent for a cement plant, 18.9 percent were food vendors or peddlers in the street,
and nearly 50 percent worked for the railroads. The rest of the Mexican male
population worked as barbers, waiters, elevator operators, translators, tailors,
dishwashers, machinists, engravers, and woodchoppers.\footnote{Ibid.}

During this period, several Mexicans in Dallas established businesses in Little
Mexico that would endure to the present day. In 1912, Pedro Hernández arrived in
Dallas from León in Guanajuato, Mexico. In 1918, he opened Hernández Grocery on
McKinney Avenue. He ran this store with the help of his wife, Socorro Hernández. In
1948, the Hernández family moved their grocery store from McKinney Avenue to Alamo
Street. In 1911, twenty-year-old Mike Martínez, Sr., and his family arrived in Dallas
from Mexico. Martínez had little education and knew only a little English. He worked as
a railroad laborer until he was laid off, then worked as a pot washer at the Oriental
Hotel. At this job, Martínez studied the chefs and learned the basics of food
preparation. In 1916, he opened Martínez Café, a one-man, one-room establishment
on the corner of Griffin Street and McKinney Avenue. In 1918, he changed the name of
the restaurant to El Fenix, referring to the mythical bird and symbol of strength and
renewal, the phoenix. Both Hernández Grocery and the El Fenix chain of restaurants enjoy continued success into the present day.\textsuperscript{11}

Mexican heads of household in 1910 continued to be older, married men who worked for a living. The Mexican population of Dallas in 1910 consisted of seventy-five heads of household, three of whom were women and seventy-two, men. Their average age was nearly forty. Compared to the average age of the Mexican population of Dallas in general, heads of household were nearly fifteen years older. They were also older than the Mexican heads of household listed in the 1900 census. Thus, Mexican heads of household consisted of an older section of the Mexican male population, for the most part.\textsuperscript{12}

The marital statuses of Mexican heads of household in 1910 differed greatly from those of the general Mexican population in Dallas at that time. Sixty-seven percent of the heads were married, 27 percent were single, and 7 percent were widowers. Conversely, only 31 percent of the general Mexican population was married while 59 percent were single. Thus, heads of household were more likely than the rest of the population to be married.\textsuperscript{13}

Like the rest of the Mexican population, most of the Mexican heads of household arrived in the United States closer to the 1910 census rather than the 1900 census. Their average year of immigration was 1899, although most arrived in 1908. Even so, these heads of household accounted for six of the ten naturalized Mexicans in Dallas in

\textsuperscript{12} Thirteenth Census.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
1910. However, five of the six immigrated to the United States before the turn of the century; the latest naturalized head of household immigrated in 1903. Hence, heads of household made up over half of the naturalized Mexicans in Dallas in 1910, but those naturalized heads had been in the country longer than the rest of the head of household population.\textsuperscript{14}

The literacy rates of the heads of household were only slightly better than were those of the rest of the Mexican population. None were in school, but their overall older age precludes the relevance of this statistic. Nevertheless, 49 percent could not read and the same percentage could, while 53 percent could not write and 45 percent could. These figures were only slightly higher than were those of the general Mexican population in Dallas in 1910: 38 percent of the general population could not read and 41 percent could, while 43 percent could not write and 36 percent could. Lastly, 51 percent of the heads of household could speak English, as compared to the 32 percent of the total Mexican population who could. The fact that many of the heads of household had been in the United States longer than was the rest of the Mexican population largely accounts for these figures.\textsuperscript{15}

Heads of household, as the traditional money-earners in their homes, worked for a living. As such, seventy-one of seventy-five, or 95 percent, of the Mexican heads of household worked. Two of those who did not work, moreover, were in their 80s. Laborers accounted for nearly one-quarter of the working heads of households’ trade/profession. Concrete/cement companies employed 7 percent of the working heads and railroads employed 38 percent. Twenty-eight percent of the heads of household worked.

\textsuperscript{14} Thirteenth Census.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
household worked as food vendors or peddlers in the street. Interestingly enough, the three female heads of household were also some of the oldest heads of household—fifty, eighty, and eighty-five; none of them worked. The youngest head of household, fifteen-year-old A. Marino, immigrated to the United States in 1908 and worked as a trackman for a railroad. Employment, similarly to older ages and spouses, was a trademark of heads of household.16

Although the number of Mexicans in Dallas grew 550 percent from 1900 to 1910, the statistics of the population changed only slightly. The changes that did occur, however, pointed toward a trend that would explode in the 1920 census. The growing gap between the percentage of single Mexican men and women was undeniably significant; with the coming of the Mexican Revolution and its concurrent upheaval, more and more single young Mexican men would cross the border by themselves—a development reflected in the data collected from the 1920 census. In the tumultuous decade during which the Mexican Revolution unfurled south of the Río Grande, many changes occurred in the United States and in Dallas that greatly affected the coming deluge of Mexican immigrants.

The area in which Little Mexico would emerge was not always home to a Mexican population. In the late 1800s, a significant wave of Jewish immigrants arrived in Dallas. These Jewish immigrants settled in Dallas’ first red-light district, an area known as Frogtown (named for the sound of frogs at night in the sweltering Texas heat). This designated “reservation” for prostitution was east of Lamar Street, from Cochran Avenue on the south to the Katy railroad tracks on north, bounded on the east by the

16 *Thirteenth Census*. 45
Dallas Branch stream (including especially Wesley Avenue, Broom/Ardrey Street, and Griffin Street). In 1910, the city commissioners of Dallas adopted an ordinance specifically designating new boundaries for prostitutes in Frogtown.\textsuperscript{17} In the ordinance, the commissioners declared:

\begin{quote}
We find that under the existing conditions bawdy houses and bawds are promiscuously scattered throughout the City, greatly menacing the decent neighborhoods and offending decent and respectable communities and parts of the City… We feel that the measure hereby suggested by us will entirely eliminate such objectionable characters from decent neighborhoods of the City.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

Discrimination from the non-Jewish white residents of Dallas nevertheless forced the Orthodox Jews to take up residence among nearly 400 prostitutes and work as street peddlers or sidewalk vendors.\textsuperscript{19}

Frogtown remained open for business and home to the Jewish population of Dallas until 1913. Preacher and reformer J.T. Upchurch vehemently opposed the existence of Frogtown and after city officials rebuffed his attempts to have the prostitution reservation shut down, he decided to publicize the goings-on in the red-light district. In his publication *The Purity Journal*, Upchurch reproduced photographs he had taken of the houses in Frogtown and the prostitutes who took up residence there and printed the names of the absentee owners of the houses in the reservation. In 1913, Dallas's Council of Churches decided it would no longer tolerate the existence of the reservation and organized Sunday meetings at which prominent ministers would urge city and law enforcement officials to shut it down. Finally, County Attorney Currie

\textsuperscript{18} Payne, *Big D*, 43.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 31.
McCutcheon served notice to the women in reservation that they must move out by 6:00 p.m. on November 3, 1913, or face arrest. The women moved out, but by that time, so had the Jews. In the early 1910s, a new wave of immigrants had begun to push the Jewish population out of Frogtown. By late 1913 and early 1914, the transformation was all but complete and the arriving Mexican immigrants had turned Frogtown into Little Mexico.\(^{20}\)

The border between the United States and Mexico, however symbolically damning to unrestricted movement between the two countries, remained open to Mexicans fleeing the increasingly desperate situation in Mexico for opportunity in the North. In Mexico in 1911, Francisco I. Madero assumed the presidency after overthrowing Porfirio Díaz. The conflict was far from over however. When Madero failed to deliver on his promises as president, upheaval upon upheaval, each fronted by a different revolutionary leader, disrupted not only the governing structure of Mexico but also its religious structure, education system, and economy for nearly a decade.\(^{21}\)

The Mexican Revolution wreaked havoc on many industries in Mexico. The *Dallas Morning News* reported in 1913 that in Mexico City, Guadalajara, Oaxaca, and Puebla there were not many signs that a revolution was going on, but there was “an undercurrent of alarm and uncertainty.” Mexicans and foreigners alike left Mexico, depression plagued business, and people lost confidence in the government of Mexico.

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\(^{20}\) Payne, *Big D*, 43-46. The Dallas City Directories also reflect the influx of Mexicans and the simultaneous exodus of Jewish residents. Over the years, Mexican surnames steadily replaced Jewish surnames on the streets of Little Mexico. *Dallas City Directory for 1900* (Dallas, Texas: John F. Worley and Company, 1900); *Dallas City Directory for 1910* (Dallas, Texas: John F. Worley and Company, 1910); *Dallas City Directory for 1920* (Dallas, Texas: John F. Worley and Company, 1920).

to handle the situation. Textile mills in Puebla were unable to get raw materials because railroad services had been interrupted, just as other industries suffered the same fate in other parts of the country. As such, employers shut down their businesses and put thousands of Mexicans out of work. Other employers offered their workers the option to take a pay cut or to lose their positions with the company; some employees, knowing the difficulties they faced in finding new employment, took the lower wages. Converging Constitutionalists forced Mexican townspeople to flee their homes, leaving many towns in the country desolate. As such, “everywhere the people of all classes are in a more or less continuous fright.” Supplies of food dwindled, industries closed down indefinitely, and work became scarce.  

The turmoil that engulfed the country and upended its citizens’ daily lives forced many Mexicans to seek fortunes and futures in the United States. Economic servitude bound many agricultural laborers to plots of land in Mexico, but with the arrival of Madero to the presidency, the debts of the Díaz regime disappeared and gave Mexican laborers the opportunity to seek options elsewhere. Indeed, the erasure of their debts made “action on the part of the rural inhabitants not only possible but necessary.” No longer tied to the land, these Mexican laborers were free to fight alongside Madero, align with counterrevolutionaries, or even leave Mexico entirely in search of opportunity in the United States. No matter what their decision, they had to do something—the revolution ravaged the haciendas on which they had toiled and the economic situation in Mexico became more unstable with each passing day. Moreover, the leaders of Mexico did not bring about the agrarian reform they promised and the lives of Mexican peons did not improve.

became more difficult than ever. To be sure, progress in the realm of land redistribution slowed considerably every time a new military uprising took place. The lack of legislation behind the land reforms and the absence of effective political machinery to bring it forth certainly contributed to the already dire situation. The latter option, seeking work in the United States, thus became a reality for approximately one-tenth of the entire Mexican population.23

Factors in the United States also played a role in Mexicans’ decision to emigrate. Geographically, the United States was an “obvious” destination for Mexican immigrants because it lay just north of Mexico. Additionally, it provided a “sympathetic environment, for the Mexican tradition in [the Southwest] had not been entirely obliterated by annexation to the United States and by the infiltration of American culture.” The United States also promised economic opportunity to Mexicans. Warring European nations called on the United States to provide supplies—a call American industry heeded without a second thought. Black laborers in the 1910s began to abandon the South for economic opportunity in the North. As for white laborers, with the advent of World War I and especially the entrance of the United States in the war in 1917, white men found themselves in the armed services rather than at work in factories. The loss of white American men to military service and the lack of black labor

23 Howland, Survey of American Foreign Relations, 203; McWilliams, North from Mexico, 152; Mark Reisler, “Always the Laborer, Never the Citizen: Anglo Perceptions of the Mexican Immigrant during the 1920s,” The Pacific Historical Review 45 (May 1976), 230-232. Even by 1921, little land distribution had actually taken place and more than a third of the rural population of Mexico still lived on haciendas. Quote in Howland, Survey of American Foreign Relations, 203.
spurred American employers in the Southwest to ask the government for another
alternative to their labor needs.\textsuperscript{24}

In response to the grievances expressed by American employers and the
continued racial bias against southeastern European immigrants, the government of the
United States initiated a new era of immigration regulation with the Immigration Act of
1917. This piece of legislation was the “apex of qualitative control.” It barred from
admittance to the United States persons who were feeble-minded, destitute, seriously
ill, or morally undesirable. It also added harsher sanctions, extended the period of
deportability from one year to five years, and appropriated funds for the first time to
enforce deportation. That same year, the government of the United States also
temporarily legalized the entry of previously excluded Mexican illiterate and contract
laborers and lifted the eight-dollar head tax at the Mexican border. Before World War I,
many Americans considered using Mexican labor economically undesirable and worried
that it might create undue competition with American workers. Wartime, however,
quelled these concerns and justified the use of Mexican workers because American
employers saw hiring Mexican laborers as beneficial to both the laborers and the United
States. Moreover, the employers knew that Mexican laborers would not be displacing
white American workers, who were now in the armed forces.\textsuperscript{25}

Texas lawmakers also made special allowances for Mexican immigration in this
period. A brief article in the \textit{Dallas Morning News} in 1918 detailed the news that Texas

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governor William P. Hobby approved the request of Commissioner of Labor T.S. Jennings to travel to the Texas-Mexico border with a team of special representatives to make an “equitable distribution” of Mexican laborers to various farms in Texas. Governor Hobby also appropriated $1,200 to cover the expenses of two of the representatives. They intended to carry out a “campaign of education” to induce Mexicans to cross the border to work in the United States. The government representatives assured the laborers they would not be drafted into the army and that at the end of six months, they would have the option to return to Mexico. In doing so, the representatives hoped to thwart the efforts of the “man-catchers” who told Mexicans to leave Texas and go north to other states. The article concluded by reporting that Texas needed 10,000 laborers and that through the “campaigns of education,” that number could potentially be reached. That in this post-World War I era the United States government had lifted most immigration restrictions regarding Mexico only facilitated the work of these representatives.\footnote{“State to Take Steps to Draw Mexican Labor,” \textit{Dallas Morning News}, May 28, 1918. There were a total of six special representatives in total: two from the Department of Labor, three from the Department of Extension of the Agricultural and Mechanical College, and one from the State Council of Defense.}

In the months following, the \textit{Dallas Morning News} provided updates on the situation of Mexican labor in Texas. On June 26, 1918, it reported that Mexican labor was available for work on farms, in lignite mines, and for road and railroad maintenance. These new laborers were “eager for work.”\footnote{“Plenty of Mexican Labor Available for Farm Work,” \textit{Dallas Morning News}, June 26, 1918.} Almost two weeks after that, a story in the \textit{Dallas Morning News} stated that Senior Examiner F.H. Horner of the Federal Labor Bureau stated that Dallas employers in the railroad industry had made a call for
hundreds of Mexican laborers, including ten automobile mechanics, thirty-four bridge foremen, fifteen buglers, fourteen earthworks foremen, eight pump operators, eighty-five section foremen, ninety-five supply foremen, seventeen track foremen, and four tinsmiths. The aviation industry made calls for eighteen electricians, three photographers, ninety gas engine men, ten acetylene welders, and ten wire cutters.28

The rescinded eight-dollar head tax at the Mexican border only added to the numbers of incoming Mexican immigrants, as did calls for Mexican labor pouring forth from Texas and other surrounding states. On September 14, 1918, Adjutant General Harley suggested to the chairman of the State Council of Defense, O.E. Dunlap, that his organization initiate a campaign to bring more Mexican labor into Texas. This suggestion came in the wake of the “exodus of Mexican labor” to work in the cotton fields. Harley went on to propose that the Councils of Defense in western and southwestern Texas take part in the campaign and send speakers to Mexico to inform potential laborers “the rights which they enjoy as citizens of a foreign country and of the good faith of the American Government in dealing with aliens.”29

Consensus concerning the immigration of Mexican laborers did not exist among all government officials in Texas, however. During World War I, the government of the United States admitted Mexicans for six-month periods to aid farmers and stock raisers of states along the United States-Mexico border to maintain production. On October 16, 1919, however, the members of the House of Representatives debated a resolution

28 “Calls Are Being Received Here for Mexican Labor,” Dallas Morning News, July 2, 1918.
requested by the State Department to extend passport regulations for an additional year. The passage of the bill would have meant keeping undesirable immigrants from entering the United States and would have served as temporary legislation to manage the immigration situation until the government could permanently strengthen immigration laws. Texas Representative John Box, a member of the House Immigration Committee, declared that he was in favor of passage of the bill and that the policy should apply to all interests. He went on to tell the House that the government should deny the farmers of Texas the ability to ask for and bring Mexicans to work for them. Oddly enough, Representative Box had been a part of the Texas delegation that went to Department of Labor to ask for the temporary admission of Mexicans during the First World War.30

Many members of the House of Representatives disagreed with Box’s decision to support the restriction of Mexican immigration. Representative Claude B. Hudspeth called attention to the inconsistency of Box’s actions and went on to say that the “Texas farmer and cotton raised is patriotic. If he believed that Mexican labor would be a menace to the safety of the Government, he would let his crops rot before he would advise bringing it across.”31 Box responded by saying:

Several months ago I was present when several gentlemen from Texas and several Texas Congressmen discussed and requested of the Department of Labor the admission of these people. The Secretary declared that he had neither authority nor disposition to admit them except as a war measure to end with the declaration of peace. I made no objection to that. My presence might cause me to be classed as friendly to it. But the question now is whether, since our boys have come home from the army, we shall continue this as a peace policy. As a member of

31 Ibid.
the House Committee on Immigration, I shall actively oppose any such measure.\textsuperscript{32}

Box sought to keep out not only Mexicans but all foreigners whose presence in the United States would “tend to break down barriers which protect order and peaceful free government.” He went on to say that Mexicans brought to the United States like “droves of cattle” went as far into the country as they pleased and stayed as long as they wanted. Box was not alone in his sentiments toward immigration—the House, by a vote of 234 to 1, passed the bill extending the wartime passport restriction in order to keep radicals and undesirable aliens out of the United States.\textsuperscript{33}

At the same time, members of the Texas delegation in Congress made their opposing viewpoint known. They asked to speak in front of the House Immigration Committee in support of a provision in the Johnson Immigration Bill by which the Department of Labor would be able to make regulations for Mexicans to be brought into states along the border for six-month periods. The government allowed the entrance of Mexicans into the United States as a war measure but planned to discontinue the practice after January 1, 1920. The Johnson Bill intended to bar “objectionable” aliens from entering the United States for two years. The delegation argued that it was impossible for farmers and ranch owners to find sufficient local help. They also argued that even though the war was over and men previously in the military were returning home, labor problems still existed. Over a year later, the members of the House of

\textsuperscript{32} “Box Would Keep Out Undesirable Aliens,” \textit{Dallas Morning News}, October 17, 1919.  
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid. The one dissenting vote was from Representative Gallagher (Democrat) of Illinois.
Representatives voted to pass the Johnson Immigration Bill, but changed the two-year stipulation to one year.  

