
South Bay Historical Society Bulletin

February 2018

Issue No. 18



Supervisor Greg Cox, author Barbara Zaragoza, Mayor Mary Salas opened the new exhibit in the Heritage Museum.

New Museum Exhibit Opens

Our 3rd Annual Museum Exhibit opened on Saturday, January 27th at the Chula Vista Public Library. The event was a great success with overflow seats necessary and 'standing-room-only'.

Supervisor Greg Cox gifted the Chula Vista Heritage Museum a proclamation that stated January 27, 2018 would be Fronterizos Day.

The exhibit also garnered media attention with the San Diego Union Tribune, KPBS Midday Edition, San Diego NBC Channel 7, Hoy San Diego, La Prensa-San Diego and Voice of San Diego all covering the exhibit.

On view until January 2019, sixteen cases display approximately 100 photos with Spanish-English

captions. Eight cases against the wall tell a chronological history. Eight cases on the floor present themes, including the artists & athletes as well as the food of the Californios. An iPad then shows the 50 interviews and several hundred photographs (over 2,000 archival photographs were collected in total). Visitors can also view the website at home and can buy the 200-year survey book at Amazon.com. You can go to www.chulavistaheritagemuseum.org for more information.

Just for our members, we present an excerpt of the book that gives a summary of the project and the many names of our South Bay residents who contributed to the work:



It was a full house at the library (above) and Barbara Zaragoza's book sold out (below).



Fronterizos, or residents who live in the border region of San Diego, enjoy a distinct culture that first and foremost is defined by their mixed identities. Making up over 51 percent of the population in the South Bay, for fronterizos race, culture, national origin and socialization are intertwined. To understand this mixed identity, we must go back eight generations to when San Diego was part of Spain and then Mexico.

Rose Marie Blanco's ancestors, for example, came to San Diego during the late 1700s and were of Spanish and mestizo origins. Once living in Alta California, the pioneers forged a new identity known as the Californios. Anita Argüello Cota's family dated back to Jose Dario Argüello whose descendants owned most of the South Bay land during the Mexican period. Octavio Castro Garcia had an elaborate genealogy, tracing his ethnic background to Irish, mestizo, Native American and Afro-Mexican ancestors.



Rose Marie Blanco



After the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, a large number of Californios went to live in communities at the San Diego-Tijuana border; Rose Marie Blanco, Anita Argüello Cota, David and Andres Crosthwaite and Octavio Castro Garcia all grew up in the South Bay. The photo of a San Ysidro WWII Memorial shows that quite a number of Californios lived in the town. Therefore, the South Bay retained a strong Californios culture, with many crossing the border regularly or owning land in both Baja California and the South Bay. Anita recalled her grandfather lived on a ranch in Tijuana and her father went back and forth across the border regularly. Still today Octavio, David and Andres have 'one foot on both sides,' living and working in both the South Bay and at Baja California ranches.

A large number of South Bay interviewees descended from indigenous groups of Mexico. When Hernan Cortes destroyed the Aztec Empire in the 1500s and established 'New Spain,' the Spaniards brought disease and brutality, killing large numbers



Branding cattle at the Crosthwaite ranch

of indigenous people, but for South Bay families, their roots go back to the indigenous people who survived. While Cortes obliterated indigenous civilizations, he also encouraged his conquistadores to marry the indigenous women.¹ Furthermore, many indigenous groups who lived in remote villages throughout Mexico remained untouched by the Spanish conquest. Over time, when they came in contact with the increasingly large numbers of immigrants to Mexico, the indigenous people married them. These unions continue to resonate for many South Bay interviewees who often traced their heritage back to indigenous groups.

