

NO PLACE OF REFUGE: MEXICANS, ANGLOS, AND VIOLENCE IN THE  
TEXAS BORDERLAND, 1900-1920

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DEDICATION

For Patricia (Patsy) Villanueva

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

“Up to the time the Mexican Revolution started there was never a more friendly people on earth than the Mexicans on the Mexican side of the river and the Americans on the American side.”<sup>1</sup>

One thousand nine hundred and sixty-nine miles—that is the total length of the border shared by Mexico and the United States. It is the busiest border in the world with over 350 million crossings per year, forty-six official border-crossing sites, and cross-border trade totaling one billion dollars every day. On January 11, 2010, Mexican President Felipe Calderón and United States Trade Representative Ron Kirk celebrated the opening of Anzaldúas International Bridge in Reynosa, Tamaulipa, Mexico. Kirk praised the accomplishment of this new link as a symbol of the connectedness and cross-cultural understanding that the two nations forged together. Kirk explained, “In fact, this bridge represents the most fundamental kind of trade: people-to-people transactions . . . Mexican and American families crossing the river to shop, to visit, to provide a service, or to get a meal—to literally get a taste of the other side. These are the daily transactions that tie us together.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Proceedings of the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House in the Investigation of the Texas State Ranger Force,” Attorney R.B. Creager examined by Jose T. Canales during the February 15, 1919 testimony in which he opined that the actions of the Texas Rangers were directly responsible for the mid-decade border raids/violence.

<sup>2</sup> Ron Kirk, “Anzaldúas Bridge Opening Ceremony,” (speech, Reynosa, Mexico, January 11, 2010), Office of the US Trade Representative, <http://www.ustr.gov/about-us/press-office/speeches/transcripts/2010/January/remarks-united-states-trade-representative--0>.



A century earlier, Mexican President Porfirio Díaz and United States President William Taft met in Ciudad Juárez. This marked the first time an American president stood on foreign soil while in office. The affair was celebrated on both sides of the Rio Grande. In Mexico, the streets were lined with both the Mexican colors and the American Stars and Stripes. A banquet was held at the Ciudad Juárez customhouse. Sparing no expenses, the Mexican organizers lavishly decorated the interior of the building. The two leaders enjoyed their dinners on gold and silver plates valued at one million dollars that once belonged to Emperor Maximilian. The floral aroma that engulfed the room came from thousands of flowers that had arrived in three boxcars from central Mexico. Díaz made a toast to Taft, the United States, and the American people:

“This visit, which his Excellency President Taft makes to Mexico will mark an epoch in the history of Mexico . . . proof of international courtesy, which Mexico appreciates and esteems in all of its worth and meaning, will be from today a happy precedent for Latin American republics to cultivate constant and cordial relations among themselves, with us, and with all other countries of the continent.”<sup>3</sup>

After two minutes of cheers, Taft responded with equal gratitude and respect for his neighboring Mexico:

“I have left the United States and set my foot in your great and prosperous country to emphasize the high sentiment and confidence, the feeling of brotherly neighborliness, which exists between our two great nations . . . I drink to my friend, the president of this great republic to his continued long life and happiness, and to the never-ending bond of mutual sympathy between Mexico and the United States.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>“Taft and Díaz Meet; Talk of Friendship,” *New York Times*, October 17, 1909, 1-2.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

The following year, revolutionary forces demanded the ousting of Díaz, which led to the outbreak of civil war and the overthrow of the Díaz administration shortly thereafter. The period of peaceful coexistence between the two neighboring nations, which took sixty years to develop following the end of Mexican-American War of 1846, drastically transformed as revolutionary fighting intensified. Civilians from both nations moved from amity to animosity. Violence increased in the borderland, and American and Mexican diplomacy crumbled. By mid decade, the two nations found themselves on the verge of war. As the violence escalated, lynching of ethnic Mexicans by Anglo Texans increased, contributing to the dark reputation of the 1910s as the bloodiest decade of racial/ethnic violence in the United States of the entire twentieth century.

Lynching of ethnic Mexicans was not a new development.<sup>5</sup> During the decade that followed the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, there were over 150 known lynchings of ethnic Mexicans in the United States and its Territories, most of which were attributed to property disputes. The cases were most prevalent in the states of Texas and California, and the Territories of Arizona and New Mexico. A well-developed law enforcement system had yet to emerge in remote

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<sup>5</sup> The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo is the peace treaty between the United States and Mexico that ended the Mexican-American War of 1845-1848. Negotiated by Nicholas Trist, the treaty required the Mexican cession of 525,000 square miles of land to the United States in exchange for 15 million dollars. The Mexican Cession included land that is part of present day California, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, Colorado, and most significant to the origin of the conflict that led to war, Mexico relinquished all future claims to Texas and formally recognized the Rio Grande as the US and Mexico border. While the Mexican government agreed to these terms, many Mexicans would urge their fellow citizens to reclaim the territory for Mexico.

counties in the West at that time, allowing vigilante groups to impose their own “justice.” Lynchings had declined in numbers between 1850 and 1910, but the rate spiked again between 1910 and 1920. A pattern of vigilantism developed in southwestern communities, as Anglo Texans increasingly took matters into their own hands. Anglo Texan men argued that the state and federal governments failed to stop Mexican rebels from looting businesses and farms. Anglo Texans’ sense that their manhood was being challenged exaggerated genuine concerns about the growing lawlessness of the border. They responded harshly, justifying their actions in the name of American nationalism and pride.<sup>6</sup>

This dissertation examines Mexican and Anglo relations in the borderland of Texas and northern Mexico during the 1910s. The outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910 was an important event for both nations: it was a civil war among Mexicans that also triggered hostilities between Anglos and Mexicans in the borderland. This dissertation explores, as no other work has, the dramatic rise in the lynching of ethnic Mexicans in Texas during the decade of the Mexican Revolution. It argues that ethnic and racial tension brought on by Mexican Revolutionary fighting in the borderland made Anglo Texans feel justified in their violent actions against Mexicans. Using the legal system to their advantage, and deploying white privilege, their actions, even when illegal, often went unpunished.

This dissertation reconstructs, too, some of the earliest, and hitherto hidden, efforts by ethnic Mexicans in Texas to organize a defense of their rights

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<sup>6</sup> Anonymous letter signed, “Sincerely Yours for Dignified Manhood,” Texas State Archives Box 140, folders 1-31, 1912.

as Americans, and shows how these efforts drew support from wherever it could be found: among revolutionary groups in Mexico, among sympathetic whites in the United States, and, by the end of the decade, among Mexican American politicians in the state legislature. Out of such resistance, early civil rights protests by Mexican Americans emerged in Texas. This work is one of the first to analyze the earliest stirrings of what we might call the “long civil rights movement” among Mexican Americans in the Lone Star State. This dissertation shows that even as the consolidation of the Mexican Revolution eased Anglo-Texan/Mexican-American relations in the borderland, and led to a dramatic decrease in lynchings after 1920, the civil rights movement among Mexican Americans had taken root and would shape future struggles.

The practice of lynching in the United States has its origin early in the 1760s among South Carolinians, known as “regulators,” who used extra-legal measures to punish outlaws. The term “lynching” may have originated from Charles Lynch of Bedford County, Virginia, “when he and his friends informally tied and whipped pro-British sympathizers during the American Revolution, and first appeared in print in 1817 as “Lynch’s law.”<sup>7</sup> Initially, a lynching referred to a group of men who whipped or beat an outlier to society. By the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century, white southerners were using such assaults, now usually ending in death, to pursue rebellious slaves. Lynching then

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<sup>7</sup> Stephen J. Leonard, “Judge Lynch in Colorado, 1859-1919,” *Colorado Heritage* (Autumn, 2000), 4.

moved west with the gold rush, and westerners defended the practice as necessary to bring order on the frontier.

While historians have done a great deal of work on the lynching of African Americans, they have only recently begun to examine the lynching of ethnic Mexicans in the United States.<sup>8</sup> Two major factors have contributed to this lack of attention: documents and sources on the lynching of ethnic Mexicans in the United States usually identify victims as “black” or “white,” rendering their ethno-racial identity invisible; and, following a strict definition of lynching provided by the NAACP, historians have excluded from consideration hundreds of cases in which law enforcement officials were among the perpetrators.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The literature on lynching that directly addresses violence against ethnic Mexicans are listed here. They are mostly chapters of books or journal articles. William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, “The Lynching of Persons of Mexican Origin or Descent in the United States, 1848 to 1928,” *Journal of Social History* 37 (2003); William Carrigan and Clive Webb, offer a systematic study of mob violence against Mexicans by state and decade. Their research shows that from 1870 to 1910, the lynching of ethnic Mexicans decreased by at least 50% from each of the previous decades. Webb and Carrigan have a forthcoming book on lynching of Mexicans in the US Several conversations with Carrigan have encouraged my research. Rodolfo Acuna, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, 3rd Ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1988; This book examines the nature of the Spanish and Indian cultures that combined in New Spain and later Mexico. This book identifies the collision of two frontiers: the northward movement of Mexicans and the westward expansion of Americans. Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999; Her chapter “Vigilantism” provides details about the decrease in lynchings of ethnic Mexicans at the turn of the century. F. Arturo Rosales, *Pobre Raza: Violence, Justice, and Mobilization Among Mexico Lindo Immigrants, 1900-1936*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999; This is one of the first modern scholars who started to examine violence against ethnic Mexicans in the twentieth Century. Charles H. Harris, III, and Louis R. Sadler, *The Texas Rangers and the Mexican Revolution: The Bloodiest Decade, 1910-1920*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965; Lynching is mentioned at various times throughout this book, but the significance of this book is the similarities between the Rangers and civilian mobs that I study. William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, “A Dangerous Experiment: The Lynching of Rafael Benavides,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 80 (2005): 265-292; The authors assert that Rafael Benavides was the last know ethnic Mexican lynched in the U.S (according to the definition of a lynch mob used by the NAACP). The Benavides lynching occurred in 1928.

<sup>9</sup> According to the NAACP, four characteristics must be present to define a murder as a lynching: first, a murder must have occurred; second, there must be three or more perpetrators involved; third, it must occur extra-legally; and fourth, the purpose was in the name of vengeance or tradition. Here in lies the problem that I address in this dissertation—I argue that law officers

Newspapers and African American institutions led the way in collecting data on lynching cases, with the *Chicago Tribune* publishing cumulative annual totals beginning in 1883. In 1912, the Tuskegee Institute began publishing the *Negro Yearbook: An Encyclopedia of the Negro*, which included the annual lynching records collected by the Institute since 1892. According to Tuskegee Institute records, 3,445 of the 4,742 known lynchings that occurred between 1882 and 1964 targeted African Americans. The remaining 1,297 victims are listed as “white.” For years, historians did not try to determine how many of those “white” victims were Mexicans.

Only in 2004 did reliable estimates begin to emerge, most notably in the work of William Carrigan and Clive Webb, which demonstrated that at least 571 ethnic Mexicans were lynched between 1848 and 1928.<sup>10</sup> Almost 20% (124) of these occurred during the 1910s.<sup>11</sup> Alleged murder was the most common justification given by Anglo mobs for targeting Mexicans, and African Americans alike. The second most common justification for attacking Mexicans was theft, not the violation of sexual norms that Anglos used to rationalize their attacks.<sup>12</sup> Unlike African American men, ethnic Mexican men were not generally viewed by

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acting as jury, judge, and executioner acted beyond their authority, something that will be addressed in greater detail in Chapters Four and Six.

<sup>10</sup> William Carrigan and Clive Webb, “Muerto Por Unos Desconocidos: Mob Violence Against African Americans and Mexican Americans,” in *Beyond Black and White: Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in the US South and Southwest*, ed. Stephanie Cole and Alison Parker (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 423.

<sup>12</sup> William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1928* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 65.

Anglos as sexual predators; Anglo men perceived the shorter, smaller-framed Mexican as a “distinctly effeminate race.”<sup>13</sup>

Though the Carrigan/Webb contribution has been seminal, it did not do enough to explain why lynching of Mexicans increased so dramatically during the 1910s. Those historians who have looked at the rising number of Mexican deaths attribute it to the “bandit wars” between suspected Mexican criminals and the Texas Rangers, oversimplifying the period and overlooking the fact that many of the dead were lynched. In *Militarizing the Border*, Miguel Antonio Levario discusses the subject of Anglo-on-Mexican lynching only briefly. And Cynthia Skove Nevels’ *Lynching to Belong*, one of the most thorough studies of lynching in the Texas borderland, focuses entirely on African American victims. This dissertation seeks to remedy this neglect by focusing on the lynching of ethnic Mexicans during the decade of the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920. It also seeks to place those events within a larger political, social, and territorial frame. It illustrates how the Mexican Revolution intensified both anti-American sentiments in Mexico and anti-Mexican stereotypes in the United States. The growing tension led to a decade of disorder, ethnic and racial violence on both sides of the border, and a dramatic rise in the lynching of ethnic Mexicans in the United States.

Through several case studies of lynchings, this dissertation focuses on some of the most notorious episodes of Anglo-on-Mexican violence. The goal is not to sensationalize the violence but to reconstruct as fully as possible the lives

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<sup>13</sup> Manfred Berg, *Popular Justice: A History of Lynching in America* (Lanham, MA: Ivan R. Dee Publishing, 2011), 122.

of those it touched, and the social and political world in which it occurred. Thus, the chapters that follow focus on the victims themselves, their families, and the communities from which they emerged; on the perpetrators of violence; on efforts to bring the lynchers to justice; and on the swirling, violent world of the Mexican Revolution that made the borderland a frontline in that revolutionary struggle. The lynching and the disorder of the revolution subsided toward the end of the decade, helped along by the identification of a new enemy to Anglo Texans: Germans-Americans who now stood accused of aiding America's enemy during the Great War. But the intense strife of the decade left lasting marks on Mexican-Anglo relations in Texas.

Some definitions of terms are necessary. I have chosen to use "Mexican" to refer to Mexican nationals, "Tejano" for ethnic-Mexican Texans, "Mexican American" when referring to American citizens of Mexican descent that may or may not include Tejanos, and "ethnic Mexican" for individuals whose national origin is unknown or when referring to a group comprised of both "Tejanos" and "Mexicans." I use "Anglo" to describe white Texans, both of English and other European descent.

By "Mexican Revolution," I mean the decade of the most intense conflict, 1910-1920. I am aware that some of the developments that caused the revolution began decades before 1910, and that some historians have argued that the revolution did not really end until the 1940s. Nevertheless, fighting in the borderland was most intense in the 1910-1920 period, beginning with Díaz's overthrow and ending with the Obregon presidency in 1920.



This dissertation has five chapters. Chapter One describes the coexistence of Anglos and ethnic Mexicans in Texas prior to the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910. Chapters Two, Three, and Four are case studies that examine episodes of violence against ethnic Mexicans, experienced in Texas during the 1910s. Chapter Five examines the reasons why the violence ended, and explores the emergence of a Mexican-American civil rights movement in Texas.

More specifically, Chapter One focuses first on the openness of the border prior to the Mexican Revolution and how the region functioned as a borderland of cultural exchange. An examination of American families in Chihuahua and Mexican families in Texas demonstrates how both maintained patriotism for their homeland, while maneuvering through the nationalistic cultures encountered on foreign soil. It was possible for both Americans in Mexico and Mexicans in Texas to assimilate into local society and culture while still fostering a love for one's former country. But by the 1890s this fluidity had begun to narrow, first through the application of the principles of "Juan Crow" to ethnic Mexicans in Texas and then on account of fears generated by the Mexican Revolution. By the 1910s, the fluidity of the borderland had vanished, making ethnic Mexicans prime targets for lynching.

Chapter Two examines the lynchings of Antonio Rodriguez and Antonio Gomez. The former resulted in anti-American protests in Mexico days before the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution, and the latter occurred months later, resulting in an arrest of four men who were ultimately acquitted. This chapter

demonstrates the disruption of Anglo and Mexican relations immediately following the riots, and the fear that arose among ethnic Mexicans in Texas from the realization that white-on-Mexican violence largely went unpunished. Thus, lynching offered Anglo perpetrators an alternative to a time-consuming legal process, and promptly provided the verdict and punishment they demanded for alleged crimes. These two events prompted early Mexican American rights groups to announce that their purpose was to protect ethnic Mexicans in the state, and to bring the lynchers of Rodriguez and Gomez to justice.

Chapter Three is a case study about the trial and execution of Leon Martinez, Jr., accused and convicted of murdering an Anglo woman. Officially, Martinez was spared a lynching, but the jury that convicted him included members of the mob that attempted to lynch the teenager on the night of the murder. What the mob could not accomplish through extra-legal means it achieved through the artifice of legal proceedings. This case study shows the extent to which animosity toward Mexicans ran through all levels of Anglo society. It also demonstrates the stirrings of resistance, evident in a remarkable protest movement that stalled legal proceedings against Martinez for three years. In these moments, one can see a Mexican American civil rights movement taking shape.

Chapter Four examines the darkest episode of the decade: the lynching of fifteen Mexican men by Texas Rangers and ranchers at the Mexican village of El Porvenir in Texas. This was not a matter of one individual being lynched, but of Anglos killing Mexicans indiscriminately. This occurred when the already tense

relations between Anglos and Mexicans along the border worsened as a result of the Great War and fears that Germany might seek to open a front against the United States through Mexico. Both Mexicans and Anglos committed violent acts at this time, but Mexicans suffered a great deal more, with Anglo Texans increasingly profiling all Mexican refugees as criminals and “bandits.”

Just when it seemed as though relations would never improve, they did. Chapter Five illustrates when and how this transformation took place. Political stability in Mexico was improving. A significant number of Mexican Americans served in the U.S. military in World War I, and they became outspoken in defense of Mexican American rights when they returned. Meanwhile, the war itself caused German-Americans in Texas to become the most feared immigrant/ethnic group in the state. German exclusion, ironically enough, facilitated Mexican American inclusion. Violence against Mexicans declined dramatically. Still, the struggle for equal treatment among Mexican Americans remained in its earliest stages.

Towns such as Thorndale, Pecos, and Rock Springs are largely absent from history books. The tragic events that occurred there briefly drew to them national and international attention. The case studies I have executed for each of those obscure towns are meant to render the historical dramas that occurred there in the 1910s in very human terms. By reconstructing the social and political worlds surrounding the lynchings, I am able to probe Anglo and Mexican relations at their most contested moments of the twentieth century. I have used a wide variety of sources, including newspapers, photographs, court

cases, oral-history testimonies, diaries, and legislative investigations. While I document the rise and fall of lynching, my deeper purpose is to render comprehensible a violent decade of inter-ethnic and inter-racial relations. And while I argue that a largely disproportionate amount of violence befell innocent Mexicans, I also show how complex, insecure, and uncertain life became for both sides—in Mexico and in Texas—during the decade of the Mexican Revolution.

## CHAPTER II

### MIGRANTS, EXILES, AND REFUGEES: SOCIAL ORDER IN THE TEXAS/MEXICO BORDERLAND PRIOR TO THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION

“It was great. We had a wonderful life...we had everything we needed.”<sup>1</sup>

These are the words of Molly McCallick, a refugee of the Mexican Revolution, reflecting on her life prior to the upheaval of civil war. McCallick remembered a peaceful life in Mexico before revolutionary fighting forced her family to flee the war-torn nation in 1911. Mollie remembered Mexico as a beautiful country where she and her half-Mexican siblings were born but had to flee as refugees once the country erupted in a violent revolution.

Mollie, the daughter of an American businessman, is not the first image that comes to mind when we discuss Mexican refugees. The race, social class, and national origin of refugees from the Mexican Revolution varied. Mexican nationals fled the country for various reasons that differed by social class. Revolutionary factions targeted wealthy landowners because of their connection with the regime of Porfirio Díaz. Many of the poorest Mexicans left the country when mines and haciendas fell under constant attack by rebel forces raiding for food, weapons, and the conscription of males for service. The revolutionary cries were to return Mexico to Mexicans and, most importantly, to reclaim Mexico for working-class Mexicans.

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<sup>1</sup> University of Texas at El Paso Institute of Oral History, Interviewee: Mollie Gossett (McCallick), Interviewer: Sarah E. John, December 2, 1975. Tape no: 216, Transcript no: 216.

Foreigners living in Mexico found themselves under attack for what they represented—foreign exploitation of Mexico under Díaz. Americans made up a majority of these foreigners, who ranged from laborers to wealthy businessmen and banking leaders. Many American businessmen lived in Mexico with their families in mostly American communities. Mollie McCallick was the thirteen-year-old daughter of an American smelting superintendent, Hugh McCallick, who had been born in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico, in 1901.<sup>2</sup> The only homeland she knew was Mexico, but when the American Consulate alerted Hugh McCallick that rebels were on their way to raid the operation and kill all Americans, the families had to abandon their settlement immediately. Young Mollie fled with her family to a foreign place—Texas.

In Texas and much of the Southwest at the turn of the century, “Anglo” was synonymous with white, and not necessarily indicative of English descent. Most of the European immigrants in Texas—English, French, Scandinavians, and Germans—were part of this “new Anglo America” because of their whiteness, their families’ pre-twentieth century arrival, and knowledge of the English language. Many of the Anglo families in Texas were of varied European descent, often lumped together as “white.” In turn, they viewed ethnic Mexicans with their bronze skin as “non-white.” The wealthy class of Mexicans, the minority elite of the Díaz era in Mexico, often claimed a degree of “whiteness” by virtue of their Spanish ancestry, and had very little intermarriage with the indigenous population of Mexico for generations. Both American refugees from Mexico and upper-class Mexican refugees found an easier

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

path toward inclusion in Texas communities than the thousands of working class Mexican refugees who arrived each week. Many of these Mexican refugees did not speak English, were not seen as “white,” and were associated with the violence of the revolution. Stereotypes about their demeanor, brutality, and susceptibility to diseases became accepted as fact among Anglo Texans.

This chapter traces how the borderland transitioned from a region fostering cultural exchange and tolerance for multi-cultural societies to a “border line” with a nationalistic society on each side, intolerant of the other. Through this transition, a culture of racial hatred developed among Anglo Texans that combined Mexican stereotypes, in regards to their “whiteness,” with the violence of the Mexican Revolution. This transition led Anglo Texans to use brutal force, mob violence, and lynching to maintain a racial order that victimized ethnic Mexicans in Texas as the decade continued. An examination of American families in Mexico and Mexican families in Texas demonstrates how the two maneuvered on foreign soil prior to the Mexican Revolution. Following the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution, the question of loyalty presented a problem for the alien population on both sides of the Rio Grande.

This chapter examines the Texas/Mexico borderland in four parts. Part one documents the openness of the United States and Mexico border from 1880 to 1900, focusing on Americans in Mexico and their relationships with Mexicans. Part two identifies Mexicans in Texas who found inclusion through assimilation and acceptance by Anglo Texans because of their ability to claim “whiteness.” Part three examines a period of intensifying discrimination against newly arriving ethnic

Mexicans on the U.S. side of the border, 1900-1910. It analyzes how the degree of “whiteness” among Mexicans became more important as the Anglo population increased in West Texas, bringing with them Jim Crow era practices of racial segregation that they applied to ethnic Mexicans. Part four of this chapter illustrates the impact that the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution had on both groups attempting to cohabitate in the borderland. It illustrates how cultural exchange and plurality along the border became stigmatized and forbidden at this time.

### **Americans in Mexico**

The pre-Mexican Revolution borderland was an open door of exchange, and the fluidity of the border allowed for the movement of people seeking opportunity, refuge, and entertainment in Mexico. During the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, 1876-1910, the period known as the *Porfiriato*, Mexico went through a period of modernization that saw the development of a vast rail system. The network of interconnecting rail lines throughout the country linked up with U.S. lines in places like El Paso. In 1876 railroads were negligible, but by 1910 they stretched over 15,000 miles of the Mexican countryside. Modernization was financed through large-scale foreign investment in mining, farming, and oil, which brought thousands of American businessmen and their families into Mexico. By 1910 there were 75,000 Americans living in Mexico.<sup>3</sup> Initially, support was strong for Díaz among

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<sup>3</sup> Timothy Neeno, “The Mexican Revolution and U.S. Intervention, 1910-1917, Military History Online, <http://www.militaryhistoryonline.com/20thcentury/articles/mexicanrevolution.aspx>, accessed July 14, 2013.



middle and upper class Mexicans, but as the economy began to suffer by the turn of the century, Díaz's middle class support waned.

Mollie McCallick's father, Hugh, worked on the railroads in Mexico during the *Porfiriato*. Born in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, in 1865, he was the son of Irish immigrants Charles McCallick and Mary Rose. By his early twenties, Hugh left Pennsylvania for a job building a rail line from Eagle Pass, Texas, to Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico. In Eagle Pass, McCallick met Santos Peña, a Mexican woman, and in 1888 they married—Hugh was twenty-three and Santos was fifteen.<sup>4</sup> The two left for Mexico for the infinite financial opportunities they believed awaited American families there.

The McCallick family was one of 300 American families living in Torreón, Coahuila, Mexico, in 1910. The families included both Anglo parents and families with an Anglo father and a Mexican mother like the McCallicks. Mollie McCallick described her life in Mexico with her siblings as “wonderful.” They were educated in both English and Spanish. During this time, the illiteracy rate of the Mexican population was 81% as opposed to 7.7% in the United States.<sup>5</sup> The McCallick children and their American friends had private tutors who taught in English in the morning and Spanish in the afternoon. It is unknown how or when, but Mr. McCallick had moved upward within the company and became a manager of the operation. The family lived in a fourteen-room house with beautiful furniture and

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<sup>4</sup> University of Texas at El Paso Institute of Oral History, Interviewee: Mollie Gossett (McCallick), Interviewer: Sarah E. John, December 2, 1975. Tape no: 216, Transcript no: 216.

<sup>5</sup> Stacey Lee, *Mexico and the United States* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2003), 466.

two living rooms. Mollie's mother imported all of the furniture for the master bedroom from Germany. Most impressive was the red velvet canopy bed. The exterior of the house had a garden and a lavish water fountain.<sup>6</sup>

The McCallick family showed the kind of upward mobility that could occur for Americans living in Mexico during Díaz's presidency. The McCallicks enjoyed lush décor in their homes and bilingual education by tutors. Most of the American men who brought their families over the border were in management, supervisory roles, or skilled positions that provided favorable living conditions.<sup>7</sup> In Monterrey, American laborers working for the American Smelting and Refining Co. lived in substantial brick quarters built exclusively for them, while Mexican laborers of the same class lived outside of the fenced-in compound in "mud huts and shanties made out of slabs and tin cans and brush, with no floors."<sup>8</sup> American families lived well above the poverty level in Mexico as the masses of Mexico's poor struggled to put food on their tables.

Lucrative opportunities in Mexico were plentiful for Americans with the wealth and means to invest in oil and real estate. San Diego, Texas, attorney William Frank Buckley moved to Mexico City during the *Porfiriato* with his brother Claude. Together the two founded the firm of Buckley and Buckley, which represented American and European oil companies. The Buckley brothers made major real

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<sup>6</sup> University of Texas at El Paso Institute of Oral History, Interviewee: Mollie Gossett (McCallick), Interviewer: Sarah E. John, December 2, 1975. Tape no: 216, Transcript no: 216.

<sup>7</sup> Stacey Lee, Edited by. *Mexico and the United States* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2003), 466.

<sup>8</sup> Preliminary Report and Hearing of the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate Pursuant to Senate Resolution 106, United States Senate, Investigation of Mexican Affairs, testimony of Dr. Bruce Maker Corbin, 1458.

estate investments and profited considerably from interests in Mexico.<sup>9</sup> The Díaz administration strongly encouraged American capitalists to come to Mexico; critics charged that foreign investors were exploiting poor Mexican workers.

Dr. James M. Taylor, one of the secretaries of the Board of Foreign Relations of the Methodist Church, spent several years as a Methodist missionary in Monterrey, Tampico, Mexico City, Puebla, and dozens of much smaller towns. He said that prior to his initial visit to Mexico he believed the stories he had heard about exploitation of Mexicans by Americans. However, after living in Mexico he argued that Americans were actually helping the poorer class of Mexican citizens by modernizing the nation, and even described their involvement as quasi-missionary work because of efforts to disseminate modern sanitation techniques, “better modes of living, compelling the children to go to school, and things of that kind.”<sup>10</sup> This was a common defense made by foreigners who lived in Mexico.

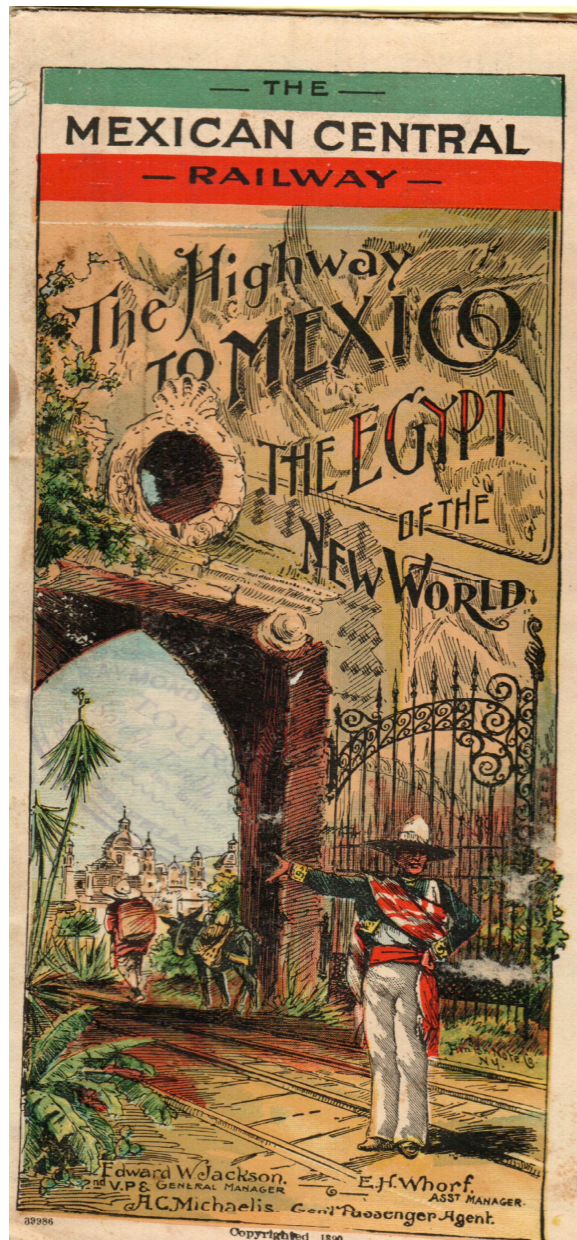
Tourism was another pull factor that brought foreigners, mostly Americans, into Mexico. Local and state governments lobbied for building railroads to isolated regions of the Yucatan Peninsula (modern day Cancun), in an effort to generate

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<sup>9</sup> Preliminary Report and Hearing of the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate Pursuant to Senate Resolution 106, United States Senate, Investigation of Mexican Affairs, testimony of William Frank Buckley, 767-777.

<sup>10</sup> Preliminary Report and Hearing of the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate Pursuant to Senate Resolution 106, United States Senate, Investigation of Mexican Affairs, testimony of James M. Taylor, 1405.

revenue for the state.<sup>11</sup> Tourism brochures circulated by the National Railways of Mexico urged Americans to explore Mexico (see Figure 2.1). Many of the brochures



**Figure 2.1** Russ Todd Collection, Box 3, File 13, Mexican Central Railway, West Texas Archive, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

<sup>11</sup> M. Bianet Castellanos, "Cancun and the Campo: Indigenous Migration and Tourism Development in the Yucatan Peninsula," in *Holiday in Mexico: Critical Reflections on Tourism and Tourist Encounters*, eds. Dina Berger and Andrew Grant Wood (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 242-243.

described Mexico as having a history as “sophisticated” as the ancient Egyptians and with cities that rivaled Europe’s finest. One flyer described Mexico as “The Egypt of the New World” and claimed that once “the ruins of old Mexico are explored, greater discoveries will be made than those made in Egypt.”<sup>12</sup> The captivating rhetoric targeted Anglo Americans in an effort to present Mexico in a culturally sophisticated light. The Mexican National Railways encouraged tourists to take an entire month off and travel in first-class cabins. The journey would take travelers to Mexico City, advertised as having a mild climate during the summer months “where even in July and August, one welcomes a blanket for bed covering.”<sup>13</sup> A March 1908 flyer described Mexico as “The Mecca for Tourists,” and Mexico City tourism referred to the city as “The Paris of America” because of the historic parks, parades, outdoor concerts, and numerous cafés: “To no other metropolis can Mexico City be so aptly compared, yet it possesses a charm distinctly apart from that fashionable metropolis of Europe.”<sup>14</sup> Additionally, President Díaz encouraged restaurant and hotel owners to hire light skinned Mexican workers in these high-traffic tourist locations, preferably of “Spanish” origin.<sup>15</sup> The Mexican National Railways became the vehicle that American tourists used to explore their neighboring country, and the Mexican

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<sup>12</sup> Russ Todd Collection, Box 3 File 13—Mexico Central Railway, Angelo State University archives. “Twenty Days in Mexico.”

<sup>13</sup> Russ Todd Collection, Box 3 File 13—Mexico Central Railway, Angelo State University archives. “Summer in Mexico Highlands.”

<sup>14</sup> Russ Todd Collection, Box 3 File 13—Mexico Central Railway, Angelo State University archives. “The Paris of America.”