Thus, American business interests seeking a sizeable supply of cheap labor welcomed Mexican workers. These Mexican workers in turn saw in the allure of the United States higher wages. While these wages were more than what they could potentially earn in revolution-stricken Mexico, they were—to the delight of American employers—still less than the wages expected by white workers. Therefore, individual contractors, employment agencies, representatives of southwestern and national corporations, and government-operated employment offices recruited Mexican workers at the border for work in several industries including railroads, agriculture, and mining. As a result of competition among agencies and businesses and the fact that recruiters worked on commission, recruitment procedures were often overly aggressive and not entirely scrupulous. Recruiters promised pay they could not guarantee—indeed, they oftentimes promised jobs they could not guarantee. They advertised the higher wages in the United States, but neglected to warn Mexicans that they would also face higher costs of living.

The labor contract system was extraordinarily unfair to the Mexicans it contracted. American employers who needed a certain task completed—harvesting a


crop or building a section of railroad—sought labor contractors who would in turn find laborers to complete the task. Labor contractors bid against each other and were after profit above all else; thus, they drove down the wages of the laborers they found. The employers held back one-quarter of the contract price from the contractor until the laborers completed the task satisfactorily, and the contractor in turn held back one-quarter of the wages owed laborers until they finished the job. However, contractors often “skipped out” before compensating laborers fully, keeping the twenty-five percent of the contract for themselves.36

Nevertheless, Mexicans flowed into the United States—and consequently, Dallas—in a steady stream from 1910 to 1919. They continued to labor in the same unskilled positions as their forebears in the 1900 and 1910 censuses and began to find housing alongside other Mexican immigrants. The white residents of Dallas contributed to the creation of these ethnically defined areas. In 1916, the voters of Dallas passed a referendum that allowed the institution of legal racial housing segregation—the first of its kind in the state of Texas. This law created three categories of neighborhoods, white, black, and open. The neighborhoods already exclusively occupied by one race were to be closed to other races. Open blocks consisted of poor and working-class families and were often racially integrated. Although the Texas Supreme Court invalidated the ordinance in 1917, just four years later, in 1921, Dallas city officials tried to reinstate the policy in a slightly different form. The Dallas City Council passed a new law by which residents of a neighborhood could request that their block be designated as black, white, or open. Once the city granted this designation, only a written request

by three-fourths of the residents on that block could overturn the neighborhood’s racial assignment.\textsuperscript{37}

These isolation of Mexican immigrants in ethnically defined neighborhoods fostered a heightened sense of Mexicanness and kept them from seeking whiteness, as argued by historian Michael Phillips. The invisible walls around these communities both kept Anglos distanced from the eyesore of the Mexican presence while simultaneously keeping Mexicans from “infiltrating” the Anglo world. These contained communities thus encouraged immigrants to cling to and uphold Mexican culture and institutions and the Spanish language. These things were familiar and safe; they were ways for immigrants to cope with the larger Anglo environment in which they lived. As a result, the Mexican communities of Dallas became havens into which the immigrants could escape the white world around them, not areas where they plotted their quest to whiteness and white ideals. Whiteness to them was foreign and unattractive, whereas their Mexican identities, which their cloistered communities increasingly reinforced, became precious to them—the one thing Anglos could not deny them.\textsuperscript{38}

Areas of Mexican settlement sprang up in three parts of Dallas: East Dallas, West Dallas, and Little Mexico. These Mexican communities were all barrios, and Little Mexico was the largest of the three. Sociologist Shirley Achor defined a barrio as the following:

\begin{quote}
Is not a ghetto, though there are ghettos in the barrio. It is a microcosm… a place of dualities; a liberated zone and a prison; a place of love and warmth; and a place of hatred and violence, where most of La Raza live
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{37} Phillips, \textit{White Metropolis}, 63.
\textsuperscript{38} Phillips, \textit{White Metropolis}. 
out their lives... It is a place of poverty and of self-reliance, of beloved *ancianos* (the old ones), of *familias*, of *compadres*.\(^{39}\)

Historian Arnoldo De León, moreover, defined a barrio as “a place where Mexican Americans lived in a familiar surrounding and where they could both identify with the traditions of their homeland while accepting tenets of the host society on their own terms.”\(^{40}\) Each of these definitions applied to the barrios of Dallas, themselves microcosms of tradition.

Compared to other barrios in the Southwest, the barrios of Dallas were relatively young and small. The barrios of Southern California, Arizona, and the border towns of Texas had Mexican pasts dating back to before the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. Their histories told of Anglos arriving in the nineteenth century to find already established and well functioning Mexican communities. These Anglos pushed their way into these regions and subsequently pushed Mexicans into confined spaces within the towns they once dominated. The barrios of Dallas, however, did not begin to take shape until the mid-1910s with the arrival of Mexican outsiders to an Anglo-dominated town. Nevertheless, the general themes within these Mexican barrios remained the same across the Southwest and into the Midwest—Mexican laborers (mostly men) worked in low-paying occupations, lived with their families in the poorest parts of town as a result of racial segregation and housing discrimination, and created


\(^{40}\) Arnoldo De León, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt: A History of Mexican Americans in Houston* (Houston: University of Houston, 1989), ix.
and participated in institutions that were distinctly Mexican within environments that were distinctly Anglo.\textsuperscript{41}

The Mexicans living in East Dallas lived in a neglected and overpopulated community. Indiana Alley, located between Elm Street and the Texas and Pacific Railroad tracks, was completely surrounded by factories and as such was incredibly noisy. Most of the Mexican residents of East Dallas were on relief and had little education. The economic levels of East Dallas were comparable to the middle- and upper-status sections of Little Mexico.\textsuperscript{42}

West Dallas also housed many Mexicans in Dallas. It was different from the communities in East Dallas and Little Mexico in that there was a lot of open space and houses were not crowded together. Moreover, houses did not overflow with occupants. Many West Dallas residents were skilled laborers and were able to own their homes. The literal space between houses created a lack of a cohesive network among


Mexicans in this area, much unlike the Mexican communities in East Dallas and Little Mexico.  

Cement City in West Dallas faced a series of trials and tribulations in the 1910s. By 1910, the population of the city had reached 503, of which twenty-six were Mexican laborers (5 percent). In 1911, the Cement City Independent School District formed; however, after the 1913 elections in Cement the governing body dissolved. In 1915, the post office closed. The town nevertheless remained incorporated for many years.

Work in the cement plants proved extremely dangerous. In 1911, the *Dallas Morning News* reported that R. Tarolar, a Mexican laborer from Laredo, fell into the bin into which he had been shoveling rock on the evening of November 24, 1911. He “became a part of the gravitating mass of crushed rock,” slipped into the chute, and eventually suffocated to death as stones from above crushed his body. His corpse remained in the bin for one-and-a-half to two hours until it was retrieved. Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans, nevertheless, sought work in the cement plants since these businesses actively recruited non-white workers to whom they could pay low wages.

Despite the existence of pockets of Mexican immigrants in East and West Dallas, most Mexicans in the 1910s lived in Little Mexico. After the mass exodus of Jewish immigrants and prostitutes from Frogtown, Little Mexico appeared in its place and truly began to expand outward block by block. As sociologist Ethelyn Davis pointed out, “To

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44 Incorporation papers, Folder 1, Cement City Collection, T/D DPL; Thirteenth Census; McDonald, *Dallas Rediscovered*, 10, 14; Phillips, *White Metropolis*, 94.
all appearances Little Mexico forms a city within a city, entirely different from its surroundings.” It was bounded by McKinney Avenue to the east, the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad tracks to the west, and Maple Avenue to the north. The Mexican residents of the neighborhood lived on Young, Houston, Magnolia, Griffin, Canton, New Orleans, and Commerce streets. This area of Mexican settlement was further north than it had been in 1900. Mexicans mostly lived in homes constructed of scrap wood and tarpaper or in boxcars at the edges of the neighborhood. Houses lined unpaved streets, often did not have yards, and offered no privacy from neighboring homes. From 1910 to 1920, therefore, the influx of immigrants from Mexico to the North Texas region settled alongside their fellow immigrants in this section of Dallas that consequently received the moniker Little Mexico.46

La Colonia itself was subdivided into different sections. The poorest part of Little Mexico lay around the Katy Railroad yards, where Mexican families resided in railroad boxcars. The next section extended to Caroline Street and was populated with small shacks, each housing fifteen to twenty people. The business district of Little Mexico lay along Caroline, Payne, and McKinney Streets. Finally, the “better” homes in Little Mexico were located north of Akard Street. Residents’ inability to pay rent produced great internal mobility within Little Mexico, so families frequently shifted from one part of the neighborhood to another.47

46 Davis, “Little Mexico,” 2; Twelfth Census; Thirteenth Census; Fourteenth Census; Rick Leal, Little Mexico: A Barrio (Documentary, VHS, North Texas Public Broadcasting, 1997); Murphy and Bolanz Index Map of Greater Dallas, 1911, T/D DPL. Quote in Davis, “Little Mexico,” 20
The proximity of Little Mexico to the Katy railroad tracks yielded characteristics peculiar to this area. Most of its male residents worked for the railroads in some capacity and as such, did not earn high wages. They worked most hours of the day and were overwhelmingly illiterate. They spoke primarily Spanish and crowded into uncomfortably small and rundown dwellings.48

As they settled into daily routines of work and family life, Mexicans entered schools in Dallas and began to recreate Mexico by forming a Mexican Catholic church. Their separate place of worship reflected the segregation present in Dallas religious institutions and the fact that Mexicans had their own “way of being Catholic.” Their Catholicism was a blend of pre-Reformation Spanish Christianity and Mexican Indian worldviews, resulting in a “unique Mexican Catholic identity and way of life.” Thus, the Spanish- and Indian-influenced Mexican Catholicism that Mexican immigrants transplanted to the United States emphasized practices often considered superstitious by Anglo clergy—favored saint veneration (like Our Lady of Guadalupe, after whom the Mexican Catholics of Dallas named their first Catholic Church) and community-centered religious celebration (like that which existed in Little Mexico) that made indistinguishable the line between sacred and secular. They maintained a tight grip on their Mexican Catholicism because it served their particular spiritual needs and helped them deal with the social subordination to which Dallas society subjected them. The centrality of the Catholic faith to the identity of Mexican immigrants pushed them to establish their own churches in the United States. Arriving, unlike Europeans, without their clergy and without the religious structures and resources of the Catholic Church, Mexican

immigrants invested themselves wholeheartedly in the creation of Mexican Catholic churches. In doing so, they deepened their commitment to maintaining their Mexican identities while conversely distancing themselves from Anglo society and from whiteness. They also further bound themselves to Dallas and to the history of a future metropolis.⁴⁹

Mexican immigrants in Dallas could not create their churches by themselves, however. The droves of Mexican immigrants to Dallas attracted the attention of many Dallas residents, including the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, from whom Mexican refugees received aid. In 1896, the Daughters of Charity arrived in Dallas from the Motherhouse at Emmitsburg, Maryland, at the request of Dallas city officials to set up and manage a hospital for the poor. Sister Mary Bernard helped raise $10,000 for the hospital to be located on Bryan Street. St. Paul’s Sanitarium, the first modern hospital in Dallas, was completed in 1898. The arrival of refugees from the Mexican Revolution prompted the Daughters of Charity to assist with the settlement of refugee families. These women made daily trips to offer the refugees food, clothing, and medical supplies. By 1914, they established a mission church for the Mexican refugee community with the help of the local prelate, Bishop J.P. Lynch. They named this church Our Lady of Guadalupe.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Roberto R. Treviño, The Church in the Barrio: Mexican American Ethno-Catholicism in Houston (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 4, 15-16, 24. Phillips, White Metropolis. Quote in Ibid., 4. Ethno-Catholicism, as Treviño points out, is not the polar opposite of institutional Catholicism; Latinos merely have a different kind of relationship with the Catholic Church than do Anglos. Ibid., 5.

⁵⁰ St. Ann’s School File, Folder 38, Box 2, Dallas County Landmark Files, T/D DPL; “Sacred Heart/Guadalupe Cathedral of the Dallas Diocese Since 1902,” compiled by Frances James, Sacred Heart/Guadalupe Church File, Folder 6A, Box 16, Dallas County Historical Commission Files, T/D DPL; Phillips, White Metropolis, 94.
Bishop Lynch asked the Spanish Vicentian priests to run the mission under the leadership of Reverend Manuel de Francisco. Our Lady of Guadalupe opened in a storefront at the intersection of Griffin and McKinney Streets in the center of Little Mexico. On November 30, 1914, Our Lady of Guadalupe held its first baptism. Two years later, in 1916, the church moved to another location on Caruth Street (also in Little Mexico) where a small chapel was constructed for the 228-person congregation. From 1916 to 1919, the congregation of the church quadrupled in number and Reverend Manuel de Francisco baptized an average of twenty-three children per month. In 1918, the Daughters of Charity opened a free medical clinic called Marillac on North Harwood Street under the leadership of Sister Brendan O’Brien. By 1920, the Daughters of Charity had also opened a preschool, an elementary, and English and citizenship classes in Little Mexico.\footnote{St. Ann’s School File, Folder 38, Box 2, Dallas County Landmark Files, T/D DPL; “Sacred Heart/Guadalupe Cathedral of the Dallas Diocese Since 1902,” compiled by Frances James, Sacred Heart/Guadalupe Church File, Folder 6A, Box 16, Dallas County Historical Commission Files, T/D DPL; “53,251 Persons Attend Churches in Dallas,” \textit{Dallas Morning News}, April 10, 1916.}

Protestants also tried to minister to the needs of Mexicans in Dallas. For many years, Mexican Methodists and Presbyterians worshipped together under the direction of Santiago Gómez, a student of the ministry at Southern Methodist University. In 1912, the First Presbyterian Church of Dallas organized a separate Mexican Presbyterian Church located at the corner of Williams and Duncan Streets in West Dallas. Reverend Antonio B. Carrero headed this newly created church and was the first Mexican minister in Little Mexico. The church began with twelve adult members, each of whom were given a Spanish language Bible. The church also baptized ten children and distributed
volumes of the Psalms and the New Testament in Spanish to them. By 1916, the Mexican Presbyterian Church commanded a congregation numbering 169. Later, First Presbyterian Church established a mission on Griffin Street near McKinney Avenue, and in 1918, Reverend Elías S. Rodríguez, took over as head of this mission. The Mexican Mission provided, in the words of its director, Miss Rhoda Dragoo, “not free aid, but assistance in self-support.” Both the Methodists and Presbyterians maintained the mission, which served as a kind of employment bureau where Mexicans applied to clean yards or houses. Mexican adults worked for what the mission provided them and children received clothing. The mission also worked to keep Mexican children in school, especially Cumberland Hill School. In 1921, the mission opened a night school where Mexican adults learned English.52