Barbara Avalos' paternal grandparents were Tarahumara Indians from Veracruz. David Lopez' maternal grandmother was Tarahumara Indian from Chihuahua. Rosalie Gonzales Alvarado and Pauline Gonzales Castillo explained that their maternal grandmother was a Mayan Indian. The grandchildren of Maria and Lazaro Torres did not know their

ancestral line, but surmised that Lazaro's mother might have been a Yaqui Indian. Charlie Vasquez believed his mother stemmed from a Yaqui Indian heritage as well. Rosie Almanza's maternal grandmother was a Zacatecan Indian. Bill Virchis' maternal grandmother was indigenous from Mexico and spoke fluent Nahuatl. William Mendoza, although born and raised in the United States, considered himself to be Mexican Indian, but didn't know what group. Ceasar Castro took his DNA and found he had 12 percent indigenous roots, but unknown which cultural and linguistic groups.²

Many South Bay interviewees had parents and grandparents who were born in the Southwest, with their ancestors having come from Mexico. Eddie Juarez's mother was born in Arizona. Ana Castro's parents came from El Paso and Ray Juarez's mother was also born in Texas. Herman Baca's parents came from New Mexico and his family on his father's side

dated back to the 1600s when his ancestors came with the Oñate Expedition.

Although many South Bay interviewees knew at least some of their ancestry, others did not. Difficult economic conditions, war and migration meant that their families left documents behind. Many interviewees were simply proud of having had ancestors who came from Mexico, having decorative Mexican art and trinkets in their homes, but their genealogy had been lost to time.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s Mexico continued to accept immigrants, including from Europe. These Europeans intermarried with mestizos in Mexico and their children sometimes settled in the South Bay. Beatriz Rocha's maternal grandmother was born in Mexico and her grandfather was Jewish, having escaped from Germany due to anti-Semitism. Paul Torres' maternal grandparents settled in Mexico during one of the four waves of Spanish immigration, in their case during the Porfirio Diaz dictatorship.



Beatriz Rocha

Once families settled in the South Bay, inter-ethnic marriages continued. The first Mexican to move to San Ysidro, Guadalupe Gonzalez, married Theresa

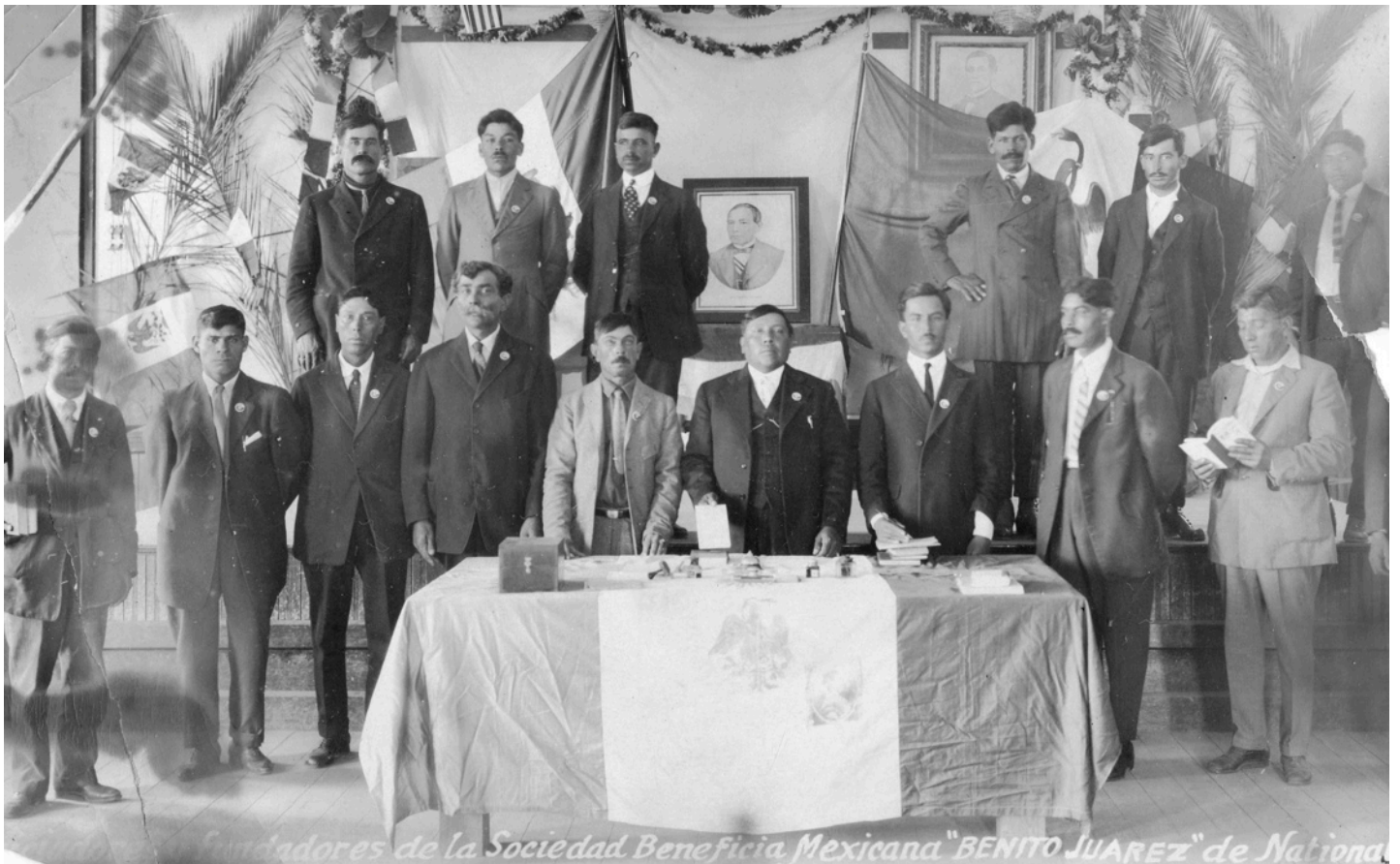
who was of Irish and German descent. Together they had nine children, most of whom remained in San Ysidro.