<sup>15</sup> *La Crónica*, June 29, 1911., The Laredo, Texas, Spanish publication criticized President Díaz for his discriminatory actions that put a higher degree of importance on skin color.

government under Díaz welcomed tourism as an emerging industry.<sup>16</sup> Evidence suggests that Americans were comfortable visiting the neighboring country prior to the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution.

Americans Howard and Mary K. Quinn, for example, enjoyed spending their summers in Mexico when Mary was a college student prior to the outbreak of the revolution. Howard recalled in an interview how Mary loved Mexico and the Mexican people, and even more so the spending power of the American dollar. He described that the suite they often rented had a sitting room, and entry hall, two bedrooms, and a balcony. The Quinns felt safe traveling throughout Mexico, and Mary spent one summer studying at a Mexico City university unaccompanied. Howard asked a family friend living in Mexico to “keep an eye on her,” but Mary responded that nobody could keep track of her.<sup>17</sup>

Border towns became Mexican attractions for Americans, who traveled across the country to El Paso with the intentions of experiencing Ciudad Juárez, its “cosmopolitan” sister city. The center of town included both Mexican and American owned businesses. Here the visitors could experience Mexican culture, eat exotic foods, and take in a local bullfight while still enjoying familiar intoxicants—whiskey and gin. On Comercio Street in Ciudad Juárez, Jimmie O’Brien owned O’Brien’s Bar and Café, where a standard drinks delivery included 100 barrels of American whiskey and 200 cases of gin—once again saturating the Mexican city with

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<sup>16</sup> Russ Todd Collection, Box 3 File 13—Mexico Central Railway, Angelo State University archives. “The Highway to Mexico.”

<sup>17</sup> University of Texas at El Paso Institute of Oral History, Interviewees: Howard and Mary K. Quinn, Interviewers: David Salazar and Mildred Torok, March 8 and 15, 1973. Tape no: 68, Transcript no: 68, p. 19-25.



American liquor. The Manhattan Café was a popular bar for American businessmen, where the slogan read, “Some spend their evenings at home but we spend ours with one foot on the rail where we can spit on the floor.” However, most appealing to both American men and women was Lobby Café No. 2 in the heart of Ciudad Juárez (see Figure 2.2).<sup>18</sup> Men and women mingled in the border town, escaping from Victorian rules and traditions. Visitors interested in the darker side of Ciudad Juárez referred to it as an “open town,” because it was easy to find a gambling establishment, a house of prostitution, or an opium den.



**Figure 2.2** Russ Todd Collection, Box 1, 2006-28, Mexican Postcards, Cities/States, West Texas Archive, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

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<sup>18</sup> Russ Todd Collection, Box 1—Mexican Postcards.

Social conditions in the United States also contributed to the movement of Americans to Mexico during the *Porfiriato*. During the late nineteenth century, Mormon families fled the United States and its territories, specifically the Utah Territory, after the United States Congress enacted anti-bigamy laws. Individual states had anti-bigamy laws, but in 1862 Congress enacted the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act, which criminalized bigamy in United States territories, setting the penalty at five years in prison.<sup>19</sup> The Morrill Act failed, however, to end the practice of plural marriage because it was too difficult to enforce. Couples were not required to file for marriage licenses in the Utah Territory, and if questioned, wives were uncooperative with authorities. Mormon women, Nancy Cott has argued, believed that polygamy was “the only safeguard against adultery, prostitution, free-love and the reckless waste of pre-natal life [abortion].”<sup>20</sup>

In 1882 Congress passed the Edmunds Anti-Polygamy Act, making plural marriage a felony rather than a misdemeanor. Moreover, it eased the federal government’s effort to target bigamy by making bigamous cohabitation a misdemeanor. In addition to increasing the severity of the crime, the Edmunds law threatened offenders with the loss of voting rights and prohibited those convicted from ever serving on a jury, or holding political office. An estimated 1,300 Mormon men were jailed as “cohabits the following year” (see Figure 2.3)<sup>21</sup> Five years later

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<sup>19</sup> Nancy Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 112.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Leonard J. Arrington, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 180-181.



the Edmunds-Tucker Act added a fine of up to \$800 to a polygamy conviction and dissolved the corporation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. The Edmunds-Tucker Act allowed the federal government to seize all church property valued over \$50,000.<sup>22</sup> The LDS challenged the constitutionality of the seizure of church property, only to see the United States Supreme Court uphold the Edmunds-Tucker Act on May 19, 1890.<sup>23</sup>



**Figure 2.3** C.R. Savage Photograph Collection, Brigham Young University, Harold B. Lee Library Digital Collections. Mormon Prisoners. A group shot of Mormon men in prison stripes, standing in front of the Utah Territory Prison, ca. 1887. The Men in the photograph were serving time for bigamy.

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 138-139.

<sup>23</sup> *Late Corporation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints v. United States*, 136 U.S. 1 (1890).

The question of Utah statehood became a sensitive issue, with Protestant Americans arguing against admitting Utah into the Union. The leaders of Protestant churches went so far as to say that Mormons should be barred from immigrating to “our shores,” depicting them as dangerous foreigners. They also opposed Mormon missionaries who went to Europe in search of Mormon converts to bring to the United States, many of whom were young women from Northern Europe. Mormon interest in Europe began as early as 1840, when Brigham Young and four others traveled to England to spread their faith. The country was in the midst of a depression and “government authorities had recommended migration to America.”<sup>24</sup> During their year abroad, Young and his companions successfully converted over eight thousand people to Mormonism, and many returned as wives to the United States.<sup>25</sup> The church creed stated, “Increase and multiply, and raise up a generation unto the Lord.”<sup>26</sup> Heber Chase Kimball, one of the original twelve apostles, went so far as to scold missionaries for marrying the foreign women before returning to the United States. He claimed, “The brother missionaries have been in the habit of picking out the prettiest women for themselves before they get here, and bringing on the ugly ones for us; hereafter you have to bring them all here before taking any of them, and let us all have a fair shake.”<sup>27</sup> *The New York Times*

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<sup>24</sup> Stanley P. Hirshson, *The Lion of the Lord: A Biography of Brigham Young* (New York: Knopf Inc., 1969), 36.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>26</sup> “The Mormons: Life Among the Mormons-Salt Lake City, its Appearance and Inhabitants,” *The New York Times*, September 21, 1857.

<sup>27</sup> Stanley P. Hirshson, *The Lion of the Lord: A Biography of Brigham Young* (New York: Knopf Inc., 1969), 129-130.

reported that Kimball, “offered a father a yoke of oxen and a wagon for a sixteen-year-old girl.”<sup>28</sup> Critics of these missions and of polygamy argued that these women were similar to slaves, and one unidentified daughter of Young stated to *The New York Times*, “If Salt Lake City was roofed over, it would be the biggest whore house in the world.”<sup>29</sup>

International pressure fueled immigration concerns. By the late 1880s, British newspapers began reporting stories of English women being lured by American Mormon missionaries back to Utah. One of these women, Elizabeth Rutter, told a terrible story of women being brought to Utah under false pretenses and subjecting them “to fearful indignities... by the elders.” Rutter escaped and made a four-day trip from Ogden, Utah, to Chicago without anything to eat or drink, and was found by authorities laying on a street unconscious.<sup>30</sup> British officials likened what Mormon missionaries were doing in Europe to slave trafficking. Stories circulated in the papers estimating that “an average of 3,500 girls, most of whom are English and Swedish, leave Liverpool annually for Utah,” and often described the church as a “cult” that allegedly went house to house offering money to bribe the “girls to emigrate.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.,129.

<sup>29</sup> “The Mormons: Life Among the Mormons-Salt Lake City, its Appearance and Inhabitants,” *The New York Times*, September 21, 1857.

<sup>30</sup> “Amongst the Mormons,” *Lloyds Weekly News*, August 5, 1888, 2.

<sup>31</sup> “Mormon Lure—English to Stop White Slave Traffic,” *Kingston Gleaner*, March 15, 1911, 17.; “Girls Lured to Mormon City—Great Britain Supplies More than a Thousand Converts a Year,” *Lloyd’s Weekly News*, April 23, 1911, 10.

In their *1890 Manifesto*, the LDS bowed to anti-polygamy pressure and officially banned the practice of plural marriage. Although individual Mormons practiced polygamy well into the twentieth century, it was no longer official church policy. In a Protestant Episcopal paper, *Standard and the Church*, published in Philadelphia, a writer argued that Mormons were only pretending to outlaw polygamy in order gain statehood for Utah, and that Mormon judges and Mormon juries would not enforce the law. The author argued that “Gentile Americans” would be outcasts in a Utah state, and likened the idea of Americans living in Utah to that of abolitionists in antebellum days living in the South.<sup>32</sup> By prohibiting Mormon missionaries from foreign recruitment and rigorously enforcing the Edmunds Act, the author argued, “Utah, in time, will accumulate a sufficient Gentile American population to outvote the Mormon adherents. Then, and not till then, will it be safe to consider the matter of statehood for Utah.”<sup>33</sup> Federal pressure on the Mormon Church and anti-Mormonism by nativists made expatriation to Mexico an appealing alternative.

Mormon interest in Mexico began in the 1870s when LDS church leader Brigham Young began sending Mormon missions there. Their goal was to spread their faith to the indigenous population—specifically the Yaqui Indians.<sup>34</sup> The Mormon missions that arrived in Mexico in the 1870s were successful in spreading the word of the LDS, and informed Mormon communities in western American

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<sup>32</sup> “The Mandate and Mormonism,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 8, 1890, 4.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>34</sup> Daniel W. Jones, *Forty Years Among the Indians* (Springville, UT: Council Press, 1890), 370-371.

territories of their general acceptance in Mexico, leading many Mormon families to seek refuge there. By 1910 there were more than four thousand American Mormons living in nine colonies: six in Chihuahua and three in Sonora. Their influx brought a new religion into the country that reached as far inland as Mexico City.<sup>35</sup>

Memoirs and journals by Mormon exiles detail stories of hardship during the early years of expatriation.<sup>36</sup> Many colonies were twenty to thirty miles from the nearest town, and resources were scarce. Colonists endured a hot, dry climate in some regions while they searched for a location with fertile soil and fresh water. Mary Ann Black recalls finding one such location in Cove Valley, and quickly abandoning it when the community realized it was outnumbered by rattlesnakes.<sup>37</sup> Thomas Cottam Romney was a teenager in the late 1880s when his family left Utah for Colonia Juárez, in Chihuahua. Romney later wrote that their homes were adobe style buildings with dirt roofs and dirt floors. Most Mormon boys attended school no more than three months of the year and rarely did they reach the eighth grade. Romney described how they went months without white flour, and that his diet consisted of redroots and pigweed—commonly used today by farmers as pig fodder. When the plant grows to full maturity it becomes less edible, forcing Romney's

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<sup>35</sup> F. LaMond Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico: The Dynamic of Faith and Culture* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1987), 91.; Stacey Lee, *Mexico and the United States* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2003), 842.

<sup>36</sup> For personal accounts dealing with Mormon missionaries in Mexico, see Utah State Historical Society and California State University, Fullerton, Oral History Program; Daniel W. Jones, *Forty Years Among the Indians* (Springville, UT: Council Press, 1890); Thomas Cottam Romney, *A Divinity Shapes Our Ends, as Seen in My Life Story* (published by the author, 1953); Jesse N. Smith Family Association, *Journal of Jesse Nathaniel Smith, The Story of a Mormon Pioneer 1834-1906* (Salt Lake City, 1953); Nelle S. Hatch, *Colonia Juárez: An Intimate Account of a Mormon Village* (Salt Lake City, 1954).

<sup>37</sup> Utah State Historical Society and California State University, Fullerton, Oral History Program, "Southeastern Utah Project," Interview: Mary Ann Black, Interviewer: Louise Lyne, Subject: Recollections of Mexico, Date: July 10, 1972.

mother to serve alfalfa as the family's principal meal. After several attempts Romney declared that he had "no objection to competing with pigs in the consumption of weeds, but in eating of alfalfa I must draw the line."<sup>38</sup> His dissatisfaction went beyond the living conditions: "Worst of all," he wrote, "our neighbors for miles around were Mexicans—a people, up to this time, whom I profoundly disliked."<sup>39</sup> Romney, like most Mormon refugees, considered himself an American national and white, doubly different from the dark Mexicans. Nelle S. Hatch moved to Colonia Juárez as a young girl and was twenty-three-years old when the Mexican Revolution began. Hatch helped to care for George Romney, son of Gaskel and Annie Romney, relatives of Thomas Romney. While she played with the Mormon children she was instructed to keep them separated from the Mexican children. When asked if she ever dated Mexican boys, she replied that it was never officially prohibited because Mormon girls never desired to do so—"Why should they? There were plenty of white boys. Why become a poor Mexican?"<sup>40</sup> Romney's dislike of Mexicans was not shared by all Mormon exiles. In memoirs and journals, these men and women recall a satisfaction with their new countrymen because of the religious freedom they found in Mexico. Protestants and Catholics in Mexico objected to the practice of polygamy, but there was nothing similar to the size and scope of the persecution that occurred in the United States.

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<sup>38</sup> Thomas Cottam Romney, *A Divinity Shapes Our Ends, as Seen in My Life Story* (published by the author, 1953), 46.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 49-51.

<sup>40</sup> Utah State Historical Society and California State University, Fullerton, Oral History Program, "Southeastern Utah Project," Interview: Irene Hatch Redd, Interviewer: Gary L. Shumway and Scott Blickenstaff, Subject: Recollections of Mexico, Date: October 18, 1970.

Some Mormon families welcomed Mexican converts into their communities. Manrique González, who fled peonage conditions on a hacienda north of Mexico City, found refuge in the Mormon colony of Colonia Juárez. Mormon families raised the young Mexican boy in their community and educated him through high school. At 16 he was baptized, and became a member of the LDS. Hatch reminisced about the spiritual moment:

“I’ll never forget the day, it was so important to us. As soon as they are baptized, then they’re confirmed and made members of the church. In the meeting where that happened, we had an old patriarch there who stood up and spoke in tongues, and had us all spellbound . . . He told him [González] what an influence he was going to be among his own people.”<sup>41</sup>

González’s conversion changed his religious identity, which superseded his ethnic identity, allowing him to gain acceptance in the community.

After high school González married a white Mormon girl and went to college in Logan, Utah. When he graduated, the LDS wanted González to help them spread his faith to ethnic Mexicans living in the United States and abroad. Church officials were impressed with how well he assimilated into their “white” world, and in deciding where he would settle down, church officials remarked, “Why, we can place you anyplace. We can put you any one of six places when you get through here [college].”<sup>42</sup> However, this was not the case. After five job placement rejections in the United States he met with the sixth and final Mormon employer who had no intention of hiring him. González remarked, “You don’t need to tell me . . . I know

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<sup>41</sup> University of Texas at El Paso Institute of Oral History, Interviewee: Nelle S. Hatch, Interviewer: Richard Estrada, November 7 and 9, 1977. Tape no: 422, Transcript no: 422.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

why they don't hire me, I'm a Mexican."<sup>43</sup> González left Utah with his family and settled in New Mexico where he believed inclusion in the ethnic Mexican community there would be much easier to achieve. However, both Protestants and Catholic Mexican Americans took issue with his Mormon faith and once again ostracized his family. Unable to bear this discrimination, Gomez's white wife left him and moved with their seven children to a Mormon colony in Arizona. After their departure González wrote in his diary, "Well, I've been denied a position once because of my race and another one because of my religion. I think I'll go back to Mexico, where I came from."<sup>44</sup> The Mormon families who lived in Mexico and introduced their faith to González were more accepting of cultural exchange, possibly because they were on the fringe of society or because of a strong desire to convert the Mexican boy to their faith. In their Mexican colony, González was accepted because he assimilated into their world, but the greater "white" Mormon world was not as accepting of the young Mexican Mormon, especially after the turn of the century as racial lines throughout the United States hardened.

### **Mexicans in Texas**

Mexicans in Texas made up a highly diversified group. Mexicans from the wealthier class found inclusion much easier than the poor, and especially those of Spanish descent and "whiter" in appearance. These upper-class Mexicans chose assimilation as a necessary step toward inclusion. Anglo Texans began to exclude

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<sup>43</sup> University of Texas at El Paso Institute of Oral History, Interviewee: Nelle S. Hatch, Interviewer: Richard Estrada, November 7 and 9, 1977. Tape no: 422, Transcript no: 422.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.



poor Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants as the southern segregation system of Jim Crow, or Juan Crow, was established in Texas and applied to ethnic Mexicans. There was a tension among Anglos in Texas between assimilating and segregating ethnic Mexicans in Texas. Inclusion or exclusion by Anglo Texans depended on multiple factors including skin color, class standing, and the ability to speak English.

In Texas, Anglo Americans grouped Mexicans with African Americans near the bottom of the racial hierarchy. This racial order ranked working class Mexicans, referred to as “peons,” at the bottom. Derived from the word “peonage,” the word described a lower-class Mexican worker, subjugated by Anglo society and hired to do work that was “beneath” whites. In addition to “peon,” the word “greaser” was commonly used to identify poor Mexicans. It also had its origin in the mid-nineteenth century. Historian Arnolde De León explained that the term most likely arose from an effort to link Mexican skin color to the color of grease, and to the filth associated with dirt.<sup>45</sup>

In Mexico, Mexicans were grouped into three main categories: European in origin, mestizo, and Indian. At the top of the social hierarchy was the European stock, which usually had Spanish heritage and mixed little with Indians; they represented less than 15% of the country by the turn of the century. The mestizos, a mixture of Spanish and Indian blood, constituted the largest group, making up over

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<sup>45</sup> Arnolde De León, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes Toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 16.

half of the population of Mexico. The remaining 35% of the population was Indian.<sup>46</sup> When U.S. employers sought laborers, a vast majority of the recruits who came to work in mining, agriculture, and railroads were mestizos.

The color line separating Anglos and Mexicans in Texas was complex, because it was based not only on skin tone but also class standing. Manuel Gamio was one of the first to examine the color line between Anglos and Mexicans in the 1930s. According to Gamio, Anglos in Texas accepted Mexicans into their communities only when they possessed a light skin color and a high class standing. Darker-skinned Mexicans experienced the same degree of “restrictions as the Negro, while a person of medium-dark skin can enter a second-class lunchroom frequented also by [white] Americans of the poorer class.”<sup>47</sup> A Mexican of “light brown skin” could not enter a high-class hotel, but “a white cultured Mexican [would] be freely admitted to the same hotel, especially if he [spoke] English fluently.”<sup>48</sup> The treatment of Mexicans by Anglo Texans differed from the treatment of African Americans, all of whom were completely excluded from all-white establishments. However, the willingness of Anglo Texans to assimilate light-skinned and higher-class Mexicans into Anglo society declined somewhat over time, and a preference for segregation increased.

Fair-skinned, wealthy, upper-class, English-speaking Mexican immigrants found inclusion into Anglo society. Many of these men and women were tied closely

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<sup>46</sup> Charles Curtis Cumberland, *Mexican Revolution: Genesis Under Madero*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1952), 3-5.

<sup>47</sup> Manuel Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States: A Study of Human Migration and Adjustment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930), 53.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

to American business investors in Mexico and moved to the United States as the Mexican economy declined near the end of the nineteenth century. Assimilation was not necessarily forced on these Mexicans as much as it was embraced by light-skinned Mexicans who claimed to have a Spanish heritage. Such was the case with Mexican immigrant José Robles, who had light brown hair and light brown eyes. Robles arrived in Texas with his wealthy Mexican parents as a teenager. In Dallas, he studied English and enrolled in a local business college. He eventually met a German-American girl, and the two were married in a Baptist church. Regarding assimilation, he stated, "I am now following American customs in everything that I can . . . My wife prepares my food and even though she is German she learned to cook American Style."<sup>49</sup> Robles and his wife found that assimilation helped them maintain a level of acceptance among Texans who accepted them as "white."

Upper-class Mexican women who displayed "white" attributes found a relatively easy entry into Anglo Texan society. Ruhe López, a native of Mazatlan, Sinaloa, Mexico, was the daughter of a Spanish woman and Austrian man. Before her arrival in Texas, her father owned a prominent hotel that permitted only "Europeans, Americans, and prominent persons in Mexico." She studied English, and at the age of seventeen, her father introduced her to an American mining engineer staying at the establishment who she later married.<sup>50</sup> Upper-class Mexicans of Spanish descent believed they were white; by quickly demonstrating

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<sup>49</sup> Manuel Gamio, *The Mexican Immigrant: His Life-Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), 226-228.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

American cultural characteristics following their arrival, they found inclusion into Texas communities much more easily than working class Mexican immigrants.

Anglo Texans believed in the importance of acculturation as a necessary step to possible inclusion into American society. To prevent affluent ethnic Mexicans from reading Spanish language newspapers, American presses began printing editions of their daily papers in Spanish. The *El Paso Morning Times* learned the importance of employing a native Spanish speaker as its translator when the *Times* ran an ad for a clearance sale at the City of Mexico Store that read: “Gran Venta de Deficación” instead of “Gran Venta de Evacuacion.” The former announced, “Big Sale of Shit.”<sup>51</sup> In the borderland region of Texas and Mexico, assimilation into American culture occurred on both sides of the border. On the Mexican side, so-called *fronterizos*, those living in northern Mexican communities, were seen by Mexicans in Central Mexico as having assimilated into American culture.

From 1880 to 1900, the population of Texas almost doubled in size from 1,591,749 to 3,048,710. During the same 20-year period, Mexican laborers arrived in unprecedented numbers: the Mexican-born national population in Texas increased from an estimated 43,000 to over 70,000. By 1910, the population of ethnic Mexicans in Texas reached 367,000, with 125,000 of them being Mexican-born nationals.<sup>52</sup> Mexican immigrants to the United States fared better when they

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<sup>51</sup> University of Texas at El Paso Institute of Oral History, Interviewee: Brig. Gen. S.L.A. Marshall, Interviewer: Richard Estrada, Date: July 5, 7, 9, 11, and 19, 1975. Tape no: 181, Transcript no: 181 page 53.

<sup>52</sup> Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910.

settled into already established communities, many of which had been part of Mexico before 1848 and of Spain before that.

The West Texas town of San Angelo is one community with a Spanish-Mexican history. Prior to European arrival, Jumano Indians, an indigenous tribe, inhabited large areas of West Texas. In 1632, a Spanish mission led by Friars Juan de Ortega and Juan de Salas arrived in the region. The Jumanos eventually became part of Apache and Comanche Indian tribes after disease and warfare decimated the population by the late eighteenth century. The town of San Angelo emerged once American settlers arrived in the region in the 1860s. These settlers clashed violently with Native Americans. The United States Army soon arrived and established military forts to provide protection for American settlers in the region. San Angelo was first established as a town to serve the needs of Fort Concho, built along the Concho River in 1867. With an abundance of water and plenty of liquor, sex, and gambling, it became indispensable to the 450 soldiers posted at Fort Concho by 1875.<sup>53</sup> Bartholomew DeWitt officially established Santa Angela as a trading post in 1883, the name memorializing his late wife, Angela. It quickly became a West Texas center for farming and ranching. In 1888, the Santa Fe Railroad arrived, making the town a fast-growing center for shipping as well.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> [www.sanangelotexas.us](http://www.sanangelotexas.us), visited June 26, 2012.; Gus Clemens, *Concho County* (San Antonio: Mulberry Avenue Books, 1980), 91.

<sup>54</sup> Virginia Noelke, *Early San Angelo* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2011), 7-8.; Escal F. Duke, "San Angelo, TX," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hds01>), accessed June 22, 2012. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

Ethnic Mexicans who lived in Texas for decades were not necessarily welcomed into Anglo circles, but some factors led to better relations between the two groups. Some of the ethnic Mexican men spoke English, were educated, and fought for the Confederacy in the Civil War. Second and third generation Mexican Americans had lived in Texas for decades and spoke both Spanish and English, which helped them maneuver through Anglo society. In 1888, a group of ethnic Mexican men organized the *Juntá Patriótica*, the first Mexican patriotic organization in San Angelo. Their goal was to establish a civic group that would honor Mexican Independence Day—the 16<sup>th</sup> of September.<sup>55</sup> Manuel Trevino was the secretary of the organization and kept detailed notes of its plans for the festivities, as well as a list of the group’s official members. Their first meeting was conducted at the office of the Justice of the Peace, Mr. E. E. Dubors. The chairman of the organization, Zenon Ramirez, reported that a great number of Mexican citizens were in attendance to discuss the celebration. The records list the following officers of the committee: Froilan Guerra, President; Manuel Trevino, Secretary; Felipe Alderete, Treasurer; and Felix Flores, Sergeant at Arms.<sup>56</sup>

Forty men and three women pledged a total of \$56 to pay for the upcoming festival.<sup>57</sup> The celebration was open to everyone in San Angelo. Twenty-two-year-old Froilan Guerra, a photographer who immigrated earlier that year and was fluent

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<sup>55</sup> Padilla Family Collection, Porter Henderson Library, Angelo State University, The Padilla family donated these records they found in their attic. They are the records kept by Manuel Trevino, the secretary of the *Juntá Patriótica* of San Angelo, Texas.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, Names listed included the amount pledged and an “X” indicating whether the money had been collected.

in written and spoken English, became the organization's president.<sup>58</sup> Fifty-eight-year-old Felix Flores, the Sergeant at Arms, was a Mexican American farmer who spoke only Spanish and could neither read nor write. Yet Flores had fought in the Confederate Army as private in the 36<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Texas Cavalry, engaged in combat during the Red River Campaign battles of Mansfield and Pleasant Hill.<sup>59</sup>

The festivities began on Friday evening September 14, 1888, at 10:00 p.m. with bands playing traditional Mexican music in the center of town. At 11:45 p.m., Manuel Trevino read the *acta de independencia* to the crowd in Spanish. After the short oration, the band played music until 12:30 a.m., packed up for the night, and reconvened after sunrise. The committee organized a parade honoring the flags of both the United States and Mexico that concluded in the park where a barbeque awaited local residents. The most important part of the celebration began around 4:00 p.m. when Guerra welcomed guest speaker Rafael Duarte who, sixty years earlier, had fought as a teenager against Spain in the Mexican war for independence. Following their speeches, numerous other ethnic Mexicans came to the podium to speak proudly of their love for Mexico and the importance of honoring the 16<sup>th</sup> of

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<sup>58</sup> Year: 1900; Census Place: Justice Precinct 1, Val Verde, Texas; Roll: 1675; Page: 22B; Enumeration District: 74; FHL microfilm: 1241675.

<sup>59</sup> Tenth Census of the United States, 1880. (NARA microfilm publication T9, 1,454 rolls).; Texas State Library and Archives Commission; Austin, Texas; Confederate Pension Applications, 1899-1975; Collection #: CPA16526; Roll #: 447; Roll Description: Pension File Nos. 03296 to 08825, Application Years 1899 to 1902.; Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29. National Archives, Washington, D.C.; National Park Service, Civil War Soldiers and Sailors System, online <<http://www.itd.nps.gov/cwss/>>, accessed June 22, 2012.

September. Music played and dancing went on throughout the night. Flores was responsible for the evening's refreshments—beer, cigars, and fruit.<sup>60</sup>

Trevino not only helped to organize the 16<sup>th</sup> of September celebration, he also helped to create San Angelo's Mexican Dramatic Company. On January 18, 1896, the *San Angelo Standard* published a favorable review of one of the company's first plays, "In the Hilt of the Sword." The *Standard* described the performance as a Mexican opera infused with humor. The report praised the acting ability of the local Mexican performers, male and female.<sup>61</sup> The existence of this organization and play demonstrates that a more culturally sophisticated Mexican community had emerged in rural West Texas by the late nineteenth century. These productions featured large casts and elaborate costumes (see Figure 2.4), and were well received in Anglo parts of town. "In the Hilt of the Sword" was performed in the Pickwick Theater in the center of town on the same stage as Anglo performances. A writer for the *San Angelo Standard* reviewed the performance, applauding the acting, marveling at the lavish costumes, and describing the play as a financial success.<sup>62</sup> Most importantly, the reviewer reported, was that the play "indicated the high degree of intelligence of our Mexican friends."<sup>63</sup> The audience likely included sizeable numbers of local

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<sup>60</sup> Padilla Family Collection, Porter Henderson Library, Angelo State University, The Padilla family donated these records they found in their attic. They are the records kept by Manuel Trevino, the secretary of the Juntá Patriótica of San Angelo, Texas.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *San Angelo Standard*, "The Mexican Opera," January 18, 1896, 2.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.





THE ACTORS IN FULL COSTUME, EXCEPT THAT THE DEVILS ARE WITHOUT THEIR MASKS

**Figure 2.4** Arnaldo De León Collection, Box 3, File 16, Photos of Hispanic Influence in San Angelo, West Texas Archive, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

Anglos, one sign of how well the Anglos and Mexican communities had accommodated themselves to each other, and how willing they were to cross cultural borders. This cultural openness would not survive long into the twentieth century.

Juntá Patriótica was the first Mexican civic organization in San Angelo. Other organizations, like the theater group, formed thereafter. After the turn of the century, new organizations appeared, including the Club Latino American (1906),

which aimed to celebrate Mexican heritage and provide a physical location in San Angelo exclusively for Mexican social entertainment. Mexican organizations began to meet exclusively in the Mexican district in town. In their inaugural celebration, the forty-member Club Latino American hosted an event honoring the memory of Don Benito Juárez, a former president of the Republic of Mexico who resisted the French occupation of Mexico. According to the *San Angelo Standard*, the group was “made up of the best class of the Mexican citizenship of this city.” Invitations were sent to over 300 people for an event that included dancing and traditional patriotic speeches.<sup>64</sup> Also in 1906, the Spanish-speaking citizens of San Angelo gained enough of a presence to attract the attention of Amado Gutierrez, the publisher of *El Liberal*, a Spanish paper in Del Rio, Texas; Gutierrez announced plans to issue a weekly version of the paper in San Angelo.<sup>65</sup>

After the official establishment of San Angelo in 1883, Mexican families moved to the town and worked on the neighboring ranches and farms. These families organized a school for their children in the early 1880s. In 1886, as many as 60 children attended the Mexican school. A reporter for the *San Angelo Standard* made an unannounced visit to the school during the winter of 1886, unsure of what he would find. He reported to his surprise that the Mexican children were “very bright” and that all of the students from the oldest to the youngest were put through a series of intellectual “exercises” to demonstrate their ability.<sup>66</sup> He wrote that “they

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<sup>64</sup> “Club Latino Americano,” *San Angelo Standard*, March 24, 1906, 6.

<sup>65</sup> “A Spanish Weekly,” *San Angelo Standard*, March 24, 1906, 6.

<sup>66</sup> “The San Angelo Mexican School,” *San Angelo Standard*, February 29, 1886, 3.

looked neat, clean, and happy” and that they demonstrated an eagerness to learn English and American “methods.”<sup>67</sup> The students were learning English, following similar daily routines as Anglo children, and assimilating at a young age.

By the turn of the century, the openness of the border allowed many Mexican workers to seek better employment in the United States; many found communities like San Angelo as an appealing place to live. Historian George J. Sanchez examined the economic push-and-pull factors that influenced this mass movement, and illustrated how the main railroad lines in Mexico served as a vehicle for migration. Mexican laborers sought better paying jobs in the United States, where they could earn “between \$1 to \$2 a day” in railroad and agricultural positions as opposed to the “12 cents a day paid on several of the rural haciendas.”<sup>68</sup>

American labor recruiters traveled south on the central railroad deep into Mexico for recruitment purposes.<sup>69</sup> The American press questioned this tactic of seeking foreigners for American employment. A *Dallas Morning News* article raised the question, “Who pays the fare of the hundreds of Mexican peon laborers that [sic] continually come into the United States?” The article pointed out that “the average peon seldom accumulates more than \$5, but these Mexicans are coming in droves from the interior of the southern republic on tickets that cost as high as \$20.”<sup>70</sup> The railroads that carried American investors, businessmen, and their families into

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford, 1993), 19.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>70</sup> “Importation of Mexicans,” *San Antonio Light*, September 23, 1905, 6.

central Mexico now became a vehicle for recruitment and movement of Mexicans into Texas. Migration increased as the cost of living in Mexico began to rise while wages remained low. As the movement of Mexican immigrants into Texas increased, Anglo Texans grew less tolerant of ethnic Mexicans already in their midst, especially those who celebrated their ancestry. By 1900, a shift in a preference for segregation of Mexicans occurred among Anglos in Texas.

The population of San Angelo grew quickly due to the sheep and cattle industries, with sheep shearing providing work for many working-class Mexicans in San Angelo (see Figure 2.5).<sup>71</sup> With diversity came segregation, and some areas of town soon became segregated districts. The north side of town near the Santa Fe Railroad tracks became known as the *Santa Fe barrio*. Isolation within a barrio allowed ethnic Mexicans to live in the manner to which they were accustomed in Mexico, and to preserve their culture, customs, and traditions. However, living conditions were primitive in the early days of settlement for ethnic Mexicans (see Figure 2.6). As the Anglo population grew, brick buildings replaced wooden ones for the Anglo residents by 1900, and the disparity in living conditions between Anglos and Mexicans became more apparent. San Angelo's population grew from 4,510 in 1890 to 10,321 in 1910. With the arrival of more Anglo settlers, the ethnic Mexican presence decreased from 40% of the city population in 1890 to 7% in 1910.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> [www.sanangelotexas.us](http://www.sanangelotexas.us), visited June 26, 2012.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

Increasingly, the poorest ethnic Mexicans were discriminated against and confined to poorer neighborhoods.<sup>73</sup> Inclusion in the growing Anglo populace of San Angelo, and Texas as a whole, became more difficult for ethnic Mexicans. Nativists in Texas began to argue that assimilation was not possible for migrant workers and the illiterate. Their fears deepened as thousands of single laborers arrived in Texas



**Figure 2.5** Arnolde De León Collection, Box 3, File 16, Photos of Hispanic Influence in San Angelo, West Texas Archive, Angelo State University

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<sup>73</sup> *The Artistic Legacy of the Mexican Revolution*, produced by Linda Cuellar (1995; Princeton, NJ: Films for the Humanities & Sciences, 2003), DVD.