The mechanisms governing the city of Dallas and the services it provided shifted and evolved as more people settled in the city. In 1907, Dallas voters elected to do away with the increasingly complex and corrupt ward system of local governance and replace it with a civic administration composed of a five-member commission. Dallas borrowed the commission form of government from another city in Texas that had seen success with the system, Galveston. The Texas Legislature instituted the commission system in Galveston after a hurricane hit the city in 1900 and the existing mayor/council failed to react effectively in its wake. The new government worked so well there that in 1903, a new city charter in Galveston made it a permanent institution. News of the effectiveness of Galveston’s system of government spread quickly; people perceived it

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as a way to achieve efficient city government by conducting city affairs in a businesslike fashion while simultaneously curtailing political corruption. The citizens of Dallas approved of this new system and instituted it in their city. The commissioners elected soon called for a program of expansion and beautification to attract new residents and for the creation of a system of parks to serve public welfare.\(^{53}\)

In addition to their desire for a more beautiful city, Dallas city leaders also needed the new program for practical reasons. On May 25, 1908, a flood that caused waters in the Trinity River to rise from twenty-eight feet to forty-one-and-a-half feet in just five hours devastated Dallas. The "most disastrous natural calamity ever to occur in Dallas," the floodwaters eventually peaked at nearly fifty-three feet. The flood caused the deaths of four or five people, the homelessness of 4,000 Dallas residents, and the damage of the Katy and H&TC Railroads and of $2.5 million in property. To make matters worse, the water was slow to subside. The natural disaster ravaged the city of Dallas and made city officials realize that they needed to find a way to pacify the river. Consequently, the Kessler Plan emerged. It was a proposal that would, before long, result in the creation of a park that would one day become the heart of Little Mexico and home to Mexican celebrations. The Kessler Plan would also result in the commercialization of downtown Dallas and the subsequent dissection and destruction of Little Mexico.\(^{54}\)

The leaders of Dallas aspired to the principles of the City Beautiful Movement instituted in cities like St. Louis, Kansas City, and Chicago in which city planners


implemented designs to beautify the cities and expand their park systems. The vice president and general manager of the *Dallas Morning News*, George B. Dealey, was one of the most avid and outspoken supporters of city planning for Dallas. He delivered a speech at the Critic Club in Dallas extolling the virtues of city planning and ran a series of editorials in the *Dallas Morning News* advocating the innovative idea. As a result, Dealey, the Dallas Chamber of Commerce, business leaders, and city officials organized the City Plan and Improvement League.\(^\text{55}\)

This organization then sought independent, professional assistance from St. Louis-based landscape architect George Kessler, a “near genius of design.” Born in Germany, Kessler actually grew up in Dallas. After he obtained an education in Europe, he returned to the United States and eventually designed the park system in Kansas City. He served as consultant to the park boards of other cities and gained a favorable reputation. Dallas even utilized Kessler’s skills in 1906 when its State Fair Association hired him to study the fair grounds and facilities and make suggestions for the long-run. Kessler, whom the Association only paid $1,000, produced detailed maps of drives, walks, and buildings and offered many suggestions like the construction of a fair administration building. In 1910, the park board of Dallas retained Kessler again to provide direction in the creation of a park system. In 1911, the park board and City Plan and Improvement League hired Kessler once more to develop a plan for Dallas for a salary of $1,250. The report he produced, known as the Kessler Plan, “dramatically shaped the course of expansion within Dallas.”\(^\text{56}\)

\(^{56}\) Payne, *Big D*, 28-29; Jebsen et al., *Centennial History*, 216, 255-62; First quote in Jebsen et al., 258; second quote in Ibid., 262. For more on Latinos and city
The Kessler Plan was much more than just a plan for expanding the park system of Dallas. The plan, published in the form of an annual report from the park board in 1911, encompassed the entire city and addressed everything from its transportation facilities to its flood control mechanism. Kessler recognized that Dallas, a typical railroad terminal town that had grown according to the dictates of land speculation, had not taken into consideration the need for the creation of continuous thoroughfares throughout the city or for room for downtown commerce to expand.\(^57\) The plan he created specified nine areas for improvement:

I. The rechanneling of the Trinity River and the construction of levees to provide flood protection. The basin between the levees would be dammed below the city to create a city harbor that would serve as a center of commerce once the Trinity was made navigable.

II. The construction of a belt railroad to run in a double loop (one around Dallas proper and the other around Oak Cliff) in order to alleviate congestion on the railroad tracks. This would avoid the unsightly abundance of tracks and draw larger industries out of the inner city, thereby decreasing congestion within the city.

III. The construction of a union passenger station near Main and Broadway to serve all lines entering the city to give Dallas a “pleasing and dignified” railroad entrance.

IV. The construction of a central freight terminal between Akard and Broadway to better organize the distribution of the freight in the city.

V. The construction of a civic center to surround the union terminal plaza and “eliminate unsightly conditions that surround railroad terminals.”

VI. The elimination of all railroad grade crossings in the central city and perhaps the removal of all tracks except those in Kessler’s proposed loops.

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\(^57\) Jebsen et al., *Centennial History*, 263-67; Robinson Ellis, “The Place of Borders and Between,” 60.
VII. Straightening, lengthening, widening, or extending many streets in Dallas, especially in the downtown area, to lessen the difficulties that resulted from land speculators’ development of areas without concern for continuous streets.

VIII. The creation of a system of parks connected and coordinated by an elaborate network of parkways and boulevards.

IX. The creation and enlargement of children’s playgrounds in Dallas.\(^{58}\)

By 1911, Dallas had already spent $1 million in public funds to purchase land along Houston Street for a central railroad passenger terminal to replace the five existing ones. With that, Kessler set Dallas on a path it would follow into beautification, expansion, and commercialization—all at the expense of the residents of the crooked streets Dallas city leaders sought to rejuvenate.\(^{59}\)

The control that the elites of Dallas maintained over the urban planning of the city greatly disadvantaged the neighborhoods dominated by Mexicans. These neighborhoods offered limited city services and they often became severely overcrowded because of segregation. The 1921 law the City Council passed concerning racially defined housing limited housing options for people of color in Dallas. Low wages further limited housing options for Mexicans because the housing that was

\(^{58}\) Jebsen et al., *Centennial History*, 263-67; Kessler also suggested that Dallas get rid of its “unsightly array” of telephone, telegraph, and electric poles and wires, electrified street trolley lines, and street signs because he thought these looked “immature.” Moreover, he abhorred the use of “glaring advertising” in the form of billboards and signs on the sides of buildings and on roofs. Finally, he reprimanded Dallas city officials for not having created uniform regulations for the quality of street construction, the position of sidewalks, or the condition and care of trees. Ibid., 265.

Dallas would once again hire George Kessler in 1918 to update his plan based on the growth that had taken place in Dallas since his original plan. It made no new proposals, only revisions. In 1927, the city commission appointed the Ulrickson Committee, which formulated a nine-year capital budget program with eighty-one proposed projects. They in turn produced the $23.9 million Ulrickson Plan, an updated version of George Kessler’s 1911 plan. Ibid., 353-54, 398-99.

available went to poor whites before it went to them. Through their own actions, then, the elites of Dallas contributed to the congestion and contagion in underdeveloped neighborhoods like Little Mexico. Nevertheless, they still complained when the problems they had helped create interrupted the tranquility of their lives. Moreover, they blamed the residents of these neighborhoods for the squalor in which they lived, never once taking into account that their own discriminatory practices were the impetus for the problems to which they objected.  

The Kessler Plan resulted in some developments that benefitted the Mexicans of Dallas, however, such as the construction of Summit Play Park. Later renamed Pike Park, Summit Play Park eventually became the heart of the Mexican community in Dallas and hosted countless fiestas patrias. When it first opened, however, Summit Play Park, despite its location in Little Mexico, was closed to Mexicans. The park was the first in Dallas to be established under the new program of park design dictated by the Kessler Plan. Before the Kessler Plan, park sites were selected from undeveloped areas and purchased from a single owner in one transaction. After the creation of the Kessler Plan, however, city officials identified specific needs for target areas; then, the park board purchased the necessary plots of land from several owners in an already established neighborhood to meet the recreational needs of the residents of the neighborhood. The creation of the park coincided with the morality campaign the city of Dallas launched against the red-light district in Frogtown. From 1912 to 1914, the Dallas Park Board purchased 4.39 acres for $18,085. The name for the park, which sat on a hill overlooking Dallas, was the $5.00-winning entry of a young girl in a name-the-

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60 Phillips, White Metropolis, 64.
park contest. By 1915, the facilities were ready to use: a $23,759-fieldhouse replaced
the two-story house once belonging to Nat G. and James H. Turney (from whom the
Park Board purchased the land). The basement of the structure housed a free shower
service and the upper stories contained reading rooms, activity rooms, an assembly
hall, and a party room. A flagpole, playground equipment, and a wading pool were
installed outside the fieldhouse.61

In 1907, however, eight years before Summit Play Park opened, the elites of
Dallas amended the city charter to impose racial segregation in schools, churches, and
public amusement venues. As a result, Summit Play Park remained closed to Mexicans
completely until 1931. Before then, Mexicans were not allowed in the fieldhouse at all.
Mexican children were also not allowed to play on the lawn or on the playground
equipment. As early as 1926, however, Mexicans used the park for their fiestas. On all
other days of the year, the white residents of Dallas kept Mexicans out of a park that sat
in the middle of Little Mexico.62

The unabated stream of Mexicans into Dallas increasingly began to catch the
attention of white Dallas residents, whose perceptions of the Mexican population
solidified as the immigrants’ presence became more visible. In the first decades of the
twentieth century, white Americans focused their attention almost wholly on the flood of
European immigrants entering the United States at Ellis Island. Mexicans’ arrival was

61 Pike Park File, Folder 34, Box 2, City of Dallas Landmark Records, T/D DPL; Jebsen et al., Centennial History, 301-303; Amy Simpson, Pike Park: The Heart and History of Mexican Culture in Dallas (Dallas: Los Barrios Unidos, 1981), 5-6. The name of the park changed from Summit Play Park to Pike Park on July 12, 1927, to honor Edgar L. Pike, a member of the Dallas Park Board from 1908-1919.
62 Phillips, White Metropolis, 63; Pike Park File, Folder 34, Box 2, City of Dallas Landmark Records, T/D DPL; Jebsen et al., Centennial History, 301-303; Simpson, Pike Park, 6-7.
thus not immediately obvious, especially since they lived mostly out of sight in railroad boxcars and barrios.\(^{63}\) The phenomenal increase in the number of Mexicans in Dallas from 1910 to 1919, however, disrupted any notions Anglos previously held that they might be able to coexist quietly with Mexicans. As historian Carey McWilliams noted:

> Having been defeated in their first encounter with Anglo-Americans in the Southwest [the Mexican-American War], the Spanish-speaking people were naturally somewhat reluctant to seek a new accord. Like other minorities under similar circumstances, they sought to minimize contacts with the dominant group by withdrawing into their own world. As time passed, it seemed as though relations between the two groups might be stabilized on the basis of a bicultural accommodation. But the partial accommodation which had been achieved by 1900 was completely disrupted by the avalanche of immigration. As thousands of immigrants streamed across the border at a dozen points, the old conflict of cultures was renewed.\(^{64}\)

The renewed hostilities and tensions between Anglos and Mexicans resulted in efforts by the white population of Dallas to control or help—or sometimes both—the burgeoning ethnic population.

In Texas, racial prejudice was marked. Anglos in Dallas often reacted and responded to the presence of Mexicans in the city the same way they had when Jews arrived in the late 1800s. Anglos believed that Jews (and later, Mexicans) were essentially and eternally different. Their views toward these populations were not necessarily hostile, but Anglos nevertheless perceived these groups as separate. In addition, Anglos in Dallas long associated Mexicans with barbarism and contagion. Moreover, although legally classified as white, Anglos in Texas often viewed Mexicans as nonwhite. Indeed, Anglos were oftentimes unwilling to make a distinction between blacks and Mexicans. The Texas Revolution further colored Anglos’ perceptions of

\(^{63}\) Reisler, “Always the Laborer,” 232.

\(^{64}\) McWilliams, North from Mexico, 173.
Mexicans and bitterness over the conflict manifested itself in their attitudes toward
Mexicans. They saw Mexicans as villains in the “creation myth” of Texas. Mexicans’
status as low-paid workers, their Catholic faith, and their Spanish language made it
even easier for Anglos to maintain their view of Mexicans as aliens. Mexicans’
tendency to resist or disregard becoming Americanized made them less acceptable to
Anglos and susceptible to more exploitation and discrimination. Anglos saw Mexicans
as outside of whiteness and thought their culture deserved to be obliterated. Mexicans
thus became more united as Mexicans while simultaneously distancing themselves from
the dominant Anglo culture.65

Many Anglos maintained inaccurate preconceptions of Mexicans. They assumed
that Mexicans lacked intelligence, fought rather than worked, and flaunted white society
by continuing to wear their traditional clothing. They also believed that Mexicans were
generally a nuisance. The findings of contemporaneous social scientists supported
these notions. Mexicans seemed to be indolent, docile, and backward—three qualities
abhorred by nativists and three qualities praised by Anglo employers searching for
cheap labor. Nativists also worried that the indomitable fertility of Mexican women
would overwhelm the population of the United States; more Mexicans in the country
translated into increased fears of miscegenation. As historian Mark Reisler noted, “The

65 Phillips, White Metropolis, 55, 67-69; Gamio, Mexican Immigration, 55; Mario
T. García, “La Frontera: The Border as Symbol and Reality in Mexican American
Thought,” Mexican Studies 1 (Summer 1985), 199.
presence of Mexicans would encourage violation of the nation’s most inviolate racial
(taboo).”

Still other misconceptions about Mexicans existed. Some Anglos believed that
the confusing alien tongue of the United States, English, retarded the mental
development of Mexicans. Many Anglos also believed that Mexicans were more highly
sexed as a result of the supposed early arrival of puberty in Mexican children. Further,
Mexicans allegedly lived by a philosophy of “here today, tomorrow may die,” and as
such enjoyed themselves and spent whatever money they made. Anglos also believed
that Mexicans had emotional natures. Contemporary journalist and American
correspondent on Latin American affairs Carleton Beals stated, “The Mexican’s outlook
upon life approaches the Oriental; it is never mechanistic; it scorns efficiency for
efficiency’s sake. The Mexican’s evaluation of ideas of human activities is,
consequently, almost unintelligible to us. The thought forms, the social régimes, the
mode of living, all are different.”

The American Federation of Labor (AFL) maintained an unmistakable and rigid
attitude toward foreign immigrants in the early twentieth century. The members of the
AFL saw Mexican immigrants as the reason for lowered wages in the United States, a
ready-made pool of strikebreakers, and a significant obstacle to the successful
organization of workers in the United States. Focused mainly on Asian and European
immigration in the first two decades of the 1900s, the AFL turned their attention to the

66 Reisler, “Always the Immigrant,” 236, 243-44; David Montejano, Anglos and
Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987),
82-85, 114-117, 160-161.
67 Carleton Beals, “Mexican Intelligence,” Southwest Review 10 (October 1925):
27-29; Flora Lowrey, “Night School in Little Mexico,” Southwest Review 16 (October
flow of aliens from the south after legislation and world war effectively shut out their first two targets. As historian Harvey A. Levenstein stated, “At the very moment when the AFL’s efforts to close the front door on cheap labor seemed to be crowned with success, however, it began to creep through the back door and seep though the walls.”

During this period, the government of the United States made few attempts to curtail immigration from Mexico. With the passage of the Immigration Act of 1917, the government abandoned its literacy requirements for Mexican immigrants and simultaneously encouraged the recruitment of contract labor from Mexico. Immigration laws in the United States largely targeted European immigrants—Mexican immigrants were not yet a concern for most Americans. The literacy test and eight-dollar head tax stipulated by the Immigration Act of 1917—aimed again at European immigrants but waived in the case of Mexican immigrants—proved to lessen only momentarily the deluge of Mexican immigrants. Countless Mexican immigrants continued to cross the border into the United States undocumented before, during, and after the passage of the Immigration Act of 1917.