Guadalupe Gonzalez and Wife

A large population of Filipinos also settled in the South Bay. During World War I, Filipinos entered the United States Navy, usually confined to the rank of steward or domestic servants for white naval officers. After three years, they could obtain U.S. citizenship and approximately 25,000 Filipinos found employment in America, the majority working in agriculture. From the 1860s to the 1960s the American legal system maintained that interracial marriage was unnatural and prohibited unions between whites and nonwhites through miscegenation laws. As a consequence, many South Bay residents of Filipino and Mexican descent married each other. Their children began to create for themselves a new identity they termed 'Mexipino.'³

As the population of San Diego grew alongside the state of California, vast numbers of migrants came from other parts of the United States. Three waves of white anglo migration took place: during the Gold Rush in 1848, during the depression of the 1930s and during the 1940s when the war industry brought employment opportunities to San Diego. Their monumental numbers turned California into the most



Benito Juarez Society

populous state in America. Each wave of migration also coincided with legislation that curbed immigration of non-white anglos.

Race restrictive covenants meant that if someone was of Spanish-speaking descent or had darker skin or both, they could generally only rent or buy a home in certain areas of the South Bay, such as the Otay Valley, San Ysidro or Old Town National City. What's more, South Bay interviewees, including Paul Torres, Eustolia Jimenez de Reyes and Albert Alvarado's father, all held employment where the majority of people spoke Spanish. Over time, this de facto neighborhood and workplace segregation led children to attend schools that were also de facto segregated due to school attendance boundaries. In high school, interviewees described how they were encouraged to take vocational classes rather than

college preparation courses. In response to this discrimination, South Bay communities created various support networks for themselves.

Because of the proximity to the border, most South Bay interviewees of Spanish-speaking descent had Mexican ancestry and the characteristics of their group tended to differ from other immigrants. For example, when a commission surveyed Mexican railroad workers in 1911, they found that their families accompanied them more often than any other group of workers. Families then spread out throughout the United States and became hosts for other family members. As historians Balderrama and Rodriguez explain, "In truth, one could travel the length and breadth of North America without ever being far removed from the protective cloak of la familia, the extended family."⁴ Family loyalty,

therefore, became a far greater priority than nationality and often individuals of Mexican descent chose not to seek U.S. citizenship despite settling in the region permanently.