**Figure 2.6** Arnaldo De León Collection, Box 3, File 16, Photos of Hispanic Influence in San Angelo, West Texas Archive, Angelo State University

looking for work. These newcomers were dark, poor, and without the anchor that families offered. If they could not be kept out, they had to be kept separate from the white population. Anglo Texans believed in the importance of segregating poor ethnic Mexicans from Anglo Texans, and some of the first official cases involved schools.

### **“Juan Crow” in Texas**

Some segregation of ethnic Mexicans in Texas occurred throughout the nineteenth century. Initially, segregation appeared in residential districts of Texas cities—an African American section of town, a Mexican quarter, and the remaining area for the white population. By the late nineteenth century, ethnic Mexicans were

encountering segregation in public institutions, such as schools, restaurants, and hotels. Schools began following Jim Crow practices in most Texas cities by creating all-Mexican, all-black, and all-white schools. By the early twentieth century, Anglo businesses posted signs that read, “No Mexicans and Dogs Allowed.”<sup>74</sup> Anglo Texans doubled their efforts to segregate those seen as non-white. Resident ethnic Mexicans in Texas were especially offended. Their determination to protest inclined them to emphasize the American dimension of their identity rather than the Mexican dimension. They also emphasized that they were white by American law. Thus, Anglos in Texas had no right to impose segregationist ordinances and practices upon them.

At the turn of the twentieth century, “whiteness” in Texas was not ultimately determined just by the color of one’s skin, but rather by a formula derived from a medley of categories regarding one’s race, ancestry, cultural characteristics, and from the vagaries of American law. By most Anglo standards, Mexicans were found to be non-white. In one respect, however, they had an exceptionally strong case to be considered white. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) declared that Mexican citizens who found themselves on the United States side of the border following annexation had the option to remain in the country and become American citizens. The United States had a naturalization law that declared that anyone born on foreign soil desiring to become a citizen had to be free and white. Thus, if Mexicans were declared eligible for citizenship by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, then they must be white—at least by law. This is exactly what a United States

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<sup>74</sup> LULAC History, accessed January 4, 2011, <http://lulac.org/about/history/> 78 LULAC History, accessed January 4, 2011.

federal court ruled in 1897.<sup>75</sup> Ethnic Mexicans lost no time in declaring that their eligibility for United States citizenship and whiteness rendered segregation measures passed against them inappropriate and illegal. This meant that Anglo Texans had to find a non-racial basis and justification for segregating Mexicans.

In 1893, Texas enacted the Public Free Schools Act, which allowed for the segregation of children in public schools based on their race and color. The Act defined “colored” as being “of mixed blood descended from Negro ancestry.”<sup>76</sup> By this definition under the law, Mexicans were considered “white.” Anglos, however, were simultaneously pursuing the segregation of Mexican children on linguistic grounds: Spanish-speaking immigrant children had to attend separate schools to help them learn English without holding back English-speaking children. Texas passed English-only laws in 1893 and 1905, targeting not only Mexican children but also the arrival of large numbers of *new immigrants* from Eastern and Southern Europe. The new laws provided guidelines for the proper use of English in the classroom: “All lessons, instructions, recitations, songs, etc., were to be conducted in English.”<sup>77</sup> The rationale for separating Mexican and white children also extended to economics: proponents argued that Mexican children needed separate schools in order to cater to the seasonal labor needs of migrant families. Segregationists claimed that Mexican children reached puberty sooner than American children,

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<sup>75</sup> Ian F. Haney López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 27-28.

<sup>76</sup> Michael Ariens, *Lone Star Law: A Legal History of Texas* (Lubbock, Texas: Texas Tech University Press, 2011), 244.

<sup>77</sup> Carlos Kevin Blanton, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas, 1836-1981* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 61-62.



another reason why they had to be kept separate from white children.<sup>78</sup> All of this contributed to the widespread segregation of Mexican children, and subjected them to all the difficulties associated with segregation: poor facilities, poor resources, and fewer teachers.

Throughout the state of Texas, Mexican schools were often the last to open and first to close. Attendance at the beginning of the fall term usually lagged behind the winter months as young boys worked in seasonal positions with their brothers, fathers, and uncles. From Galveston to El Paso, the segregated schools had many deficiencies relative to their Anglo counterparts. In Kerr County, Texas, a heavily German American region, both Mexican and German American students attended the same Kerrville Schools in 1902-1903, but Mexican students were restricted to one building.<sup>79</sup> In Lockhart, Texas, school boards allocated funds for the following improvements: a general overall improvement to the Anglo high school, a second room for the Mexican school, and “the negro building [to] be worked on later in the season.”<sup>80</sup> The additional room for the Mexican school improved the facility from the previous school year, when the city of Lockhart failed to hire a teacher for the Mexican children well into November.<sup>81</sup> In Alpine, Texas, town leaders segregated Mexican children as early as 1910 when they erected the Madero Ward School, an all-Mexican school on the corner of West Avenue G and South Tenth Street.

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<sup>78</sup> Michael Ariens, *Lone Star Law: A Legal History of Texas* (Lubbock, Texas: Texas Tech University Press, 2011), 244.

<sup>79</sup> Carlos Kevin Blanton, *The Strange Career of Bilingual Education in Texas, 1836-1981* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 36.

<sup>80</sup> “Lockhart School Notes,” *Galveston Daily News*, August 25, 1909, 4.

<sup>81</sup> “Schools,” *Galveston Daily News*, November 19, 1908, 9.

In San Angelo, as a revolution brewed south of the border, ethnic Mexican families organized to challenge the segregated educational system of their community. Segregation of ethnic Mexican children began there in the 1880s, primarily for the Mexican children who did not read or write in English. Over time, as the state implemented the English-only laws in the schools, Mexican families attempted to send their children to the white schools and were met with resistance. School districts like San Angelo applied the same restrictions to Mexican students as to black students. School officials argued that segregation began as a way to provide Spanish-speaking Mexican children an opportunity to learn English without interfering with the education of English-speaking children. However, over time, segregation of Mexican children became the unwritten rule in San Angelo and much of Texas for linguistic and ethnic/racial reasons.

Few historians have examined school desegregation efforts by ethnic Mexicans in the southwest during the early twentieth century.<sup>82</sup> The San Angelo protest of 1910 successfully brought awareness to ethnic Mexican communities across the state that the practice of unequal education of their children should not be tolerated. These men and women fought the segregation of Mexican children in San Angelo on their own, without the support of a national civil rights group. This

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<sup>82</sup> Historian Michael Aries examined the *Salvatierra* case in which LULAC and the parents of Mexican children in Del Rio, Texas, challenged the segregation of Del Rio schools in 1928. Aries identified this as one of the “initial challenges to segregated education for Mexican American students.” Vicki Ruiz credited the 1945 *Mendez v. Westminster* decision in California where Judge Paul McCormick ruled that segregation of Mexican children “found no justification in the Laws of California and furthermore was a clear denial of the ‘equal protection’ clause of the *Fourteenth Amendment*.” Incidentally, this decision was a precursor for the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, and was a precedent used in the de of Mexican Schools in Texas and Arizona. The focus on successful desegregation campaigns in the literature needs to shift to those instances that were less successful as well.

may have been the first Mexican American civil rights challenge of segregation in the schools.

On Tuesday, June 7, 1910, the Mexican population of San Angelo, represented by an attorney and a committee of four, began its protest against the inequality of the local school system by formally addressing the school board. Representatives of the Mexican community presented a formal application requesting that the board either integrate the Mexican children of San Angelo into the all white classrooms or relocate the students to some section of the main white building. They demanded that the Mexican children be educated on the same physical grounds as whites. The group of parents prepared for two weeks and hired attorney J.P. Dumas of the Anderson & Dumas law firm to represent them. The San Angelo School Board recognized that the Mexican school facility was unsatisfactory, “and that in the future the Mexican children will have public school facilities equal to the white schools. But school board chairman Sam Crowther also stated that the children should not integrate. The board was unanimous in its opposition to “placing the two races on the same playgrounds.”<sup>83</sup>

The board believed that they met the demands with an acceptable compromise by promising to move the Mexican children to a better facility—an abandoned building once used to school Anglo children. They believed that Mexican parents would not press any further. What the board did not understand was that the protest was not merely a spontaneous reaction, but rather a calculated plan with a sophisticated fiscal argument. Months earlier, Patrick Dooley, an enumerator for

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<sup>83</sup> “Mexicans Seeking to Enter White Schools,” *San Angelo Standard*, June 8, 1910, 1.

the 1910 census, encountered stubborn protest while gathering population data. Several Mexican parents withheld the names of their school-aged children “claiming that they did not receive the benefit of the Mexican apportionment.”<sup>84</sup> They believed that withholding the names and number of children in their families from the census taker would be a silent protest—the additional head count of Mexican children provided the San Angelo school district additional money for the school system, which would most likely benefit only the all-white facility. Perhaps the white school board would notice the drop in school district funds, and, in an effort to recover those funds, address Mexican school grievances. This information was brought to the school board’s attention and appears to be the reason that it quickly agreed to the improvements of the Mexican school. One week after the meeting, the *San Angelo Standard* announced that the 1910 census would be retaken in the Mexican portion of the city. As a result, the original number of 154 Mexican children increased to 200. The successful maneuver initially reduced the amount of state funding the city of San Angelo received for operating public schools, a financial burden for the school board and a strong statement that the Mexican families were no longer going to cooperate with Juan Crow.<sup>85</sup> Based on these new numbers and the demands of the Mexican parents, the board selected new teachers for the Mexican students and promised that they would soon make a decision regarding a

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<sup>84</sup> “Mexican Census of City Will be Retaken,” *San Angelo Standard*, June 15, 1910, 1-2.

<sup>85</sup> Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910 (NARA microfilm publication T624, 1,178 rolls). Year: 1910; Census Place: San Angelo, Tom Green, Texas; Roll: T624 1592; Page: 2A; Enumeration District: 0283; Image: 1087; FHL microfilm: 1375605.

new location for the school. Ten days after the formal protest, the members of the board believed that the issues regarding the Mexican school were settled.<sup>86</sup>

The Mexican families rejected the offer and called an emergency meeting for the following Sunday at Turn Verien Hall. An estimated 300 Mexican men, women, and children met and listened to Florentine Muñoz, chairman of the Mexican committee, deliver a speech urging them to boycott the Mexican school. One after another, participants joined Muñoz at the podium and delivered enthusiastic speeches about their rights under the law and how they intended to secure those rights. Most importantly, they agreed not to accept the board's decision: "We repudiate the school board's offer and demand our rights."<sup>87</sup> The families did not want yet another abandoned building that once schooled Anglo children; they wanted integration, because they believed that the Anglo students had better teachers and facilities. Some of the speeches were in English, while others were delivered in Spanish. The diverse group included all classes of ethnic Mexicans living in San Angelo—skilled workers, unskilled workers, shepherders, and some of the wealthiest members of the city.<sup>88</sup>

Attorneys for the Mexican families informed school board chairman Sam Crowther they were prepared for a legal challenge that would cost the city dearly. Crowther was unrelenting, arguing that he had offered the Mexican families "a square deal" but warned "we will not think for one moment of admitting them into

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<sup>86</sup> "Trustees Elect Five More Teachers," *San Angelo Standard*, June 18, 1910.

<sup>87</sup> "Refuse Trustees Offer," *San Angelo Standard*, June 20, 1910, 6.

<sup>88</sup> "Stirring Speeches," *San Angelo Standard*, June 20, 1910, 6.

the white schools and thus demoralizing our entire school system. I won't do it and it won't be done."<sup>89</sup> Mayor J.D. Hassell supported the decision: "I want to say right here that I am strictly in favor of their action and were I in Mr. Crowther's position, I would follow in his footsteps exactly and see that the Mexicans are not admitted into the white schools. Such a move would be absolutely a lightning strike to our school system as it stands and demoralize it altogether." Hassell, a southern Democrat, was born in Hamburg Landing, Tennessee, in 1863. Both his maternal and paternal extended families were planters and slaveholders. Hassell Sr. was a soldier in the Confederate Army and spent the final eleven months of the Civil War as a Federal prisoner at Camp Morton in Indianapolis, Indiana. Following the war, his family lost everything and suffered greatly. As a young man, J.D. Hassell heard stories about the prosperity of his family before the American Civil War. His family left its Tennessee home in 1886 while J.D. was a child, loaded up a wagon drawn by oxen with all of their remaining possessions, and migrated to North Texas. Hassell was educated in an all white school, matured during the era of Jim Crow in which "separate but equal" was the status quo, and viewed Mexicans as non-white.<sup>90</sup> For the Hassell family, integration of the races destroyed their life in the Old South.

By late June 1910, it appeared that the Mexican community of San Angelo was ready to challenge the Anglo-imposed social order—a dangerous thing to do in the early twentieth century. Muñoz, the most vocal leader of the group, declared,

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<sup>89</sup> "Attorneys for Mexicans Determined," *San Angelo Standard*, June 21, 1910, 2.

<sup>90</sup> Frank W. Johnson, *A History of Texas and Texans, Volume III* (Chicago and New York: The American Historical Society, 1914), p. 1458.

“We have the right to put our children in the white schools and we are going to do it if we have to go to the highest authorities in the state.”<sup>91</sup> Talk of a mass meeting of the white community of San Angelo began in early June. Crowther invited “every loyal citizen of San Angelo” to attend.<sup>92</sup> The *San Angelo Standard* urged “the white citizens of San Angelo to endorse the action of and support the school board in whatsoever manner it may be deemed best.” The article included a subtle threat to Mexican readers: “It is murmured quietly that if the Mexicans do not come to an agreement... stringent methods will be brought into action.”<sup>93</sup>

The Mexican committee in San Angelo was successful in getting the attention of local government leaders, and, in the very least, demonstrated a willingness to fight racial inequality in the public schools. Their protest and resistance demonstrates that Mexicans in San Angelo believed that as American citizens, they had the right to attend school with Anglo children. Moreover, they used all available resources to protest inequality. When classes began in the fall of 1910, two students attended the Mexican school; in a bold display of protest, seven Mexican pupils marched up to the North Ward white school and attempted to register for classes but were refused entry. The school board, determined to demonstrate the workability of Juan Crow at all costs, had to maintain a separate facility for the Mexican pupils and pay the salary for a teacher who only taught a few students.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> “Mexicans Determined,” *San Angelo Standard*, June 20, 1910, 3.

<sup>92</sup> “Attend the Mass Meeting,” *San Angelo Standard*, June 28, 1910, 1.

<sup>93</sup> “Talk of Mass Meeting,” *San Angelo Standard*, June 21, 1910, 3.

<sup>94</sup> “Mexicans Refuse to Enter Own Schools,” *San Angelo Standard*, September 20, 1910, 1.

The *San Angelo Standard* reported that many of the Mexican families who boycotted the public school enrolled their children in the local Catholic school, the Immaculate Conception Academy. Academy officials separated the white children from the Mexican children and provided different teachers. This appeared to be an improvement in the eyes of the Mexican families, because at least their children attended school on the same grounds as white children. However, rumors quickly spread throughout San Angelo that white children mingled with Mexican children at the Immaculate Conception Academy. In an official statement, Immaculate Conception Academy authorities reported that these rumors were unfounded. Mother Superior confirmed this when she declared, "The Mexican children have never been taught in the same room with whites and they never will."<sup>95</sup>

The reaction of the school board reveals how Anglo Texans perceived Mexicans as non-white. The Mexican committee followed through on its threats to take the school debate to a higher power in the state; as a result, this became a short-lived question of international importance. Muñoz appealed to the Mexican consul in San Antonio, Enrique Ornelas, for advice on how he should proceed with his fight against the school board. Muñoz stated, "We think we are in the right and are going to stand up for entrance into the white schools."<sup>96</sup>

Ornelas was aware of a similar situation in San Francisco with Japanese school children. Nativists in California convinced the San Francisco School Board in

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<sup>95</sup> "Catholics Refuse to Grant Request Made by Mexicans, Will Not Mix Whites and Mexicans," *San Angelo Standard*, September 22, 1910, 1.

<sup>96</sup> "Local Mexicans Appeal to the Mexican Consul at San Antonio," *San Angelo Standard*, September 21, 1910, 1.



1905 to segregate Japanese children from white children. Chinese laborers were barred from immigrating since the passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, and nativists were arguing for the exclusion of Japanese laborers as well. The incident became a foreign relations concern between the United States and Japan. Historian Gary Gerstle explained that President Theodore Roosevelt viewed Japan in higher regard than China and other nations of the Asian world. Gerstle explained that Roosevelt was impressed with Japanese success in foreign market competition and territories, and with the “Japanese victory over the Russians in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905.” Roosevelt negotiated a resolution in order to end the international debate. The Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907 restricted the immigration of Japanese laborers to appease the nativists but required the San Francisco School Board to end its policy of segregating Japanese school children.<sup>97</sup>

In San Antonio, Ornelas was determined to stir the diplomatic pot, so to speak, by making the San Angelo school segregation topic one of international importance in Mexico and in the United States. Ornelas took up the matter with the government of Mexico, Texas Governor Thomas Campbell, and President Taft. “The dispute,” the *San Antonio Light* reported, “promises to become as serious and important as when California excluded the Japanese.”<sup>98</sup> It would appear that Ornelas had the upper hand since a precedent was set in the Gentlemen’s Agreement halting the segregation of children of foreign-born parents. Ornelas

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<sup>97</sup> Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 60-61.

<sup>98</sup> “Serious,” *San Antonio Light*, October 1, 1910, 2.

stated, "I believe the San Angelo board to be clearly in the wrong...The Mexicans pay taxes to the state, county, and municipalities and their children are entitled to the same educational advantages as the children of American parents."<sup>99</sup> Unfortunately for the families fighting the school board, the Mexican government had no grounds for appeal to the United States, because an earlier petition by Muñoz, the head of the Mexican committee, argued that every signatory was a legalized voter in Texas and "to all intents and purposes American citizens."<sup>100</sup> Muñoz attempted to recant the previous statement, but the damage had already been done. Diplomacy could not help with the Mexican fight for desegregation, because it had appeared that the protestors had renounced their Mexican citizenship.

The San Angelo school protest made headlines across the state, and families continued their protest beyond 1910. The following year, Mexicans in Laredo, Texas, organized to protest the segregation of Mexicans from Anglo children in their public schools. The statewide attention San Angelo received encouraged Mexican organizations in other Texas cities to bring up the issue of segregated education. In Laredo, the local Mexican group, the *Congreso Mexicanista*, was more interested in discussing the education debate than planning the September 16<sup>th</sup> festivities. Outlining six grievances with the local school board, it stated that its number one priority and the priority of Mexicans across the state should be the "education of the Mexican children in the state of Texas." The *Congreso Mexicanista* threw down the gauntlet to Anglo Texas authorities: "Is it, or is it not our duty to protect against

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> "Mexican Committee Says Members are American Citizens," *San Angelo Standard*, September 23, 1910, 1.

exclusive schools for Mexican children, wherein they are separated from the American children?" Citizens concluded their meeting with a few remarks about the admission of other foreign children in Texas schools, thus questioning the legality of prohibiting Mexican-American children from attending the same schools.<sup>101</sup>

The case of education in San Angelo provides an example of how Anglo Texans viewed ethnic Mexicans, and how ethnic Mexicans viewed themselves as American citizens with civil rights. The *San Angelo Standard* reported how the ethnic Mexican population protested segregation while maintaining a desire for peace in the city. An anonymous ethnic Mexican stated to the press: "I am a Mexican by blood, but by birth I am an American, and I want to see things peaceful in San Angelo."<sup>102</sup> However, a racial hierarchy in Texas did not permit integrated education. Anglo Texans viewed ethnic Mexicans as poor, prone to disease, primitive in their living conditions, and dangerous. It is unlikely that a Mexican government taking an interest in the events in San Angelo would have produced a different outcome for Mexicans living in the United States. As San Angelo Mexican families were challenging the local school board, an even greater international event dwarfed their debate. A revolution brewing in Mexico would soon change the Anglo/Mexican racial divide in Texas from one of discriminatory social rules to a violent period of chaos in the borderland that quickly turned deadly.

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<sup>101</sup> "Mexicans in White Schools," *El Paso Morning Times*, September 22, 1911, 6.

<sup>102</sup> "Split in Mexican Population of San Angelo Now Seems Certain," *San Angelo Standard*, September 25, 1910, 1.

## The Outbreak of the Mexican Revolution

Díaz continued his close ties with foreign investors and world leaders while discontent among Mexican citizens intensified. In 1909, President William Howard Taft visited Ciudad Juárez to meet with Díaz and reinforce American commitment to Mexico and the Díaz administration. Privately, Taft was growing concerned that an upheaval in Mexico would have an adverse effect on American financial interests. In a letter to his wife after meeting Díaz in El Paso and Ciudad Juárez, Taft commented on how remarkable the eighty-year-old leader was in his “agility, quickness of perception, and dignity of carriage.” But he cautioned:

“There is great fear, and I am afraid a well-founded fear, that should he die, there will be a revolution growing out of the selection of his successor... It is inevitable that in case of a revolution or internecine strife we should interfere, and I sincerely hope that the old man’s official life will extend beyond mine, for that trouble would present a problem of the utmost difficulty.<sup>103</sup>

A social revolution was on the horizon by 1910. Only 2% of the Mexican population owned land, one of every two houses were deemed unfit for human habitation, and the average life expectancy was 30 years as compared to 50 years in the United States.<sup>104</sup>

The *Porfiriato* had taken a toll on the masses of the poor in Mexico, and Taft’s premonition of revolution would prove to be true, even before Díaz died. Francisco Madero ran against Díaz in the 1910 election. Madero, an upper class politician, sold much of his property in 1909 to fund an election campaign against Díaz in Mexico

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<sup>103</sup> William Howard Taft Papers, Series 2, Box 48, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, President William Howard Taft writes a letter to his wife after holding the first summit meeting with Mexican President Porfirio Díaz, October 17, 1909.

<sup>104</sup> Stacey Lee, *Mexico and the United States* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2003), 301., life expectancy; *ibid.*, 723-724., living conditions.

City and reclaim “Mexico for Mexicans.” Madero warned against the *Porfiriato* propaganda and voter fraud. Díaz jailed Madero in 1910 to silence him. When Díaz again “won” the presidency in 1910, hostility grew to a point of no return. Mexicans knew the election was fixed. Madero, after his release from his jail cell in San Luis Potosi, Mexico, fled to San Antonio, Texas, where he issued his proclamation—the *Plan of San de Potosi*. Written while in prison, the plan declared the 1910 election null and void, called for the uprising of the Mexican people to overthrow the presidency of Porfirio Díaz, and urged Mexicans to restore democracy through whatever means necessary—including violence. The plan called for an armed uprising to begin on November 20, 1910, at 6:00 p.m.

Revolutionary leaders recruited soldiers in Mexico and working-class Mexicans in the United States. The Mexican Embassy in Washington D.C. warned the Taft Administration to monitor the Texas cities of Masa, El Paso, Presidio, Boquillas, and Eagle Pass for recruiting efforts, and the smuggling of arms.<sup>105</sup> Revolutionary leaders recruiting in Texas found many of the working-class Mexican laborers loyal to such a cause. Anti-American feelings were present among these workers long before the outbreak of revolution. These workers criticized Texans for the poor treatment they received, while Americans and other foreigners were welcomed in Mexico during the *Porfiriato*. An anonymous advocate for these workers argued in the *Monitor Democratico*, a Spanish-language newspaper in San Antonio, that “our countrymen abandon their homes and come [to] this side of the Rio Grande to beg,”

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<sup>105</sup> Letter from Mexican Embassy in Washington D.C., November 19, 1910, in Gene Z. Hanrahan (ed.), *Documents on the Mexican Revolution*, Vol. I, Pt. 1, Salisbury, NC: Documentary Publications, 1976), 65-66.

even though there is an abundance of bread in Mexico, however, it is for “foreigners, and more particular for the Yankees.”<sup>106</sup> Anti-American feelings were strong with some of the Mexican population prior to the revolution, but Anglo-on-Mexican violence in the borderland during the 1910s intensified that sentiment.

Over time, the revolution devolved into a bloody civil war. Revolutionary armies fighting the federal soldiers used every means to support their army—forced conscription of peasants, raids of industries and haciendas in Mexico, and theft of American property in close proximity to the border. Mexican men and women fought in the revolution, as did young boys forsaking their childhood. Tomas Zepeda and two childhood friends in their early teens were working on a hacienda in December 1910 when revolutionary soldiers approached them. Thomas remembered trying to avoid the Mexican federal army draft, but when approached by a Carranza general, Pablo González, the boys eagerly joined the ranks of the resistance. The three boys fought that very first day against the government forces—the *Federales*. With the exception of the captains and generals, “every soldier in his regiment was under sixteen.”<sup>107</sup>

The Mexican Revolution would, by its conclusion, claim over one million Mexican lives. Zepeda told a gruesome tale of military warfare that often turned to savage hand-to-hand combat. War even made enemies of various revolutionary factions. Yet, more hated were the American forces along the border. “Everyone,”

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<sup>106</sup> ¡The Outcasts!, Translated from the *Monitor Democratico* of San Antonio, Texas, September 4, 1910.

<sup>107</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, “A Fighter in the Mexican Revolution Recalls the Bloody Struggle,” December 12, 1985, 6.

he said, “hated the U.S. soldiers.” Zepeda recalled stories about how Mexican women who traveled with the regiment preparing food, the “tortilleras,” “had even killed a few American soldiers.”<sup>108</sup> Zepeda lost his stepfather and the aforementioned friends in the three years he fought for revolutionary forces, before fleeing to Nuevo Laredo, Texas. Mexican soldiers such as Zepeda were poor peasants thrust into battle; many told similar stories of fighting, movement over the border, and hostility toward Americans and other foreigners in Mexico.

As the fighting during the early years of the revolution intensified, foreigners fled Mexico. Mormon colonists had many demands made upon them by revolutionaries. Prior to the revolution, Mexicans and Mormons lived peacefully among each other, with only minor disputes about petty thievery.<sup>109</sup> Thomas Cottam Romney echoed the words of young Molly McCallick when reflecting upon his life prior to the Mexican Revolution: “we had about all we could wish for.”<sup>110</sup> Following the outbreak of war, Mormon colonies were seen as sources of equipment, funds, and livestock by revolutionary leaders. Mormon historian Irene Hatch Redd recalls her uncle, George Redd, complaining that Mexican rebels would sneak into his barn and milk the cows at 4:00 a.m. One morning George waited outside the barn to catch the thieves in the act, but fell victim to his own trap when a

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Utah State Historical Society and California State University, Fullerton, Oral History Program, “Southeastern Utah Project,” Interview: Mary Ann Black, Interviewer: Louise Lyne, Subject: Recollections of Mexico, Date: July 10, 1972.

<sup>110</sup> LaMond Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico: The Dynamic of Faith and Culture* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1987), 92.

startled Mexican thief fired a shot that pierced his leg. The bullet severed his Femoral artery and he bled to death before sunrise.<sup>111</sup>

Colonists fell victim to extortion and theft by Mexican Revolutionaries. First they were ordered to provide leather goods and supplies, in exchange for receipts for reimbursement if the revolutionary cause succeeded. Uncooperative colonists were threatened with force.<sup>112</sup> In extreme cases the raids ended with the death of Mormon colonists. In Colonia Díaz, citizens caught several Mexican men looting their bank known as the Union Mercantile. After a brief chase and an exchange of gunfire, a Mexican raider was shot while he escaped. The following day, a posse of Mexican men retaliated and shot colonist James Harvey while he worked in his field. Junius Romney feared the event would precipitate more racial violence and bloodshed “owing to the strained condition now existing between the Mexican people and foreigners.”<sup>113</sup> Thus, many of the exiled Mormon families in Mexico made plans to return quickly to the United States.

Reports of revolutionary armies raiding Mormon colonies spread throughout the Mormon network in Mexico and to other members of the LDS in Arizona and Utah. In the wake of violence, Bishop Bentley at Colonia Juárez called upon his community and warned that “political conditions have taken an unhoped-for turn.

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<sup>111</sup> Utah State Historical Society and California State University, Fullerton, Oral History Program, “Southeastern Utah Project,” Interview: Irene Hatch Redd, Interviewer: Gary L. Shumway and Scott Blickenstaff, Subject: Recollections of Mexico, Date: October 18, 1970.

<sup>112</sup> Thomas Cottam Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), 152.; Thomas Cottam Romney’s memoir was originally published in 1935, this is a reproduction.

<sup>113</sup> “Story of Murder at Colonia Díaz,” *El Paso Morning Times*, May 10, 1912, 8.



Perilous times no doubt lie ahead.” Yet, he urged the Mormon followers to have faith:

“Though they may despoil us, deprive us of our property and misuse us in many ways, let us not forget that the despoilers, though ignorant and depraved, are still God’s children, and that our mission in this land is to be a link in the chain of their salvation. Who knows, we may be hastening the day when they shall become a white and delightsome people?”<sup>114</sup>

Bishop Bentley prayed that peace and goodwill would prevail over violence and lawlessness—that Mexicans “shall become white.” But just the opposite happened: violence intensified, and Anglo Texans increasingly viewed Mexicans as dark and dangerous.

Immediately after the outbreak of fighting in November 1910, news reports reached the United States that Mormon colonies were under attack.<sup>115</sup> American women and children would soon be engulfed by the savagery of revolutionary fighting. In Coshocton, Ohio, the *Coshocton Daily Tribune* reported that colonists, under a flag of truce, offered to give the rebels food and horses in exchange for their safety, and declared they would remain neutral in the fighting. The rebels agreed to no such terms and pillaged the community and threatened to burn down buildings. Siding with the expatriate Americans, the Ohio newspaper reported on how the 4,000 members of the colony spent a quarter of a million dollars improving the land, building schools and churches, and implementing an irrigation system.<sup>116</sup> Almost

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<sup>114</sup> Nelle S. Hatch, *Colonia Juárez: An Intimate Account of a Mormon Village* (Salt Lake City, 1954), 208.

<sup>115</sup> “Rebels May Attack,” *The Washington Post*, December 3, 1910, 1.

<sup>116</sup> “Mormons Beat Back Invaders,” *Coshocton Daily Tribune*, November 11, 1910, 3.

overnight, Mormons ostracized from the United States for their culturally un-American practices became America's children in grave need of assistance.

Bishop Bentley's Colonia Juárez fell under multiple rebel attacks as the revolution raged on. Dynamite explosions destroyed homes and drove cattle off the ranches. In nearby Colonia Díaz, rebels burned every home and business to the ground.<sup>117</sup> Bentley might have urged church members not to engage in fighting, but it appears that Mormon colonies in Mexico participated in weapon smuggling operations across the border. These weapons were for protection but perhaps also for profit. An investigation in Ogden, Utah, revealed an unusual demand for 30 caliber rifles four months prior to November 1910, and a man who represented himself as a "salesmen" in Salt Lake City made heavy purchases in both cities. Whether these weapons were for colonists' protection, extortion, or profit is unknown.<sup>118</sup>

Five months into the fighting, news filtered into the United States that several Mormon colonies had all but lost hope of remaining in Mexico. An Associated Press report from Auga Prieta announced:

"The determination of the Mormon colonists of Colonia Morelos and Colonia Oazaca, coupled with the Mormon appeals to Washington presented a menacing situation today... Mormons have been killed by rebels since the revolution began five months ago. Most of the Mormons are American citizens... A few of the Mormons are naturalized Mexicans and great fear has been expressed that this circumstance might compel the rebels to assume they were justified in attacking the colonists if they resist demands for supplies."<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Nelle S. Hatch, *Colonia Juárez: An Intimate Account of a Mormon Village* (Salt Lake City, 1954), 210.

<sup>118</sup> "Ogden Sends Arms to Mexico," *The Evening Standard*, November 29, 1910, 8.

<sup>119</sup> Thomas Cottam Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), 195.

The destruction of property and the burning of homes and businesses were explained as part of the rebel forces' hatred of foreign investment and ownership of Mexican property during the *Porfiriato*. Early colonists had reported that amity prevailed with their Mexican neighbors when they first arrived, possibly because the two groups lived in similar conditions and worked tirelessly to survive. Over time, however, as the disparity of wealth between Mexicans and Mormons increased, Mexicans "begrudged" their new neighbors, and Mormons "viewed Mexicans as lazy and primitive."<sup>120</sup> Thomas Romney blamed this on his belief that Mexicans did not share in the genetic legacy of "Nordic stock" that largely made up the ancestry of the Mormons.<sup>121</sup> One American colonist of Colonia Chuichupa, in the State of Chihuahua, alleged that native Mexicans were jealous of the living conditions of the Mormon colonists. The commander of rebel forces that attacked Colonia Chuichupa, Inez Salaza, declared, "The time had come when the Mexican citizens were going to live in good houses, and American citizens were no longer to be allowed to live in good places [while] Mexicans live in out-of-the-way places."<sup>122</sup>

Mormon colonists began their flight to the United States with women and children fleeing first; as the revolution continued, the men followed and found refuge in the United States. In El Paso hundreds of Mormon families initially took

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<sup>120</sup> B. Carmon Hardy, "Cultural 'Encystment' as a Cause of the Mormon Exodus from Mexico in 1912," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (Nov., 1965), 446.