During the First World War, AFL leader Samuel Gompers became alarmed at the possible undesirable effects of Mexican immigration on the United States and on the AFL. He worried that once the war ended, the Mexican labor imported during wartime would accept lower wages than would Americans and anxiously wrote to Secretary of

Labor William B. Wilson in 1918 requesting that wartime exemptions be nullified. Following the Steel Strike of 1919 in which Chicago steel interests brought in Mexican strikebreakers from the Southwest, the AFL passed a resolution at their convention officially opposing Mexican immigration. From then on, the AFL tirelessly endeavored to have Mexican immigration addressed by proposed immigration restriction legislation in Congress.\footnote{Levenstein, “The AFL and Mexican Immigration,” 207-08; “Plan to Organize Labor in Mexico,” \textit{Dallas Morning News}, September 16, 1920.} 

The residents of Dallas also took action where Mexicans were concerned. In response to the slovenliness—real and exaggerated—of the population of Little Mexico, “war was declared” when the Dallas Director of Public Health, Captain Leslie C. Frank, initiated a cleanup campaign of Little Mexico in 1919. Sanitary supervisor Frank R. Shaw oversaw the cleanup of the region with the help of two inspectors and a garbage wagon, subjecting the entire Little Mexico area to careful inspection. He and the inspectors examined each house individually and designated items destined for the garbage wagon. The scope of the three sanitation assessors was limited to the premises of the houses as they did not have the authority to impose sanitary regulations for the interiors of the residences.\footnote{“Clean-Up Campaign for ‘Little Mexico’ District,” \textit{Dallas Morning News}, July 13, 1919, “To Make Sanitation Drive in ‘Little Mexico,’” \textit{Dallas Morning News}, August 15, 1919.} 

The poor conditions in Little Mexico did not assuage the increasingly accelerated pace of Mexican immigration to Dallas, however. Mexicans continued to pour into North Texas and crowd themselves in the outwardly expanding neighborhood of Little Mexico and into smaller communities in East and West Dallas. In doing so, they became more
and more a part of the landscape of Dallas and Dallas history. As such, they had significant impacts on the schools, churches, and public facilities in the city that would last long after Little Mexico city planners bulldozed over the neighborhood to make way for a commercial district. The institutions they created and in which they participated reinforced their Mexican identities as they kept their Mexican traditions and culture alive. They did not pursue whiteness, as argued by Michael Phillips; rather, they pursued a sustainable version of Mexicanness that they could practice within the confines of their isolated communities to deal with the pressures of Anglo discrimination and segregation. The Mexican Revolution pushed them out of Mexico and the United States drew them in, but Dallas did not necessarily welcome their large population with open arms. Nevertheless, they kept coming—a fact reflected in the 1920 census, which showed that the Mexican population in Dallas exploded in just ten short years.

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72 Phillips, *White Metropolis*. 
CHAPTER 4
EL TORRENTE: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PERMANENT MEXICAN COMMUNITY, 1920-1925

Dallas, by the 1920s, was the wealthiest city in the state of Texas in terms of property valuation. It consistently ranked high in the nation in the number of building permits issued. It had more telephones than any city in the South. Its skyline had 100 structures ranging from five to twenty-nine stories tall. In 1924, Henry Ford purchased land for a million-dollar assembly plant in the city. By 1925, Dallas contained 112 miles of streetcar lines and six interurban lines. Dallas, then, was an incredibly prosperous and increasingly expanding city in the 1920s. Mexicans continued to immigrate into Dallas and by 1920, they comprised the majority of the immigrants arriving in Dallas.¹ They created a community in Little Mexico that was soon bursting at the seams. They may have called the wealthy city of Dallas home, but their employers and landlords continued to relegate Mexicans to the poorest parts of the city and the worst-paying jobs.

By 1920, 52,361 Mexicans had crossed legally into the United States and an untold number had made unauthorized crossings into the country. The number of Mexicans in Texas jumped up to 388,675, comprising 8.3 percent of the 4,663,228-person population of Texas. Also by this time, the population of Dallas had reached 158,976, of which 4,130 were Mexicans. From 1910 to 1920, Dallas witnessed an astonishing 1,251.5 percent increase in the number of Mexicans living within the

¹ Payne, Big D, 107; Phillips, White Metropolis, 89.
boundaries of the county. The slow trickle of Mexicans into North Texas had truly increased in intensity.²

In early 1920, many Texas business interests continued to call for more Mexican labor. On January 30 of that year, Representatives Hudspeth and Box (in yet another ideological turnaround) filed telegrams with the House Committee on Immigration in favor of the admission of Mexicans for temporary labor purposes in industries other than agriculture. Representative Box received and presented a telegram from Dallas-based J.O. McKay, president of the Texas Lignite Operator's Association, stating that his industry in North Texas was suffering from decreased production due to a shortage of Mexican labor. Representative Hudspeth also presented telegrams he had received from business interests in other parts of Texas seeking Mexican labor. A telegram from Don S. Biggers of Eastland, Texas, stated that western people understood Mexicans, that they had no trouble with them, and that they preferred them over black laborers “at all times and for all purposes.” Many Texans reported to the Department of Labor that they would acquire labor from Mexico whether the law allowed them to or not. Thus, the dilemma of Mexican immigration did not subside with the proposal, debate, and passage of immigration legislation in 1917 and 1918. Business interests considered

² Population: Number and Distribution of Inhabitants, 1930, 18; Population: Reports by States, 1930, 44, 68; Fourteenth Census. As Dallas grew, so did its Mexican population. From 1900 to 1910, the number of Mexicans in Dallas grew 6,883.3 percent. For an interesting look at the relationship between Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans, see Harley L. Browning and Rodolfo O. de la Garza, eds., Mexican Immigrants and Mexican Americans: An Evolving Relation (Austin: CMAS Publications, 1986).
Mexico to be the best source of cheap and effective labor and were willing to do whatever it took to bring Mexicans to the United States.³

The Texas Chamber of Commerce also feared a shortage of Mexican labor in 1920. They worried that one-fifth less land in Texas would be cultivated than had been the year before. As a result, the Texas Chamber of Commerce sent ballots to its 800 members questioning their opinions on the importation of Mexican labor. The ballots contained questions like, “Shall the present Federal immigration laws be so amended as to permit the importation into the United States of Mexican labor to meet satisfactorily the demands of Texas?” and “Shall your Texas Chamber of Commerce undertake this activity as the representative of the membership and business interests of Texas?” Vice president and general manager of the Texas Chamber of Commerce James Z. George included a memorandum with the ballot referendum that outlined the dire need for Mexican labor in Texas. It also stated that the only way for Texas to avoid underproduction was for the Chamber of Commerce to seek federal immigration legislation. George stated that the organization wished to present before Congress its need for immigration laws “which will protect our American ideals, yet permit the Nation’s greatest agricultural state to make full use of Mexican labor.”⁴

Just under a month later, the Texas Chamber of Commerce started urging manufacturers and railroad companies in Texas to utilize the Mexican labor that had been pouring into Texas since February 1, 1920. The organization pushed the employment of Mexicans so as to avoid a labor shortage when agricultural seasons

began. The Chamber of Commerce also explicitly suggested that railroad companies employ these recent immigrants as section hands. The Chamber of Commerce hoped to circumvent the taking of Mexican labor by Northern business interests and the return of these immigrants to Mexico. They saw the arrival of these Mexicans as a chance to stimulate increased production.5

The Mexican government also assisted Texas business interests in their calls for Mexican labor in the 1920s. The Mexican Labor Bureau, organized by the Mexican government to provide laborers for agricultural and unskilled labor in the United States, sent hundreds of Mexicans across the Rio Grande. Under the supervision of Mexican Consul General Arturo de Baracho, the labor bureau offered Americans who signed a contract with the United States Immigration Service Mexican laborers at $2.50 per head.6

Texas business interests’ favorable attitudes toward Mexican immigration and support from the Mexican government resulted in the increased arrival of Mexican laborers in the years leading up the 1920 census. In 1920, a total of 4,130 Mexicans lived in Dallas. Their average age was 24.4. The Mexican women were, on average, 21.2 and the Mexican men 25.2. The Mexican population of Dallas in 1920, then, was fairly young. Compared to the ages of Mexicans in Dallas in 1910, Mexicans on the whole in 1920 were more than two years younger, Mexican women were more than one year younger, and Mexican men were nearly four years younger. This suggests that

younger and younger Mexicans were making their way north. This population’s youth meant that many had had less opportunity to obtain an education and that they also had had less time to acquire skills in industry. Consequently, the flood of young immigrants from Mexico, because of their probable lack of education and skills, were destined for relegation to the lowest ranks of society and employment in a white, discriminating Dallas.\textsuperscript{7}

The marital statuses of Mexican immigrants to Dallas remained fairly constant from 1910 to 1920. In the latter census year, 39 percent of the total Mexican population was married, 55 percent single, 5 percent widowed, and .1 percent divorced. Forty-five percent of Mexican women in 1920 were married, 47 percent single, 7 percent widowed, and .1 percent divorced. Thirty-five percent of male Mexican immigrants were married, an overwhelming 61 percent single, 3 percent widowed, and .1 percent divorced. Taken all together, a majority of Mexicans were single—especially Mexican men. Judged against the 1910 statistics, the number of single Mexicans in Dallas in 1920 fell slightly, but maintained consistently significant proportions. Mexican immigrants thus were not arriving in Dallas with families and previously established social networks and ties—they came with other single strangers seeking work. Only when they were in Dallas did they begin to create for themselves social networks, families, and a community.\textsuperscript{8}

Mexicans arrived in droves in the years leading up to 1920. Their average year of immigration was 1914, but over one quarter of those who reported their arrival dates arrived just one year prior to the 1920 census enumeration, in 1919. Nearly 80 percent of the Mexicans in Dallas were born in Mexico. Of the 3,250 Mexicans in Dallas who

\textsuperscript{7} Fourteenth Census.  
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
were born in Mexico, only forty-one, or 1.3 percent, were naturalized. Eighteen of the forty-one who had been naturalized had, on average, completed the naturalization process in 1911. Because so many had only just appeared in Dallas in the year before the census enumeration, most had either not had the time or desire to seek naturalization, a trend that was also apparent in the Mexican population present in Dallas in 1910. Most of those who were naturalized had already been in the United States since before 1910. Sociologist Emory S. Bogardus found that Mexican immigrants who had been in the United States for several years often began to consider becoming citizens. Their fellow Mexican immigrants, however, often produced enough opposition to the idea so as to quash the idea completely. Of course, loyalty to Mexico played a role in Mexicans’ unwillingness to seek naturalization. Moreover, many Mexicans came to realize that status as an official citizen of the United States did not always translate into actual rights and fair treatment. Thus, naturalization remained a choice Mexicans opted not to pursue.9

The percentage of Mexicans in school continued to remain low. Twenty-two percent of the total Mexican population reported not having attended school and only 9 percent reported that they had attended school. Twenty-one percent of Mexican women had not attended school and 12 percent had, while 22 percent of Mexican men reported not having attended school and only 8 percent had. Therefore, the number of Mexicans in school remained exceptionally low. Although the percentage of Mexicans

9 Fourteenth Census; Bogardus, The Mexican in the United States, 76-81.
in school had gone up and the percentage of Mexicans not in school went down from 1910, the fact that so few were in school tempers these gains.\footnote{Fourteenth Census.}

Rates of literacy also remained quite low. The percentage of Mexicans who could not read and those who could was equal, at 39 percent, as was the percentage of those who could not write versus those who could. Thirty-seven percent of Mexican women in Dallas could not read and 36 percent could, while 37 percent of these women could not write and 35 percent could. From 1910, the percentage of women who could not read and write had fallen 5 percent and 11 percent, respectively; the percentage of those who could read and write rose 7 percent and 14 percent, respectively. The rates of literacy among Mexican men were also distressing: 40 percent could not read and 41 percent could read while the percentage of those who could not write was an equal 41 percent. Compared to 1910, the percentage of Mexican men who could not read and write had risen 3 percent and 1 percent, respectively; the percentage of those who could read and write had fallen 5 percent and 2 percent, respectively. Hence, rates of literacy hovered around the same proportions from 1910 to 1920 and nearly a third of the adult Mexican population in Dallas could not read or write.\footnote{Ibid. In the 1920 census, 909 and 908 Mexicans did not report their ability to read and write, respectively. Of these unknowns, 405 and 406 were aged 5 and under; thus, around 500 Mexicans were of unknown literacy statuses.}

The problem of illiteracy was not lost upon the white residents of Dallas. In 1923, the \textit{Dallas Morning News} reported that Texas stood highest in literacy among southern states but it was thirty-fifth among all the states in the union. The article noted that in the South, the explanation of illiteracy almost always lay with the “negro,” but that in Texas this was not the case. Black Texans had slowly been achieving higher levels of
literacy in the years since the turn of the century. Foreign-born whites, including Mexicans who “came to dig our ditches, pick our cotton and peddle ‘dulce’ and tamales,” contributed significantly to the problem of illiteracy in Texas, however. According to the article, 70 percent of foreign-born whites in Texas were of Mexican origin.\(^1^2\) The article went on to summarize:

The conclusion seems to be that the problem of negro illiteracy is solving itself, through the efficiency of negro schools under negro instructors, but that the same problem among Mexicans is of growing seriousness, owing to the fact that we have no corps of teachers qualified to teach the little Mexicans and have no texts specifically adapted to their use. The young Mexican has the added difficulty that he must learn to read and write in a language which he has never learned to speak. Then, too, his parents are usually poverty-stricken and of no fixed habitude from year to year, so that the enforcement of truancy laws is extremely hard, and sometimes out of the question.\(^1^3\)

The article went on to suggest two solutions to the problem of Mexican illiteracy. First, steps had to be taken to improve the economic condition of Mexicans so their children could attend school. Second, the state needed to provide instructors “who understand the Mexican point of view and customs so as to be able to teach them our point of view and customs along with our language and textbooks.” It was not going to be an easy task, the article recognized, for “centuries of ignorance, poverty, and easy-going indolence are back of the problem and have to be overcome.”\(^1^4\)

Learning the English language remained a low priority for Mexicans in 1920. Mexicans who had the ability to speak English made up only 19 percent of the population, while those who remained solely Spanish-speaking made up 59 percent of

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\(^{1^2}\) “Texas and Illiteracy,” *Dallas Morning News*, October 14, 1923.

\(^{1^3}\) Ibid.

\(^{1^4}\) Ibid.; *Dallas Morning News*, October 14, 1923. For more on this, see Carlos Blanton, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas, 1836-1981* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2004).
the population. Fifty-seven percent of Mexican women had not learned the English language and 17 percent had, while 61 percent of Mexican men had not learned the English language while 20 percent had. Thus, Mexican men were only slightly more likely to have learned the English language, perhaps as a result of their exposure to the language in their work environments outside the home. However, the relatively low rates of English-speaking ability underscore the fact that most of these Mexican immigrants were new arrivals to the United States who had not yet had the chance to learn the language.\textsuperscript{15}

In her 1936 master’s thesis, Ethelyn Clara Davis observed, “The Mexican came to the United States as a day laborer and usually has remained unskilled.” Further, sociologist Emory Bogardus noted that second-generation Mexicans very rarely reached the high school level and had instead “fallen back into the unskilled status of their parents,” very often handicapped by their color. He also argued that second-generation Mexicans did not crowd into new areas or fields where it was obvious they were not wanted and lacked the leadership to take on these challenges in the first place. Finally, their isolated community organization hindered their progress into new realms of employment—they had not received any encouragement in “leaping the chasm” from their Mexican communities into the white, occupationally skilled world.\textsuperscript{16}

The data from the 1920 census supports these points and shows that Mexicans continued to toil in the same low-paying industries in 1920 in which they toiled in 1900 and 1910. Of the 4,130 Mexicans located in the 1920 census, nearly half—2,010—

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Fourteenth Census.}  \textsuperscript{16} Bogardus, “Second Generation,” 276-78; First quote in Davis, “Little Mexico,” 3.
performed some form of wage-earning labor in various industries. Of those 2,010 workers, an overwhelming 77 percent listed their trade/profession as “laborer.” Pipeline companies employed 6.6 percent of working Mexicans, a concrete/cement company 5.2 percent, various hotels 4.2 percent, street car companies 6.4 percent, the gas company 1.7 percent, and various factories (dress, overall, shirt, skirt, box, cracker, candy, and coffin) 1.5 percent. Mexicans also labored on farms (7.5 percent), public works (6.7 percent), and in the streets (6.6 percent). The railroads in Dallas continued to employ the most substantial number of Mexicans, however. In 1920, nearly one-quarter (24.4 percent) of the Mexicans working were employed by the railroads.¹⁷

Most Mexican women did not work for a living, but a small population did. Of the 1,567 Mexican women in Dallas in 1920, 189 (12 percent) did work of some kind. Half of these Mexican women toiled in the same industries as did Mexican men—94 of the 189 women (50 percent) who worked were laborers for railroads, factories, cement companies, farms, and streetcar companies. The other half of the female Mexican labor force worked in traditionally female industries and positions. They were maids in hotels, clerks in dry goods stores, cooks for private families, at-home dressmakers and laundresses, boardinghouse keepers, nurses, and factory seamstresses. These women also accounted for twenty of the thirty-one (or 65 percent) total factory workers. Thus, Mexican women were just as likely to be found in traditionally male industries as female industries. There is no telling, however, the kind of work—whether hard labor

¹⁷ Fourteenth Census.
alongside their male counterparts or domestic work with other women—these women performed in those traditionally “male” industries.¹⁸

In “Mexican Peon Women in Texas,” economics professor and author on Texas labor Ruth A. Allen attempted to capture the lives of Mexican farmwomen in several Texas counties. Mexican peon women, Allen argued, followed the men of their families into the United States and brought with them “traditions of feminine subservience which seem strange in twentieth century America.” She went on to say that the new environment in the United States strengthened these habits because Mexican women had fewer contacts than Mexican men and knew less English. As a result, Allen continued, “fear borne of ignorance [made] her more dependent upon husband or father than she would be in a familiar situation.”¹⁹ Allen then considered what, if anything, Mexican women could add to American civilization and decided that they had one real contribution:

Seldom is there a Mexican home so mean that it has not its spot of beauty. It may be a tiny flower garden protected by wires and sticks; it may be some colored handwork on the table or the chair; or, it may be the shrine in the corner where bits of color, bright pictures, and cheap images and trinkets are gathered. The visitor has the feeling that here are people who never forget that hyacinths are as necessary as bread to human life.²⁰

While the Mexican women of Dallas were not as likely to work as Mexican men, their lives did consist of more than merely putting up spots of color in their homes and supposedly weighing American society down with their “helplessness in a world of

¹⁸ Fourteenth Census. The census does not report the specific job titles of a person. Someone listed as a “laborer” may be just that; however, the term may be just a generic title with meanings similar to “employee.”


individualistic competition.” Mexican women in Dallas attended school, raised families, and served as the reason behind the tenacity of transplanted Mexican culture in the United States.