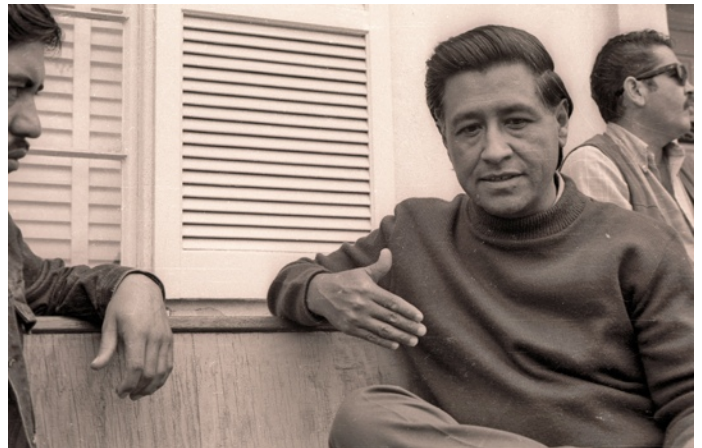
James Toledo and Rosalie

The compadre and comadre relationships then added to the strength of family ties. Dating back at least to the first pioneers of the 1700s, when friends became witnesses at each others' weddings and godparents to each other's children, these ceremonies solidified strong friendship bonds. Baptisms and weddings also implied adherence to a church community. Religious organizations that had a large Mexican American population in the South Bay included St. Rose of Lima in Chula Vista and St. Anthony's in National City. The Otay Valley farmers also built their own Apostolic Church.

Adding to church communities, mutualistas or mutual aid societies developed as far back as the early 1900s. These two traditions extended to

neighborhoods where people watched out for one another and gained community pride. A strong value that grew from these support systems became civic duty and generosity. Henry Alvarado's mother worked at the tuna cannery and would bring food to the needy in Tijuana on the weekends. Angel Lopez never went anywhere without food, offering his fresh grown produce to neighbors in Imperial Beach as well as to the homeless. Lydia Arballo Rodriguez's family would take trips to Tijuana in order to help the needy; Lydia recalled that her parents always brought new items, never used. Mary Casillas Salas explained that her grandparents were well-known for helping newcomers.

From this strong sense of generosity, service organizations arose to address the many needs of South Bay communities. They created health clinics, youth centers and offered free immigration services. Community advocacy led to a new generation of South Bay residents taking part in the Chicano Movement; they became activists, organizers and union leaders.



Cesar Chavez and Herman Baca

All the while, living by the border meant families tended to cross frequently. In Tijuana they may have helped the poor or offered religious care, but also crossed to buy famed tortillas or simply enjoy the tourist attractions on Avenida Revolution and Agua Caliente. Many South Bay interviewees continued to have family in Tijuana and would go for frequent



Roger Cazares Executive Director of MAAC

visits, attending weddings, baptisms and even cattle branding parties. They celebrated cross-cultural holidays by bringing turkey over to their families in Tijuana for Thanksgiving or holding Dia de los Muertos celebrations in the South Bay. Cross cultural experiences and multi-ethnic identities also came with the knowledge that generations of mi familia had relatives who had served on both sides of the border in the armed forces. Having a relative in the U.S. military meant the whole family took pride in their patriotism and sacrifices for America. This, coupled with their genealogy, meant South Bay residents of Spanish-speaking descent developed an identity as living descendants of a shared heritage dating as far back as prehistory and the beginnings of American history.

2. Information taken from the personal interviews.

3. Rudy P. Guevarra Jr., *Becoming Mexipino: Multiethnic Identities and Communities in San Diego* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2012) 26 & 131.

4. Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006) 39.