<sup>121</sup> Thomas Cottam Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), 195.

<sup>122</sup> Preliminary Report and Hearing of the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate Pursuant to Senate Resolution 106, United States Senate, Investigation of Mexican Affairs, testimony of Capt. S. H. Veater, Part 10, Page 1480.

shelter in temporary housing such as this El Paso lumberyard (see Figure 2.7). In time the U.S. federal government paid for the cost of relocation, and Mormon refugees resettled in various western states.<sup>123</sup> Colonists were once again driven from their homes, this time into an Anglo Texas world growing hostile toward ethnic Mexicans.



**Figure 2.7** Mormons living in lumberyard—El Paso; Library of Congress Prints and Photograph Division Washington, D.C.; Call Number LC-B2-2765-6 Upon arrival in the United States they shared their violent stories of the Mexican Revolution, and described Mexicans as a “primitive” race prone to violence.

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<sup>123</sup> F. LaMond Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico: The Dynamic of Faith and Culture* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1987), 95.

As the white refugees arrived, they told stories of barbaric revolutionary fighting that became the image Anglo Texas held of their southern neighbors.

American businessmen who headed U.S. businesses that flourished during the Díaz presidency found themselves in a hostile environment. U.S. families fled the country after threats of attack. In Zacatecas, Mexico, Mexican rebels attacked the family of John Hoffman, a mine superintendent, repeatedly firing shots at the family's home. Mrs. Hoffman and her daughter hid in the storeroom of a local shop until they fled by carriage, being cursed at and stoned by angry Mexican men.<sup>124</sup> Another U.S. refugee, Miss Gladys King, gave details of a mass exodus of American women and children from Torreón, Mexico. She traveled with 134 American refugees on a train northbound to the United States. Along the way she observed a distant train wrecked by rebels, and noted that every bridge was damaged. She remembered looking from the rear of the train and watching a band of armed men burn one of the bridges they had just crossed.<sup>125</sup> The wife of a U.S. dairyman in Ciudad Juárez, Mrs. H.M. McClure, fled across the river to El Paso in February 1912 without any intention of returning. She described herself as a longtime resident of the Mexican town, and that in all her years prior to the revolution she never received verbal abuse or threats to her life. She told a story about a gun-wielding Mexican woman who chased her home, where she barricaded herself inside until hostilities subsided.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> "Americans Were Hooted," *San Antonio Light*, April 19, 1911, 5.

<sup>125</sup> "American Women Being Insulted," *El Paso Morning Times*, February 18, 1912, 1, 7.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

As the stories became more violent, editors amplified the headlines to include every gruesome detail and warned that several classes of Mexican citizens held animosity toward Americans. One El Paso construction worker warned fellow citizens in Mexico that “peons” were “worked up” to a threatening attitude, and that the middle class Mexicans held the same hatred toward U.S. citizens, but that they were in a better position to control themselves. He believed Mexican authorities were losing control of the working class, and feared that the growing number of rebels had become too powerful to control. Their hatred for foreigners, and especially U.S. citizens, was life threatening.<sup>127</sup> Stories such as these were commonly published in local papers, damaging the already tattered image Anglos had of working class Mexicans.

The revolution uprooted the McCallick family. Businessmen who settled in Mexico with their families had established American communities in Mexican cities near Mexican haciendas and other industries. The violence of the revolution forced their exodus. Molly McCallick remembered the American Consul coming to her family’s home in Torreón and informing them that there was no time to pack; within two hours rebels would attack their smelting community. The United States federal government funded a special train transport out of Mexico for the McCallick family and other Americans. Rebels attacked this transport on several occasions and seized the refugee rations, leaving the families with nothing. As a result the

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<sup>127</sup> “Show Hatred for Americans,” *El Paso Morning Times*, September 14, 1911, 1.

American refugees bathed in muddy ditches along the tracks and stopped to kill a bull for meat. They made soup from the remains.<sup>128</sup>

Refugees witnessed terrible violence, as in federal soldiers hanged by their necks from trees, known as Villa's "fruit trees."<sup>129</sup> Mollie and her older brother, desensitized by the violence, made a game of this by challenging each other to see who could count more bodies hanging from the trees. At times the train stopped because revolutionary fighting blocked its passage. Rebel leaders boarded the train and warned Americans not to harbor federal soldiers, and tossed amputated body parts onto the train as a warning. Mollie's older sisters hid, for fear they would be kidnapped and raped. Mollie remembers her father telling the two girls, "If some of these bandits get on this train, I'm going to have to shoot you both," rather than have the men take the girls.<sup>130</sup>

The American refugees had to abandon their exit route when they reached a bridge that had been destroyed near Monterrey. They traveled east toward Vera Cruz where they boarded the S.S. Texas for Galveston. The passenger manifest lists Mollie's parents, two brothers, and two sisters.<sup>131</sup> After ten days of quarantine in Galveston, Mollie and her siblings stepped foot on American soil for the first time. Exhaustion got the better part of Hugh McCallick's health, as he rarely slept or ate

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<sup>128</sup> University of Texas at El Paso Institute of Oral History, Interviewee: Mollie Gossett (McCallick), Interviewer: Sarah E. John, December 2, 1975. Tape no: 216, Transcript no: 216.

<sup>129</sup> Williwood Meador Collection, Pancho Villa, Box 7, File 3, Porter Henderson Library, Angelo State University.

<sup>130</sup> University of Texas at El Paso Institute of Oral History, Interviewee: Mollie Gossett (McCallick), Interviewer: Sarah E. John, December 2, 1975. Tape no: 216, Transcript no: 216.

<sup>131</sup> National Archives and Records Administration; Washington D.C.; *Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at Galveston, Texas, 1896-1951*; National Archives Microfilm Publication: M1359; Record Group Title: *Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*; Record Group Number: 85.

while protecting his family during their journey. He continued on from south Texas to El Paso, where McCallick's smelting company was located. Within a few days, McCallick had a job, and a small three-room house for his family. One week after arriving in Texas Molly remembered her father came home early from his new job. Not feeling well he went to bed and never woke up again. Mollie, her siblings, and their Mexican mother were refugees in an unknown place. In an interview years later she tearfully recalled how much she loved her life with her family in Mexico. "It was great. We had a wonderful life . . . we had everything we needed."<sup>132</sup> Mollie remembered how the revolution destroyed their home, took the life of her father, and left the remaining family members strangers in a foreign land.

## **Conclusion**

Prior to the revolution, Mexico welcomed foreign business and foreign tourism. Mexican workers came to the United States for work, and some brought their families with them. Mexican communities that formed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries developed civic groups in association with ethnic Mexicans already living in Texas. Ethnic Mexicans believed in their rights in the United States as American citizens: equal protection under the law, the right to be schooled with Anglo children, and the right to no longer be considered as second class citizens.

Many of the first refugees who fled during the early years of the revolution were Anglo Americans, but poor Mexican families soon joined in the flood of people

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.



crossing into Texas. The fluidity of the border once seen as a vehicle for cultural exchange was now viewed as a threat. Disturbing reports similar to the McCallicks poured into the United States with the refugees. The American press circulated stories about anti-American protests and indignities carried out against Americans in Mexico. During the 1910s, Americans became targets of violence in Mexico more than any other foreigner. A total of 46 Americans died from revolutionary violence in Mexico compared to 1 of any other nationality other than the Chinese.<sup>133</sup> These events led Anglo Texans to see Mexican males as unscrupulous characters associated with the revolution or criminal activity such as banditry.

As the decade progressed, thousands of Mexican refugees arrived in Texas. According to census data, the Mexican immigrant population in the United States doubled during the 1910s, a pattern also present in Texas. The 1910 census lists 125,827 Mexican immigrants living in Texas. That number grew to 251,827 by 1920.<sup>134</sup> As the revolution intensified, the Mexican population in Texas surged. Anglo Texans became irritated and anxious, identifying this population surge as the “Mexican problem.” This problem had two characteristics. First, Anglos believed the quality of Mexicans entering declined during the 1910s. Those who came for labor prior to the revolution were preferred because of their willingness to perform undesirable jobs. The refugees were less desirable, because Anglos believed that the

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<sup>133</sup> Preliminary Report and Hearing of the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate Pursuant to Senate Resolution 106, United States Senate, Investigation of Mexican Affairs, Foreigners Other Than Americans Killed in Mexico, p. 3396. In the case of the Chinese, 303 were killed in the Torreon massacre to be discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>134</sup> Martha Menchaca, *Naturalizing Mexican Immigrants* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 216; the actual number of Mexican refugees that entered Texas was much higher but many returned when the United States entered World War I. Young Mexican males feared they would be conscripted into service for the American effort in World War I. This is discussed in Chapter Five.

best of the Mexican working class was either already in the United States, or had joined the Mexican armies.

The homeless population surge into Texas border towns became another aspect of the “Mexican problem.” Refugees arrived by the hundreds and thousands, creating processing delays at the border, and leaving entire Mexican towns deserted. Within a three-day period, the border town of Del Rio, Texas, received over two thousand Mexican citizens from Las Vacas, Mexico. Upon arrival, these homeless foreigners waited for U.S. immigration officials to clear them for entrance.<sup>135</sup> Part of the inspection included a health and physical examination for potentially life-threatening and communicable diseases. At Eagle Pass, Texas, the immigration department identified three cases of smallpox among the six thousand detainees. Immigration officials ordered the entire group of refugees to be deported.<sup>136</sup> The combination of news reports describing diseases among the refugees, and public opinion arguing that those arriving during the Mexican Revolution were less desirable, led more Texans to resent the growing presence of Mexicans in the country.

In El Paso, citizens did not believe that the “Mexican problem” was temporary. Anglos believed the large number of Mexican migrants depressed wages of working-class whites, creating a financial problem for the Texans. Frustrated El Paso citizens believed that at least 1,000 Mexican laborers who lived across the border in Ciudad Juárez and worked during the day in El Paso were stealing \$1500

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<sup>135</sup> “Mexican Town Deserted,” *Dallas Morning News*, October 10, 1913, 2.

<sup>136</sup> “Deport 6000 Refugees,” *El Paso Morning Times*, October 10, 1913, 1.

per day in wages. They described the men, women, and children crossing the border each day as a “silent invasion...before El Paso is hardly astir and the workers return to their homes after dark.”<sup>137</sup> Anglos resented the labor that Mexicans toiled at during the day and despised the “degenerate” behavior they saw in Mexican men at night.

Border crossing sites such as El Paso were full of bars and saloons eager to get a cut of the Mexicans’ wages. Gambling, prostitution, and alcohol abuse flourished, with nativists blaming all of these ills on the presence of Mexican “peons.” As one nativist reporter for the *El Paso Morning Times* declared, “The lower class of Mexicans have no more control over their passions than an angry beast and in their ignorance they are just as unreasonable.”<sup>138</sup> Newspapers dwelled on the arrests of Mexican men for crimes of murder, theft, abuse, and even for the use of strong language toward Anglo women.<sup>139</sup> Anglo men responded with threats to punish those who violated the color line with legal or extralegal punishment.

The increased presence of poor Mexican men combined with the rumors of barbaric savagery of the revolution created a panic in Texas. Over the next ten years, innocent Mexican lives would be taken by mob violence, Texas Rangers, American soldiers, and the blood stained hands of judges, lawyers, and jurors. Chapter Two examines two lynchings that occurred in Texas. Weeks before the

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<sup>137</sup> “Alien Labor Hits: El Paso Hard Blow,” *El Paso Morning Times*, November 24, 1911, 1.

<sup>138</sup> “Show Hatred For Americans: Peon Class Worked Up to Threatening Attitude,” *El Paso Morning Times*, September 14, 1911, 1.

<sup>139</sup> “American Women Being Insulted,” *El Paso Morning News*, February 18, 1912, 1.; “Red Flag Rebels Violate Woman: Wife of American Ranchman Criminally Assaulted Five Times in Succession,” *El Paso Morning News*, March 12, 1912, 1.

outbreak of the Mexican Revolution, the murder of twenty-year-old Antonio Rodriguez became the center of an international event. In Rock Springs, Texas, a group of Anglo men lynched the Mexican migrant worker; no arrests were made, and an international protest erupted. Mexicans desecrated the American flag; American citizens attacked and threatened Mexicans on both sides of the border. The young man's death was buried in the ashes of the revolution. His death exemplifies the rough justice carried out by Anglo Texans against ethnic Mexicans. It set a precedent for the years to come: mob violence could supersede the law, and violence against ethnic Mexicans in Texas would go unpunished. Within a year after the Rodriguez lynching, a mob of men in Thorndale, Texas, lynched fourteen-year-old Antonio Gomez. With dozens of witnesses to the crime, and pressure from the governor on officials to make an arrest, the lynching of Gomez tested the Rodriguez precedent.

## CHAPTER III

### THE BURNING OF ANTONIO RODRIGUEZ AND LYNCHING OF ANTONIO GOMEZ

“The iron hoof of the Texas ‘Yankee,’ in his barbarous and savage sentiments of race-hatred, is no not trampling upon the Negro, but the rottenness of its core has spread out so as to wound and even kill a Mexican by the iniquitous method of lynching. Lynching is not practiced by the blond “Yankee” except upon beings whom, for ethnic reasons, he considers his inferiors. When a Mexican is immolated, it is to be inferred that the social conscience of the state of Texas, in her loathsome scorn, compares the sons of Negroland with the descendants of Cuauhtémoc. Our race is in no way inferior to the Anglo-Saxon. Our ancestry is more glorious than that of the pork-dealers of Chicago. Our traditions are more splendid and heroic than those of the Quakers of Philadelphia.”<sup>1</sup>

On November 5, 1910, “La Pezuna de Dollaria” [translated in the American press to be “The Hoof of Nobility”] headlined the front page of Mexico City’s newspaper *El Debate*. This bold article lambasting the United States targeted Anglo men living in Texas for the lynching of Antonio Rodriguez. On November 3, 1910, Antonio Rodriguez had been seized by an Anglo mob from a jail in Rock Springs, Texas. The vigilantes broke down the jail doors and took the twenty-year-old Mexican migrant worker to a fire prepared beforehand, and after each member of the mob took a turn at striking the young man, Rodriguez was doused with oil and set ablaze—still conscious.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “La Pezuna de Dollaria,” *El Debate*, November 5, 1910, 1.

<sup>2</sup> “Why Rodriguez Was Burned,” *The New York Times*, November 11, 1910, 2.

Historians who have examined the Rodriguez case tend to place it within the context of the origins of the Mexican Revolution. Harvey Rice, in his University of Texas Masters thesis, argued that the anti-American riots in Mexican cities “contributed directly to the beginning of the [Mexican] Revolution.”<sup>3</sup> What historians have failed to consider is that the riots in Mexico contributed to increased Anglo resentment and mob violence in Texas toward ethnic Mexicans. Rice’s argument that the lynching of Antonio Rodriguez, and the consequent rioting throughout Mexico, was a driving force for the Mexican Revolution is problematic, because it turns a blind eye to other factors that also played a role in making the revolution inevitable by November 1910. The Rodriguez lynching established a precedent that Anglo-on-Mexican violence would go unpunished during the 1910s, and set into motion a race war that intensified during the decade of the Mexican Revolution. This undeclared war between Anglos and Mexicans in the Texas and Mexico borderland would be the bloodiest conflict between the two nations since the Mexican-American War, deepening an already oppressive racial order in Texas that privileged Anglo over Mexicans.

Mob violence against Mexicans increased during these years as Anglo Texans addressed the “Mexican problem.” This phrase is used in reference to Anglo frustration with revolutionary fighting along the border, raids on Texas property, and an overall tension that existed between Mexicans and Anglo Texans. Conflict

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<sup>3</sup> Harvy Rice, “The Lynching of Antonio Rodriguez” (Master Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1990), 1-9. In large part, Rice’s thesis attempts to connect the Mexican Revolution and the riots that followed the lynching of Antonio Rodriguez. The connection is not necessary for this essay and in some respects is dismissed. Rice admits that his research in the Mexican archives are lacking, thus, only providing the opinions of the American press.

raged between citizens and aliens, Rangers and Mexican revolutionaries, as well as Anglo mobs and alleged Mexican criminals. The battles were fought on farms, in the streets, and in courtrooms. The larger story is not simply one of Anglo aggression toward victimized Mexicans; it is also a story where both races justified their actions by their belief in their own superiority and sovereignty within the border region. Though the Rodriguez lynching is not the main focus of this chapter, the Rodriguez case marks the turning point in the early twentieth century when violence against people of Mexican descent began to increase. Anglo attacks on ethnic Mexicans grew more severe at this time partly out of Anglo panic that the Mexican Revolution would destabilize their entire region and the racial order that stood at its core, and partly out of growing confidence among the attackers that they would not be punished for what they had done. Furthermore, Anglos justified their actions with arguments about national pride and the need to protect America from the Mexican Revolutionaries, bandits, and undesirables.

This chapter reconstructs the rise of Anglo vigilantism in the early years of the Mexican Revolution, and the turning point this rise marked in Anglo-Mexican relations. Part one reconstructs the lynching of Rodriguez and the rioting this lynching generated in major Mexican cities. Part two examines the racial stereotypes that Anglo Texans held of Mexicans, and how the revolution introduced new ones. Part three examines how worsening race relations in Texas led to another horrible killing, this one involving a fourteen-year-old boy, Antonio Gomez. And part four analyzes how Gomez's killers, despite the testimony of eyewitnesses who reported having seen them hang the boy, were acquitted, and how this verdict

imbued Anglos in Texas with the belief that their crimes against Mexicans would go unpunished.

### **The Burning of Antonio Rodriguez**

In the American West, lynching had a long and dark history. Mob violence within the borderland region after the 1840s was a result of an immature legal system. The lack of law enforcement officials, attorneys, and judges in western states and territories allowed for extra-legal activity by citizens against alleged criminals. Carey McWilliams believed that this lawlessness resulted in “more Mexicans [being] lynched in the Southwest between 1865 and 1920 than blacks in other parts of the south.”<sup>4</sup> Historians William Carrigan and Clive Webb created a database listing all known lynchings of ethnic Mexicans in the United States between 1848 and 1928. They argue that the lynching of ethnic Mexicans in the United States far exceeded that of any other immigrant group, and is comparable with African American lynching, “at least on a per capita basis.”<sup>5</sup> Carrigan and Webb found that mobs believed they were policing the region, and targeted Mexicans for suspected crimes of murder or theft more than any other reason.<sup>6</sup> Modernization, statehood, and stronger local law enforcement contributed to a steep decline in mob violence by the 1920s.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Amy Waters Yarinski, *All For One and One For All: A Celebration of 75 years of the League of United Latin American Citizens* (Virginia Beach: Donning Company Publishers, 2004), 15.

<sup>5</sup> William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1928* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>7</sup> The literature on lynching that directly addresses violence against ethnic Mexicans are listed here.



The decade of the 1910s started as an anomaly to this trend. This period had more known lynchings of ethnic Mexicans than the previous thirty years combined. Historians claim that the increase in lynchings of ethnic Mexicans in the United States correlated with the increase in number of migrant laborers arriving during these years; however, the first decade of the twentieth century witnessed an unprecedented influx of Mexican migrant workers into the United States, and the number of known lynchings of ethnic Mexicans actually decreased from 24 cases in the 1890s to 8 in the years between 1901 and 1910, only to spike during the decade of the 1910s to 124 known cases.<sup>8</sup> Thus, something much more powerful was responsible for the violence that ensued between 1910 and 1920, something that infuriated Anglo Texans sufficiently to persuade them to revert to nineteenth

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They are mostly chapters of books or journal articles. William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1928* is the only book that examines the lynching of ethnic Mexicans in the United States; William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, "The Lynching of Persons of Mexican Origin or Descent in the United States, 1848 to 1928," *Journal of Social History* 37 (2003); William Carrigan and Clive Webb, offer a systematic study of mob violence against Mexicans by state and decade. Their research shows that from 1870 to 1910, the lynching of ethnic Mexicans decreased by at least 50% from each of the previous decades. Rodolfo Acuna, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, 3rd Ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1988; this book examines the nature of the Spanish and Indian cultures that combined in New Spain and later Mexico. This book identifies the collision of two frontiers: the northward movement of Mexicans and the westward expansion of Americans. Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999; Her chapter "Vigilantism" provides details about the decrease in lynchings of ethnic Mexicans at the turn of the century. F. Arturo Rosales, *Pobre Raza: Violence, Justice, and Mobilization Among Mexico Lindo Immigrants, 1900-1936*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999; this is one of the first modern scholars who started to examine violence against ethnic Mexicans in the twentieth Century. Charles H. Harris, III, and Louis R. Sadler, *The Texas Rangers and the Mexican Revolution: The Bloodiest Decade, 1910-1920*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965; Lynching is mentioned at various times throughout this book, but the significance of this book is the similarities between the Rangers and civilian mobs that I study. William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, "A Dangerous Experiment: The Lynching of Rafael Benavides," *New Mexico Historical Review* 80 (2005): 265-292; The authors assert that Rafael Benavides was the last known ethnic Mexican lynched in the U.S (according to the definition of a lynch mob used by the NAACP). The Benavides lynching occurred in 1928.

<sup>8</sup> William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, "The Lynching of Persons of Mexican Origin or Descent in the United States, 1848 to 1928," *Journal of Social History* 37 (2003): 412.

century strategy of frontier justice—lynching.

Initially, the lynching of Rodriguez escaped local and national attention in the American press. Only the story that Rodriguez murdered a well-known rancher's wife, Mrs. Lamuel Henderson, was covered in the local papers. After his capture, police reported that Rodriguez confessed to having committed the crime because "she had talked mean" to him when he approached her for food.<sup>9</sup> The press first reported the murder of Mrs. Henderson with an article encouraging local men to seek out the wanted man. The *Waco Times Herald* reported that a battle was to be expected when the posse located the "greaser."<sup>10</sup>

In the town of Rock Springs, Texas, where Rodriguez was lynched, most Mexicans were shepherders; the Mexican investigators who studied them in the wake of the Rodriguez murder reported that they were mostly satisfied and generally well paid. None of the interviewees knew Rodriguez and speculated he was a drifter from Las Vacas, Mexico, the sister city of Del Rio, Texas. Immediately following the violent evening, the Mexican American community appeared to have accepted the fate of the alleged killer. Rather than investigating who had burned Rodriguez, the press appeared to be more concerned with the young man's mental state.<sup>11</sup> In a special report to the *Waco Times Herald*, the press reported:

"Acting Adjutant General Phelps today said that state authorities will take no action toward identifying and arresting members of the mob which burned at the stake an unknown Mexican recently at Rock

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>10</sup> "Armed Men Hunting for Mexican," *Waco Times Herald*, November 3, 1910, 8.

<sup>11</sup> *Waco Times Herald*, "Mexican Crazy or a Fugitive," November 18, 1910, p. 2.

Springs, Texas, after he had shot to death the wife of a prominent ranchman.”<sup>12</sup>

Convinced of Rodriguez’s guilt, the Anglo community believed that his execution had served the cause of justice. But reactions to the killing in Mexico made it clear that the door to this episode in Mexican-American relations could not be so summarily shut.

When the news of Rodriguez’s lynching reached his hometown of Guadalajara, Mexico, an international crisis developed. Mexicans wanted their president, Porfirio Díaz, to demand that the US government investigate the crime, arrest the men responsible for the slaying, and guarantee the safety of Mexicans living in the United States. Protests erupted throughout Mexico and quickly turned into anti-American riots. The Mexican press fueled the fire that burned within the protesters with details of the lynching. Most of the articles explicitly attacked the American government for not pursuing the men responsible. Several days of riots produced numerous editorials full of anti-American rhetoric.

Mexican newspapers reported the lynching in Texas as a direct attack on Mexicans, and the initial response by Texas officials not to investigate the crime infuriated native Mexicans in the United States and abroad. American officials falsely reported that Rodriguez might have been born in New Mexico, and requested that the Mexican government therefore rescind their request for an investigation

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<sup>12</sup> *Waco Times Herald*, “Mexican Murdered Woman: State Probably Will Not Investigate Lynching at Rock Springs,” November 10, 1910, p. 1.; “Armed Men Hunting for Mexican,” *Waco Times Herald*, November 3, 1910, 8.

and reparations.<sup>13</sup> In the end, no member of the mob was ever questioned or charged with a crime, a breakdown in justice that infuriated Mexicans. Public protest in the streets of the Mexican capital began with college students who had read about the lynching. It then spread like brushfire across the countryside. Anti-American protests were reported by all of the major Mexican newspapers, with many supplying their own anti-American rhetoric. The student protesters urged their countrymen to boycott American businesses in Mexican towns in order to make a political statement. In the days following, the riots grew more violent.<sup>14</sup> Tempers were pushed to their limits. Police attempting to maintain order arrested hundreds of protesters who had become violent, and even shot several students. Crowds chanted “death to Americans,” “down with the gringos,” and “death to the Yankees.”<sup>15</sup> On the second day of rioting, an American living in Mexico City, Carlos B. Carothers, manager of the West End Realty company, fired his pistol into the crowd of anti-American protesters killing a fourteen-year-old Mexican boy. As a mob of Mexican protestors sought Carothers and his wife, a Mexican national, Mrs. Carothers called to an officer for protection: “I am a Mexican protect me.”<sup>16</sup> The officer replied, “You married an American, you don’t deserve protection.” Mexican police arrested Carothers, leaving his wife alone fearing her safety. The boy’s death

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<sup>13</sup> “Why Rodriguez Was Burned,” *The New York Times*, November 11, 1910, 2.

<sup>14</sup> “The Mexican Riots,” *The New York Times*, November 11, 1910, 8.

<sup>15</sup> “Mexico Prevents Further Rioting,” *The New York Times*, November 11, 1910, 1.; “Refugees Pour Out of Mexico,” *Waco Daily Times Herald*, November 23, 1910, 8.

<sup>16</sup> Unknown letter from an American in Guadalajara, Mexico, November 23, 1919, in Gene Z. Hanrahan (ed.), *Documents on the Mexican Revolution*, Vol. I, Pt. 1, Salisbury, NC: Documentary Publications, 1976), 81-82.

worsened the situation in Mexico. In Chihuahua, Mexico, a mob that assembled at Hidalgo Plaza, in the center of town, divided into three groups that marched through the streets and shouted: "Remember Antonio Rodriguez!"<sup>17</sup> The protesters in Guadalajara tore through the American section of the city and shattered the windows of the American Banking Company, the Cosmopolitan Hotel, American owned hardware stores, drug stores, and American owned restaurants. C.E. Myers of Joplin, Missouri, and Cliff Munger of York, Pennsylvania, were beaten in the streets by the rioters. These stories made their way back into the United States, as did reports that in each city the American Flag was either spat upon, burned, or both.

Anglo Texans already believed that extra legal violence was necessary to protect Americans from the *peon* class. The Rodriguez riots in Mexico now led Anglos to believe that middle-class Mexicans were also incapable of controlling their anger. Anti-American demonstrations in Mexico began with college students protesting the American response to the lynching. The crowds that included lower- and middle-class Mexican citizens grew to great numbers as they listened to speeches. The press identified the students as largely middle-class Mexicans. As the middle-class informed the lower class of the atrocities that occurred against their fellow countrymen north of the Rio Grande, the two classes united in common cause. The *New York Times* reported that the real danger was with the students; "As a class," the *Times* noted, they are not likely to attempt any overt acts against foreigners or their property, but, by initiating demonstrations, they may put into

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<sup>17</sup> "Another Riot in Mexico," *The New York Times*, November 15, 1910, 1.

motion a mob which would soon get beyond their control . . . crowds of the lower classes.”<sup>18</sup>

American families who witnessed the violent demonstrations first-hand sent letters to their family in the United States reinforcing the claims that all Mexicans— young and old—were threats to Americans abroad:

“Dear Edward . . . [Mexican] Children from the working class have told our children ‘when President Díaz dies there wont be an American left in this country.’ Children do not invent such ideas. There have been threats to take the penitentiaries, turn loose the prisoners, poison [American] water supplies, cut telegraph wires, tear up the [railroad tracks]. I am frightened.”<sup>19</sup>

The American press released these reports creating an image that most Mexicans of any class other than the elite were prone to violence and anti-Americanism.

The events of the Mexican Revolution that followed the Rodriguez protests weeks later were similar in appearance. Mexicans once again took to the streets in protest. This time, however, they wanted to see President Díaz removed from power. During his years in office, the dictator formed close ties with the United States, and U.S. businessmen were heavily invested in Mexico. Associating Díaz with the United States, the protesters shouted anti-American slurs such as, “Kill Díaz and his Yankee friends.”<sup>20</sup> However, there is little to directly connect the Rodriguez lynching with the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution. Though the riots were separated by a little more than one week, and in cities like Rodriguez’s home of

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<sup>18</sup> “Hard Fighting In Pueblo,” *The New York Times*, May 8, 1911, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Unknown letter from an American in Guadalajara, Mexico, November 23, 1919, in Gene Z. Hanrahan (ed.), *Documents on the Mexican Revolution*, Vol. I, Pt. 1, Salisbury, NC: Documentary Publications, 1976), 81-82.

<sup>20</sup> “Refugees Pour Out Of Mexico,” *Waco Daily Times Herald*, November 23, 1910, 8.

Guadalajara they butted up against each other, they were separate in their intentions. While the Rodriguez riots intended to send a direct message to Washington that Mexicans deserved better protection in the United States, the Revolutionary riots were directed toward the Mexican government, demanding political change. In Texas, however, Anglo Texans believed one common denominator—they saw the Mexican population as violent and anti-American.

The anti-American rhetoric of the revolution fueled anger among Anglos toward people of Mexican descent and any person disloyal to the Stars and Stripes. In the Rodriguez case, a journalist reported “the spirit of nationalism runs high in that ancient city [Guadalajara] and is quickly expressed for small cause.”<sup>21</sup> The conditions in Mexico worsened in the early months of the revolution and crossed over the border into the United States. American refugees fled the country into cities like El Paso, Texas, bringing stories about brutal attacks on Americans. Anglo Texans justified their violence against Mexicans living in the United States by highlighting the anti-American threat that the revolutionaries represented. Mexican newspapers circulated in Mexican neighborhoods in San Antonio, Waco, and El Paso, featuring cartoons like the one in *El Diario del Hogar* that illustrated Mexican people clubbing Uncle Sam, while in the background Rodriguez was being burned.<sup>22</sup> During the early years of the Mexican Revolution, Texans wrote to their political leaders urging them to protect the state and the nation from a perceived Mexican threat.

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<sup>21</sup> “More Mexican Rumors,” *The New York Times*, November 12, 1910, 1.

<sup>22</sup> “Los Estados Unidos y Rodriguez,” *El Diario del Hogar*, November 9, 1910, 1.

This letter to Texas Congressman J.N. Garner exemplified what dozens of letters expressed about Mexican-American allegiance:

“The fact remains, and will ever remain, that the Mexican, whether he be naturalized, native-born Mexican-American, still retains and stubbornly maintains race prejudice against the American People. It is innate in them and Hell can’t eradicate it. This feeling has existed with that nationality ever since... the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 when the territory... was ceded to the United States... Mexican children have been taught that this territory was STOLEN from them by Americans—Mexican histories repeat it, their statesmen herald it, and their priests communicate it.”<sup>23</sup>

People of Mexican descent living in Texas during the 1910s were under constant surveillance by Anglos for signs of disloyalty or criminality. Anglo Texans believed that taking up arms against Mexicans in the United States was their duty as America’s first line of defense. At a time when nativists in America were celebrating the immigrant races who “successfully” Americanized, people of Mexican descent were caught between two fires: a Revolution in their homeland that brought devastation to family and friends, and an intensified hatred in the border region of Texas.

### **The Roots of Anti-Mexican Prejudice**

Claims of Mexicans’ inferiority came in many forms. Anglos argued that Mexicans were intellectually inferior, largely because the Mexicans most prevalent in border society they encountered were migrant workers referred to as *peons*. Anglo Texans subjugated these workers in Anglo society, yet desired their labor in the region. These workers built the increasingly important railroads that connected

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<sup>23</sup> Texas State Archives Box 141, Folder 1-31, 1913. “M”, December 2-14, folder 4.



the Eastern seaboard to the mineral-rich Western frontier, implemented new irrigation technology for agriculture, and performed dangerous mining jobs. Most of these men spoke very little English and some were not well educated in Spanish either. As late as 1910, only 32% of adult Mexicans in Mexico could read.<sup>24</sup> Many of the migrant workers coming into the United States for unskilled employment were from the two thirds of the Mexican population that was illiterate.

Many Anglo Texans also viewed Mexican migrant workers as unhealthy, unsanitary, and indifferent to diseases. The press often reported cases of small pox among the Mexican migrant class as a warning, and concerned citizens wrote to the newspapers, congressmen, and the governor of Texas. In June of 1911, letters sent to Governor Oscar B. Colquitt demanded that he reconsider the state's plan to establish a leprosarium at Fort Ringgold, Texas. The citizens of neighboring Rio Grande, Texas, adamantly opposed this colony due to the large Mexican population in the region whose members, Anglos believed, would be vulnerable to infection. Starr County Judge J.R. Monroe charged that his county had spent over \$8,000 in the previous four years defending "this border against the influx of every contagious disease coming to us from Mexico."<sup>25</sup> In a separate letter, Judge Monroe argued that it was common knowledge that Mexicans were highly susceptible to contagious diseases, and that the "ignorance and superstition prevailing among the lower class

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<sup>24</sup> George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 27.