In contrast, most Mexican men worked for a living. Of the 2,563 Mexican men in Dallas, 1,820 worked, or 71 percent. Therefore, Mexican men were six times more likely to be employed than were Mexican women. An overwhelming 1,445 (56 percent) listed their trade/profession as “laborer.” Mexican men constituted 100 percent of the total Mexican pipeline company laborers, 96 percent of the total Mexican cement/concrete company laborers, 95 percent of the streetcar company laborers, 94 percent of the gas company laborers, 93 percent of the street laborers, 91 percent of the railroad laborers, and 72 percent of the total farm laborers. The 44 percent of the Mexican male working population not listed as laborers worked as tailors, bakers, dishwashers, barbers, porters, bellboys, shoemakers, waiters, and woodcutters. A small portion of the Mexican male population, 1.4 percent, was self-employed—they were proprietors of grocery stores, restaurants, barbershops, pool halls, and cafes. Most Mexican men, however, occupied the lowest-paid and most menial occupations, just as they had in 1900 and 1910.²²


²² Fourteenth Census. The situation concerning Mexican male and female immigrants in the workplace did not change much in the decades after the 1920s. In Yucatecans in Dallas, Texas, anthropologist Rachel H. Adler found that in the late 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century, female immigrants from Yucatán, Mexico, maintained low rates of employment compared to male Yucatecans. Moreover, men and women had “different working environments”—women typically occupied domestic occupations. Adler, Yucatecans in Dallas, Texas, 94-97.
The arrival of so many Mexicans in the United States often made securing employment difficult. On January 31, 1921, a group of 200 Mexicans approached the mayor of Dallas, Frank W. Wozencraft, and the Dallas city commissioners and asked for work. The spokesmen of the group, D.G. Hernández, a member of the Dallas Mexican Labor Exchange, and L.G. Soto, a Mexican civil engineer, argued that Mexicans were destitute and unable to pull together the funds to return to Mexico. The spokesmen “asked for nothing of the city except work.” The mayor and city commissioners responded with a promise to give their problem “consideration and do what was in their power.”

Most Mexicans in Dallas worked in the lower echelon of occupations in the 1920s, but their occupations were nevertheless diverse. For instance, Fred Flores was a bottler at Grain Juice Company, Frank Escovar was a tailor at Simon Koenigsberg, José Estes was a painter at the Adolphus Hotel, Gonzales Espino was an employee at City Club, Nicanor Gómez worked as a grocer, and Theo Espinosa worked for the Dallas Gas Company. Female heads of household either maintained boardinghouses for incoming Mexican immigrants or worked in domestic trades as seamstresses, dressmakers, or laundresses. Lucía Cortez was a cook at Jefferson Café, Rose Perretta was a cashier at Collins Drug Store, Fannie Escovado was a clerk at Sears and Roebuck, Beatrice Medellín was a music teacher, Sara Escalante was a dressmaker, and Royelia Huerta was a seamstress.

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23 “Two Hundred Mexicans Call on Mayor Seeking Work,” Dallas Morning News, February 2, 1921.
24 Twelfth Census; Thirteenth Census; Fourteenth Census; Dallas City Directory for 1920, 623, 665, 710-11, 732, 772, 1036, 1125. For more on the history of Mexican labor in the United States, see George C. Kiser and Martha Woody Kiser, eds., Mexican
Some Mexican women found success as business owners. In 1923, a woman named María Luna arrived in Dallas from San Luis Potosí with her two children, Carmen and Francisco. After working for a few months in Porero’s Grocery Store on North Griffin Street, Luna bought a corn grinder from her employer. In February 1924, she opened Luna’s Tortilla Factory on Caroline Street and started selling the tortillas she made with the corn grinder. Luna encountered difficulties finding women to help her make tortillas, however, because many husbands did not want their wives to work outside the home. Her solution was to fill dishpans with masa (cornmeal dough used to make tortillas) and take them directly to the women’s homes each morning. Later that day, she would pick up the finished tortillas. In 1926, María Luna married Rudolfo Gonzáles; nevertheless, she insisted on maintaining control of the business and would not turn over management to her husband. By 1927, she had twenty-four employees who produced 500 dozen tortillas a day. In 1929, the factory initiated a home delivery service to homes in Little Mexico, the West Dallas barrio, Cement City, and El Rancho Grande (where Texas Stadium stands today). In 1938, Luna moved her tortilla factory to a location on the corner of McKinney Avenue and Caroline Street. A year later, Luna turned over her factory to her son, Francisco. In 1940, Francisco Luna mechanized the factory and raised the output of tortillas to 100 dozen per hour. Luna’s Tortilla Factory remained at its McKinney Avenue location until August 2007 when the Luna family sold

Workers in the United States: Historical and Political Perspectives (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979). Diacritical marks have been added to these names.
the building to a Dallas restaurant group. Luna’s Tortilla Factory moved to Harry Hines Boulevard.25

Mexican heads of household in 1920 continued to be mostly older men who worked to support families. In the 1920 census, 801 Mexicans classified themselves as heads of their household. Of these 801, sixty-two were women (7.7 percent) and 739 were men (92.3 percent). The average age of the heads of household was almost thirty-seven. Compared to the average age of the general Mexican population of Dallas, heads of household were more than ten years older. Mexican heads of household in 1920 were more than three years younger than were the heads in 1910, most likely as a result of the influx of young Mexican immigrants from 1910 to 1920.26

The marital statuses of the heads of household segment of the Mexican population were very different from those of the general Mexican population. Eighty-one percent were married, 8 percent single, 10 percent widowed, and .1 percent divorced. In contrast, only 39 percent of the general Mexican population was married and 55 percent were single. Heads of household were thus more likely to be married and have families. Non-heads of household were more often single boarders living with other single Mexican immigrants.27

Most of the Mexican heads of household arrived just prior to the 1920 census enumeration, in 1919. Nevertheless, heads of household constituted nearly half of the

26 Fourteenth Census.
27 Ibid.
forty-one naturalized Mexicans in Dallas in 1920. However, half of those eighteen naturalized heads had arrived in the United States prior to 1900. Indeed, the latest year of arrival for a naturalized Mexican head of household was 1916. Thus, Mexican heads of household who had sought naturalization had mostly been in the United States longer than a decade.\textsuperscript{28}

The rates of literacy among Mexican heads of household were much higher than were those of the general Mexican population in Dallas. The youngest head of household was fifteen years old and was the only one to have attended school. The rest of the heads of household were older than school age and had thus not attended school. However, 53 percent could read (46 percent could not) and 52 percent could write (47 percent could not). These percentages were noticeably higher than the 39 percent literacy rates of the general Mexican population. Moreover, 29 percent of the Mexican heads of household could speak English, as compared to the 19 percent of the greater Mexican population who could speak English. Again, the fact that these heads of household had mostly been in the United States for many years undoubtedly contributed to their picking up the English language.\textsuperscript{29}

The heads of household, as breadwinners in their homes, needed to work to earn money. It is not surprising, then, that 91 percent of the head of household population worked in some capacity. Laborers once more dominated the trades/professions listed, constituting 72 percent of the total head of household working population. Railroads employed 19 percent of the heads of household, farms 9 percent, streetcar companies 8 percent, and cement/concrete companies 6 percent. One of the heads of household,  

\textsuperscript{28} Fourteenth Census. 
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
twenty-six-year-old C. Barrera, was not employed but was a medical student at Baylor University. Interestingly enough, all of the twenty-five Mexican proprietors were heads of household. Only one of these proprietors was a woman, forty-four-year-old Mexico-born Elane Cortez. She immigrated to the United States in 1918 and by 1920, she owned a café. The other twenty-two women who worked (35 percent of the female heads of household) were maids, cooks, boardinghouse keepers, laundresses, dressmakers, tailors, and woodchoppers. Of the fifty-six heads of household who listed their trade/profession as “none,” thirty-nine (or 70 percent) were women. Only seventeen men listed their trade/profession as “none”; as such, men were again more likely to be employed than were women.30

Thus, the number of Mexicans in Dallas—and indeed, the rest of the Southwest—rose exponentially in the 1920s. Federal immigration legislation became increasingly restrictive during the 1920s as it shifted from qualitative to quantitative means of limitations; it did not, however, affect the influx of Mexican immigrants. Many Americans feared a flood of immigrants fleeing from war-torn Europe and its economic crises inundating the shores of the United States. In 1921, Congress passed a quota law—a measure they intended to be temporary. This act limited overall immigration to 350,000 per year with quotas allocated to each nationality group based on the number of foreign-born present in the United States in 1910. Fear of overwhelming numbers of immigrants arriving in the United States morphed into a fear of the *types* of immigrants arriving and the effect they would have on the supposedly racially superior Anglo-Saxon

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30 *Fourteenth Census*. There were sixty-nine total heads of household who did not work. Fifty-six listed their trade/profession as “none,” one was a medical student, and twelve were unknown (nine of these twelve were in a section of the census that was damaged and missing half of the page).
Americans. In 1924, Congress passed another quota law, the National Origins Act—this time, a measure Congress intended to be permanent. The quotas in this law were based on the 1920 census rather than the 1910 census and limited the total number of aliens admitted annually to just 150,000.\(^{31}\)

Both the 1921 and 1924 laws deliberately excluded countries of the Western hemisphere from quota consideration. Immigrants from Mexico and Canada made up the bulk of immigration from countries in the Western Hemisphere at the time, and even then, they only amounted to a small percentage of the total immigrants. Moreover, the quota laws specifically targeted European immigration and moderates in the United States easily convinced Congress that the foreign policy of the United States demanded favorable treatment for its neighbors. Thus, Mexicans who could afford the eight-dollar head tax at the United States-Mexico border or who entered labor contracts gained admittance to the United States with relative ease. Even unauthorized immigrants could enter the country without much difficulty—the Border Patrol only began in 1924.\(^{32}\)

Many Americans took sides in the unrestricted versus restricted immigration debate during this era. Those in favor of restriction often espoused racially motivated arguments. They declared that the United States possessed a racially superior stock of people that would be undermined if too many inferior immigrants flooded in. They


recognized that the Mexican immigrants settling in the United States were of the lower, working classes and considered them a “racial menace.” Others in favor of restriction were trade unionists (like the AFL) who argued that Mexicans lowered American labor standards because they were willing to work for less and in substandard working and living conditions. Moreover, trade unionists argued, the fact that Mexicans were not easily organized hindered the growth of unionism. Finally, many social and public health workers were also restrictionists. They recognized that Mexicans accounted for a large number of the charity cases, hospital wards, and prisoners in their cities and worried about the danger of contagious diseases. Furthermore, the seasonal nature of Mexicans’ labor made for disorganization at their arrival and in their wake. These restrictionists argued that while employers saved money by using Mexican labor, taxpayers were forced to pay for their presence and its repercussions, even after immigrants moved on.33

Many Americans, on the other hand, favored non-restriction of immigration. Employers of laborers in the Southwest depended on unskilled labor and thus wanted open borders with no restrictions. Existing immigration laws placed quotas on the number of admitted European immigrants which made them harder to recruit as labor, employers argued. Thus, they needed Mexican labor. Other anti-restrictionists claimed that placing any kind of quota on Mexico would offend the Mexican government. Still others opposed restriction and simply called for increased surveillance at the border, registration of all aliens in the United States, enforcement of the clause forbidding the

entry of anyone suspected of becoming a public charge, and deportation of those in the United States illegally. With these adjustments, they argued, the problem of Mexican immigration would solve itself.\textsuperscript{34}

Nevertheless, Mexicans became an unmistakable presence in Dallas, as proven by the data available in the 1920 census and by the leeway given them in the immigration legislation of the 1920s. As such, they continued to make their presence known in religious and educational institutions. Children in Little Mexico had few options when it came to schools. There existed two kindergartens for Mexican children in Dallas, one sponsored by the Catholic Church, the other by the Methodist Church. Both kindergartens intended to teach Mexican children enough English to be able to succeed alongside white children in the first grade. Mexican students seeking a high school education attended Dallas Technical High School and, to a lesser extent, North Dallas High School. There were few schooling options for adults in Little Mexico. Two night schools existed, one run by the public schools of Dallas and the other by the Methodist mission. These schools intended to teach Mexican adults how to speak, read, and write enough English to be able to transact any necessary business.\textsuperscript{35}

Cumberland Hill School, which taught grades one through six, was by far the most popular school for Mexicans because of its proximity to Little Mexico. By 1925, Cumberland Hill School had acquired a noticeably Mexican student body. An article in the \textit{Dallas Morning News} titled “Speaking the League of Nations!” noted that students of many different ethnic groups attended Cumberland Hill: “From sunny Italy to coldest

\textsuperscript{34} Bogardus, \textit{The Mexican in the United States}, 85-87.
Siberia and from the turbulent Emerald Isle to the complacent... China, they come to
Cumberland.” The article went on to note that at the school, which was “near the heart
of the squalid, yet romantic ‘Little Mexico,’” Mexican children made up a majority of the
student population.36

At Cumberland, one of the teachers’ primary goals was Americanization. It was
“not... at all unusual to see such a program as the following presented at one of the
Friday auditorium periods: ‘Why I Love America,’ orations by Epimenio Espinosa...
‘Abraham Lincoln, Savior of His Country,’ by Secundia Flores... ‘The Dallas Spirit,’ by
Guadalupe Pérez.” A law passed by the Texas Legislature in 1918 aided in
Cumberland teachers’ program of Americanization. The English-only law banned all
school employees from using the Spanish language on school grounds and made it a
criminal offense to teach in any language other than English. One of the teachers at
Cumberland Hill, Miss Pinkston, commented that “Here we take all of them on the same
plan and for one purpose—to make them good, substantial, American citizens.
Whether they are American, Swedes, Russian, Mexican, or Chinese they are the same
to us—potential Americans.” The fact that many of these students had probably been
born in the United States and were already American citizens did not seem to matter—
their ethnicity made their American status questionable. Nevertheless, these attempts
at Americanization suffered—and may have even failed completely—because when
Mexican children went home after school, they once again freely donned their Mexican
identities. When they stepped outside the doors of Cumberland Hill School, they left

36 “Speaking the League of Nations!” *Dallas Morning News*, June 7, 1925.
their teachers’ white America and entered Mexico, which was alive and well on the streets of La Colonia and in the hearts of its residents.\textsuperscript{37}

Attempts at Americanization did little to temper the way Anglos perceived Mexicans in Dallas, however. Sociologist Emory S. Bogardus explained this predicament:

The experiences which trouble the Mexican-Americans most are those in which citizens of the United States continually treat them as “Mexicans.” They are native-born, and as such are citizens; they have learned English, acquired occupational skills, and understand something of “American” standards; but when they aspire to recognition they are stunned by being labeled “foreigners,” or worse still, “dirty greasers.” Like “American” youth they run the gamut from the finest types of human character to low-grade individuals. Many “Americans,” unfortunately, do not discriminate; they treat all as inferiors and as foreigners.\textsuperscript{38}

Cumberland Hill School also boasted home economics and manual training departments famous throughout the city of Dallas. The cooking school in the home economics department allowed “Little Mexican girls who, a few months ago, knew little of cooking other than preparation of frijoles and tamales,” the opportunity to learn how to make salads, cakes, and pies. The reporter pointed out, however, that “it is a bit disconcerting to hear a lassie from the mountains of Old Mexico discussing the comparative value of calories of beef steaks and peanuts.” Boys in the manual training department learned to become skilled workmen, “fashioning from crude wooden boards the most beautiful furniture, tables, chairs, bookcases, bird houses and anything else their fancy dictates.”\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{37} “Speaking the League of Nations!” \textit{Dallas Morning News}, June 7, 1925; Phillips, \textit{White Metropolis}, 69; Montejano, \textit{Anglos and Mexicans}, 165-170, 190-195; Blanton, \textit{The Strange Career}.