5. Zoila Niehaus, Personal Interview, 20 April 2016.

6. Rosalie G. Zarate, Personal Interview, 23 May 2016.

Notes

1. T.R. Fehrenbach, *Fire & Blood: A History of Mexico* (New York: First Da Capo Press, 1973) 234-235.

TRNERR SPEAKER FEB. 17

At the Saturday Speaker Program on Feb. 17 at 10 am at the Tijuana Estuary, Barbara Zaragoza will speak on "Fronterizos: A History of the Spanish-Speaking People of the South Bay." The program is free and open to the public. For more info, see <http://tnerr.org/>

MEETING MARCH 24

The meeting on March 24 is co-sponsored by the South Bay Historical Society and the Chula Vista Genealogy Society. Connie Gunther will speak on Early Families of Chula Vista. Connie's ancestors came with Father Serra in 1769 and Adolfo Savin, originally from France, held the mortgage to Casa Bandini (Cosmopolitan Hotel). Victor Contreras will give a theatrical interpretation of Bonifacio Lopez. Joaquin Blanco will speak on Life and Farming in the Otay Valley. The program is free and open to the public.

The Californianos of Chula Vista



Join us on Saturday, March 24th at 1pm
in the Chula Vista Public Library Auditorium

Descendants of the original *Californios* will present:

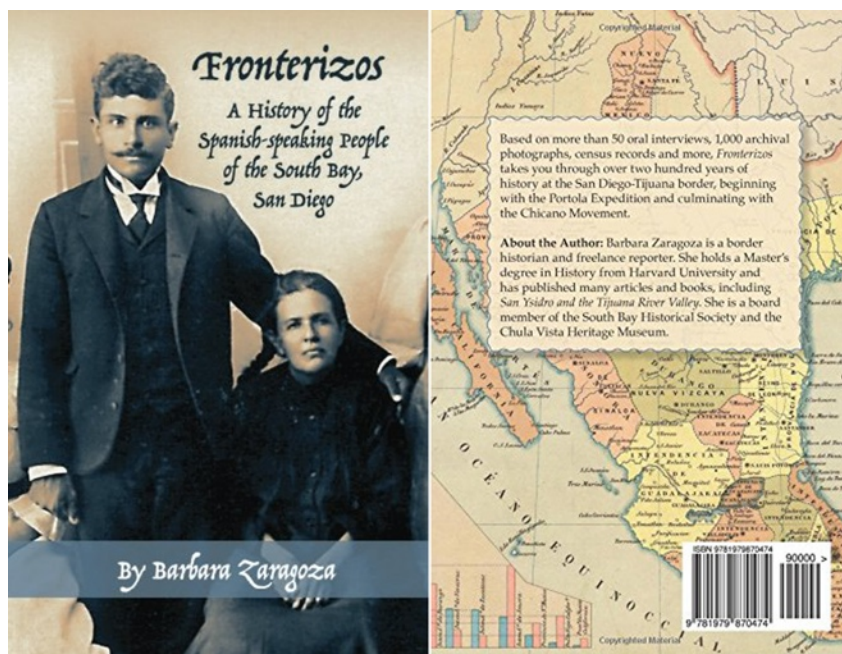
Connie Rascon Gunther: "The Early Families of Chula Vista - Reflecting on our past"

Victor Contreras: "A theatrical interpretation of a person who actually lived here -
Bonifacio Lopez: A California Rancher of the 1800's"

Joaquin Blanco: "Generations - Life and Farming in the Otay Valley"

Hosted by the South Bay Historical Society
and the Chula Vista Genealogy Society

Civic Branch
365 F Street
Chula Vista, CA 91910



Barbara Zaragoza's book will be on sale for \$30 at both meetings.

South Bay Historical Society
Bulletin No. 18, Feb. 2018
Editorial Board Steve
Schoenherr, Harry Orgovan
Board of Directors Mitch
Beauchamp, Cesar Castro,
Patti Huffman, Debbie Munoz,
Ralph Munoz, Harry Orgovan,
Shelley Rudd, Steve
Schoenherr, Peter Watry,
Barbara Zaragoza
For more information, see our
web page at
<http://sunnycv.com/southbay/>