<sup>25</sup> Texas State Archives Box 140, Folder 1-31, 1911. "M", June 26-30, folder 8.

of the Mexican people . . . seem to have no fear or dread of any contagious disease.”<sup>26</sup> These fears reached a concerned Colquitt. In August 1910, Colquitt’s own son became ill with typhoid fever.<sup>27</sup> Another letter to Colquitt, which included a petition signed by more than 100 citizens of Starr County, made a similar claim about Mexicans as carriers of deadly diseases. Moreover, the petitioners warned that the county’s dense population of Mexicans posed a high risk of disease to everyone who lived in the area.<sup>28</sup>

These border communities in Texas usually had “sister” towns across the Rio Grande. These twin cities witnessed the majority of migration into the United States from Mexico, and inspections at these border-crossing sites were routine. Part of the inspection included a health and physical examination for potential life threatening communicable diseases. At Eagle Pass, Texas, the Department of Immigration identified three cases of small pox among the six thousand detainees. Immigration officials ordered the entire group of refugees deported.<sup>29</sup> By mid decade, the US Public Health Service implemented the practice of branding Mexican laborers who passed immigration inspections with the word “admitted,” and justified this as a procedure to guarantee public safety from diseases carried by

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<sup>26</sup> Letter from Starr County, Texas, judge J.R. Monroe, Texas State Archives Box 140, Folder 1-31, 1911. “M”, June 16-26, folder 7.

<sup>27</sup> Texas State Archives Box 139, Folder 1-31, 1910. “M”, July 26-August 10, folder 2.

<sup>28</sup> Petition sent from from Starr County, Texas, judge J.R. Monroe Texas State Archives Box 140, Folder 1-31, 1911. “M”, June 16-26, folder 7.

<sup>29</sup> “Deport 6000 Refugees,” *El Paso Morning Times*, October 10, 1913, 1.

“Mexican paupers.”<sup>30</sup> News reports of disease among migrants, and later among refugees during the Mexican Revolution, led more Texans to resent the growing presence of Mexicans in the state.

During his campaign of 1910, prior to the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution, Governor Colquitt embraced the Mexican-American voter. Francisco A. Chapa of San Antonio, a good friend of Colquitt and a member of the Mexican-American elite, reached out to the Tejano community to support Colquitt’s campaign. With Chapa’s help, Colquitt carried the Tejano vote, and later appointed Chapa to one of twelve advisory positions. Colquitt’s campaign drew fire from prohibitionists and the Anti-Saloon League, but he held his position against prohibition. He only began to distance himself from the Mexican-American community as the years of the Mexican Revolution brought increased resentment among Anglo voters toward ethnic Mexicans. During Colquitt’s time in office, he became known as the “Pardoning Governor” due to symbolic pardons he made on various holidays; however, during his second year in office, 1912, he refused pardons for ethnic Mexicans on Mexican Independence Day because of the criticism he had received from pardoning them the previous year.<sup>31</sup>

In response to the previously mentioned letters from border communities, Colquitt attempted to show sympathy for Mexicans while at the same time

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<sup>30</sup> Miguel Antonio Levario, *Militarizing the Border: When Mexicans Became the Enemy* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2012), 88.; Comments made by USPHS medical inspector H.J. Hamilton.

<sup>31</sup> “Commendation For Colquitt,” *Dallas Morning News*, June 26, 1911, 5.; “Colquitt Pardons Negroes,” *Dallas Morning News*, June 18, 1912, 7.; “Governor Issues Pardon,” *Dallas Morning News*, March 28, 1911, 13.

expressing a set of nativist convictions. In one letter, he attempted to defend himself from being considered “terribly prejudiced against the Mexican,” and claimed that this “is not an accurate conception” of his position. He expressed sympathy for people of Mexican descent because of “his [Mexican] inability to take care of himself.”<sup>32</sup> However, in another letter drafted only days after the aforementioned document, he is more prejudiced about the status of Mexicans in the racial hierarchy. In response to a letter that praised how Texas Rangers policed the border and protected Texans from Mexican bandits, Colquitt stated, “Our Texas Rangers are very valuable to us, and are worth a great deal more than 500 Mexican horses. As a matter of fact, I think every Texas Ranger is worth more than 500 Mexicans.”<sup>33</sup> Colquitt’s might always have held such a low opinion of ethnic Mexicans; but it appears his opinion shifted to a much more negative register as a result of the Mexican Revolution. New charges against Mexicans as a result of their behavior during the revolution now developed alongside old stereotypes in the minds of Colquitt and others.

Theft by revolutionaries, bandits, and refugees increased substantially in the early years of the revolution and intensified Anglo hatred of the Mexican people. Letters to the governor announced that thieves stole horses, mules, wagons, buggies, cows, hogs, chickens, farming implements, “and in fact everything that is not tied down and watched with a shot gun.”<sup>34</sup> Rancher J.R. Axsom reported with

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<sup>32</sup> Texas State Archives Box 141, Folder 1-31, 1914. “C”, May 2-16, folder 4.

<sup>33</sup> Texas State Archives Box 140, Folder 1-31, 1911. “M”, June 16-26, folder 7.

<sup>34</sup> Texas State Archives Box 141, Folder 1-31, 1914. “C”, April 2-14, folder 4.

disgust that one of his cows had been butchered and only the hindquarter was taken; his cow valued at \$100 dollars was “left to rot so that the thieves could enjoy one steak.”<sup>35</sup>

The most damaging claim of inferiority was that Mexicans lacked the ability to control their anger, which threatened the safety of Americans in the United States and in Mexico. The events in Mexico that followed the Rodriguez lynching reinforced this claim in the minds of Anglo Texans. Not since the mid-nineteenth century had Mexicans appeared to pose a threat as a group to the United States. While Anglos had long believed that Mexican men of the *peon* class could not control their anger, many now charged that all classes of Mexicans were prone to violence. These claims increased after the riots that followed the Rodriguez lynching.

### **The Lynching of Antonio Gomez in Thorndale, Texas**

The outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in November 1910 triggered a rush of refugees into Texas in 1911, as both Mexican and American families sought refuge in the Lone Star State. They brought with them stories of brutal attacks on their towns by revolutionaries. The *San Antonio Light and Gazette* reported that, as early as December 1910, a refugee colony had been established within the city limits.<sup>36</sup> Those who had denounced Díaz began fleeing months before the revolution began. Disguised as a priest, Juan Sanchez Azcona crossed into Texas at El Paso. Azcona left Mexico in July after federal authorities shut down his printing press that had

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> “Azcona Will Stay in Jail as Courtesy,” *San Antonio Light and Gazette*, December 15, 1910, 3.

published *Mexico Nuevo*, because of his seditious remarks about the Mexican government and his affiliation with Francisco Madero. While political exiles, wealthy Mexicans, and American expats populated the refugee stream, the majority of those fleeing for Texas were the Mexican poor who lost jobs and means of sustenance. When fighting broke out in Matamoros, Mexico, women and children fled across the Rio Grande into Brownsville, Texas, overwhelming a shelter known as the Charity House of Brownsville (see Figure 3.1).



**Figure 3.1** Charity House, refugees. Robert Runyon Photograph Collection, "The South Texas Border, 1900-1920, The Center for American History and General Libraries, University of Texas at Austin. Digital ID: txruny 02467.

Anglo Texans were concerned not just with the refugees but with reports of the violence unleashed by the revolution in Mexico. Texas newspapers reported the events of the revolution daily, and focused especially on reports of Americans being mistreated in Mexico. In March 1911, for example, *The New York Times* reported on an American sentenced to ten years in a Mexican prison for being an accessory to the murder of a laborer. Criminal Judge Marentes of Zacatecas, Mexico, the presiding judge, was notoriously known to be anti-foreign, and displayed a strong bias throughout the trial.<sup>37</sup> However, it was the murder of Americans that enraged Americans the most, and as the first few months of the Mexican Revolution progressed, the names of Americans killed in Mexico made front page headlines:

“Samuel Hidy, murdered at the Los Plátanos colony, in the state of San Luis Potosí, in May, 1911; George W. Crichfield, shot from an ambush near Tuxpán, in the state of Vera Cruz, and who died on April 7, 1911 . . . Patrick Glennon, A.L. Foster, and John G.D. Carroll, who were killed at Alamos, Lower California, on June 11, 1911 by Mexican Federal soldiers... [and] William W. Fowler, who died as the result of wounds inflicted by a Mexican peon near Tuxpán, in the state of Vera Cruz, June 18, 1911.<sup>38</sup>

Wanting President Taft to intervene, F.W. Meyer of Bonney, Texas, offered his suggestion as to what to do about the murder of Americans in Mexico. Meyer proposed, “every time an American gets murdered in Mexico, by Mexicans, let this Gov. collect, besides other indemnification, one million dollars for every American life . . . and take one million acres off of Mexico, adjacent to Texas.”<sup>39</sup> Meyer was one

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<sup>37</sup> “Mexican Sentence Enrages Americans,” *The New York Times*, March 2, 1911, 1.

<sup>38</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1911* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1919), 843.

<sup>39</sup> F.W. Meyers to President William H. Taft, November 10, 1910, NA, RG 59, 311.122 R61.

of hundreds of Texans who wrote to Taft about the “Mexican problem,” and most shared the opinion that some form of intervention in Mexico would be necessary. Two days of violent disturbances beginning on May 8, 1911, produced thirty-one casualties that included American citizens from El Paso (see Table 3.1). Following the death of five Americans in Ciudad Juarez, the *El Paso Herald* printed an editorial

**Table 3.1** List of Casualties in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, May 8-10, 1911

Date	Time	Casualty
8-May	11:30 A.M.	Antonio Garcia, shot in the head, died at the scene
	2:00 P.M.	Mrs. Morehead, shot in the arm and back (American citizen)
	2:00 P.M.	Edward Heaton, wounded (American citizen)
	3:00 P.M.	G.W. Smith, shot in the leg (American citizen)
	5:00 P.M.	Jesse Diena, wounded (American citizen)
	5:00 P.M.	Romando Cruz, shot in the leg
	6:00 P.M.	Luis Villalobos, wounded
	6:00 P.M.	R.H. Ferguson, killed (American citizen)
	6:00 P.M.	W.D. Chandler, killed (American citizen)
	9-May	6:00 A.M.
6:00 A.M.		Jesus Barela, shot in the head
7:00 A.M.		Vicente Pereda, killed
8:00 A.M.		Ynez Morales, shot in the head
11:00 A.M.		Delmonico Alarcon, shot in the back
11:00 A.M.		Santiago Sandoval, shot in the hand
1:00 P.M.		Jesefa Rosendez, struck by flying glass
6:00 P.M.		Mrs. Preston, shot in the leg (American citizen)
6:00 P.M.		Juana Joja, wounded
7:30 P.M.		Wong Gong, shot in the mouth
10-May	7:30 P.M.	Franciso Protello, shot in the arm
	8:00 A.M.	Simon dominguez, killed
		Nine additional unnamed casualties
		16 Killed and 15 Wounded

Gene Z. Hanrahan (ed.), *Documents on the Mexican Revolution*, Vol. I, Pt. 1, Salisbury, NC: Documentary Publications, 1976), 375-376.



that criticized President Taft and his failed diplomacy with Mexico stating: “The attitude of the American national administration with reference to the protection of American rights in Mexico and along the border is shameful, disgraceful to the last degree, and deserving of open and unreserved censure.”<sup>40</sup>

The murders of Americans in Mexico along with the negative stereotypes that Anglos held of Mexicans exacerbated Anglo-Texan and ethnic Mexican relations. In May 1911, a mob of Anglo Texans in Barstow, Texas, lynched a Mexican man.<sup>41</sup> Rumors of possible lynchings increased as the year continued, and murder of a white Texan by an ethnic Mexican brought “Judge Lynch” to the scene regardless of one’s sex or age. In Thorndale, Texas, on the evening of June 19, 1911, hundreds witnessed a mob of German American men taking the life of a fourteen-year-old Mexican boy. By June, only seven months after the Rodriguez lynching, Texas recorded three lynchings of ethnic Mexicans—quickly approaching the total of four known lynchings of ethnic Mexicans that occurred in the state during the previous ten years combined.

The town of Thorndale derived its name from the surrounding landscape. Established in 1879, Thorndale was not the most desirable location for migration in southeastern Texas. In fact, it was a railroad employee’s comments about the “abundant thorny vegetation—mesquite thorn, prickly pear, and sagebrush”—that

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<sup>40</sup> “Criticism of ‘Message of President Taft’ by El Paso, Texas, *Herald*, in Gene Z. Hanrahan (ed.), *Documents on the Mexican Revolution*, Vol. I, Pt. 1, Salisbury, NC: Documentary Publications, 1976), 65-66.

<sup>41</sup> “Mexican Lynched in Texas: Shouted “Viva Díaz!” While Others Celebrated Madero’s Victory,” *The New York Times*, May 31, 1911.; very little is known about this event.

led to the town's naming.<sup>42</sup> Coal had been discovered in the 1860s in Milam County, and once the railroad lines began running through and stopping in locations such as Rockdale and Thorndale, mines such as the Black Diamond, Santa Fe, and Texas Coal Company arose and attracted businessmen, laborers, and families.<sup>43</sup> The first businesses to arrive were the hotel and the dry goods store, and Thorndale was selected as a strategic shipping point for Milam County farmers. A boxcar served as the railroad station in 1883, and by 1884, "Thorndale had a church, a school, and 130 residents."<sup>44</sup> By 1910, there were 811 people living there. Of these residents, 523 were fourteen years of age or older, and 90% were white (neither African American nor of Mexican descent).<sup>45</sup>

With the new railroads cutting through Milam County and stopping in Thorndale, many people came to this region in search of work in the newly opened mines. The majority of these new miners were Mexican migrant workers. During the second half of the 19th century, immigrant laborers helped build the trans-continental railroads, mine valuable raw minerals, and work the fields. Each decade following 1890, Mexican workers arrived in increasing numbers in Texas. A

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<sup>42</sup> *The Handbook of Texas Online, Texas State Historical Association: A Digital Gateway to Texas History*, "Thorndale, Texas," (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hjt04>) accessed November 19, 2010, Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

<sup>43</sup> Lelia M. Batte, *History of Milam County, Texas* (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1956), 175.

<sup>44</sup> Lelia M. Batte, *History of Milam County, Texas* (San Antonio: The Naylor Company, 1956), 175.; *The Handbook of Texas Online, Texas State Historical Association: A Digital Gateway to Texas History*, "Thorndale, Texas," (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hjt04>) accessed November 19, 2010, Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

<sup>45</sup> Year: 1910; Census Place: Justice Precinct 8, Milam, Texas; Roll: T624\_1578; For the purpose of distinguishing between adults and children I determined that 15 years old and above will be the break. The US Census for 1910 recorded one female married at the age of fifteen and one fifteen-year-old male working in the county.

majority of these migrant workers were young men both single and married, but married men often arrived without their families and sent their earnings back to Mexico, creating an imbalance of men and women in these towns. The new ethnic demographic of the population led to increased fear of ethnic Mexicans among white Texans because of cultural differences and traditions. To nativists, Mexican workers appeared to pose a threat. Defenders of Mexican labor argued for their usefulness, and that they could easily be sent home once their need was exhausted.

In Thorndale, there were only 18 ethnic Mexican residents in 1910. Most ethnic Mexicans lived outside of town or near neighboring Rockdale where the coalmines were located. Those who lived in Thorndale were general laborers or worked on farms.<sup>46</sup> As in San Angelo, Milam County did not integrate Mexican children into the county schools. Mexican children attended “La Eschelita” (the little schoolhouse), where they were taught English and not allowed to speak in Spanish. However, in this overwhelmingly German American town, speaking German was unofficially allowed in the public schools.<sup>47</sup> Mexican children were segregated from the white children in Thorndale until 1944.<sup>48</sup> Many of the single ethnic Mexican males in Milam County worked as sharecroppers or in the mines. These employees lived on the property of E.A. Camp and were paid tokens for their work that could only be used at the mine commissary where they could purchase sharecropper food

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<sup>46</sup> Year: 1910; Census Place: Justice Precinct 8, Milam, Texas; Roll: T624\_1578; Page: 8A; Enumeration District: 72; Image: 301.

<sup>47</sup> Milam County Historical Commission, accessed January 12, 2011, [Milam county historical commission.org](http://Milamcountyhistoricalcommission.org).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

or seek medical treatment. The German American community of Thorndale managed to recreate a peonage system, which was notorious in Mexico, and used it to hold Mexican workers captive yet again. This Mexican community of laborers became known as “La Recluta” (the recruitment).<sup>49</sup> German Americans in Thorndale always defined Mexicans as non-white. Thorndale residents segregated Mexicans from the start and barred them from voting in the Thorndale Democratic primary.<sup>50</sup>

Gabriel Gomez, Antonio’s father, arrived in Texas as a seasonal laborer in 1867 at the age of 18.<sup>51</sup> Like many seasonal laborers, Gomez sought the higher wages offered to migrant workers in Texas. Gomez met his wife Amelia in Mexico and continued his seasonal work in the United States, returning to his family during the winter months. Amelia was born in Mexico and twenty years younger than her husband. In 1889, she gave birth to their first child (Emma). She would have four more children (Dolores, Maria, Appilones, and Antonio) before emigrating to Texas in 1900. In 1908, she gave birth to Josephia, their only child known to be born in the United States. It is unclear whether Antonio Gomez was an American or Mexican citizen. For the 1910 census, Gabriel reported his children born in “Tex. Spanish.” Possibly Gabriel wanted his children to be listed as American citizens, but since Amelia listed her arrival year as 1900, it would seem that their first five children,

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> George R. Nielsen, *Vengeance in a Small Town: The Thorndale Lynching of 1911* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, Inc., 2011), 102-103.

<sup>51</sup> Gabriel Gomez is listed as “Gamez” in some of the primary and secondary documents. Overwhelmingly the name appears as “Gomez,” and on the 1910 federal census the name is listed as “Gomez,” thus, for the purpose of clarity and consistency “Gomez” will be used in this text.

Antonio included, had been born in Mexico.<sup>52</sup> All of the children understood and spoke English, but none could read or write. The Gomez family rented a house near Thorndale, and Gabriel worked on a nearby farm.

A racial hierarchy existed in Thorndale, and the dominant German American population viewed Mexicans as non-white and racially inferior. The local press perpetuated this prejudice by reporting extensively on poor living conditions of the Mexican migrant workers, as well as their alleged poor hygiene, susceptibility to disease, addiction to alcohol, and criminal inclinations.<sup>53</sup> Following the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution, these two local papers continued their negative portrayal of ethnic Mexicans and printed stories about the fear that plagued border towns—“The last line of defense.” These two papers provided the daily reports of the Mexican Revolution as well as editorials about ethnic Mexicans living in Texas. The reporters often referred to any criminal activity as “banditry” and grouped all people of Mexican descent—Tejanos, Mexican immigrants, and Mexican Americans—under this label. During the months that followed the outbreak of revolution, Thorndale citizens read headlines such as “[Mexicans] Seek American Captives,” “American Planter Slain,” “American Women Captives,” and “Americans Face Peril in Mexico.” In April 1911, a week-long series of reports described how a group of Americans were held captive in Alamo, Mexico. The reports detailed how women, children, and

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<sup>52</sup> Year: 1910; Census Place: Justice Precinct 5, Caldwell, Texas; Roll: T624\_1536; Page: 14B; Enumeration District: 0033; Image: 495; FHL microfilm: 1375549.

<sup>53</sup> The source of information for local residents came from the *Thorndale Thorn* and the *Rockdale Reporter and Messenger*.

the elderly were attacked by Mexican “bandits.”<sup>54</sup> Thorndale Anglos, who were predominately German, grew suspicious of their Mexican neighbors.

The newspaper reports about the alleged crimes against Americans by Mexican revolutionaries both in the United States and across the border, these reports reinforced negative stereotypes about ethnic Mexicans and raised questions about the Mexicans living in Milam County. Anger, frustration, and fear harbored by Anglo Texans toward ethnic Mexicans triggered “rough justice;” the record of daily violence by Mexicans became Anglo justification for anti-Mexican violence. The ethnic division in Milam County appeared to be an “us” versus “them” scenario in which the former represented the German Americans who had embraced American nationalism, taking on a nativist persona, and the latter encompassed ethnic Mexicans who had been stigmatized with stereotypes of inferiority, banditry, and malice, as well as an anti-American identity.

Eye witnesses in Thorndale reported that a young Mexican boy was whittling a piece of wood with his pocket knife outside of the Old Bank Saloon around 7:00 p.m. when Mr. Stevens, annoyed by the presence of the boy, exited the saloon, took the piece of wood from Gomez, and tossed it into the street shouting that “the sidewalk was no wastebasket.” Stevens grabbed the boy, scuffled with him, and tossed him to the ground. Two groups of men, one drinking at the saloon and the other in the street, began to ridicule the boy. At the scene were Charles Zieschang, Constable Bob McCoy, Johnny Davis, and Wallace Young. Retrieving his wooden

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<sup>54</sup> *Thorndale Thorn*, “Seeks American Captives,” April 13, 1911, 1.; *Thorndale Thorn*, “Americans Face Peril in Mexico,” April 16, 1911, 1.; *Rockdale Reporter and Messenger*, “Seeks American Captives,” April 13, 1911, 1.; *Rockdale Reporter and Messenger*, “American Planter Slain,” April 20, 1911, 1.

carving, Gomez attempted to leave the scene. But Zieschang, declaring that he could “make the damn little skunk quit whittling,” snatched the wood from the boy and began to whip him with it while the crowd of men continued to berate the boy. In an act of self-defense, Gomez stabbed Zieschang in his chest. Almost instantly, Zieschang bled to death on Main Street in Thorndale.

At the trial, another version of these events emerged. In this version, Zieschang was reported to have grabbed the wood out of the boy’s hand and then returned to the saloon. When he exited after a few minutes, Gomez was waiting for him and lunged toward him with his pocketknife, stabbing below his clavicle, instantly killing the man. We cannot know for sure whether Gomez acted in self-defense or aggressively attacked Zieschang.<sup>55</sup>

The stabbing of Zieschang occurred at the intersection of First and Main Streets. No other place could have been more central and in plain sight than in front of the Old Bank Saloon. Constable Bob McCoy immediately apprehended Gomez and marched him north up Main Street to the calaboose—a typical one-horse town jailhouse with a single cell. Along their way, Thorndale citizens exited the buildings to learn what the commotion was about and watched as Constable McCoy marched a murderer to jail. Many of these citizens offered themselves as witnesses, but had

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<sup>55</sup> The events of the stabbing are an accumulation of newspaper reports and trial records, all of which have glaring inconsistencies. The reports from the local papers, the Thorndale Thorn and the Rockledge Reporter and Messenger provided some of the most detailed early reports, but as time passed the reports were less about justice for the Mexican boy, and more about the innocence of the Thorndale men responsible for the lynching. The San Antonio Light provided a more even report of the events but lacked the proximity to Thorndale to conduct interviews with witnesses. The Laredo paper La Cronica catered to the Mexican American community in Texas. There are inconsistencies with the records provided during the initial court of inquiry to the criminal trials. The following newspaper articles were used to piece together the events. The *San Antonio Light*, June 22, 1911 p. 1-2.

only second-hand knowledge of the stabbing. Nonetheless, they talked freely to the press, further distorting the events of the night in question. As the sun was setting, fear set into Gomez. Darkness brought in the sinister "Judge Lynch."

McCoy was well aware of the necessary ingredients for a lynching, and attempted to prevent such actions. McCoy knew the citizens would want the highest degree of punishment carried out for Gomez, but the fourteen year old was too young for capital punishment in Texas. Only three years prior, Alex Johnson, an African American man, allegedly attacked Birdie Haley, an Anglo woman in Mayfield, Texas, a neighboring town north of Thorndale within Milam County. Since a rape did not occur, Johnson was tried for assault with the intent to rape. Outraged Anglos sought a more severe punishment and took the man from jail, beat him to near death, and hanged him from a tree near the courthouse. The headlines of the *Rockdale Reporter* read: "Negro Brute Hanged by a Crowd of Incensed Citizens."<sup>56</sup> Since the death penalty was not an option due to his age, Gomez became a target for a lynching. As for life in prison, a self-defense claim might take murder off the prosecution's table. For these reasons, and with intense fury developing, McCoy demanded that all saloons shut their doors for the night, hoping that clearer and cooler heads to prevail. When more citizens descended onto Main Street, however, the commotion only grew in intensity. Now, more than 100 people crowded the streets.

A discussion about what to do with Gomez quickly turned into a decision to execute him for the murder of Zieschang. McCoy knew that the calaboose could

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<sup>56</sup> *Rockdale Reporter and Messenger*, November 7, 1907.



keep Gomez locked in but could not keep an angry mob, hell-bent on lynching the boy, locked out. At approximately 8:00 p.m., McCoy took Gomez from the cell, tied a small chain around his neck, and led him with the help of Wilford Wilson, to the home of G. W. Penny. Wilson stayed there with the boy as McCoy left the house to secure transportation to bring their prisoner to the county jail in Cameron.<sup>57</sup>

Somehow, before 9:00 p.m., members of the mob learned the whereabouts of Gomez and made their way to the Penny house. Penny and Wilson kept their prisoner hidden as a group of men arrived demanding that they surrender the boy. Gomez sat in the small house no longer as a prisoner but rather as prey. While Penny informed the men that Gomez would not be released. Wilson led Gomez out the back door into an alley, and the two fled under the cover of night. They were headed to the oil mill, a rendezvous point where McCoy had planned to have a transport waiting to take the three to Cameron. However, lurking in the shadows were three men on foot and one on horseback who blocked Gomez from the only route to the oil mill.

When Gomez faced the four men in the darkness of the alley the terrified boy circled around Wilson, using the man as a shield. The horseman, Ezra Stephens, grabbed the chain secured to the prisoner's neck and rode east toward Main Street, dragging the boy along the way. Rather than take Gomez to the site of the murder, the four men took him to the corner of N. Railroad and Main Street—the location of the Calaboose. When Wilson arrived, Gomez was falling from a ladder that had been leaned against the telegraph pole from which the mob had initially tried to hang

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<sup>57</sup> "The Most Infamous Of All Our Crimes," *Dallas Morning News*, June 21, 1911, 1.

him. This was the mob's first attempt at hanging the boy as he tried to kick his way free. Wilson watched as the four men circled Gomez's nearly lifeless body, which lay on the ground. Witnesses reported hearing the whistling sounds of the boy gasping for air. Finally, an enraged Stephens repeatedly kicked the boy's head. Unable to prevent the inevitable death, Wilson reported what he had seen to Woodbury Norris, the Justice of the Peace. Wilson named Z.T. Gore, Garrett Noack, and Harry Wuensche as Stephen's accomplices. The first lynching attempted failed, so the determined mob pulled Gomez up once again, and hanged him from the telegraph pole. While the lifeless body of a fourteen-year-old boy dangled above, witnesses reported having overheard the men congratulate one another and even ask the young corpse if he "wanted to kill any more Germans" as they left the scene.<sup>58</sup>

News of the Gomez lynching quickly spread through the American press. "The News is not capable of producing anything that could express the horror and humiliation that it feels because of the crime committed by a mob at Thorndale," wrote the editors of the *Dallas Morning News*.<sup>59</sup> The press lambasted the actions of Thorndale citizens whether they participated actively or simply witnessed the lynching. Newspapers in Dallas and San Antonio reported the lynching as a dark episode of Texas history, and national news reported a similar tale of "Thorndale's finest" taking matters into their own hands.<sup>60</sup> The mob, witnessed by over one hundred citizens, believed it was necessary to overrule the law and carry out swift

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<sup>58</sup> *San Antonio Light*, June 22, 1911 p. 1-2.

<sup>59</sup> "The Most Infamous Of All Our Crimes," *Dallas Morning News*, June 21, 1911, 1.

<sup>60</sup> "Lynching Angers Mexico; Washington to Take Up the Hanging of a Mexican Boy in Texas," *The New York Times*, June 26, 1911, 4.

“justice.” Condemnation of this crime conveyed the growing sense among Anglo citizens in the state that no act left a “deeper stain” than lynching. “Even those mobs that have resorted to fiendish torture have not brought so foul a disgrace on Texas,” noted the *Dallas Morning News*.<sup>61</sup> The Thorndale mob reached a new level of cowardice with this beating and hanging of a fourteen-year-old boy.

After the Texas press condemned Thorndale citizens, the original report was recanted by the *Thorndale Thorn*, and a new statement was made that Gomez, without provocation, murdered Zieschang. The town then reacted to the crime without time to suppress its anger. However, a witness came forward to rebut this new account, which led to the arrest and prosecution of four Thorndale men for the murder of Gomez. The witness, Antonio Alvarez, was a Mexican laborer. Colquitt sent a Texas Ranger to Thorndale to secure the witness and escort him from the town to San Antonio, due to fear that he would meet the same fate as Gomez.<sup>62</sup> The first report appears to be the most accurate depiction of the events. Most of the newspapers reported these to be the events that led to the lynching, and the trial records indicate that Gomez was provoked and not “insane” as local reports later claimed to be the case. The trial records further indicate that a considerable amount of time passed from the moment of the initial stabbing to the parading of Gomez’s near-lifeless body.

Constable McCoy arrived late that evening to find Gomez hanging lifelessly in the air by the chain he had fastened around the boy’s neck hours earlier. McCoy

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<sup>61</sup> “The Most Infamous Of All Our Crimes,” *Dallas Morning News*, June 21, 1911, 1.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

removed the chain and lowered Gomez to the ground. Shortly before midnight, several German American men went to the house of Gabriel Gomez, Antonio's father, and ordered the family to leave Thorndale immediately or suffer the same fate. Fearing that the mob would return and "kill the whole family," Gabriel went into town and retrieved his son's body. Some time in the early morning hours, Gabriel buried his son, and then the Gomez family gathered their belongings and left for San Antonio.<sup>63</sup>

San Antonio provided the Gomez family a safe place to relocate. A large ethnic Mexican community resided there, and, more importantly, several San Antonio organizations advocated for better treatment of ethnic Mexicans in Texas. Donaciano Davila, the president of *La Agrupación Protectura Mexicana*, testified before the US Commission on Industrial Relations about the peonage conditions, describing how Mexicans were defrauded out of their earnings in various ways.<sup>64</sup> In 1911, in light of the Gomez lynching, *La Agrupación Protectura Mexicana* shifted emphasis from labor rights to the protection and safety of ethnic Mexicans "whenever they faced Anglo-perpetrated violence."<sup>65</sup>

In July 1911, *La Agrupación Protectura Mexicana* members attended the first Mexican Congress—*El Primer Congreso Mexicanista*—to give more exposure to violence and injustices against ethnic Mexicans. Activists who opposed these

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<sup>63</sup> *San Antonio Light*, June 22, 1911, 1-2.

<sup>64</sup> *San Antonio Light*, March 20, 1915, 5.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Symposium on International Relations and Human Rights Sponsored by the El Paso Council on the Arts and Humanities, 1979, "Interview no. 335," Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.

atrocities organized the annual meeting that began in the summer of 1911. When news of Gomez's lynching reached San Antonio, members of *La Agrupación Protectora Mexicana* quickly responded to the events, provided his family with protection, and organized a mass meeting, making the following proclamation:

“The society has for its general purpose the protection of Mexican citizens throughout the state of Texas, and for the specific purpose bringing to justice the perpetrators [of] the lynching of Antonio Gomez at Thorndale and Antonio Rodriguez at Rock Springs.”<sup>66</sup>

Flyers were distributed throughout San Antonio announcing the urgency and importance of this June 29<sup>th</sup> meeting (see Figure 3.2). The flyer explained that the purpose of the general meeting was to develop a response to the infamous and cowardly lynching of a fourteen-year-old boy in Thorndale. Mexican Consul Miguel E. Diebold pleaded with Davila not to hold a large event. Nevertheless, over 3,000 attended the meeting. Tensions ran high; some participants wanted to avenge the boy's death. The group's leaders had all attendees sign a petition for Governor Colquitt to intervene and see that those responsible were arrested for the murder of Gomez. Colquitt responded that it was his “desire to do what is right at all times.”<sup>67</sup> On behalf of *La Agrupación Protectora Mexicana*, Emilio Flores drafted a letter about the event and sent it to the US State Department and the Department of Foreign Affairs in Mexico City.<sup>68</sup> In a letter to Miguel E. Diebold, the Consul of Mexico in San

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<sup>66</sup> “Mexican Protective Society,” *Laredo Times*, July 2, 1911, 4.

<sup>67</sup> Texas State Library: Archives Division 301-301 Governor's Records Oscar B. Colquitt 7 letter Press Books, May 10, 1911 – October 19, 1911. Letter written July 7, 1911 to D.R. Davilo, president of La Agrupacion Protectora Mexicana.

<sup>68</sup> “To Condemn Lynching of Boy in Resolutions,” *San Antonio Light*, June 25, 1911, 1; “Governor is Thanked,” *The Galveston Daily News*, July 7, 1911, 9.

Antonio, Colquitt promised to send “an experienced Ranger to Thorndale to look further into the matter, and to talk to the witness who appeared against those now incarcerated.”<sup>69</sup>



**Figure 3.2** Courtesy of the *Archivo Historico Genero Estrada*

<sup>69</sup> “To Condemn Lynching of Boy in Resolutions,” *San Antonio Light*, June 25, 1911, 1; “Governor is Thanked,” *The Galveston Daily News*, July 7, 1911, 9. Letter written July 1, 1911 to Miguel E. Diebold, the Consul of Mexico in San Antonio; Texas State Library: Archives Division 301-301 Governor’s Records Oscar B. Colquitt 7 letter Press Books, May 10, 1911 – October 19, 1911.