\textsuperscript{38} Bogardus, \textit{The Mexican in the United States}, 75.

\textsuperscript{39} “Speaking the League of Nations!” \textit{Dallas Morning News}, June 7, 1925.
The prevalence of different nationalities did not manifest itself in the form of ethnic conflicts at Cumberland. There were "no outcasts in Cumberland Hill, no cliques, and caste is unknown." The *Dallas Morning News* article also called attention to the fact that students' attire did not matter much. The proximity of the school to the poorer sections of Dallas meant that most of the students came from the same economic backgrounds. It was more common to see "boys—and girls go without their shoes" than to see nice clothing. The tattered clothes were "outward demonstrations of the bank account. Bank accounts were not so numerous in the section served by the school and the rugged urchin is on a par with the best dressed one in the room."  

Mexican children in West Dallas also faced limited schooling options. There were no kindergartens, but Cedar Valley School educated both white and Mexican children in the first few grades. Benito Juárez School later became the Mexican school in West Dallas following complaints by white parents who did not want their children in school with Mexican children. Some children attended the schools in the Cement School District, but again, prejudice from white parents forced many to instead seek education at Cumberland Hill School. The city did not offer any transportation from West Dallas to Cumberland Hill and as such, truancy was a problem for many West Dallas children. 

In the 1920s, Cement City continued to house many laborers of Mexican descent. From 1910 to 1920, the total population of the city had grown from 503 to 878 and the number of Mexican-origin laborers had risen from twenty-six to ninety-eight (11 percent of the total population). Although black workers comprised the bulk of the

40 “Speaking the League of Nations!” *Dallas Morning News*, June 7, 1925.
population of Cement City, Mexican employees and their families maintained a constant presence in the incorporated city (see fig. 3.1).  

The area encompassed by Little Mexico exploded outward in the 1920s. The 1920 census listed over 3,000 Mexicans living on the following streets, roads, and avenues: Mockingbird, Record Crossing, Cedar Springs, Young, Akard, Caroline, McKinney, Alamo, Wesley, Cottonwood, Ashland, Summers, Oakland, Broom, Wichita, Griffin, North Lamar, Caruth, Camp, Illing, Hood, Ross, Collin, Ervay, Canton, Main,

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42 Twelfth Census; Thirteenth Census; Color-coded map of ethnic areas in Dallas, 1945, Dallas Committee on Housing Reports, T/D DPL; Achor, Mexican Americans in a Dallas Barrio, 20.
Indiana, Payne, and Carter (see figs. 3.2 and 3.3). Mexicans in Dallas had come to occupy an area all their own in the heart of downtown Dallas.  

In the realm of religion, the substantial Mexican population exerted a considerable influence. Our Lady of Guadalupe Church continued to grow into the 1920s. From 1922 to 1926, the parish purchased ten lots on a block bounded by North Harwood Street, Turney Boulevard (later Harry Hines), Moody Street, and Wichita Street for nearly $15,000. In September 1925, Our Lady of Guadalupe School held its first day of class with 176 enrolled students in grades one through five. Six young women made up the teaching staff and the Dallas Catholic Ladies Guild provided hot meals at noon for the students and teachers.  

The parish erected a new wooden church structure at 2501 North Harwood in 1925 and held a dedication on November 22 of the same year. The local Mexican Catholic lay organization El Comité Guadalupano had raised funds for the $10,000 building and had distributed printed Spanish-language invitations to the dedication. The Dallas Times Herald reported three days after the ceremony that the 600-person church auditorium had been filled to capacity. Four hundred more people stood outside and two Mexican bands played in the churchyard.  

The Methodist Church also gave the Mexicans of Dallas their own structure. In 1924, Hubert D. Knickerbocker, presiding elder of the Dallas district of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, Bishop James Cannon, Dr. F.F. Onderdonk, and R.L. Russell held a conference at the Jefferson Hotel in Dallas. At this conference, the four men

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43 *Fourteenth Census; Tarrant’s Key and Guide to Dallas map, 1921, T/D DPL.*  
44 St. Ann’s School File, Folder 38, Box 2, Dallas County Landmark Files, T/D DPL.  
Fig. 3.2. Map of Dallas, ca. 1921. Courtesy of the Historic Texas Maps Collection of the Texas/Dallas History & Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.
Fig. 3.3. Detail of map of Dallas, ca. 1921. Over time, the main area of Mexican settlement shifted north. The circles, from bottom to top, indicate the shifting and expanding of this settlement in 1900, 1910, and 1920, respectively. The top circle accurately indicates the location of Little Mexico. Courtesy of the Historic Texas Maps Collection of the Texas/Dallas History & Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.
voted to erect a $10,000 brick church on Highland Avenue for the Mexican Methodists of the city. The strictly Mexican Catholic and Methodist churches in Dallas contributed to the perpetuation of Mexican identities and traditions among the immigrants in the city.46

During the post-World War I era of Dallas, the city’s park board recognized the need for a park specifically for Mexicans. They realized that Mexican children played in the streets because they had nowhere else to play; the houses they lived in were crowded very close together and very rarely had yards. They also became aware of the fact that these children playing in the streets lacked proper sanitation facilities. Thus, a group of volunteer workers, the War Camp Community Service, secured a lease on property at the intersection of Caruth and Griffin Streets. The Dallas park board then assumed the lease and improved the lot. By late 1919, the new park, simply named Mexican Park, included playground equipment and free showers. The president of Mexico, Álvaro Obregón even paid a visit to the new recreation area.47

The authors of the centennial history of the park system in Dallas, historians Harry Jebsen, Jr., Robert M. Newton, and Patricia R. Hogan, pointed out that the creation of a Mexican park was both prejudicial and somewhat altruistic. At the same time the park board created Mexican Park, it also created separate parks “designated for Negroes.” However, park recreation workers had grumbled that Mexican children often did not participate in activities involving a mix of nationalities. When the activities were for Mexicans exclusively, Mexicans became active participants. Mexican Park,

47 Jebsen et al., Centennial History, 350-51; Amy Simpson, Pike Park, 4-5.
then, “provided a place where the Mexicans felt welcome and were not inhibited by their hesitancy to associate with Anglos.”

The white residents of Dallas performed other seemingly philanthropic acts on behalf of Mexicans in the city. They responded to the presence of Mexicans in the city with a kind of “Christmas basket paternalism”—a Christmas basket for one day of the year and poverty for the other 364 days. At Christmastime in 1920, Dallas Police Chief Myers dressed up as Santa Claus for the children of Little Mexico for the erection of a Christmas tree in Mexican Park. The women of the Presbyterian Mexican Mission, specifically Director of Public Welfare Alecia Brown and mission Superintendent Rhoda Dragoo, arranged the Christmas activities for the children. During the festivities, “mothers, fathers and little children, dressed in the gay colors affected by their race, gathered about their Christmas tree.” The women of the Mexican Mission continued their benevolent work on behalf of the Mexicans into 1921.

Despite the best efforts of the city of Dallas to entertain the occupants of Little Mexico, the neighborhood continued to deteriorate. In 1920, Rhoda Dragoo, Alecia Brown, and W.F. Jacoby, Director of Parks, inspected Little Mexico and found it to be overcrowded, a problem that resulted in conditions that were menacing to the health of its Mexican residents. In one three-room house, Dragoo found nineteen people living together. Water came from one faucet and the house had no gas, sewer, or toilet facilities. She stated that these conditions were typical of the rest of Little Mexico (see figs. 3.4 and 3.5). Dragoo, known as the “Mother of 5,000” for her work among the

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48 Jebsen et al., Centennial History, 351.
Figs. 3.4 and 3.5. Although these photos of Little Mexico and the West Dallas barrio were taken in the late 1940s, they reflect the deteriorating conditions present in the neighborhood in the 1920s. Photos courtesy of the Collections of the Texas/Dallas History & Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.
Mexicans of Dallas, declared that the erection of army tent camps on the vacant lots of Little Mexico would be better places for the Mexicans to live than their current congested houses. A recent ordinance ordering the removal of railroad tracks from Pacific Avenue in an area newly designated as an industrial district only exacerbated the housing problems in Little Mexico. Approximately 200 Mexicans lived in that part of the neighborhood and faced immediate displacement. Thus, Dragoo argued that tents would be a feasible, cheap, comfortable, and sanitary solution to the housing problems in Little Mexico.⁵⁰

The streets in Little Mexico were among the worst in Dallas. In 1924, Dallas city authorities surveyed fifteen streets including Zang’s Boulevard, Lancaster Avenue, Ross Avenue, South Ervay Street, South Harwood Street, Masten Street, Live Oak Street, San Jacinto, Elm, Main, Commerce, McKinney Avenue, Bryan Street, North Akard, and Cedar Springs Road. Of the fifteen streets, six were in the most disrepair: Bryan, Live Oak, Commerce, McKinney, North Akard, and Elm. The latter three streets each ran through Little Mexico. On Elm Street, the pavement was completely worn out in some places and severe trenches eight to ten inches deep existed everywhere. McKinney Avenue, the Dallas Morning News reported, “one of the most important traffic arteries to the north, is in such bad shape that many businesses located on it complain that they are being hurt. The stretch lying between Lamar and Harwood through ‘Little Mexico’ is very bumpy and bad.”⁵¹

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The decaying state of Little Mexico did little to alleviate the prevailing perceptions of Mexicans in the United States. Many Anglos did not think Mexicans wanted to acquire wealth or possessions. Rather, they thought Mexicans found “the highest expression of [their] personality in music and songs and dances, in pottery-making and manners, in the enjoyment of the only certain possession that we have, namely, the present, and in making and creating, not in knowing.”

The deteriorating conditions in Little Mexico and Anglos’ perceptions of Mexicans contributed, unsurprisingly, to poor health and hygiene in Little Mexico. Both Mexicans and Anglos bore responsibility for the rampant disease in the Mexican areas of Dallas. Mexicans lacked knowledge of manners of hygiene. It was Anglos, however, who denied Mexicans access to that knowledge and who forced Mexicans into crowded and unsanitary living situations. Anglos rented substandard housing to Mexicans at higher rents than they could afford and they continued in their “illness-producing and death-dealing roles, because love of money by some ‘Americans’ [was] greater than love of the Mexican’s health and life, and because the public [was] ignorant and careless regarding the dangers of slums to occupants.” To be sure, not all Anglos in Dallas turned a blind eye to the unhygienic conditions in Little Mexico. In March of 1921, the women of the Presbyterian Mexican Mission voted in favor of establishing a free

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tubercular clinic on McKinney Avenue in Little Mexico. Nevertheless, most Mexican immigrants were often the victims “not only of their own ignorance but also of ‘American’ greed, carelessness, and ignorance.”

An editorial in the *Dallas Morning News* on February 1, 1921, called “The Cost of Our Cheap Mexican Labor” presented a thoughtful examination of the impact of Mexican immigration on Texas. The author of the piece recognized that many Mexican immigrants stayed in the United States well past the completion of the contracts under which they arrived in the country. Thus, there had been a “steady and very considerable increase” in the number of Mexicans in Texas, “so that the swinging door is seen to swing only in one direction.” The author went on to state, “In yielding to the plea for the satisfaction of a ‘seasonal demand,’ we have made a large and permanent addition to our Mexican population.” The author also pointed out that a large percentage of the Mexicans who remained in the United States because of their inability or unwillingness to return to Mexico became “claimants to our charity.” Thus, the author concluded, it was a fallacy that the labor imported from Mexico was cheap. Instead, “Cheap it is to those who hire it, but it comes dear to the people of Texas when to the small wage paid to it are added the other consequences which result from the importation of it.”

Mexicans becoming claimants to Anglos’ charity could have theoretically triggered hostile responses from some Texans—for instance, the Ku Klux Klan, a major presence in Dallas. Interestingly enough, there were no reported incidents found of Ku

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Klux Klan violence against the Mexican residents of the city. The Second Ku Klux Klan, founded in 1915 at Stone Mountain in Georgia, spread over much of the South in the late 1910s and early 1920s. The organization aimed its oftentimes violent actions at blacks, Jews, and Catholics and sought to uphold the principles of white, Protestant masculinity. In 1920, Bertram G. Christie organized a chapter of the Klan, No. 66, in Dallas; by 1924, the Dallas Klan was the largest local Klan in the nation. Many of the police officers and city officials of Dallas belonged to the Klan and the Exalted Cyclops of the Dallas Klan, Hiram Wesley Evans, later succeeded the Imperial Wizard of the national Ku Klux Klan, William Joseph Simmons. Thus, the Klan had a profound presence in Dallas in the early 1920s—the exact era in which Mexicans began to overwhelm the population of the city. Nevertheless, articles in the *Dallas Morning News* about the Klan told of their violence toward the black, Jewish, and "immoral" white residents of the city. Nowhere did the newspaper report violence against traditionally Catholic Mexicans, although acts of this nature probably occurred.  

The seeming absence of Klan violence toward Mexicans did not necessarily mean that Klansmen in Dallas did not possess anti-Mexican sentiments. In a debate published in 1924, Klansman Hiram Evans declared that immigrants like the Mexicans were as hopeless as any black person. He went on to say that Catholics had integrated

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55 Payne, *Big D*, 73-86; Phillips, *White Metropolis*, 78-88. The Dallas Klan was particularly cruel to the black residents of the city. On April 1, 1921, members of the Klan whipped a black man named Alex Johnson accused of having a liaison with a white woman 25 times and painted the letters "KKK" on his forehead with acid. They then forced him to walk through the lobby of his workplace, the Adolphus Hotel in downtown Dallas. Payne, *Big D*, 73-74, Phillips, *White Metropolis*, 83. For more on violence toward Mexicans in the United States, see F. Arturo Rosales, *¡Pobre Raza! Violence, Justice, and Mobilization among México Lindo Immigrants, 1900-1936* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999).
themselves into the power structure of Dallas and that they were part of a vast conspiracy to control the world. The Klan believed that Catholicism would be the means through which the Antichrist would impose false Christianity on the world in the final days. In calling Catholicism “Romanism,” historian Michael Phillips pointed out, the Klan thus identified it as innately foreign and thus not Anglo-Saxon and less than white. The Catholic Church came to seem even more foreign to Klansmen in Dallas as traditionally Catholic Mexican immigrants poured into the city in the 1920s. The Dallas Klan’s anti-Mexican sentiment, however, did not bode well with the elites of Dallas who profited from the labor Mexicans provided. In fact, many joined a newly formed organization in 1922 called the Dallas County Citizens’ League, created to oppose the Ku Klux Klan in Dallas. Nevertheless, the Dallas Klan published a petition in the March 30, 1923, edition of their newspaper, *The Texas 100 Per Cent American*, that called for an end to the immigration of Mexican laborers into Dallas.  

The importation of Mexican labor thus initiated an unrelenting cycle to which no one could provide a suitable solution. American business interests possessed an insatiable appetite for Mexican labor—an appetite only exacerbated by the departure of American men to the military during World War I and by the departure of blacks to northern industry. The unwillingness of American business interests to pay Mexicans sufficient wages, moreover, stranded Mexicans in the United States and left them few options but to seek aid from charitable organizations. These stranded Mexicans sapped resources because they had no other choice; in turn, they unwittingly fueled an

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increasingly volatile debate over immigration. Mexicans did not enter the United States intent upon creating inhospitable slums that riled up both white city residents and city officials. They merely responded to a push out of Mexico by a declining industry and a chaotic government and the pull into the United States by greedy American employers and labor contractors.

Their highly contentious roles within American society were not the result of unemployed loafing or the careless spread of disease. On the contrary, Mexicans in Dallas labored, struggled, and built communities rooted in Mexican tradition and Mexican identity in the midst of restrictions placed upon them by American business, education, and religious institutions. Their churches, parks, schools, and homes celebrated and venerated Mexico and its traditions. The Mexican identity was the life vest to which immigrants in Dallas clung for survival in the turbulent waters of an Anglo-dominated city. Rather than chasing a white ideal that would forever be just out of reach because Anglos did not consider Mexicans white, Mexicans in Dallas instead adorned their otherwise grueling lives with the vibrancy and stability of Mexican culture. They did not seek to create havoc in the United States, nor did they seek entrance into the realm of whiteness, as argued by historian Michael Phillips—they sought only to live and survive.57

57 Phillips, *White Metropolis.*
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

In 1936, Southern Methodist University graduate student Ethelyn Clara Davis concluded the following in her master’s thesis, *Little Mexico: A Study of Horizontal and Vertical Mobility*:

The Mexican at first expected his stay in the United States to be temporary, but at present few Mexicans in Dallas desire to return to Mexico. It is only those who would return to Mexico in the better positions, and not as laborers, who do not wish to remain here. As the Mexican has adjusted to local conditions, mobility has decreased both horizontally and vertically. He has, however, assimilated cultures to only a limited degree, and these largely educationally. The lower class Mexican has accommodated to the United States and is satisfied to remain and continue as he has been living. Although the upper class, educated Mexican is more nearly assimilated, he realizes that he fits in neither place. He is not happy here, but knows that he would be no happier in Mexico were he to return.¹

Mexicans crossing the border into the United States during and after the Mexican Revolution may have thought they would soon return to Mexico, but for most, this never happened. Instead, they ended up recreating Mexico in Dallas and establishing roots for a community that would tenaciously persist into the twenty-first century.

Few obstacles lay in the way of Mexicans’ immigration to the United States. The American government waived the eight-dollar head tax and literacy test at the Mexican border and American business interests actively recruited Mexican labor. Some reports indicated that the annual number of Mexicans who crossed the border without authorization during the first few decades of the twentieth century equaled thirty percent of the number who had entered legally. Although the newly created Border Patrol began policing the 1800-mile United States-Mexico border in 1924, it commanded

seriously limited resources. In 1928, the Commissioner of Immigration reported that his organization consisted of 747 members total, including 670 border patrol inspectors. They utilized 267 automobiles, thirteen trucks, and twenty-two saddle and pack horses. In the year ending June 30, 1928, immigration officials took 18,000 smuggled aliens into custody, among whom Mexicans were in the majority. Nevertheless, by 1930, Mexicans in Texas numbered 683,681 and constituted 11.7 percent of the population of the state; in Dallas, they constituted 2.3 percent of the population.\(^2\)

Changes took place in the United States once Americans finally became fully aware of the reality and scale of Mexican immigration. The Great Depression created a dearth of jobs in the country and suddenly, American business interests, once Mexican laborers’ fiercest champions, had no use for Mexican workers. Nativists finally gained ground over the arguments of Anglo employers and business interests in the United States when in 1930 the United States Senate passed a quota bill specifically aimed at Mexican immigration. Republican leaders in the House of Representatives, however, quashed the bill at the request of President Herbert Hoover’s administration. Attempting to rebuild relations with Mexico at that time, Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson advised that the legislation was discriminatory, would hinder the redeveloping friendship between the two nations, and was detrimental to American interests in Mexico. Administrative means put into action two years earlier by the State Department nevertheless impeded immigration from Mexico. The department charged Mexican

consuls to abide meticulously by the immigration regulations concerning visa issuance, resulting in denial of entry for most Mexicans under the public charge, literacy, or contract labor clauses of the Immigration Act of 1917.³

The pressures of American society never ceased to affect the Mexican population of Dallas, though not in the manner historian Michael Phillips described in *White Metropolis*. Phillips asserted that in the 1930s, second-generation Mexican Americans followed in the footsteps of European immigrants and sought whiteness by shunning the Spanish language and Mexican culture, much to the dismay of their parents. Their efforts produced little result, he continued, and they remained outside of whiteness. While many second-generation Mexican Americans may have indeed tried to break away from their traditional language and culture, they were hardly doing so in a quest for whiteness. These young people simply sought a different kind of life for themselves than that to which the Anglo establishment of Dallas had relegated their parents. In the process, they risked humiliation in Anglo society and disappointment from their elders, but they never stopped *trying* to make better existences for themselves in an environment that tried to deny them as much at every turn. In that respect, they were *exactly* like their parents—relentlessly struggling to hold onto the dignity that the Anglos of Dallas constantly tried to strip away through discriminatory housing, employment, religious, and educational practices.⁴

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⁴ Phillips, *White Metropolis*, 76.
Many events transpired in the interim between 1925 and the present day that further tied Mexicans to the history of Dallas. Over time, Cement City disappeared as its institutions closed and its natural resources became depleted. The Cement City School District operated until 1928 when Dallas Independent School District annexed it. Texas Portland Cement Company continued to manage the plant and house workers in the town of Cement. In 1935, Lone Star Cement Corporation (part of Lone Star Industries, Incorporated) purchased Texas Portland Cement Company. In the 1950s, Lone Star greatly expanded operations and the company enjoyed a brief period of success. The population of Cement, however, had reached its peak in 1920 with 878 residents; by the time of the 1960 census, the last time Cement City appeared in these records, the population was down to 450. By 1970, the supply of limestone had been depleted and in 1971, the cement plants closed. In 1979, Lone Star Properties, Incorporated, the real estate arm of Lone Star Industries, developed Lone Star Business Park on the site of the cement plant. The only reminder of the cement plant that once stood there was a single smokestack that served as the centerpiece of the business park.\(^5\)

The conditions in Little Mexico also continued to worsen into the late 1920s. Housing became an issue when Dallas authorities razed homes in Little Mexico for the construction of a new industrial district. More than 100 residents were out of work and their failure to pay rent resulted in eviction from their homes. In April 1926, Director of Public Welfare Mrs. Albert Walker and other welfare workers surveyed Little Mexico at the behest of its residents. Walker found that thirty to forty people crowded into five-
and six-room shacks lacking sanitary sewage disposal facilities—yet each shack rented at thirty to forty dollars per month. They also found that on one block, 750 people lived in fifty shacks and houses. These substandard conditions in Little Mexico only contributed to Anglos’ negative attitudes concerning Mexicans and Mexican Americans. The Dallas police long considered Little Mexico one the most dangerous beats in the city—to them, it was “no place for scarecats.”⁶

Ultimately, the efforts of concerned Dallas residents could not save Little Mexico, just as the United States government could not prevent the continued entrance of Mexican immigrants. In 1926, the Dallas Morning News reported that the “sob sisters” (female reformers) and Dallas police were not going to be able to remedy the problems in Little Mexico. The Dallas Morning News instead stated that “there will be no remediing of the situation in the section now given over to the Mexican residents until there has first been set up an economic basis for it. The thing has to be made to pay its own way.”⁷

Little Mexico began to pay its own way through the implementation of the Kessler Plan. In 1924, Dallas city officials formed the five-person Kessler Plan Association to carry out the remaining parts of the Kessler Plan under a chairman named Charles E.

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⁶ “Housing and Unemployment in ‘Little Mexico’ is Acute,” Dallas Morning News, January 20, 1921; “Dangerous Beats’ of Dallas Police,” Dallas Morning News, May 3, 1925; “Little Mexico Condition Bad,” Dallas Morning News, April 9, 1926. Mrs. Walker suggested to the City Commission that Little Mexico needed better housing and more sanitation, a free employment bureau, more public health nurses and district visitors, relief from additional funds to United Charities, milk for babies from additional funds to the Infant Welfare and Milk Association, a park outside the business district, the cooperation of Mexican officials in acquiring funds for the district, and the cooperation of the Little Mexico residents themselves in “maintaining sanitary and healthful conditions—which, in our opinion, would be the easiest task of all, for they, as a whole, are docile, learn quickly, are sympathetic, and are most helpful to each other.”

Ulrickson. Thus, in 1926 the Kessler Plan Association president E.H. Cary called for the slum district to be wiped out and for the execution of the long-gestating Kessler Plan. This plan, however, did not take into consideration the existing population of downtown Dallas, specifically Little Mexico. Historian Harry Jebsen, Jr. pointed out:

Kessler’s concept of renewal for blighted areas meant simply removal… The plan included no consideration for the problems of the displaced residents. Their economic plight or relocation was not Kessler’s concern. That such people, because of their economic disability, would be forced to settle in another area of similar status and raise the density level of that neighborhood to unhealthy levels, thus creating new blight, was ignored. That such people might have problems, such as lack of education or training which prevented them from ever rising on the economic scale, was ignored. That removal from the area might cause some of the residents to lose their jobs in the nearby downtown area because public transportation did not service more remote sectors was ignored. Rather than suggesting solutions for the problems which had created the blight, Kessler merely tried to eliminate the blight itself without instituting any supplementary programs to assist the displaced to find better housing. Kessler sought beautification for broad civic benefit, but failed, in part, to consider the human cost of such benefit.

That same year, construction began in the eastern part of Little Mexico to aid the circulation of traffic in downtown Dallas. Two years later, in 1928, the Ulrickson Commission approved programs to strengthen transportation routes. These programs would eventually displace dozens of Little Mexico families. In the early 1930s, the city of Dallas finally tamed the Trinity River in accordance with the suggestions put forth in the Kessler Plan. The massive, $25 million project required the labor of 1,000 men. Their work on the river, completed in 1936, protected central parts of the city from flooding and opened up 10,000 acres of previously worthless floodplain in a strategic area near downtown Dallas. In 1931, city officials expanded Lamar Street and

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8 Payne, Big D, 111; Jebsen et al., Centennial History, 275.
9 Jebsen et al., Centennial History, 275-76.
displaced even more families. In the 1930s and 1940s, Turney Street (later Harry Hines Boulevard) was widened. This new traffic-heavy street dissected Little Mexico and led to further redevelopment in the area—the years from 1940 to 1943 saw the construction of sixteen new buildings in downtown Dallas. In the early 1940s, the city of Dallas chose the northwestern section of Little Mexico (the area bounded by the Katy railroad tracks, Turney Street, and Summit Park) as the site of a federally funded “slum clearance” project. In 1942, the city completed construction on a new 102-unit public housing development called Little Mexico Village.10

Further changes took place in Little Mexico. In 1955, city work crews began clearing out the alleys of the barrio. In 1956, Little Mexico became the first urban neighborhood in the United States to apply for and qualify to receive federal funding for urban renewal under the Housing Act of 1954. The “formula” utilized in cleaning the slum area included rigid enforcement of city building, health, and fire codes and support from local lenders to finance the necessary repairs (see fig. 4.1). The construction of the Dallas North Tollway in the 1960s resulted in the constant rezoning of the area once known as Little Mexico (see figs. 4.2 and 4.3). The property of Little Mexico residents

10 Jebsen et al., 60-62, 68-70; Payne, Big D, 154-58; St. Ann’s School File, Folder 38, Box 2, Dallas County Landmark Files, T/D DPL; Rice, “Little Mexico,” 24. The taming of the Trinity River was an “immense, expensive, complex, and politically sensitive project requiring re-routing and re-building storm sewers, moving railroad lines and switches, re-laying utility lines, creating a new confluence of the river’s West and Elm forks, digging a straight and different channel for the river bed, constructing twenty-five miles of thirty-foot high earthen levees, and erecting four new high bridges to cross the levees.” Payne, Big D, 154.
Fig. 4.1. With funding from the Housing Act of 1954, houses in Little Mexico were “rehabilitated.” 1957. Photo courtesy of the Collections of the Texas/Dallas History & Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.

Fig. 4.2. The construction of the Dallas North Tollway over Harry Hines Boulevard (formerly Turney Avenue) in 1967. Photo courtesy of the Collections of the Texas/Dallas History & Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.
Fig. 4.3. The efforts of the city of Dallas to commercialize its downtown district resulted in serious changes for Little Mexico. Here, Little Mexico is in the foreground and the growing central business district is in the background. 1957. Photo courtesy of the Collections of the Texas/Dallas History & Archives Division, Dallas Public Library.

fell under eminent domain and the city forced homeowners to sell their homes for an average of $10,000. Consequently, real estate speculators and developers moved in and bought property bounding the tollway at bargain prices. In the 1970s, the construction of the Woodall Rogers Freeway ripped through the eastern edge of Little Mexico. By this time, the aged Kessler Plan had reduced Little Mexico to Pike Park,
Little Mexico Village, and a few small residential enclaves. By 1980, Little Mexico was home to only 1,668 Mexican residents.  

The Latino presence within the Catholic Church, however, continued to grow. Historian Roberto R. Treviño estimated that in 2006, Latinos comprised one-third of all Catholics in the United States and would soon make up one-half of all Catholics in the country. Indeed, the Catholic Church in the United States is rapidly becoming a Latino church.

By the mid-1950s, the need arose to further expand the facility of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church. Local Mexican artist Joaquín Medrano created the design for the new $250,000 church and modeled it after Tepeyac, the Basílica of the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico City. However, the congregation was unable to raise enough money to build the new church (although they apparently raised at least $190,000). It was thought that the proposed new Our Lady of Guadalupe Church would have rivaled the aging seat of the diocese, the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart.

In 1965, however, a diocesan decree by Bishop Thomas Tschoepe ordered the merging of the Our Lady of Guadalupe and Cathedral of the Sacred Heart parishes. The Catholic Church appointed Reverend Sebastian Valles, formerly the pastor of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, as the pastor of the merged parishes. Bishop Tschoepe,

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13 St. Ann’s School File, Folder 38, Box 2, Dallas County Landmark Files, T/D DPL. The money raised for the new Our Lady of Guadalupe Church was eventually used to renovate Sacred Heart Cathedral and to maintain St. Ann’s School.
formerly the pastor of Sacred Heart Cathedral, was to serve as vicar general for the
diocese. Both churches remained open until 1976, when the doors of Our Lady of
Guadalupe closed for good. Just before the diocese closed Our Lady of Guadalupe,
Bishop Tschoepe announced from the pulpit of Sacred Heart Cathedral that the
cathedral would be designated The Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Catedral
Santuario de Guadalupe) and that Our Lady of Guadalupe Church and St. Ann’s would
be phased out. In addition, the Sacred Heart Cathedral structure was to be renovated
and redecorated. The building that once housed Our Lady of Guadalupe Church never
opened as a church again, but in 1979, it reopened as the Azteca Boys’ Boxing Club
under the direction of Clemente Bera. Eight years later, in 1987, the building
succumbed to a three-alarm fire.14

The newly renamed cathedral greatly reflected the influence of its mostly Latino
congregation. Bishop Tschoepe announced that “The liturgy (Mass, Sacraments, etc.)
here will meet the needs of the language and culture of the parishioners.” Soon after
the parishes merged, a seventeen-foot handcrafted tapestry of Our Lady of Guadalupe
designed by Reverend Bascomb G. Eades went up in the Shrine of Our Lady of
Guadalupe. Parishioner Alice Hernández said, “When that tapestry went up, it mean so
much to the Hispanic people—like the cathedral was finally our home.” When the
tapestry was deemed liturgically inappropriate in 2001, it was taken down in and

14 St. Ann’s School File, Folder 38, Box 2, Dallas County Landmark Files, T/D
DPL; “Sacred Heart/Guadalupe Cathedral of the Dallas Diocese Since 1902,” compiled
by Frances James, Sacred Heart/Guadalupe Church File, Folder 6A, Box 16, Dallas
County Historical Commission Files, T/D DPL; “Rev. Valles Will Head New Parish,”
_Dallas Morning News_, August 28, 1965; _Dallas Times Herald_, December 16, 1986;
replaced with an image of a dark-skinned Virgin Mary, a replica of the 470-year-old original in the Mexico City basilica.\(^{15}\)

In 1927, Our Lady of Guadalupe parish added yet another structure to its property: St. Ann’s School. A year before, in 1926, Apostolic Delegate Reverend Pietro Fumasoni-Biondi advised Bishop Lynch to erect a permanent school for the children of Little Mexico. Soon, the parish raised $5,000 from local donors and solicited a $15,000 donation from Miss Ann Kilgallen of Chicago, after whom the parish named the school. On June 16, 1927, the city of Dallas issued Building Permit No. 3199 for a two-story, eight-room brick school building. Constructed over the course of three months by local contractor Le Roy Armstrong, the school contained eight classrooms, a cafeteria, an office, and an auditorium. Four thousand people attended the dedication of St. Ann’s. The parish converted the two-story Our Lady of Guadalupe School, St. Ann’s predecessor, into a convent for the seven Daughters of Charity who taught at St. Ann’s. By 1930, enrollment at St. Ann’s reached 400 to 500 and the school offered instruction through grade eight. Parents paid $1.00-per-week tuition per child.\(^{16}\)