## The Acquittal

“Persons suspected of complicity in the lynching . . . have been arrested. While indignation is running high, it is a ten to one shot nothing is ever done to them. From all records of the past this seems to be the most probable outcome.”<sup>70</sup>

—*Beaumont Journal*

As Mexicans united in the wake of violence, white Thorndale citizens came together in defense of the men who were now charged with the murder of Gomez. Twenty-three-year-old Noack was one of the men who sought retaliation for the fatal stabbing of Charlie Zieschang. Noack was the son of one of the founders of Thorndale who deeded land for churches and schools.<sup>71</sup> Wuensche and Stephens, both twenty-one, joined Noack as leaders of the mob. Wuensche was a grocery store clerk and the son of a lumberyard owner who employed many of the men who were later called to testify in court to what they had witnessed that evening. Ezra W. Stephens was the son of William Stephens. Like most of the lynchers, Stephens was descended from prominent German American families who had lived in the Thorndale area for two or three generations. These prominent and tightly-knit families intended to fight to get their sons acquitted.

Based on the eye-witness testimony of Wilson on the night of the crime, arrests were made and Garrett P. Noack, Ezra W. Stephens, Z.T. Gore, Jr., and Harry Wuensche were charged with the murder of Gomez. On July 31, 1911, bail was

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<sup>70</sup> “That Thorndale Lynching,” *San Antonio Light*, June 28, 1911, 4.

<sup>71</sup> Milam County Historical Commission, accessed January 12, 2011, [Milam county historical commission.org](http://Milamcountyhistoricalcommission.org)

denied for all except Gore. On October 24, the Milam County grand jury at Cameron, Texas, indicted all four for first-degree murder.<sup>72</sup>

Each of the four accused men were set to face trial for the lynching of Gomez. Jury selection proved to be problematic at the first trial, which was held in Milam County. The selection process took three days, and it is believed that racial prejudice against ethnic Mexicans was the primary reason that the prosecution was unable to secure a fair and impartial group of men. A reporter for the *San Antonio Express* detailed the selection process, and believed it nearly impossible to find a group of men that did not harbor ill will toward Mexicans. Potential jurors were asked whether the same standards at trial should be applied to a Mexican defendant if the circumstances were reversed, and whether the punishment for murder of a Mexican person should be more or less severe than that for the murder of a white person. One by one, the potential jurors either balked in their response or clearly exhibited a racial bias for white men.<sup>73</sup>

Each man was tried individually. The first to stand trial was Z.T. Gore on November 11, 1911. The accused admitted to being at Penny's house but only to find out what had caused such a commotion in Thorndale. Gore testified that he had left the house and returned home, and provided an alibi for the hours in question. After one hour of deliberation, the jury acquitted Gore. Following the first trial in Milam County, the venue was changed to Williamson County in an effort to have more success in securing a jury; however, this county was home to one of the three

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<sup>72</sup> "Gore Allowed Bail," *Galveston Daily News*, August 2, 1911, 1.; *Thorndale Thorn*, October 20, 1911.

<sup>73</sup> *The State of Texas v. E. T. Gore Jr.*, Milam County District Court, Criminal Minutes No. 7616, (November 13, 1911).



remaining accused. Garret Noack's trial began on February 26, 1912. Over 150 family and friends of Noack arrived for day one of the trial. The State's case crumbled over time as one by one, witnesses' testimonies appeared to have changed. Witnesses who were originally called to help the prosecution ultimately became either unhelpful or uncooperative when called to testify. None of the witnesses placed Noack at the scene of the crime, and Noack argued that he had been at the Bank Saloon and not at Penny's house. On March 1, 1912, after only twenty minutes of deliberation, the jury found Noack not guilty. Next, it was Ezra Stephens' turn to argue his innocence in court on May 1, 1912. On Thursday, May 3, 1912, the jury deliberated and two jurors initially found Stephens guilty. Following a recess and second vote, the defense received an acquittal. Most white citizens believed that the three men were held in the county jail for unjust reasons.

Lost in the news reports on the trial was the fact that a group of men lynched a fourteen-year-old boy. Nearly one year after the event, all the testifying witnesses claimed to have seen only the stabbing of Zieschang, and provided alibis for the accused. Shortly after the Stephens's acquittal, trial Judge Wilcox released the final defendant from custody. And by early June, the charges against Wuensche were dropped. Neither Williamson nor Milam Counties wanted to spend the time and expense for another trial that would most likely to end with another acquittal. "Not guilty" was the verdict for three of the four men charged with the lynching of Antonio Gomez.<sup>74</sup> The *Beaumont Journal* had predicted it correctly—the lynching of the Mexican boy would go unpunished.

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<sup>74</sup> "G.P. Noack Not Guilty," *Galveston Daily News*, March 3, 1912, 6.

## Conclusion

The growing reality for ethnic Mexicans in Texas was that white perpetrators of mob violence against them were above the law. As the violence of the Mexican Revolution escalated, so too did Anglo-on-Mexican violence. The Mexican Consul at San Antonio, Miguel E. Diebold, criticized Thorndale citizens and Texans alike for the crime, declaring that "Texas is Hell." As a result of these remarks, he was fired by Madero, who had recently claimed the presidency of Mexico. Madero remarked that the comment was "ill-advised and not tending to promote peace and friendly relations between Mexico and the United States." Most likely, though, Diebold was on his way out anyway due to his personal ties with former president Díaz.<sup>75</sup>

Hundreds of newspapers around the country had originally declared their outrage about the heinous lynching of Gomez. One year later, very few papers followed the trials; news of the acquittals was absent from the national press. Within Texas, all of the major newspapers announced that jurors had cleared the accused of wrongdoing. Scattered reports were included in papers throughout the United States; the *Anaconda Standard* of Anaconda, Montana, explained that the jury deliberated for only twenty minutes before Noack's acquittal, making the case appear to be clearly an unnecessary waste of time for "Thorndale's finest."<sup>76</sup>

The not-guilty verdicts demonstrated that the lynching of ethnic Mexicans in Texas would most likely go unpunished during the decade of the Mexican

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<sup>75</sup> "Spoke Ill of Texas: Mexican Consul, Once Active Against Madero, Is Now Recalled," *The New York Times*, October 8, 1911.

<sup>76</sup> *Anaconda Standard*, March 3, 1912 p. 10

Revolution. The death of Antonio Gomez brought ethnic Mexicans together and altered their political agenda to one of safety and protection within the United States. During the first two years of the Mexican Revolution, accusations about suspected Mexican criminals led Anglo Texans to seek out the wanted men, bypassing legal authorities. Announcements in the newspapers read like “outlawed” postings of the old western frontier. In San Antonio, the press reported that “a hundred ranchmen are in the field, and a battle is expected hourly” after a Mexican gun smuggler fired on Dimmit County, Texas officers. The headlines read, “Hunt Mexican Murderers.”<sup>77</sup> In Marfa and Valentine, Texas, the Big Bend region, a mob of sixty cattlemen and ranchers banded together to seek out the suspected murderers of Texas Ranger E.D. Hulen and Customs Inspector Joe Sitter. The men vowed to hang the suspects and declared they would even cross into Mexico for the chase—“Crowd Seeks Slayers of Hulen and Sitters.”<sup>78</sup> Texans developed an appetite for blood during the early years of the Mexican Revolution that took the lives of hundreds of ethnic Mexicans in Texas before the end of the decade.

For the remainder of the decade, *La Agrupacion Protectora Mexicana* would be at the forefront of advocating for the rights and security of ethnic Mexicans in the United States. One of the cases it took was that of Leon Martinez, Jr., a young Mexican boy who stood accused of murdering a white woman in Pecos, Texas. Martinez was aware of the lynchings of both Gomez and Rodriguez, which may have influenced his decision to “admit” to killing Emma Brown. This admission of guilt

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<sup>77</sup> “Hunt Mexican Murderers,” *San Antonio Express*, September 12, 1913, 1.

<sup>78</sup> “Crowd Seeks Slayers of Hulen and Sitters,” *Dallas Morning News*, May 28, 1915, 1.

saved him from the mob but put him on the road to execution. At fifteen he was just a year older than Gomez, but faced a similar Anglo mob hundreds of miles away from Thorndale in a West Texas town. The Gomez lynching and the Martinez trial reveal a dilemma for Mexicans suspected of a crime in Texas—punishment would be either at the hands of a lynch mob or an unjust legal system, neither of which provided equal protection before the law for ethnic Mexicans in Texas during the decade of the Mexican Revolution.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE EXECUTION OF LEON MARTINEZ, JR.

“I listened again to this list with a profound interest at the mixture of names, for the names bear the marks of the several national stocks from which these men came. But they are not Irishmen or Germans or Frenchmen or Hebrews any more. They were not when they went to Veracruz; they were Americans, every one of them, and were no different in their Americanism because of the stock from which they came.”<sup>1</sup>

On May 11, 1914, President Woodrow Wilson read this tribute to the nineteen servicemen killed in action at the Mexican port of Veracruz weeks earlier. A memorial procession bearing the dead soldiers traveled through the streets of New York City. The parade of vehicles passed one million people, and cities across the country conducted their own ceremonies of honor. In concluding statements Wilson announced, “We have gone down to Mexico... to serve mankind.”<sup>2</sup>

In Pecos, Texas, on that very day, a ceremony of a different type occurred. Citizens came to the county seat to witness the execution of Leon Martinez, Jr., a Mexican teenager, for the murder of Emma Brown, a young Anglo woman. Newspaper reporters across Texas followed the case for nearly three years. Citizens raised concerns about the inferiority of Mexican migrants, and the increasing number of undesirable aliens entering the country. A racial order that privileged Anglos over Mexicans had long existed in Texas, but new developments were

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<sup>1</sup> “Honor Navy’s Dead,” *The Washington Post*, May 12, 1914, 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 2.

threatening to reduce the Mexicans further. The presence of anarchists and “un-American activity” among some ethnic Mexicans increased Anglo hatred during the decade of the Mexican Revolution. Anglos viewed these men and women as uncivilized and intellectually inferior. The influx of more Mexican migrants in Texas during this decade further intensified Anglo antipathy toward Mexicans, who became increasingly vulnerable to verbal and physical attacks. This case study of Leon Martinez, Jr. provides a window into the life of one such ill-fated Mexican.

Wilson’s speech identified the Irish and Jews as American citizens who risked their lives at Veracruz, and he welcomed them into the American family. The status of Mexican immigrants, by contrast, remained uncertain. During the 1910s, Mexican refugees fled to the United States and increased their presence in Texas. When the United States verged on war with Mexico in 1914, U.S. troops along the border clashed with rebels, and Texas Rangers, border patrolmen, and American servicemen lost their lives. At odds with native-born Texans, Mexicans during these tumultuous years appeared dangerous. Many questioned their national allegiance.

After the murder of Emma Brown, Anglos considered Martinez a predator who could not control his sexual drives because of the savage nature of his race. They argued that Martinez murdered the young woman because she refused his sexual advances, even though no witnesses could testify as to what actually happened. The jury dehumanized Martinez, and convicted him of murder. Local journalists portrayed Martinez as a brute. His father, deemed a Mexican radical, linked the family with anarchist factions of the revolution that scared people in Texas and abroad. During the final weeks of his life, United States and Mexican

diplomatic relations between president Wilson and Mexican president Huerta were strained and newspapers posted warnings in border towns that lives were at risk by Mexican rebel raiders.

This study of the Martinez case examines the fate of ethnic Mexicans living in Texas during the early years of the Mexican Revolution: Were Mexicans accused falsely of crimes? Did they receive equal treatment under the law? Was Martinez innocent, but unable to receive a fair trial in this hostile environment? In contrast to the Gomez case study in Chapter Two, Martinez escaped lynching and received his day in court for the murder. However, an Anglo community that sought revenge made a mockery of the legal system by conducting a criminal trial within days of the crime, and securing a guilty verdict with a death sentence. Moreover, the guilty verdict was handed down by a jury that included members of the lynch mob that sought out Martinez for the murder of Emma Brown. Martinez may not have been lynched the night of the alleged crime, but the community used the legal system to secure a death sentence for the boy.

According to the NAACP, for a killing to qualify as a lynching, it must have occurred illegally. Martinez was “legally” executed, but it may be argued that a blatantly unjust execution itself qualifies as a lynching. Thus, I argue that the Martinez execution qualifies as a lynching. I will also show how the case demonstrated to ethnic Mexicans that the Texas legal system, from the local level up to the appellate court, did not guarantee them a fair trial or the equal protection of the laws. Finally I will demonstrate how much the turmoil of the Mexican Revolution worsened the image of ethnic Mexicans among Anglos in Texas.

## **The Murder of Emma Brown**

Martinez was born in the State of Durango, Mexico, in 1896. His parents, Leon, Sr., and Sidra, also had a younger son named Manuel. As a youth, Martinez, Jr. attended El Paso public schools. His father spoke English and Spanish and raised his son in Texas, while Sidra and Manuel remained in Durango. Neither father nor son applied for naturalization papers. The Martinezs' left El Paso when young Leon became old enough to work. They moved to Toyah, a west Texas town in Reeves County 80 miles north of the United States and Mexico border. Toyah was "a typical railroad town composed almost entirely of saloons and restaurants... a rendezvous for gamblers... a town in which six-shooters, shot-guns and dirks [a dagger with a long straight blade] were standard equipment and carried ready for use at any time."<sup>3</sup> Martinez, Sr. worked for a Spanish language newspaper, and his son worked in a neighboring town at Saragossa Mercantile Company owned by Floyd Crenshaw. The Mercantile Company held a warehouse, U.S. Post Office, Western Union, and a general store. An intelligent youth who spoke Spanish and English, Martinez Jr. worked in both the general store and the Post Office. His appearance was that of a lighter skinned Mexican, not that of most Mexican migrants who were darker complexioned. The week before the murder, the young boy met twenty-six year old schoolteacher Emma Brown.

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<sup>3</sup> Alton Hughes, *Pecos: A History of the Pioneer West* (Seagraves, Texas: Pioneer Book Publishers, 1978), 94.



Brown traveled from her home in Austin, Texas, to Saragossa in June 1911 to spend the summer with her sister Mrs. H.C. Copper.<sup>4</sup> On the afternoon of July 22, 1911, after picking up supplies from the Saragossa Mercantile Company, she traveled back to her sister's home east of Saragossa. Her four-mile trip stretched along the lime rock foothills of the Davis Mountains. Her path crossed a pasture belonging to "Stump" Robbins, a pioneer rancher of Reeves County, who later found her body. Beyond the pasture the path entered a valley with grass fields four to five feet in height. Travelers of this half-mile stretch were hardly visible from the surrounding area, and it was here that Brown's murder occurred.<sup>5</sup>

The physical evidence collected at the scene provided enough information to retell the events as follows. Hoof prints from the murderer's horse indicated that the attacker came toward her from the east, not from the direction of Saragossa. The tracks from her buggy almost reached the far end of the valley where they converged with those of the single horse. An abrupt change in direction of the buggy indicated something or someone startled the woman, and the tracks ran back and forth throughout the hidden valley. Bullet holes lined the rear of the buggy, and one pierced Brown. After falling from her buggy, Brown was stabbed several times in the chest. Emma Brown died in that field, laying face up to the stars all night, until ranchers discovered her body the following morning.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> "Miss Emma Brown Slain in Pecos," *Laredo Times*, July 30, 1911, 1.

<sup>5</sup> "Martinez to Hang Today," *El Paso Morning Times*, May 11, 1914, 1-2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

The discovery of the young woman's body shocked townspeople, and prompted an immediate search for the killer. Several people had seen an unusual suspect having an intimate conversation with the young woman on the morning of the murder. That person was Leon Martinez, Jr., who became the first and only suspect in this crime.<sup>7</sup> Martinez owned a pistol, had use of his employer's horses, and most damaging of all, was seen by shoppers at the general store speaking with Brown on the day of her murder. Someone alleged that the two were planning a private rendezvous together.<sup>8</sup> Both legal and extralegal posses began hunting for Martinez. He was easy to find, as he did not run or hide. He continued his weekly routine, and on Sunday afternoon, the day after the murder, he saw his boss Floyd Crenshaw traveling toward town. Crenshaw stopped Martinez and informed him that a young woman had been found murdered several miles from Saragossa. Crenshaw asked if he knew anything about it, and Martinez said no. The boy continued on his way to a watermelon patch, and a group of men surrounded the boy as he was eating a melon.

Pecos merchant Jim Mayfield led the posse that grew in numbers as the evening progressed. The men demanded that the boy confess to the crime. Martinez protested his innocence and the angry mob threatened they would hang him if he did not confess. The distraught boy cried for his mother and father to help him, and Mayfield responded, "You are not worthy of it." Martinez confessed after

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<sup>7</sup> Ex Parte Martinez, No. 1457, "Opinion," 1.

<sup>8</sup> Ex Parte Martinez, No. 1457, "Dissenting Opinion," 14.

they promised not to hang him until after Sheriff Brown arrived.<sup>9</sup> Upon arrival, Brown took the boy to the Pecos jail, where he ordered the boy to confess or he would release him to the men waiting for him outside. As dawn approached District Attorney Will P. Brady held up a written confession to the crowd outside the jail.<sup>10</sup> Only the signed confession, not the events of that evening, were introduced at his trial as evidence.<sup>11</sup>

Two conflicting stories developed from the written confession and an interview with an El Paso reporter. The first story came from Martinez's signed confession taken the night of his arrest. It stated that on Saturday morning, the previous day, Martinez and Brown met at Crenshaw's shop. He was working at the time, and the two had a conversation that led to the young Anglo woman promising Martinez sex, an unusual move for a young lady of that time. Later that afternoon around 4:00 p.m., they met two miles outside of town. He asked her to do what she promised; she refused his advances and shouted, "You son-of-a-bitch, I am going to have you arrested." He said that was not necessary, he only wanted her to do what they planned. She rose up on her buggy, told him she would kill him, and then reached for her hip. Alarmed by this, Martinez pulled his weapon out and shot her in the chest. He returned to Saragossa, ate supper, and went back to Crenshaw's shop to do his evening shelf stocking.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ex Parte Martinez, No. 1457, "Dissenting Opinion," 29.

<sup>10</sup> Ex Parte Martinez, No. 1457, "Opinion," 3.

<sup>11</sup> Ex Parte Martinez, No. 1457, "Dissenting Opinion," 30.

<sup>12</sup> Ex Parte Martinez, No. 1457, "Opinion," 14.

It is difficult to determine the validity of a confession by someone who was the target of a lynch mob. Quite often an alleged criminal, who was sought by a posse of men, believed that a confession to the sheriff was the only option for safety. Since Martinez was a boy, this might have been the case. Historian Paul J Vanderwood provides a rich analysis of the making of a Mexican folk saint in Tijuana, Mexico, who might have suffered the same fate. In his account of the execution of Juan Soldado, Vanderwood states, "It was said that more than anything else he feared being turned over to the mob, of literally being torn apart, limb by limb, kicked and trampled, by enraged townspeople."<sup>13</sup> Only six months prior to Martinez's arrest, Antonio Rodriguez was burned alive by a mob for allegedly killing a rancher's wife. Martinez knew, if handed over to the mob, death would be certain. Thus, it is probable that his confession was coerced by the sheriff and influenced by the impending fear that his executioners awaited him. Following his arrest, Leon Martinez, Sr., the boy's father, reported to the *El Paso Morning Times* that he feared for his son's safety even in his jail cell because mobs in other cases had stormed prisons to seize prisoners and dispense their own justice. The *Times* reported that he "begs that the people of Pecos and vicinity will not descend to lynch law, as has been the case in two other sections of Texas lately" [Rodriguez in Rock Springs, and Gomez in Thorndale].<sup>14</sup>

The second story developed from an interview by an unnamed reporter accompanied by Sheriff J.F. Franks of Caldwell County, where Martinez was moved

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<sup>13</sup> Paul J. Vanderwood, *Juan Soldado: Rapist, Murderer, Martyr, Saint*, (Durham: Duke University Press), 48.

<sup>14</sup> "Father of Murderer Asks For Justice," *El Paso Morning Times*, July 27, 1911, 1.

in late August 1911. Martinez told reporters this version of the events from his jail cell. The reporter described the boy as four feet and ten inches in height weighing 116 pounds, with “great inquiring brown eyes... and he smiles often.” Martinez explained the events that led to his arrest as follows:

“I am fifteen years and two months of age. It is not true that I am eighteen years old. I was born in 1896. I did not kill Miss Emma Brown. I knew nothing of the murder until a Mexican told me about it, shortly before my arrest. I never had any relations with Miss Brown. I worked in the store and post office at Saragosa and often waited on her, selling her some goods on the morning of the killing. I placed her goods in the buggy and untied her horse. That was the last I saw of her until I viewed the body. They made me sign that confession. I told them I was innocent but they told me they would kill me if I didn’t sign a confession. I was frightened and did it. They said that Miss Brown was killed at about five o’clock in the afternoon. I could have proved that I was in the store at that hour, but they wouldn’t let me.”

As the sheriff and the reporter exited the cell Martinez called out, “Honest, I don’t know anything about the killing.”<sup>15</sup> The differences between these two conflicting stories went unresolved. The majority of Anglos preferred the confession rather than the interview.

Shortly before midnight on Sunday, Reeves County Court Judge S.J. Isaacks learned of the murder of Miss Brown, and the arrest of the young Mexican boy. The county court had recessed and Judge Isaacks was at his home in Midland, about one hundred miles east of Pecos. Sheriff Brown informed Isaacks that anger was growing toward the murderer, and he needed to depart for Pecos immediately. In the early morning hours Isaacks boarded a train for Pecos, and arrived shortly after dawn. He went directly to the Oriental Hotel owned by his friend, F.W. Johnson. The

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<sup>15</sup> “Leon Martinez Now in Abilene,” *Abilene Daily Reporter*, August 29, 1911, 1.

hotel was a central location in town where the county's elite gathered. Isaacks and Johnson met with the district attorney and two of the wealthiest men in Pecos, W.D. Cowan and B.R. Stein, vice presidents of the local bank and financiers of the newly chartered Pecos Valley Southern Railroad.<sup>16</sup> Their order of business was to discuss the "excited condition" and "threatening attitude of the citizenship" toward Martinez, and to determine what would be in the best interest and safety of the town.<sup>17</sup> They decided that Sheriff Brown should escort Martinez to a jail in Midland until trial. This was the only time in his official career that Isaacks sent a prisoner to another jail for protection.<sup>18</sup>

On Monday, July 24, 1911, Isaacks convened a special session of the court in Pecos. The order stated that the reason for this unusual and urgent procedure was "that a horrible murder had been committed." By the end of the day, he summoned a grand jury and secured an indictment for murder. Isaacks notified Sheriff Brown that a murder trial would take place on Friday July, 28, 1911. Confined in the Midland jail, Martinez did not meet with his defense attorneys until mere hours before the trial. Two attorneys were selected by Isaacks to defend the Mexican boy: George Estes, a former district attorney from El Paso Texas, and R.L. Parker, a former Reeves County judge and friend of Judge Isaacks. The trial began Friday morning, with Martinez entering a plea of not guilty. The prosecution read Martinez's signed confession but omitted the statement that indicated he was fifteen

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<sup>16</sup> "Irrigation Hope of Trans-Pecos Section," *Galveston Daily News*, January 7, 1912, 12.

<sup>17</sup> Ex Parte Martinez, No. 1457, "Dissenting Opinion," 1.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

years old. Before noon on Saturday, July 29, 1911, the jury returned a guilty verdict, and sentenced Martinez to death.<sup>19</sup>

Judge Isaacks gave the defense until 3:30 P.M. to prepare a motion for a new trial. Isaacks ordered Texas Rangers to escort Martinez back to the county jail in Midland while his attorneys went to Parker's office and prepared an appeal. Angry citizens wanted an execution, and it is unclear what prompted Estes and Parker to appeal. The court records have no record of Martinez's request, but months later Martinez stated that his father requested an appeal because there should have been a change of venue. Martinez's Anglo attorneys possibly believed they had to do everything in their power to defend their client; Parker was a former judge and Estes a former district attorney. News that these men were attempting to save the convicted teen spread rapidly. Shortly before 3:30 P.M. Estes and Parker left for the courthouse to file an appeal with Judge Isaacks. Meanwhile F.W. Johnson, Jim Mayfield, and Sheriff Brown met with Cowan and Stein at the bank to gather up men. The purpose of this mob was to prevent an appeal. Johnson reported that from the front door of the bank he could see Parker and Estes going toward the courthouse. The angry men shouted for the attorneys to stop. The mob met them "one hundred and fifty feet from the court house door."<sup>20</sup> Fifty men, including several who served on the jury, stood between Martinez's attorneys and the courthouse. Jim Mayfield, a man present the night of the arrest and the same man who threatened to hang

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<sup>19</sup> Ex Parte Martinez, No. 1457, "Dissenting Opinion," 4.

<sup>20</sup> Ex Parte Martinez, No. 1457, "Dissenting Opinion," 4.

Martinez personally if he did not confess, was one of many members of Reeves county challenging these attorneys.

A.W. Hosie, the local justice of the peace, got up on a box and shouted that the crowd would not permit an appeal.<sup>21</sup> Hosie, born of Scots-Irish immigrants, had a reputation in Reeves County as roughneck fighter able to take care of himself.<sup>22</sup> Parker became concerned about public safety. Months later he stated, "I felt that if they undertook to take the Mexican from the rangers, some of them [citizens and Rangers] would get killed... and we could not well scrap a whole county, or what looked like a whole county to us at the time."<sup>23</sup>

Estes was less concerned with the safety of the citizens than he was for his own life. As Johnson argued with Parker, four to five persons were shouting their disapproval. Members of the mob began to yell, "they could hang three as easy as they could hang one."<sup>24</sup> Parker reassured the crowd that there would be no appeal made, and that they should return home. Defense attorney George Estes boarded a train for El Paso that very evening. Later he would go on record stating that he feared for his life on that hot summer afternoon. Parker and Isaacks returned to Johnson's hotel, had a private, "whispered discussion," and they decided not to appeal the decision. Both Estes and Parker were ambitious politicians. Further representation of the Mexican boy, they now feared, would damage their

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<sup>21</sup> Ex Parte Martinez, No. 1457, "Dissenting Opinion," 6-7.

<sup>22</sup> Alton Hughes, *Pecos: A History of the Pioneer West* (Seagraves, Texas: Pioneer Book Publishers, 1978), 340-341.

<sup>23</sup> Ex Parte Martinez, No. 1457, "Dissenting Opinion," 8.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.



reputations. Parker served the county's elite for years. Oriental Hotel owner Johnson, one of the most vocal of the mob, advised Parker days later to leave Pecos.<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, Judge Isaaks ordered that Martinez would be hanged on September 1, 1911.

### **The Martinez Case and the Mexican Revolution**

Martinez was arrested for the crime of murder, but on the night of his arrest an angry posse demanded his life for the death of Emma Brown. Martinez might have heard stories about Mexican men savagely attacked by lynch mobs such as Antonio Rodríguez in Rock Springs, Texas, who was doused with oil and burned alive. Any Mexican male, regardless of age, who committed a crime against Anglo Texans could be subjected to extralegal violence. The Gomez study of Chapter Two proved that Mexican boys as well as men were victims of this heinous crime. In this case and others, mobs dispensed vigilante justice within hours of an alleged crime against one of their own. Large mobs removed Mexicans detained in jails. One wounded Mexican man was taken from his hospital bed, hanged and burned.<sup>26</sup> The public defended these actions as saving the county time and money.

The racial order that existed in Texas stigmatized Mexican migrants with racial inferiority stereotypes, subjugating them as outcasts in American border towns. Residing far away from families. These laborers often lived together and created Mexican areas of town. To nativists, they lacked moral virtues. Leon

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>26</sup> "Mexican Murder Removed," *El Paso Morning Times*, August 1, 1911, 4.

Martinez did not find a friendly face in Reeves County, and it would be over two years before he would return to Pecos for his execution. During his incarceration his family found Mexicans sympathetic to his case in El Paso, Waco, San Antonio, and cities throughout Mexico. These people and their organizations raised the \$50,000 necessary to pay for his legal representation.<sup>27</sup>

Following Martinez's sentencing, newspapers reported: "A feeling of general satisfaction prevails throughout the county.... that justice was meted out to him in a fair and impartial manner."<sup>28</sup> After sentencing on July 29, 1911, Texas Rangers escorted Martinez back to his cell in Midland to await his execution. On Sunday, the day after the trial, Dr. Homer L. MaGee, minister of the First Christian Church in Pecos, told his parishioners that he was satisfied that justice was served. He believed that Martinez's actions would be useful to remind parents to inculcate proper moral virtue in their children. MaGee declared that home is where they feed their children's bellies and minds: "A crime of this kind is not committed as a result of sudden emotion, but it is the natural outcome of the training, or lack of training, received in the home... Home is God's first ordained institution where the conscience is trained to discern between right and wrong."<sup>29</sup> Martinez, Jr., like many Mexican boys, lived in homes where either fathers were absent seeking employment, or had their sons work in the railroad and mining towns with them. In

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<sup>27</sup> Ex Parte Martinez, No. 1457, "Dissenting Opinion," 68.

<sup>28</sup> "Mexican Murder Removed," *El Paso Morning Times*, August 1, 1911, 4.

<sup>29</sup> "Mexican Murderer Removed," *El Paso Morning Times*, August 1, 1911, 4.

GaGee's eyes, boys living in these situations did not received proper moral education.

On August 6, 1911, District Attorney Brown received a telegram from Governor Colquitt stating he would not interfere with the Martinez case.<sup>30</sup> Pecos officials tried to refute the stories posted in newspapers across the state that described Reeves County as vigilante society. They published an editorial in the *El Paso Morning Times* that praised the people of Reeves County for being law-abiding citizens. It read, "Almost anywhere else on the face of the earth a resentful and indignant people would have acted otherwise, and have taken justice into their own hands without the law," and, "there is no more peace loving people in the southwest."<sup>31</sup> In truth, however, the citizens of Reeves County had growing fears that Martinez might escape execution. National newspapers were reporting that a child had been sentenced to death in Texas. The people of Reeves County sent letters to Colquitt urging him not to get involved, warning that the citizens of Texas would lose faith in a legal system that should protect them, and that any intervention would force them to settle future matters with "Judge Lynch." Attached to this letter was a petition claiming to hold the names of every citizen in Reeves County.<sup>32</sup>

Their concerns that Martinez's life might be spared were legitimate. The story about a boy facing execution made national news. Not only *The New York*

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<sup>30</sup> "Governor Colquitt Will Not Interfere," *El Paso Morning Times*, August 7, 1911, 2.

<sup>31</sup> "People of Reeves County," *El Paso Morning Times*, August 2, 1911, 5.

<sup>32</sup> Ex Parte Martinez, No. 1457, "Dissenting Opinion," 9.

*Times*, but newspapers in large and small communities around the country reported on the Martinez case. Letters arrived from as far off as New Jersey, questioning Colquitt about the Texas legal system and the pending execution of a minor.<sup>33</sup> Concerned Americans and angry Mexicans wrote letters to Colquitt. The letters expressed outrage that his trial occurred in Reeves County, given the hostility of local residents toward the boy. Albert Anders, a father from Canyon Creek, Montana, requested the governor to investigate the case, and stated: "To prove him innocent after his death will be too late." Ida C. Airhart of Lake Charles, Louisiana, argued that it would be a crime to hang someone so underdeveloped and asked Colquitt "to investigate and think of the matter in a Christian spirit." J.W. Arrowsmith, president of a surgical supply company with offices in Chicago, San Francisco, and Toronto, was infuriated: "How the great state of Texas can 'string up' an infant is beyond my comprehension."<sup>34</sup>

These kinds of protests impelled Colquitt to delay the execution thirty days for further investigation into the case.<sup>35</sup> During that time, Martinez's family sought financial support for the boy, and furnished a legal team that filed an appeal to the Texas Criminal Court of Appeals. The supporters who came to his aid created as much outrage in the media as the initial murder, and actually intensified Martinez's problems with white Texans. His family's association with Mexican radicals

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<sup>33</sup> Texas State Archives Box 140, Folder 1-31, 1912.

<sup>34</sup> Texas State Archives Box 140, Folder 1-31, 1912. "A", October 16 – November 8, 1911 folder 12, "A" August 5 – September 20, 1911 folder 10.

<sup>35</sup> "Oppose Commutation of Sentence," *Dallas Morning News*, September 3, 1911, 15.

connected him with the Mexican Revolution, and made not just a “killer” but an enemy of the state.

One of the most influential and outspoken leaders of the Mexican Revolution was Ricardo Flores Magón. Born in 1873 of working-class Mexican parents, Magón became a journalist who opposed the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz. His open opposition to Díaz led to several arrests and then to his flight from Mexico to Laredo, Texas, in 1904. A year later he founded the Mexican Liberal Party (PLM). The PLM was an opposition group that sought reform and a new leadership for the people of Mexico. The group called for open elections in Mexico, land reform for the peasantry, increased wages, and improved conditions for the Mexican working class. In Texas the PLM attempted to organize Mexican and Mexican-American laborers. The response by the Mexican communities in Texas varied. Some ethnic Mexicans supported these efforts and others distanced themselves. PLM supporters criticized U.S. foreign policy, Texas officials for their lack of concern for Mexicans killed along the border, and Wall Street’s “domination of Mexican affairs.”