By the 1940s, the classrooms at St. Ann’s School overflowed with students and a need for secondary education for Mexican women arose. Young Mexican men advanced from St. Ann’s to either the Jesuit High School or to Dallas Technical High School (later renamed Crozier Technical High School), but Mexican women only one


\(^{16}\) St. Ann’s School File, Folder 38, Box 2, Dallas County Landmark Files, T/D DPL; Timeline of Events in Little Mexico, Little Mexico Photo Collection, St. Ann’s Alumni and Friends, Dallas Historical Society.
option—the expensive Catholic high school at the Ursuline Academy. On November 29, 1945, members of the Carmelite community proposed and approved a plan for the expansion of the St. Ann’s facility. They secured a $77,236 loan from the Provincial House of the Carmelite Fathers in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, obtained $17,500 from Bishop Lynch, and raised $5,264 from local donors. M.C. Kleuser served as architect and E.J. Rife served as contractor for the expansion, and a groundbreaking ceremony took place in January 1946. St. Ann’s Commercial High School was completed by the next year and contained five classrooms, two clubrooms, an auditorium/gymnasium, and a new cafeteria.\footnote{St. Ann’s School File, Folder 38, Box 2, Dallas County Landmark Files, T/D DPL. An advertisement in the 1910 Dallas City Directory showed just how pricey the Ursuline Academy, located at 230 St. Joseph at the corner of Live Oak, was. Under the direction of Ursuline Ladies, the school, chartered by the state legislature, offered a “Thorough and Refined Education, which has distinguished it since its establishment in our city.” A “select” day school was added to the academy and the course of studies included the “Classical, Academical and Preparatory Departments. No extra charge for Latin, French, German, or Spanish, as these Languages enter into the Regular Course of Studies.” Twenty-week terms had to be paid for in advance. “Board, Washing, and Tuition, including Stationery, Drawing, Fancy Work and Ordinary Infirmary Expenses, per Session of Five Months” were $100. Additional costs included “Music and use of piano” for $30, “Music, violin” for $25, an “Entrance Fee (only for the 1\textsuperscript{st} year)” of $5, and a “Graduating Fee” of $10. \textit{Worley’s Directory of Greater Dallas, 1910}. The prevalence of Mexicans at Crozier Technical High School, or Crozier Tech, earned the school the derisive nickname “Taco Tech.”}

St. Ann’s did not fare well over time, however. In 1965, the high school closed. By the 1970s, enrollment at St. Ann’s elementary school had dropped to about 300 students per year. Moreover, there were no longer enough Daughters of Charity teaching at the school; as a result of Vatican II, the sisters were instead being sent to staff the provincial house in St. Louis, Missouri. The diocese asked the congregations
of Our Lady of Guadalupe and Sacred Heart Cathedral to contribute $1,000 per month for lay teachers’ salaries, but it was no use—St. Ann’s closed in 1974.\textsuperscript{18}

St. Ann’s remained a part of the Little Mexico community for many years after the school closed. In 1989, members of Cathedral congregation began asking the diocese what their plans were for St. Ann’s because the Cathedral parish was in need of a space for its social services. The diocese agreed to this adjustment and in 1992, St. Ann’s housed the social services for the cathedral. Just three years later, in 1995, an announcement read at the Catedral Santuario de Guadalupe stated that the diocese planned to sell the St. Ann’s property in order to pay for a civil judgment against the Diocese of Dallas.\textsuperscript{19}

The case for which the Catholic Diocese of Dallas meant to make St. Ann’s suffer was highly controversial and well covered in the media. In 1997, a jury awarded an unprecedented $119.6 million to plaintiffs in a sex abuse case against the diocese for its negligence and cover-up of the sexual abuse of altar boys by former priest Rudolph Kos. The plaintiffs settled for $30.9 million in post-trial negotiations, $19.9 million of which insurers for the church covered. Diocesan officials needed to gather the remaining $11 million to pay for the rest of the settlement and they saw the sale of St. Ann’s—1.25 acres of “prime real estate in the resurging Dallas arts district”—as an easy way to get that money. In response to the diocese’s plans to sell St. Ann’s, members of the St. Ann’s Alumni Association, Friends of St. Ann’s, and former Little Mexico

\textsuperscript{18} St. Ann’s School File, Folder 38, Box 2, Dallas County Landmark Files, T/D DPL.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
residents organized the Guadalupe Social Center Development Corporation (GSCDC), intent on preserving St. Ann’s and the block of parish property in its entirety.\textsuperscript{20}

This organization carried out a vigorous campaign to save St. Ann’s. This campaign included praying a weekly rosary at the site, erecting a portable shrine to Our Lady of Guadalupe, and launching a drive to have St. Ann’s designated a historical landmark. The latter part of their campaign garnered support from many different places. The St. Ann’s folder in the Dallas County Landmark files contains letters of support from such prominent people as California Representative Lucille Roybal-Allard, Texas Representative Domingo García, Preservation Dallas Executive Director Catherine A. Horsey, Attorney Sol Villasana, Dallas attorney Adelfa Callejo, President of Univisión Communications Henry Cisneros, Texas Senator Royce West, and Congressman Eddie Bernice Johnson. GSCDC scored a victory on November 10, 1998, when the Dallas Landmark Commission voted unanimously to recommend that St. Ann’s be designated a historical landmark. The commission also approved demolition restrictions for the structure that were much more stringent than the code the city maintained. The Dallas Diocese opposed the designation of St. Ann’s as a historical landmark because it would hinder its attempts to sell the property. Nevertheless, St. Ann’s has yet to be designated a historical landmark.\textsuperscript{21}

Cumberland Hill School faced a fate similar to St. Ann’s School. By World War II, the school began to lose its student population as commercial interests supplanted the residential areas that once surrounded it. It closed as an elementary school in 1958

\textsuperscript{20}St. Ann’s School File, Folder 38, Box 2, Dallas County Landmark Files, T/D DPL; \textit{National Catholic Reporter}, December 4, 1998.
when W.B. Travis School opened on McKinney Avenue, but stayed open for the next three years as an annex of the Dallas Vocational School. In 1961, the building went up for sale and in 1969, SEDCO, Inc. purchased it for $1,362,000. They renovated it in 1971 for office use. That same year, the Dallas County Historical Commission designated Cumberland Hill School a historic landmark.22

Mexicans in Texas continued to endure de facto school segregation well into the twentieth century. In 1940, the state superintendent of education handed down a decision stating that Mexicans had the right to attend Anglo school because they were legally white. Nevertheless, many white schools kept their doors closed to Mexicans, even after the 1948 Delgado v. Bastrop case in which the ruling declared that segregating Mexican Americans violated the constitution. Schools exploited a loophole in the law by establishing separate schools on the basis of language. Although the 1957 Hernández v. Driscoll Consolidated School District invalidated these interpretations, segregation continued to exist in the form of residential segregation and school policies separating schoolchildren on the basis of language purposes.23

Pike Park was one of the few parts of Little Mexico that remained intact until the present day. In 1938, Mexicans finally received the right to swim in Pike Park—but only from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. Before Mexican children could enter the pool, park employees carefully examined them for body sores and lice. After the Mexican children exited the pool, park employees then emptied it and had the Mexican children clean it. The park employees then refilled the pool with water and let Anglo kids swim the rest of

22 Cumberland Hill School File, Folder 22, Box 1, City of Dallas Landmark Records, T/D DPL.
the day. Park employees also had Mexican children clean the park. Nevertheless, Pike Park came to be used almost exclusively by Mexicans in the years following its limited opening to the community of Little Mexico—it was the “center of the community’s cultural and political life.” In addition, it was, “at the very least, an open, somewhat treeless area for the displaced Mexican to enjoy his spare time with his ‘amigos.’”

Pike Park played an important role in the Mexican community of Dallas. It hosted many of the Mexicans’ annual celebrations of El Diez y Sies de Septiembre (September 16) and Cinco de Mayo (May 5), two important Mexican holidays. On those days, “the drifts of mariachi music could be caught between whiffs of the distinctive aroma of Mexican food.” The park also served as a routing station for Mexican laborers on welfare work. Moreover, the directors of the park encouraged Mexican youth to finish their education; in turn, these Mexican adolescents became central parts of the business and civic landscape of Dallas. In 1940, the donation of land to the widening of Turney Avenue cut the park area down in size. In the 1950s, the recreation building was painted and remodeled into a Spanish-style structure, a lighted baseball diamond was added, and the play area was expanded. Amidst these renovations, the park became the center of the Mexican community in Dallas. It served “a paradoxical role as it was a nucleus for the expression and reinforcement of Mexican identity while simultaneously drawing the community into active involvement in the American culture.”

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24 Phillips, *White Metropolis*, 70; Pike Park File, Folder 34, Box 2, City of Dallas Landmark Records, T/D DPL. First quote in Pike Park File; Second quote in Jebsen et al., *Centennial History*, 472.

25 Jebsen et al., *Centennial History*, 437, 452; Simpson, *Pike Park*, 7-8; Phillips, *White Metropolis*, 70; Pike Park File, Folder 34, Box 2, City of Dallas Landmark
Over the years, use of Pike Park decreased. The development of two major thoroughfares through Little Mexico severed the park from the residents of the community. The razing that went along with the construction of these thoroughfares and the expansion of the central business district of Dallas displaced many families in Little Mexico, moving them away from Pike Park. City officials contemplated closing Pike Park, but protests rang out almost immediately. Ultimately, the former residents of Little Mexico and the Mexicans of greater Dallas convinced city officials that Pike Park was “the psychological home of the people, the root of their progressive and retrospective identity, the very symbol of the Mexican American presence in Dallas.”

As the psychological home of the Mexican-origin people of Dallas, Pike Park served as a meeting place when the community rallied around causes important to them. In July 1973, an incident involving twelve-year-old Santos Rodriguez, galvanized the Mexican Americans living in Dallas. After an attempted break-in at a Fina Service Station, Dallas police officers picked up Santos and his thirteen-year-old brother in

Records, T/D DPL. First quote in Jebsen et al., Centennial History, 472; second quote in Simpson, Pike Park, 7. In Centennial History of the Dallas, Texas Park System, historian Harry Jebsen, Jr. stated, “No ordinances or discriminatory practices restricted Mexicans to [Mexican Park] or excluded them from any other park. The leased park on Caruth Street seemed to serve as a mean to improve conditions in that neighborhood and to get the Mexican children involved with park programs. As more immigrants arrived from across the Rio Grande, they began to use other parks, especially Pike (Summit) Park, more freely and association between the nationalities became more open, although for an interim period in the 1920s, the recreation leaders divided the hours of use equally among Mexicans and Anglos in an attempt to move the Mexicans gradually into the main stream of park activity.” Jebsen ably explained away—disguised, even—the discrimination Mexicans suffered at the hands of Dallas city leaders. However, the fact that the Dallas Park and Recreation Board directed the creation of Centennial History of the Dallas, Texas Park System may have played a part in the decision Jebsen made to ignore the facts. Jebsen et al., Centennial History, 352.

26 Pike Park File, Folder 34, Box 2, City of Dallas Landmark Records, T/D DPL. Quote in Simpson, Pike Park, 10.
connection with the crime. Officer Darrell L. Cain tried to frighten Santos by putting his
gun to Santos’s head and pretending to play Russian roulette. The gun fired and killed
Santos. Cain was arrested and stripped of his badge; a judge later released him on a
$5,000 bail. Mexican Americans and blacks in Dallas quickly cried out that the shooting
and the subsequent low $5,000 bond were indicative of how the Dallas police perceived
and treated the minority community. Although Cain’s bail was raised to $50,000, the
minority community of Dallas called for the officer accompanying Cain in the police car
the night of the Rodriguez shooting to be charged with murder as well. The situation
became even more controversial when news broke that Cain had shot and killed a
fleeing black suspect in 1970.27

In the aftermath of the Rodriguez shooting, the Mexican American community in
Dallas held vigils and meetings in Pike Park and a mass march of more than 1,000
protestors to city hall. The march quickly escalated into a riot as marchers began
destroying a cop car, throwing objects at and hitting policemen, hurling bottles at the
windows of city hall, and damaging storefronts. Police arrested thirty-eight
demonstrators (twenty-three Mexican Americans and thirteen blacks). In the end, the
Dallas city council adopted a resolution that recognized the existence of unequal law
enforcement, dual justice, and unequal treatment for the different segments of the
community and different races of the city. The chief of police resigned and a grand jury
found Officer Cain guilty. He was sentenced to five years in prison; however, he served
less than three.28

28 Ibid.
In 1978, the recreation center at Pike Park was renovated once more. The $400,000 project converted the Spanish-style building to a Mexican style structure with a red-tile roof, curved parapet, row of arched windows, and restored stucco walls. A brick-patterned plaza replaced the swimming pool and a Mexican-style bandstand was added. The entire park was re-landscaped and enclosed in a “sturdy yet decorative” wrought iron fence. Made to reflect more the community it truly served, Pike Park continued to be a Mecca for Mexicans in Dallas—“For them the biannual pilgrimage[s] to Pike Park for fiestas is going home.” In 1981, the Dallas County Historical Commission named Pike Park a historical landmark.

The carving up of Little Mexico by Dallas city officials following the implementation of the Kessler Plan and the slow but steady closing of Little Mexico and its institutions proved to be the death knell for the ethnic community. Displaced residents relocated to East Dallas, North Oak Cliff, and West Dallas, forming new barrios like La Bajada, Los Altos, La Estrella, and Ledbetter. Today, the area that once housed the poverty-stricken Mexican barrio of Little Mexico boasts astronomical property values, luxury condominiums, and incessant traffic due to sporting and concert events at the recently constructed $420-million American Airlines Center. This structure served as the anchor for the ironically named Victory development project. Darcy Anderson, the president of Hillwood Urban, a division of Hillwood, the project’s lead developer, said that planners imagined a community of sports fans, neighborhood residents, office workers, and shoppers, with a major emphasis on ground-floor retail and pedestrian traffic. He went on to say that it would be a “people-oriented

community." The city of Dallas may have scored a victory with its reclamation of Little Mexico in the name of expansion, but the residents of La Colonia suffered enormously as skyscrapers took the place of their hearts and homes.\textsuperscript{30} Little Mexico endured radical changes in the name of progress—a progress that:

Bulldozed a unique heritage and legacy that are irreplaceable and nontransferable. A progress that features a faster, more convenient route to downtown. A progress that manufactures luxurious hotels, upscale restaurants, elite shops and galleries and premium condos. A progress that separates the haves from the have-nots. A progress that deems Dallas Hispanic history expendable. A progress that doesn’t recognize the benefits of a Hispanic heritage in this age of borderless commerce. A progress that speaks only one language."\textsuperscript{31}

Development in the area once known as Little Mexico continues into the present day. On March 4, 2008, the \textit{Dallas Morning News} reported that developers Granite Properties and Gables Residential broke ground for a project that “will be one of the biggest projects yet in Dallas’ hot Uptown market.” The project includes the construction of a two-tower development at Akard Street and McKinney Avenue. The complex, valued at $200 million, will include a twenty-story office high rise containing 361,000 square feet of office space and an adjoining twenty-four story residential tower containing 296 luxury apartments. The development will also feature retail space and a fitness center for the apartments. The scope of the project is so big that the projected move-in date for the first tenants is March 2010.\textsuperscript{32}

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\textsuperscript{31} “Progress Erases History,” \textit{Dallas Morning News}, April 4, 1999.
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Little Mexico may have disappeared into a maze of traffic and skyscrapers, but Mexicans did not vanish from the Dallas landscape. The residents of Little Mexico scattered around Dallas and put down roots in their adopted home, many never going back to Mexico as they had originally planned. Today, Latinos constitute the majority of the population of Dallas. The fourth-largest metropolis in the United States, Dallas/Fort Worth is also one of the fastest growing. Historian Michael Phillips accurately concluded that the influence of whiteness caused Dallas to “forget the past, regret the present, and dread the future.” Mexicans in Dallas did not possess the same mentality, however. They celebrated and gave new life to their Mexican pasts, struggled through the present, and looked forward to a future in which they could enjoy the fruits of their labor. Little Mexico was and is “a state of mind that refuses to die. It is generations of people who bend with the times, but never quite break… It is the pledge of the past, the promise of tomorrow, and the perseverance in between.” The Mexican identity that its residents nurtured helped them prevail in the face of Anglos’ discrimination and segregation and dissuaded them from the pursuit of whiteness. In 2006, the immigration march brought together the significant Latino population of the North Texas area and showed that the loss of the physical Little Mexico did not kill the spirit of Little Mexico. As marcher Victoria García told a *Dallas Morning News* reporter, “We came, we made history.”

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distinctly Mexican community while under the constant weight of discrimination and segregation in the shadow of the metropolis they would one day come to dominate.

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