Texas became a popular location for exiles of this sort. In San Antonio, Magón reestablished *Regeneración*, a Mexican radical newspaper that emphasized giving the land in Mexico back to the Mexican working class.<sup>36</sup> In November of 1910, Magón declared: “The Liberal Party works for the welfare of the poor classes of the Mexican people. It does not impose a candidate, because it will be up to the will of the people to settle the question: Do the people want a master?” His

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<sup>36</sup> Linda B. Hall and Don M. Coerver, *Revolution on the Border: The United States and Mexico, 1910-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 17.

*Regeneración* article “El Derecho de Propiedad” (The Right of Property) argued that man’s right to property is as ancient as his stupidity.<sup>37</sup> In most speeches, Magón condemned wealthy Anglos as thieves, and as the exploiters of working-class Mexicans. Supporters of Magón became known as *Magonistas*.

The editors of *Regeneración* published Magón’s speeches. Anglo Texans became suspicious of his intentions when these words circulated around the state:

“The expropriation of the land possessed by the rich, should be realized during the present insurrection. We liberals will not be committing a crime by turning over the land to the working people, because it belongs to them, the people; it is the land that their most distant ancestors lived on and watered with their sweat... That land belongs to all Mexicans by natural law. Some of them [Anglos] might have bought it, but where did they get the money to make the purchase if not from the work of the Mexican unskilled workers and laborers?”<sup>38</sup>

The land he desired was Texas, and the thieves were Anglo Texans. Anglo citizens in Texas worried about a hostile attempt to reclaim this land. The *Magonistas* were only one of several radical factions on both sides of the border to flourish during the Mexican Revolution. As rebels and bandits pillaged Southwestern ranches for food, supplies, and weapons, Anglo Texans became suspicious of all revolutionary factions.

Working class Mexicans in Texas had negative stigmas imposed on them by Anglos. After the 1910 Mexican Revolution, whites questioned Mexicans about their allegiance to anarchist factions. El Paso had the greatest population of Mexicans in Texas during the 1910s, and by the end of the decade an unprecedented number of

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<sup>37</sup> Ricardo Flores Magón, “El Derecho de Propiedad,” *Regeneración*, March 18, 1911. 1

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 1

Mexican nationals had sought refuge in the United States.<sup>39</sup> Spanish language newspapers increased their circulation throughout border towns, some simply reporting the news in Spanish and others fostering radical thought. Papers like *Regeneración* had subscribers in the United States, Mexico, and Cuba, but the largest distribution occurred in Texas. According to one 1915 issue, 42% of the papers were sent to Texas, 13% to California, 12% to Mexico, 5% to Cuba, 4% to Arizona. The addresses of 22% of the subscribers is unknown.<sup>40</sup> Conservative Anglos condemned these papers, and the writers and editors who produced them.

Anglo newspapers reported that Leon Martinez, Sr., was a Magónista. W.A. Hudson, shareholder of the Citizens Bank of Barstow, located seven miles east of Pecos, reported to the editors of the *El Paso Morning Times* that he knew that Martinez, Sr., was a Magónista. He declared that radical groups provided the “money and influence to save a guilty wretch.”<sup>41</sup> Martinez, Sr., worked for a Toyah, Texas, Spanish language newspaper that printed articles in support of Magón. Toyah, the railroad town several miles east of Pecos, was also home to two members of the jury in the Martinez, Jr., trial: W.M. Hopper, and A.J. Hart.<sup>42</sup> Hopper and Hart might have known of Martinez, Sr., and of his reputation as a Magónista. The elder Martinez was even rumored to have worked for Magón’s paper *Regeneración*. He

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<sup>39</sup> Linda B. Hall and Don M. Coerver, *Revolution on the Border: The United States and Mexico, 1910-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 130.

<sup>40</sup> James A Sandos, *Rebellion in the Borderlands: Anarchism and the Plan of San Diego, 1904-1923*, (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 59.

<sup>41</sup> “Pecos Attorney on the Martinez Case,” *El Paso Morning Times*, September 12, 1911, 1.

<sup>42</sup> “Father of Murderer Asks For Justice,” *El Paso Morning Times*, July 27, 1911, 1.

might have been an assistant editor as some Anglo papers speculated, but the source to prove or disprove this association does not exist. What is clear is that Martinez was known to the editors of this radical newspaper. In a newspaper piece, he asked Mexicans in Mexico and Texas to help the family afford legal representation for an appeal. As a result, money began arriving at his El Paso attorney's address.<sup>43</sup>

Martinez, Sr., wrote to the editors of Spanish language newspapers in El Paso, San Antonio, and Waco, in search of additional financial support for his son's defense. Lauro Aguirre, editor of one such El Paso newspaper who knew both father and son, reported that he did not believe that Martinez, Jr., was guilty of the crime.<sup>44</sup> Martinez, Sr., demonstrated a strong knowledge of English in a letter to the Secretary of the Texas Criminal Court of Appeals regarding payment for a transcript of his son's trial.<sup>45</sup> The signature at the bottom of the letter is elegant and in cursive, not common among Mexican working-class men.

Whether a Mexican was lower or middle class was inconsequential to most Anglos by 1912; Mexicans of both classes were suspected of insurrection. According to many Anglos, the working class carried out the crimes, while the middle class created revolutionary literature. *The El Paso Morning Times* reported a plot that urged "a call to arms of Mexicans in the United States to fight against Americans." The U.S. Secret Service raided an El Paso printing press and found over five thousand copies of an alleged insurrectionary document. Newspapers printed

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<sup>43</sup> "Martinez to Hang Today," *El Paso Morning Times*, May 11, 1914, 2.

<sup>44</sup> "Mexican Given Death Sentence," *El Paso Morning Times*, July 30, 1911, 1.

<sup>45</sup> This could have been translated and typed for him, but if that were the case it remains true that he was literate in the Spanish language.



front-page headlines such as: “Anti-American Plot Exposed.”<sup>46</sup> Such stories about Mexicans fueled Anglo resentment. An El Paso attorney, W.A. Hudson, weighed in on the debate about Martinez, Sr.’s political ties, and reported to the press that the boy’s father was “a well-known socialist—one of the Magonista faction, and it is the socialist party who is exerting its money and influence [to save Martinez].”<sup>47</sup>

Residents of El Paso current with national events knew that the Senate was considering curtailing immigration. An El Paso editorial informed the public that the Root Amendment of the Dillingham Bill, favored by the Senate, would protect Texans against radical immigrant factions who sought to undermine U.S. authorities, and threaten the country’s safety. If passed it would rid the county of undesirable aliens:

“Members of the senate foreign relations committee and of the Texas congressional delegation conferred with President Taft and his cabinet with regard to the Mexican situation, and the practice of Mexicans of coming into the Unites States territory as refugees but really to agitate and promote armed expeditions into a country from which they have fled... It provides a more adequate remedy, however, for existing conditions than does the present neutrality law, and is actively supported by Governor Colquitt, of Texas.”<sup>48</sup>

The author of this editorial argued that if such a provision were in place, subversive plots would not have the numbers necessary. This legislation would protect Texans from these radicals.<sup>49</sup> Anglos feared that Mexicans associated with groups like the Magonistas were all radicals, and, as such, threatening to Anglos.

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<sup>46</sup> “Anti-American Plot Exposed,” *El Paso Morning Times*, February 25, 1912, 1.

<sup>47</sup> “Father is Mexican Liberal,” *El Paso Morning Times*, September 12, 1911, 2.

<sup>48</sup> “Rid Country of Undesirable Aliens,” *El Paso Morning Times*, May 8, 1912, 6.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

## The Execution

On November 3, 1911, in Austin, the Texas Criminal Court of Appeals reviewed the murder trial of Martinez, Jr. The majority opinion ruled against a new trial. Three appellate judges reviewed the lower court's documents and issued clashing opinions. Appellate court Judge A.J. Harper of El Paso wrote the twenty-page opinion that supported the lower court's ruling. A dissenting opinion came from Judge W.H. Davidson, who argued that Martinez deserved a new trial outside of Reeves County. The seventy-four year old judge had built a reputation as a crusader against injustice. In another dissenting opinion he sharply criticized the "necessity" defense for a lynching: "It was *necessity* that prompted Pontius Pilate to appease the cry of the howling Jewish mob to murder the innocent Christ."<sup>50</sup> Davidson chastised those in authority who made examples of individuals to appease the populace. He condemned Judge Harper for an opinion "intended for the admiration of the people." He told the outraged Anglos of Reeves County: "I have made it the rule of my judicial life, and shall continue to do so, to decide questions as I see them after as careful investigation as my capacity affords, without reference to what public opinion may be."<sup>51</sup>

Davidson argued that Martinez's conviction violated the due process provision in the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution. The Law of Nations and two treaties between the United States and Mexico should have guaranteed

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<sup>50</sup> "Tyranny or Necessity," *The Virginia Law Review* 18 (1912): 72-73.

<sup>51</sup> "Clash of Opinions in Martinez Case" *Dallas Morning News*, March 28, 1912, 1.

Martinez the rights inherent in the Fourteenth Amendment.<sup>52</sup> Davidson provided the following reasons why the case violated the treaties: Undue haste in the trial, denial of the defendant's right to be heard by counsel of his own choosing, and the unjust discrimination against Martinez that allowed the court to satisfy the local citizens.<sup>53</sup> Davidson's concluding statement declared: "The law is not designed to be a swift engine of oppression and vengeance, but it was, and is, designed to try men only after due hearing and fair trial. I cannot concur with my brethren."<sup>54</sup>

Davidson's dissenting opinion drew sharp criticism from Judge Harper. The two judges were polar opposites and openly clashed, a friction that made national headlines from New York to Los Angeles. Letters to the editors of major Texas newspapers criticized both judges for their public debate. The *Dallas Morning News* reported: "The hurt to at least the dignity of the State would have been much less severe than that which results from this public exhibition of their spleen."<sup>55</sup>

Glenmore Farm, Texas, resident Charles Metcalfe voiced his mixed opinion of the situation. His letter to the editor began with an argument to reform the process through which these judges were elected. He went on to say that the people of Texas lost respect for the courts, and this case damaged the confidence of Texans in the law designed to protect them from criminals. His final comments stated: "The

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<sup>52</sup> The following two treaties between the United States of America and the Republic of Mexico guarantee any Mexican citizens due process of law provision of the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States: March 24, 1908, Art. III (U.S. Document No. 5, 61<sup>st</sup> Congress, Second Session, 1909-1910, Volume 47, the same being volume 1, page 1205 of Treaties and Conventions,) and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (id. Page 1107, Arts. I and XXVI).

<sup>53</sup> Ex Parte Martinez, No. 1457, "Dissenting Opinion," 52.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>55</sup> Spleen in this sentence referred to anger or bad temper; *Dallas Morning News*, March 29, 1912, 8.

overshadowing elements of uncertainty as to so-called law drive the people to primal, savage action. The result is individuals commit and avenge bloody wrongs.”<sup>56</sup> The public debate continued over the summer. Taylor McRae, a Fort Worth resident, read the case transcripts published in the *Southwestern Reporter* on May 8, 1912. He urged for reform of the courts as a result of this case, while maintaining he was not concerned with the guilt or innocence of Martinez unlike many of those who criticized the case.<sup>57</sup> His comments drew a response from Judge Isaacks that pointed out errors in McRae’s timeline, that the door was unlocked during the confession, and the murder was in Reeves not Pecos County (Pecos city is the location of the Reeves County courthouse).<sup>58</sup> This trivial response avoided the question about Martinez’s baptismal records that would have verified that Martinez was fifteen on the day of the murder.

The unusual haste of the original trial denied the Martinez family the six days needed to travel to Durango, Mexico to retrieve baptismal records, and violated his rights to a fair trial. Davidson’s dissent provided Martinez’s attorney the necessary document to take the case to the next level: the U.S. Supreme Court, which set a hearing for October 14, 1913. In Texas, strong feelings about the case divided Anglos and ethnic Mexicans. Texas had become so divided that Texas Attorney General B.F. Looney petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court to advance the case:

“That the matters involved herein are of great public importance to the State of Texas... there has arisen a great disturbance and clash between the citizens of Texas and the citizens of Mexico during the

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<sup>56</sup> “Martinez Case and Recall of Judges,” *Dallas Morning News*, April 14, 1912, 6.  
“Should Make Slow Haste About Courts,”<sup>57</sup> *Dallas Morning News*, June 18, 1912, 13.

<sup>58</sup> “Judge S.J. Isaacks Replies to M’Rae,” *Dallas Morning News*, June 23, 1912, 5.

pending and past revolutions in Mexico, and such delay in the final determination of this case has exaggerated the tension existing between the citizens of the border counties of Texas and the citizens of Mexico residing within the borders in Texas from Mexico, and that for these reasons this case should be advanced upon the docket by this honorable court and brought to a speedy termination therein.”<sup>59</sup>

The press made connections with the Martinez case and the lynching of Antonio Gomez. In 1912, as three of the Thorndale men were in prison, Thorndale citizens were aware that a delay in the Martinez execution meant that Governor Colquitt was considering a pardon of the convicted Mexican murderer. Thorndale citizens believed that their men who sat in a prison prevented a similar situation in their town. The Thorndale men were revered by some for acting “swiftly” with mob “justice,” while the Pecos men in Reeves County were ridiculed for allowing the Texas legal system to “protect” the murderer of a twenty-five year old white woman. Journalists editorialized that the citizens of Reeves County mistakenly held back their “race feelings and horror” to prevent a lynching and that they did their “best to behave.”<sup>60</sup> The Pecos residents announced frustrations that the alleged murderer would probably escape an execution, which they could have secured that fateful night. Even the press in other western states argued for a preference of extra legal punishment. The Muskogee, Oklahoma, daily paper argued as much and included a cartoon that read, “Reeves County wonders if it pays to be law-abiding” underneath a drawing of the murder of Emma Brown. The reporter, W.G. Shepherd, stated that Reeves County “passed up an excellent chance for a lynching... hundreds of virile

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<sup>59</sup> “Supreme Court Will Hear Martinez Case,” *Dallas Morning News*, May 13, 1913, 11.

<sup>60</sup> “Texans Didn’t Lynch Youth Who Murdered Defenseless School Teacher; No, They Are Wondering if it Pays to be Law-Abiding,” *Muskogee Times Democrat*, November 25, 1911, 4.

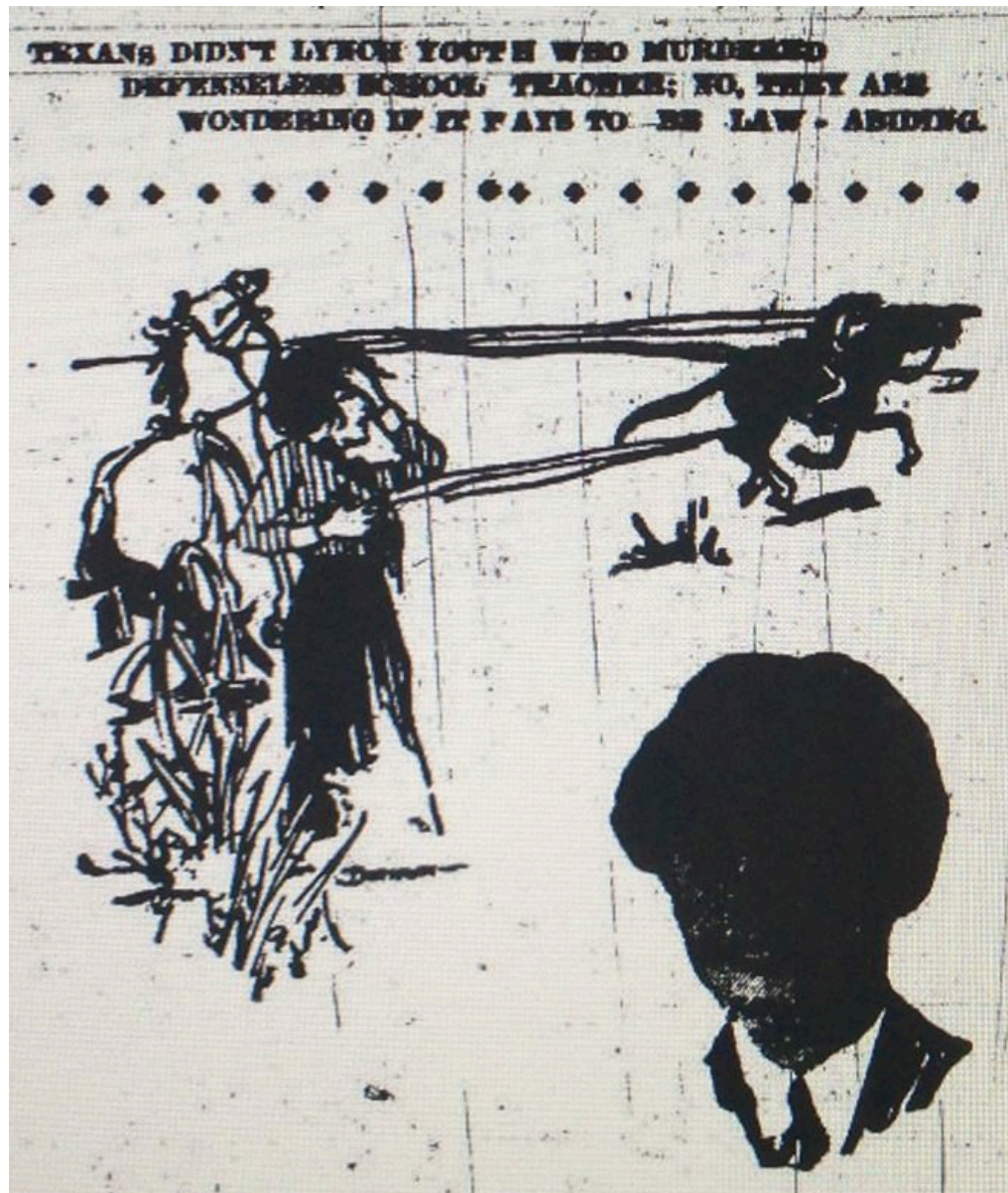
citizens were itching to string up a young Mexican,” however, “the murderer isn’t hung yet (see Figure 4.1).”<sup>61</sup>

The press reported that both Mexican men and boys were prone to violence. The Gomez stabbing of a German man in Thorndale was thought to support that notion, as was the Martinez conviction. Further damaging to the image of Mexican boys was the reports of young Mexican boys violently playing out the revolution along the Rio Grande. Police often arrested these children for their reenactment of the revolution. Many were pretending to fight for Pancho Villa. El Paso police claimed they were regularly rounding up Mexican boys living on the Texas side of the Rio Grande who fought Mexican boys on the other side. The young residents of El Paso’s Mexican district known as Chihuahuita threw stones across the river at Juárez children and homes.<sup>62</sup> The police reported that the Mexican youth of Chihuahuita were engaged in a daily battle with the Mexican youth of Ciudad Juárez. Eventually this combat earned the name “Playing Juárez.” As the revolution intensified, so did the play. Outside of El Paso, two fifteen-year-old Mexican boys fought the revolution with stones, and one boy killed the other

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>62</sup> “Mexican Juveniles in War,” *El Paso Morning Times*, August 20, 1911, 4.



**Figure 4.1** “Texans Didn’t Lynch Youth Who Murdered Defenseless School Teacher; No, They Are Wondering if it Pays to be Law-Abiding,” *Muskogee Times Democrat*, November 25, 1911, p. 4.

with his rifle. Witnesses said they were “playing Juárez,” and remarked how uncivilized Mexican boys were compared to Anglos.<sup>63</sup> While these boys fought their

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<sup>63</sup> “Mexican Boy Held for Killing Another,” *El Paso Morning Times*, April 26, 1912, 4.

revolution along the banks of the Rio Grande, Martinez battled the legal forces determined to follow through with his execution.

During his time in prison Martinez entertained himself by taking up music and other hobbies. Waco prison officials allowed family members to give him a guitar to keep in his cell. Martinez had not played before, but he taught himself how and entertained both prisoners and guards.<sup>64</sup> One reporter from the *Dallas Morning News* photographed him with a Mexican warship he constructed out of materials that included a cigar box (see Figure 4.2). In the picture he appeared clean and well dressed. This photo only circulated in the *Dallas Morning News*. Papers in border towns like El Paso refused to publish an image that humanized the murderer.<sup>65</sup> Mexican images most popular among Texans were from the revolution, and a picture postcard craze “captivated” the country.<sup>66</sup>

One of the most striking images was of Mexican children who participated in the revolution. Different revolutionary factions recruited children to work as spies and infiltrate enemy positions. Insurgents were recruited as orphans while others volunteered because it was the best opportunity to find food and shelter.<sup>67</sup> These images overwhelmed the single photograph of Martinez in the Anglo Texan mind. These two images show the contrast between Martinez, Jr., and the young soldiers. Tied around Martinez’s neck is

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<sup>64</sup> “Condemned Mexican Boy Learning to Play Guitar,” *Wichita Falls Daily Times*, February 26, 1914, 1.

<sup>65</sup> “Mexican Boy Who Is Under Death Sentence,” *Dallas Morning News*, April 7, 1912, 5.

<sup>66</sup> Paul J. Vanderwood and Frank N. Samponaro, *Border Fury: A Picture Postcard Record of Mexico’s Revolution and U.S. War Preparedness, 1910-1917* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), vii.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 164-165.





**Figure 4.2** *Dallas Morning News*, "Mexican Boy Who Is Under Death Sentence," April 7, 1912, p.5.

a tie that complements his coat and pants. The soldiers are draped with ammunition and in their hands are rifles. Martinez, by contrast, is shown holding a toy boat he created in jail. One can only wonder if blood stained either the hands of Martinez or those of the boys (see Figures 4.3 and 4.4). Citizens of Texas border towns possibly imagined Martinez as one of the disruptive youth playing war games along the river, or similar to the image of the boys fighting in the revolution.



**Figure 4.3** Young boy street urchins and tall men in the Mexican armies during the Mexican Revolution [photo #10 from Scrapbook #1], ca. 1914. Courtesy, Byron C. Utecht Collection, Special Collections, The University of Texas at Arlington Library, Arlington, Texas.



**Figure 4.4** Williwood Meador Collection, Pancho Villa, Box 17, File 6, Porter Henderson Library, Angelo State University.

El Paso residents had justifiable concerns. Ciudad Juárez became a battlefield for many rebel groups. In February of 1912, the *El Paso Morning Times* reported that Juárez was under attack and businesses were being looted. El Paso went on alert and the *Times* provided news throughout the day. Beyond the morning edition of the paper, four subsequent front page “extras” warned of the events breaking that very day. Following this event the local business owners voiced their frustrations that the Mexican Revolution was bad for business. Hotel and restaurant owners noticed that the trains entering El Paso carried fewer vacationers and salesmen, and the trains leaving the city were carrying Anglo women and children to northern and western cities. Further

damaging the town's image was yellow journalism in major cities. More concerned with paper sales than reporting accuracy, one San Francisco paper reported, "El Paso In Hands of Villa Troops," alleging that four thousand Mexicans had captured the city.<sup>68</sup> Rumors spread that Pancho Villa would come and avenge Martinez's death if executed, and destroy the town of Pecos.<sup>69</sup> Once again, the events of the Mexican Revolution were damaging to Martinez.

The U.S. Supreme Court dismissed the case on grounds that it lacked jurisdiction. Martinez's only hope rested with Governor Colquitt, known to many as a governor who pardoned over 1,600 during his four years in office. Colquitt's pardons were ceremonial. He chose Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays to pardon large groups. Race had never deterred the Governor. On June 19, Emancipation Day, he shocked the citizens of Texas by "pardoning thirty aged negro convicts."<sup>70</sup> Women quickly learned of his pardoning reputation. Mothers wrote for their sons, and wives for husbands. They were sure to include how their dire living situation had pressured others in the community to help with their financial strain.<sup>71</sup> The *Dallas Morning News* reported the Governor's humane but capricious decisions. One story reported that Colquitt was in his office Sunday morning reviewing pardon requests when his wife phoned him that he must escort her to church. He responded that he was reviewing the records of Carl Craven, a resident of Kaufman

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<sup>68</sup> "El Paso In Hands Of Villa Troops," *El Paso Morning Times*, April 24, 1914, 2.

<sup>69</sup> Alton Hughes, *Pecos: A History of the Pioneer West* (Seagraves, Texas: Pioneer Book Publishers, 1978), 195.

<sup>70</sup> "Commendation For Colquitt," *Dallas Morning News*, June 26, 1911, 5.

<sup>71</sup> "Colquitt Pardons Negroes," *Dallas Morning News*, June 18, 1912, 7.

County, when Mrs. Colquitt demanded: "Pardon him by all means and come with me to church." With a pen already in his hand he signed the pardon to please his wife.<sup>72</sup> Not all of his pardons were this whimsically based.

On Mexican Independence Day, in his first year of office, Colquitt pardoned elderly Mexicans as he did African Americans on Emancipation Day.<sup>73</sup> Both actions aroused the ire of many Anglo Texans. Nevertheless, the next year he pardoned black prisoners on Emancipation Day again. Because of the Mexican Revolution, the opposition to his pardoning of Mexican prisoners had grown. Newspapers began exaggerating the numbers of Mexicans he pardoned from nine to six hundred in just one month. Colquitt responded: "there are not six hundred in the penitentiary."<sup>74</sup> The following year, Mexican Independence day passed without Mexican pardons, and a pardon for Martinez was highly unlikely.

Border violence intensified in the months prior to Martinez's execution date. Ranchers reported a growing problem with theft of their livestock in locations near the border. In Brownsville, J.R. Axsom wrote to Governor Colquitt that the increase in theft was growing worse with each day. He explained that neither "honest nor dishonest" Mexicans can be trusted, "the Mexican who is honest and does not steal, will not divulge anything against a thief of his race."<sup>75</sup> Citizens of Texas began to criticize Colquitt for his inability to protect the state. In an attempt to explain why

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<sup>72</sup> "Governor Issues Pardon," *Dallas Morning News*, March 28, 1911, 13.

<sup>73</sup> "Colquitt Pardons Negroes," *Dallas Morning News*, June 18, 1912, 7.

<sup>74</sup> "Colquitt Answers Ramsey's Challenge," *Dallas Morning News*, July 21, 1912, 10.

<sup>75</sup> Texas State Archives Box 141, Folder 1-10, 1914.

the Governor was not more aggressive with the “Mexican problem,” many people alleged that he lacked manliness. Men wrote letters offering their assistance to take up arms and defend Texas from Mexican insurgents. In an August 30, 1913, letter signed by “Smarty Alexander” and “Sammy Grand-stander,” the anger over the “Mexican problem” continued, and they attacked Colquitt’s masculinity and leadership. The salutation began with “Dear Little Oscar.” Smarty and Sammy desired action and went to so far as to urge Congress to declare war on Mexico. They notified the governor they would be ready for service in ten days. These “Red River Bottom” men had 100 locals ready to take up arms against Mexicans and stated “every one of which would kill a greaser every time he pulled the trigger.” Their closing remarks read, “Yours to lick em.”<sup>76</sup>

Hundreds of letters arrived in Governor Colquitt’s office during his four years in office, 1911-1915, many from Texas men eager to join the ranks of the Texas Rangers and fight Mexican bandits raiding Texas ranches. Fifty-five-year-old Jet Allen of Fort Worth, Texas, wrote a three-page letter to Governor Colquitt on November 17, 1913. Mr. Allen’s letter described himself as an “old-timer” who was angry and disgusted with the “Copper Colored Cuss who frowns on the Stars and Stripes or refuses to tip his hat in respect to the Flag.”<sup>77</sup> He believed that American leaders balked when faced with dealing with President Huerta of Mexico and described it as “Wilson-Bryon Sissy Diplomacy.” Further insulting Wilson and Bryon,

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<sup>76</sup> Texas State Archives Box 140, Folder 1-31, 1912.

<sup>77</sup> Texas State Archives Box 141, Folder 1-31, 1913. “A”, November 3-29, folder 17.

Allen declared the Boy Scouts of Texas as a “more fit bunch to deal with the Mexican forces,” and signed his letter, “Sincerely yours for dignified manhood.”<sup>78</sup>

Despite this enthusiasm for citizen militias, local law enforcement and Texas Rangers did not have sufficient numbers to keep the peace. Sheriffs from border towns urged Colquitt to secure federal troops to police the border.<sup>79</sup> Colquitt ordered 2200 troops from Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio to El Paso for protection.<sup>80</sup> Another 4000 U.S. troops were sent by President Wilson to Galveston. When matters worsened, Colquitt ordered the commander of the Texas Rangers to “shoot straight if necessary.”<sup>81</sup> The orders were followed and violent border clashes increased.

Texas Rangers and U.S. troops mobilized in El Paso, Brownsville, and Douglas. Four companies of the state militia went to Brownsville after two U.S. businessmen in the neighboring Mexican town of Matamoros were kidnapped and held for a \$20,000 ransom. Captain Head of the Texas Rangers sent a telegram to Colquitt requesting permission to cross the river, in an attempt to retrieve the kidnapped Texans. Colquitt refused the request and received new public criticism for his lack of aggression with the Mexican situation.<sup>82</sup> Two separate fights broke out at Douglas in March 1913. Neither side took responsibility for the initial fire and

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> “2200 Troops Are Now In El Paso,” *El Paso Morning Times*, February 28, 1912, 1.

<sup>81</sup> “Texas Governor Wires Ranger Captain To Shoot Straight If It Is Necessary,” *El Paso Morning Times*, January 31, 1913, 1.

<sup>82</sup> “Clash Possible At Brownsville,” *El Paso Morning Times*, February 25, 1913, 1.

six Mexicans were killed.<sup>83</sup> It appeared a major United States and Mexican conflict was imminent. In February 1913 Victoriano Huerta became dictator of Mexico only two weeks after Wilson took office in the United States. Mexico's new leader encountered enemies among Villa's men, as well as the Magonistas and found few allies in Woodrow Wilson's administration. Wilson denounced Huerta as a dictator and cut diplomatic relations with the self-proclaimed president of Mexico.<sup>84</sup> With Wilson distancing the United States from the Huerta government, and the governor of Texas having to appease a population agitated by Mexicans, Leon Martinez had little chance of a pardon or even a sentence commutation.

U.S. military efforts to monitor the Mexican port cities began in early 1913, as officials in Washington expressed concerns that weapons from Germany might arrive in the ports of Acapulco, Mazatlán, and Veracruz.<sup>85</sup> Later that spring in Veracruz a minor misunderstanding broke out between Mexican soldiers and U.S. sailors because of a Mexican officer's decision to arrest a group of U.S. sailors. As both sides denied any wrongdoing, Wilson and Huerta sparred in newspapers. The situation became known as the "Tampico Affair." Wilson demanded a twenty-one-gun salute to the U.S. flag by Huerta's soldiers. When the deadline passed without such a salute, the Atlantic fleet attacked Veracruz and occupied the city. The incident resulted in the deaths of over fifty Mexican troops, hundreds of citizens, and

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<sup>83</sup> "American and Mexican Troops Clash on Border Near Douglas," *El Paso Morning Times*, March 3, 1913, 1.; *Ibid.*, "Another Fight Near Douglas," March 5, 1913, 1.

<sup>84</sup> "Breach Has Come Between the United States and Mexico," *El Paso Morning Times*, April 20, 1914, 1.

<sup>85</sup> "U.S. Warships to Mexican Waters Result Of Washington Conference," *El Paso Morning Times*, February 11, 1913, 1.



nineteen U.S. servicemen.<sup>86</sup> The U.S. military occupied the port city for six months. Following the American departure, Mexicans declared “*cuatro veces heroica*,” (four times heroic) referring to the defense of the port city by four invasions—Spain in 1825, France in 1838, and the United States in 1847 and 1914.<sup>87</sup>

The invasion strained diplomatic relations, as Mexican citizens believed the attack on the port city was unprovoked and unjust. Following the attack Mexico mourned the death and celebrated the life of José Azueta, who had fought courageously against the Americans at Veracruz. Lieutenant Azueta was the son of flamboyant and popular Commodore Manuel Azueta. On the first day of the invasion, the younger Azueta alone defended the Veracruz Naval Academy and wounded many attacking American soldiers. Azueta was mortally wounded and died days later. Veracruz residents mourned his death and celebrated his heroics with a funeral procession that included thousands of Mexican faithful (see Figure 4.5). With the death of American soldiers and devastation in Mexico, the turbulent situation most certainly worsened Martinez’s hope for a stay of execution.<sup>88</sup> While the American public mourned the loss of U.S. soldiers, Texans finally got the “justice” they had been demanding for over three years—a hanging for the murder of Emma Brown. On the fateful day of the boy’s execution, U.S. newspapers coast to coast recognized the courage of fallen U.S. soldiers at Veracruz. President Wilson

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<sup>86</sup> “Mexican Loss Two Hundred,” *El Paso Morning Times*, April 22, 1914, 1.

<sup>87</sup> Andrew Grant Wood, “Birth of the Modern Festival,” *Carnival in Veracruz*, University of Tulsa ([www.personal.utulsa.edu/~andrew-wood/carnival/index.html](http://www.personal.utulsa.edu/~andrew-wood/carnival/index.html)), accessed July 16, 2013.

<sup>88</sup> “Una Gloria de Abril,” *Tiempo Laredo*, April 25, 1914, 1.

proclaimed the efforts in Veracruz were for “mankind.” In Mexico thousands took part in the



**Figure 4.5** Funeral for Jose Azueta, the Mexican naval cadet killed defending Veracruz during the American invasion of 1914. Courtesy of the *Archivo Historico Genero Estrada*

funeral for Azueta, promoted to Captain on his deathbed.<sup>89</sup> Today a memorial statue stands in front of the naval academy in his honor. One last plea for Martinez came from Juan Raino, Spain’s ambassador in Washington. Speaking on behalf of Mexico

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<sup>89</sup> “Mexicans Honor Hero at Vera Cruz As Americans Did Dead at New York,” *Washington Post*, Sunday May 24, 1914, 7.

in an act of humanity, he requested that the governor commute the sentence to life in prison because of Martinez's "tender age."<sup>90</sup> Colquitt denied the request and Martinez returned to Reeves County for his execution. Martinez wrote a letter to his younger brother Manuel. Trying to instill good virtues in his brother, he warned the younger boy about ills of society. Martinez composed a disquisition on the use of opium, cocaine, morphine, and "other evils that beset the path of the younger generation."<sup>91</sup>

The night before his death he condemned the court: "My conviction is the result of race prejudice upon the part of the jurors. I feel perfectly well and have absolutely no fears for the future. We all must die, you as well as I."<sup>92</sup> His only request was to wear the Mexican colors when he was hanged.<sup>93</sup> He quoted Saint John in his final statement, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and I will give ye rest... God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son."<sup>94</sup> On May 11, 1914, standing in view of an Anglo crowd he announced that he was innocent.<sup>95</sup> As he stood on a scaffold in the center of town, with a Catholic grotto in the distance (see Figure 4.6), Martinez never waived from his innocence nor did he beg his Anglo executioner for mercy. He maintained his calm demeanor that he had become known for over the past three years among the reporters who met him. In an ironic

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<sup>90</sup> "Ask Leniency For Martinez," *Dallas Morning News*, May 10, 1914, 11.

<sup>91</sup> "Martinez to Hang Today," *El Paso Morning Times*, May 11, 1914, 2.

<sup>92</sup> "Martinez To Hang Today," *El Paso Morning Times*, May 11, 1914, 1.

<sup>93</sup> "Martinez Case Before Court," *El Paso Morning Times*, November 4, 1911, 2.

<sup>94</sup> "Martinez To Hang Today," *El Paso Morning Times*, May 11, 1914, 1.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.



**Figure 4.6** Downtown Oak Street 1915, Pecos, Texas, Courtesy of the West of Pecos Museum

twist, the executioner was newly elected Sheriff Tom Harrison, not his predecessor Sheriff Brown, the vocal opponent of Martinez urged court officers not to appeal the original case. Harrison is said to have lost thirty pounds within one month's time as he struggled with his court-ordered duty.<sup>96</sup> As several people in Reeves County watched, Harrison sprang the trap at noon, and fourteen minutes later Martinez was pronounced dead.

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<sup>96</sup> Alton Hughes, *Pecos: A History of the Pioneer West* (Seagraves, Texas: Pioneer Book Publishers, 1978), 195.

## **Conclusion**

Leon Martinez represented the “Mexican problem” to the people of Texas. A member of an ethnic group that arrived in large numbers in Texas, Martinez suffered from being categorized as racially inferior to Anglo Texans. During the years of the Mexican Revolution, Mexican refugees fleeing into Texas exacerbated Anglo resentment. New developments involving the growing number of Mexican radicals in Texas and allegations of revolutionary plots further damaged the Mexican reputation, and made them even more vulnerable in white Texas communities. This period was damaging to the people of a country that once ruled the southwestern region of the United States. Many were caught between two worlds: Mexico, in a civil war, and the United States, fostering ethnic hostilities against them.

Leon Martinez, Jr., lived in an Anglo world that determined his guilt without closely examining the evidence. If guilty, then Martinez paid the ultimate price for taking the life of Emma Brown. The burden of proof falls on the district attorney, not the defense, and not this historian. A forced confession by a discriminating mob on the night of his arrest, and the haste in securing a guilty verdict within a week of the crime offers evidence that Martinez became vulnerable to the Anglo/Mexican social order in west Texas. Violent death threats to his attorneys prevented an appeal, and illustrate the power this community had to persuade authorities to acquiesce to their demands. Far worse were the actions of the state’s highest judges and politicians, who concerned themselves with elections and pandered to the majority

rather than determining what was “just” for a Mexican living in Texas. The execution of Leon Martinez, Jr. was an example of a legal lynching.

The years of the Mexican Revolution damaged the image of ethnic Mexicans living in Texas. Nevertheless, on the day Wilson honored the soldiers who died at Veracruz, a Mexican boy had his life taken at a public execution, even though a swirl of stories about the crime, his apprehension, and trial, created more questions than answers. For Mexicans living in Mexico and the United States, the decade of the 1910s was one of fear and confusion. In towns along the U.S. and Mexico border, ethnic Mexicans, both American citizens and otherwise were profiled by a prejudiced society, and became targets of unwarranted searches, unjust legal decisions, and one of the most evil acts of violence—lynching. The legal system did not provide Martinez with adequate protection of his rights, and Antonio Gomez fell victim to a posse out for vengeance. By mid-decade the borderland would become a region consumed by chaos and violence. Numerous human rights violations occurred in the following years. The Mexican Revolution destabilized the borderland and intensified Anglo fear and suspicion of ethnic Mexicans. The destabilization led to an increase in hostile campaigns against ethnic Mexicans, and these crimes often went unpunished. Victims like Martinez, Rodriguez, and Gomez became martyrs, proto-civil rights icons, and, as the final chapter will illustrate, early civil rights actions/movements by ethnic Mexicans emerged in Texas in the wake of the violence.

## CHAPTER V

### THE BANDIT AND THE DEVIL IN THE BIG BEND: RANCH RAIDS AND MOB VIOLENCE IN WEST TEXAS

“I beg to make a report of a fight with Mexicans on the Night of the 28<sup>th</sup>. Eight Rangers in company with four Ranchmen were scouting on the river and found several Mexicans... and when they had gathered several of them [the Mexicans] together they were fired upon by other Mexicans, and had a general fight... fifteen dead Mexicans were found there. Several articles were found in their possession belonging to Mr. Bright, taken during the raid, December 25, 1917.

Most respectfully yours,  
Captain J.M. Fox<sup>1</sup>

Captain J.M. Fox of the Texas Rangers detailed the battle between his soldiers and fifteen Mexican men killed on January 28, 1918. His letter to General James A. Harley of the Texas State Ranger Force in Austin, Texas, reported that their “successful” mission concluded with the burial of the suspected “bandits” they had tracked to a refugee village in Texas—El Porvenir. The event that triggered the raid on El Porvenir was the Luke Brite Ranch raid on Christmas Day one month earlier. Fox explained that one of the Mexican suspects wore a pair of boots similar to the boots stolen from the general store at Brite Ranch.

The Mexican men at El Porvenir were not bandits or criminals; rather, some were American-born citizens of Mexican descent while others were refugees who fled revolutionary fighting with their wives and children. El Porvenir was not a haven for bandits; it was home to 140 ethnic Mexicans, most of whom were women

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<sup>1</sup> C.B. Casey Papers, Box 380, Folder Brite Ranch Raid. Archive of the Big Bend. Fox sent this letter to General James A. Harley of the Texas State Ranger Force reporting the death of fifteen Mexican men suspected of raiding the Brite Ranch on December 25, 1918.

and children. When the Texas Rangers and ranchmen arrived in the early morning hours, they searched the village for weapons and stolen goods. The search of El Porvenir revealed two weapons: an antique Winchester of a “special make” belonging to Rosendo Mesa, and a pistol belonging to the only Anglo man living in the village. Nevertheless, the Anglo posse lynched fifteen Mexican men and boys they suspected of being bandits. Following an investigation ordered by Texas Governor Oscar Colquitt, the murdered men of El Porvenir were all but cleared of guilt for the Brite Ranch Raid. General Harley discharged Captain Fox and his men, but none faced criminal charges. In a letter to Fox, Harley announced, “...officers should know that every man, whether he be white or black, yellow or brown, has the constitutional right to a trial by jury, and that no organized band operating under the laws of this state has the right to constitute itself judge and executioner.”<sup>2</sup> These were strong and admirable words, but they did little to change Anglo opinions about Mexican refugees living in camps like El Porvenir. Anglo Texans believed that the poorest class of Mexican refugees who lived in the isolated region of the Big Bend were nothing more than “bandits.”

Both Mexicans and Anglo Texans had their own sources of information (and misinformation), helping them form opinions of each other, and leading them to create stereotypes of one another. Anglo Texans heard news of revolutionary ranch raids as early as 1911. Additionally, stories about the “savagery” of Mexican-on-Mexican revolutionary violence south of the border arrived in Texas as refugees fled the nation, and rumors of armed Mexican uprisings against Anglos crossed the

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<sup>2</sup> Harry Warren Collection, Folder 88, Archive of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas; Letter from General James A. Harley to Captain J.M. Fox, July 12, 1918.



border with them. Ethnic Mexicans living in the borderland had reason to believe they were in danger from Anglo Texans as well, causing them to live in fear of civilian posses and Texas law enforcement. Mexicans living in Texas heard stories about Texas Rangers kidnapping Mexican men in the middle of the night, the lynching of Mexican men who were taken from county jails, and a criminal justice system that allowed executions, such as that of Leon Martinez, Jr., to occur without a fair trial. For decades Mexicans told stories that Rangers carried old rusted weapons, and placed them in possession of mortally wounded Mexicans shot by the “border cowboys.” Such manipulations of scenes allowed the Rangers to claim they shot “bandits” in acts of self-defense.<sup>3</sup> The fear Mexicans had of the Texas Rangers dates back to the time of the Mexican-American war. United States General Zachary Taylor wrote about the atrocities committed by the Ranger force. “Los Diablos Tejanos,” or the Texas Devils, was a term that stayed with the Rangers for decades to follow.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter explores the roots of vigilante violence on both sides of the border, often in response to rumors and false reports by the Anglo press. Mexican refugees were caught in a crossfire: in Mexico they fled the revolutionary violence, and in Texas they were seen as an “enemy other” both because of the stereotypes Anglos held of Mexicans and because of the reality about the brutality of revolutionary fighting. A challenging situation worsened for Anglo Texans. While

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<sup>3</sup> Robert M. Utley, *Lone Star Justice: The First Century of the Texas Rangers* (New York: The Berkely Publishing Group, 2003), 293.

<sup>4</sup> Lawrence R. Clayton and Joseph E. Chance, *The March to Monterrey: The Diary of Lt. Rankin Dilworth* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1996), 93.

ranch raids on American soil escalated, the federal government was inconsistent in its policy about the U.S. Army presence in the region. President Taft initially sent a large deployment to San Antonio, removed them within a year, and then left a scattering of regular Army personal in the region. Before leaving office Taft met with Texas Governor Colquitt to discuss the growing violence in the borderland. Taft offered little reassurance that the Wilson administration would intervene in Mexico and suggested that the “Mexican problem” was a “Texas problem,” and that he should increase recruitment of the Texas Rangers and assign them to border duty.<sup>5</sup> President Wilson recalled remaining regular troops once America’s entry into World War I seemed imminent, replacing them with an unprepared militia. Anglo Texans, as a consequence of such inconsistency, believed vigilantism was justified to protect the state of Texas. Anglo violence intensified as stories of American casualties in Mexico multiplied, and as rumors spread about armed Mexicans staging an uprising in Texas to reclaim the lost frontier. Moreover, Anglos believed that the numbers of Mexican “bandits” in the borderland increased.

This chapter illustrates the complexity of the term “bandit,” which too often is used as a moniker for Mexican criminals in the literature about this period. If some Mexicans were bandits, then the same is true of some Anglos. Several primary source documents use the term “Jingo Bandit” to describe the Anglo raiders, a term absent from the secondary literature. I define Anglo bandits as those who acted

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<sup>5</sup> “Conditions on Both Sides of the Line Separating America from Mexico,” in Gene Z. Hanrahan (ed.), *Documents on the Mexican Revolution*, Vol. I, Pt. 1, Salisbury, NC: Documentary Publications, 1976), 64-66.

without authority against suspected Mexican criminals, and/or Rangers who abused their authority and acted as judge, jury, and executioner.

This chapter also demonstrates how retaliation and revenge transformed innocent men into murderers on both sides of the border, and how lawlessness overtook civility in the region by 1918. The Gomez lynching of 1911 (Chapter Two) and the Martinez execution of 1914 (Chapter Three), legitimized Anglo-on-Mexican vigilantism in Texas. The first part identifies characteristics of Mexican refugees that Anglo Texans disliked and examines the internment of five thousand Mexican refugees at Fort Bliss. Part two demonstrates how the intensifying violence of the raids in Mexico and the United States further damaged Anglo and Mexican relations in the region. Part three shows that a brief period of stability existed while U.S. Guardsmen patrolled the region. Finally, part four discusses the return to lawlessness and demonstrates how the Big Bend became a region in chaos where raids were less about property and more about revenge over previous disputes between Anglos and Mexicans.

By 1918 escalating violence on both sides of the border had rendered the borderland lawless and violent. Anglo Texans initially believed the Mexican Revolution threatened to contaminate only their cultural purity by sending masses of foreigners fleeing into Texas. By the mid- decade, however, they worried about the threat the revolution brought to their personal property and safety. Mexicans faced a real threat as revenge motivated Anglo-on-Mexican violence, and as public officials and the courts failed to protect ethnic Mexicans in Texas. And in some cases Anglos had a right to be fearful of the Mexican bands that had become as lawless as

the Anglo vigilantes. In the Big Bend of West Texas, the Mexican revolution transformed both Anglos and Mexicans into “devils” and “bandits,” and fortified the negative stereotypes that the two groups held of each other.

### **Rumors and Myths of Mexican Refugees in West Texas**

Few other places in the world have as many references to the Devil in landmarks and on maps as does this 250-square mile region that includes “a Devil’s River with a Devil’s Lake, a Devil’s Backbone, a Devil’s Ridge, a Sierra Diablo, a Diablo Plateau.” Deep within the Big Bend National Park lies the Devil’s Den (see Figure 5.1).<sup>6</sup> Retaliation and revenge took a more gruesome turn here than in any other region of the border during the decade of the Mexican Revolution.



**Figure 5.1** Map of the Texas Big Bend

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 17.

Border violence was both Mexican- and American-made. Hundreds of innocent victims lost their lives during the years leading up to the El Porvenir raid in 1918. Anglo Texans believed that “bandits” were the root of the Mexican problem along the border. Banditry in the Southwest has a long history, one that precedes the Mexican Revolution. It is a story about Anglos, Native Americans, Mexicans, and others involved in criminal acts. Often the term bandit is interchangeable with the term “outlaw.” “Billy the Kid,” born William Henry McCarty, Jr. in 1859, was a legendary bandit who, in his short twenty-one years of life, thieved and murdered in the West, committing his first crime in Silver City, New Mexico, at the age of fifteen. Some of the most notorious bandits were train robbers such as the Dalton Gang of the late nineteenth century. Men and women of the Southwest and West committed various crimes, including: theft, murder, bank and train robberies, and even cannibalistic serial killing.

During the decade of the Mexican Revolution, Anglo men saw Mexican revolutionaries as “bandits.” In Mexico, revolutionary leaders such as Pancho Villa were both demonized and lionized—“the social bandit of 1911 became the terrorist of 1917; the social bandit of one valley crossed the mountains and terrorized another,” the historian Chris Frazer has written.<sup>7</sup>

A more regulated legal system of law and justice came to these western territories as they gained settlers and statehood. However, these changes had come

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<sup>7</sup> Chris Frazer, *Bandit Nation: A History of Outlaws and Cultural Struggle in Mexico, 1810-1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 4-5.; Frazier referenced Alan Knight’s argument that “banditry and rebellion are mutable over time and geography” in his analysis of revolutionary leaders such as Pancho Villa.

more slowly to the Big Bend. Cattle ranchers and cowboys revered the Big Bend as the last of the great frontiers in Texas, still being conquered by Anglos, where rough manliness and vigilante justice still mattered. Many ethnic Mexicans in Northern Mexico, and parts of the American Southwest, saw the Big Bend differently, as lands taken from their ancestors. Animosity among them toward Anglos in this contested space ran deep. Anglo Texans and Mexicans had a long history of contestation in the borderland, and the Mexican Revolution reawakened their nationalist feelings, prompting a level of conflict kin to an unofficial war along this part of the border between 1915 and 1918.

Ranch raids by Mexicans on the U.S. side of the border were not common during the early months of the revolution. Rebels at the time focused on haciendas, foreign owned businesses, and Mormon colonies in Mexico. That did not prevent the press from falsely reporting on such crimes. *The Galveston Daily News* ran an article about border banditry in early 1911 only a few months after the start of the revolution. The article warned the public that Mexican bandits were a possible threat to the community. The words “bandit” and “raid” were used fourteen times in the article. However, this article made no mention of an actual contemporary raid, but focused instead on an 1875 raid in Corpus Christi, Texas, by thirty Mexican criminals. The article’s bold font announced only that “AMERICANS WERE TERRORIZED” and that “WOMEN AND CHILDREN SUFFERED,” making it seem as though this raid had just happened and thereby creating the myth that the border was swarming with Mexican bandits.<sup>8</sup> *The Galveston Daily News* used language that

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<sup>8</sup> “Story of Raids by Mexican Bandits,” *The Galveston Daily News*, February 4, 1911, 25.

was anti-Mexican to spread fear that the Mexican Revolution had increased the presence of Mexican nationals in Texas who were poor and prone to violence, disease, and alcoholism. By the mid decade, daily news reports connected rebels and revolutionaries with banditry, and warned Texans to monitor the poorer class of Mexicans. The *San Antonio Light* reported that “it would be relatively easy” for over 2,000 Mexican rebels to cross the bridge into Brownsville, and take the city. A related article on the same page ran the headline, “New Raid Feared,” and disclosed that “a party of eighty Mexicans” at Rio Grande City, Mexico, was approaching Laredo.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, the press reported that those responsible for the raids were Mexican peons with “inherited ignorance... superstition... habits of poor housing,” and “weakness to... diseases.” The poorer class of Mexicans should concern Texans the most, the Anglo press warned.<sup>10</sup>

From the onset of the Revolution, refugees fled Mexico in large numbers, and Mexican American citizens had to decide whether or not to help them and risk drawing the unwanted attention of Anglo citizens. While welcoming middle and upper class refugees into their communities, urban Mexican Americans harbored more negative attitudes toward the poorest of refugees. The latter thus turned to poor Mexican Americans for help, and either over-populated Mexican districts within the cities or established isolated rural communities like El Porvenir on their own, where they could work on nearby Anglo ranches. These poor refugees were

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<sup>9</sup> “Artillery and Aeroplane to be Requested,” *San Antonio Light*, August 14, 1915, 1.; “New Raid Feared,” *San Antonio Light*, August 14, 1915, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Robert N. McLean, *That Mexican: As He Really is North and South of the Rio Grande*, (New York: Fleming H. Revell and Company, 1928), 126.

caught between a land that did not want them and a home they feared.<sup>11</sup> Thus, many of these families formed communities along the Rio Grande. They remained close to a world familiar to them without venturing too far into the unknown.

One hundred and forty Mexicans lived in El Porvenir. The small village was located in western Presidio County along the Rio Grande in the Texas Big Bend. El Porvenir, “the future,” was home to refugees of the Mexican Revolution, many of whom fled after the villages they lived in and haciendas they worked on were raided by revolutionary fighters. In the state of Morelos, one of the largest planters reported that the revolution and chaos “degenerated into bandit raids. As a result the laborers have quit the fields and taken refuge in the mountains. Neither bandits nor federals can conscript them into service.”<sup>12</sup> The planter felt the impact immediately, as his crops were over 50% short that season. The long-term consequences were even greater, as field workers in Mexico began to flee the country for Texas with their families for work and safety.<sup>13</sup>

El Porvenir was a haven for families who fled Mexico, set up to be so by two Mexicans who owned the land and who had spread word that this was a place to which Mexican refugees could find safety, and enough arable land to support their families. The settlement was organized communally, with the individual families

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<sup>11</sup> Lona Teresa O’Neal Whittington, “The Road of Sorrow: Mexican Refugees Who Fled Pancho Villa through Presidio, Texas, 1913-1914” (M.A. Thesis, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 1976), 1.

<sup>12</sup> “Raids in the South,” *The Galveston Daily News*, April 1, 1911, 1.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 1.



contributing to the general welfare without owning the land themselves. This communalism and altruism struck Anglo ranchers as odd, and worrying.<sup>14</sup>

Those refugees who could not find their way to El Porvenir had a more harrowing journey. During the winter of 1913-1914, refugees fled into the Big Bend following a Mexican Army defeat at Ojinaga, Mexico, by Pancho Villa's army. The Battle of Ojinaga produced over 1,000 casualties. *The New York Times* reported that "a steady stream of suffering humanity trailing down the Camino del Muerto, 'road of the dead,' arrived daily" in southwest Texas. Some men carried their comrades across the river, others were seen "crawling to the American side with stumps of arms appealing for aid," and many of the severely wounded remained on the battlefield as a "feast of human flesh" for the buzzards wheeling overhead. A First Lieutenant of the Federal Army crawled through the brush to the feet of an American soldier and begged to be shot in the head—his mortal wounds and loss of upper extremities were too much to bear. Local Presidio officials called out for all available physicians, surgeons, and nurses within a 300-mile radius, and the United States Army arrived with tents and cots for the wounded.<sup>15</sup>

Joining the civilian refugees were armed Mexican soldiers, immediately detained by American officials upon crossing the border. The American soldiers in

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<sup>14</sup> Harry Warren Collection, Folder 88, "The Porvenir Massacre in Presidio County, Texas, One January 28, 1918," Archive of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas; "Porvenir," Williwood Meador Collection, Box 4/File 11, The West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

<sup>15</sup> "1,000 Men Slain in Ojinaga Fight," *The New York Times*, January 2, 1914, 1.; "Fort Bliss is Promised Land for Refugees," *San Antonio Light*, January 25, 1914, 13.; "Refugees Start Trek to Marfa," *El Paso Herald*, January 14, 1914, 1.; "Federals Fortify Ojinaga; Refugees Crossing the Line," *El Paso Herald*, December 9, 1913, p. 1.; "Vanguard of Refugees is in Marfa Ready to Board Trains for Fort Bliss," *El Paso Herald*, January 19, 1914, p. 1.

the region were part of President Taft's "War Plan Green," implemented in February of 1913, which sent the U.S. Army Second Division to Galveston, Texas, and ordered an Atlantic fleet to Vera Cruz to monitor the revolutionary situation. The land troops in Texas escorted the refugees another 67 miles north to Marfa, Texas. The journey to Marfa became known as "El Camino Dolores" (the road of sorrows).<sup>16</sup> The terrain was dangerous; the road was narrow, with sudden turns and an elevation that reached 4,900 feet above sea level. Along the roadside were makeshift graves of stone piles holding wooden crosses that marked the site of a fallen refugee or a victim of revolutionary fighting. As the refugees passed each marker, they solemnly motioned the sign of the cross and whispered, "probrecito" (poor fellow).<sup>17</sup>

The four-day march to Marfa began each day at sunrise and ended upon sunset. The refugee caravan was full of women and children and resembled, according to the American commander, the "migration of some primitive people in the early dawn of history, rather than the orderly procedure of an army of modern times." And he described them to be "nearly all of Indian strain."<sup>18</sup> At the end of this four-day journey to Marfa, the refugees boarded trains to Fort Bliss, near El Paso, where they were corralled behind barbed-wire fences as "guests" of the United States. A timeline for release was not given, and the refugees would remain in internment camps for eight months. Texans did not want the visitors, but also did

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<sup>16</sup> Lona Teresa O'Neal Whittington, "The Road of Sorrow: Mexican Refugees Who Fled Pancho Villa through Presidio, Texas, 1913-1914" (M.A. Thesis, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 1976), 1.

<sup>17</sup> "Vanguard of Refugees is in Marfa Ready to Board Trains for Fort Bliss," *El Paso Herald*, January 19, 1914, 1.

<sup>18</sup> "Hegira to El Paso is Underway," *El Paso Herald*, January 16, 1914, 1.

not want to release such a large group of poor Mexican refugees in the United States. Texans feared that any of those released would join outlaws known as “river men” along the Rio Grande, become a financial burden on charitable American organizations in the cities, or swell to overcrowded impoverished Mexican neighborhoods in El Paso.

There were over 5,000 Mexican prisoners at Fort Bliss, which cost the Army \$719,883 in supplies and aid. The camp had an electrical lighting system, bathing facilities, and tents that resembled barracks. Mexican Generals had their own tents where they lived with their families. The Adjutant General’s Office instructed officials at Fort Bliss on the daily operations of the prisoners and ordered every refugee to be vaccinated for smallpox and inoculated against typhoid. Officials at Fort Bliss established a school for the numerous Mexican children and put men to work “mixing adobe to build Mexican style huts.”<sup>19</sup> A glowing report from El Paso circulated throughout the national press announcing that the conditions were hospitable for America’s “guests” and that “those in the camp are glad to be there.”<sup>20</sup> Press reports announced that the Mexican children who had made the desert and mountainous journey “half-naked” and “barefoot” were now clothed and appeared “happier than it usually befalls a Mexican child to be, even in its own land, under favorable conditions.”<sup>21</sup> One political cartoon quipped that the conditions in the

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<sup>19</sup> Perry Jamieson, “A Survey History of Fort Bliss, 1890-1940,” Publication of this report was supported by funding from the Legacy Resource Management Program of the Department of Defense Historic and Natural Resources Report No. 5 Cultural Resources Management Program Directorate of Environment United States Army Air Defense Artillery Center Fort Bliss, Texas 1993.

<sup>20</sup> *San Antonio light*, January 25, 1914, 18.

<sup>21</sup> “Hegira to El Paso is Underway,” *El Paso Herald*, January 16, 1914, 1.

camp were so impressive that the creation of more camps, similar to the one at Fort Bliss, could bring an end to the revolution once news of the camps reached central Mexico (see Figure 5.2). Some articles in the Anglo press reported that hundreds of Mexicans in the El Paso area tried to break into the internment camp because of the good conditions there. However, the official report from the Fort Bliss historical records has no mention of this, suggesting that the camps were not the coveted



**Figure 5.2** “Conquering Mexico,” *Columbus Dispatch*, January 26, 1914, 1.

destinations that the Anglo press made them out to be.<sup>22</sup> This silence did not deter the propagandists, who made out the camps to be a worthwhile tourist attraction.

Indeed, El Pasoans now looked upon the compound with pride. The sightseers took photographs of the refugees and told themselves that the internees were being offered a better life than what they had experienced in Mexico.<sup>23</sup> Inside the camp the prisoners were at first divided by politics but then united by their anger at the U.S. government for keeping them locked up.<sup>24</sup> Release was problematic. The northern Mexican states bordering Texas and New Mexico were heavily fortified by rebels, and if Mexican federal soldiers were released and sent back they would more than likely be captured and executed. The same fate might have befallen captive rebels if turned over to President Huerta and General Carranza, for both saw these men as enemy combatants of the existing regime in Mexico. Nevertheless, Huerta wanted them returned, and diplomatic relations between the two countries worsened as the United States refused to do so.<sup>25</sup>

Anglo Texans believed that refugees who escaped the camp were armed and dangerous. On the night of April 18, Zarco and Jesus Pallares crawled under the

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<sup>22</sup> Perry Jamieson, "A Survey History of Fort Bliss, 1890-1940," Publication of this report was supported by funding from the Legacy Resource Management Program of the Department of Defense Historic and Natural Resources Report No. 5 Cultural Resources Management Program Directorate of Environment United States Army Air Defense Artillery Center Fort Bliss, Texas 1993.

<sup>23</sup> *San Antonio Light*, January 25, 1914, p. 18.

<sup>24</sup> Perry Jamieson, "A Survey History of Fort Bliss, 1890-1940," Publication of this report was supported by funding from the Legacy Resource Management Program of the Department of Defense Historic and Natural Resources Report No. 5 Cultural Resources Management Program Directorate of Environment United States Army Air Defense Artillery Center Fort Bliss, Texas 1993.; *San Antonio Light*, January 25, 1914, p. 18.

<sup>25</sup> "Mexican Refugees Won't Be Sent Back," *The New York Times*, January 13, 1914, 1.

barbed wire fence on the east side of the camp, where they had previously destroyed the lights, and fled on foot. Melvin Switzer and A.T. Flanery were on patrol, and each fired at the escapees. Zarco was struck in the leg and Pallares in the back. The bullet pierced through him and exited his stomach, a wound that took his life days later. Following the incident, escape attempts became more frequent and many succeeded.<sup>26</sup> Labeled as criminals and hiding in the mountainous terrain of the border region, these men eventually found refuge in small Mexican communities along the Rio Grande. As for the interned, the federal government relocated the internment camp to Fort Wingate, New Mexico, over 350 miles from the Mexican border. On May 5, 1914, three trains transported more than 4,825 Mexican people to their new location. As they exited the transport, many pleaded for their release. "We have done no harm, take us back to Mexico" was a cry frequently heard.<sup>27</sup> But the U.S. would not release any of them until Huerta fell from power in July 1914 and the U.S. government received assurances from Villa that repatriation would not be met with violence.<sup>28</sup>

It is unknown how many refugees fled Mexico during the decade of the Mexican Revolution, or which of them were involved in border raids, but it is clear that Anglo Texans were suspicious of ethnic Mexicans who were not kept under the watchful eye of the military or segregated into the Mexican districts of cities like San

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<sup>26</sup> "Two Mexicans Shot by U.S. Sentries," *The New York Times*, April 19, 1914, 1.

<sup>27</sup> General Deficiency Bill, 1915, Hearing before Subcommittee of House Committee on Appropriations, Deficiency Appropriations for 1915 and Prior Years. Sixty-third Congress, Third Session, 82-90.; "Refugees Reach Fort Wingate Under Guard of U.S. Troop," *The Belen News*, May 7, 1914, 1.

<sup>28</sup> National Archives and Records Administration I, Record Group 393, Fort Wingate, Box 11.

Antonio or El Paso. In addition to Fort Bliss and Fort Wingate, Mexican nationals were interned at Fort McIntosh, Texas, and Fort Rosecrans, California. A total of 5,379 Mexican citizens were interned during the summer of 1914. By the mid-decade, the “Mexican problem” Anglos spoke about referred to the large number of refugees who had entered Texas, and escaped to the “river section” of the Big Bend.

### **Texas Ranch Raids**

Border raids in Texas by Mexicans became more frequent by mid decade. While the press continued to publish reports of a growing foreign threat along the border, Texas Governor Oscar B. Colquitt wrestled with the federal government over who would be physically and fiscally responsible for policing the border. When neither the state nor federal government responded swiftly to border violence, civilians formed posses to pursue suspected criminals. The question of responsibility began with President Taft and continued with President Wilson: should the federal government send troops to the border or was this the responsibility of the state of Texas? In March 1911, Taft sent 30,000 troops to San Antonio but refused to deploy them along the border or to engage much with Mexican troops. Moreover, the federal government required Texas officials to get Washington’s approval before taking action; however, Washington did not have to inform the state of Texas what its plans were. Equally problematic for Colquitt was the fact that mayors, judges, and sheriffs had the power to call up the Texas Rangers without the governor’s approval and charge Ranger expenses to the state. On several occasions Sheriff Edwards of El Paso County assembled Anglo men to fight

on behalf of the state, which prompted Colquitt to describe him as “an excitable person, prone to jump to conclusions.”<sup>29</sup> Colquitt walked a fine line: he needed to downplay the border problems locally to prevent civilian posses and talk up the problem with Washington in order to encourage federal involvement.

Following the resignation of Díaz in May, United States Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson prematurely believed that Mexico would return to a period of stability. Thus, by August 1911, Taft disbanded the troops stationed in San Antonio.<sup>30</sup> Wilson inherited the “Mexican problem” from Taft in 1913, as did Governor James E. Ferguson who succeeded Colquitt in 1915. The Anglo press kept Texans aware that no official policy was in place and declared that in sparse regions like the Texas Big Bend, citizens had the right to protect their property at any cost, especially after news broke of a Mexican manifesto to reclaim the southwest for Mexico. Those who took the pledge allegedly vowed to murder all Anglo men sixteen years of age and older.

In January of 1915, immigration authorities arrested Basilio Ramos Jr., a native of Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, on charges of sedition. Ramos entered the United States in possession of the manifesto—The Plan de San Diego. The purpose of this plan was to start a revolution in the states of Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico,

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<sup>29</sup> Don M. Coerver, “‘Wire Me Before Shooting’: Federalism in Action—The Texas-Mexico Border During the Revolution” (paper presented at the annual Walter Prescott Webb Memorial Lecture Series, University of Texas at Arlington, Texas, March 10-11, 2010.); Timothy Neeno, “The Mexican Revolution and US Intervention, 1910-1917, Military History Online, <http://www.militaryhistoryonline.com/20thcentury/articles/mexicanrevolution.aspx>, accessed June 2, 2013.; “Colquitt Wants Hundred Rangers to Guard Border,” *The Daily Bulletin* March 13, 1914, 1.

<sup>30</sup> Timothy Neeno, “The Mexican Revolution and US Intervention, 1910-1917, Military History Online, <http://www.militaryhistoryonline.com/20thcentury/articles/mexicanrevolution.aspx>, accessed June 2, 2013.



Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, and California. In Texas, the plan initially called for the uprising of ethnic Mexicans to reclaim the land between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande, and eventually capture the previously mentioned states.<sup>31</sup> The federal indictment charged Ramos with attempting to “steal” American property (the states). The charges were ultimately dismissed with the judge stating that Ramos should not be tried for conspiracy and instead he “ought to be tried for lunacy.”<sup>32</sup> Although the federal court dismissed the case, the court of public opinion in Texas believed that Ramos exemplified the Mexican threat.

The stories of rebel raids on Mexican ranches and haciendas made their way into Texas with the refugees. One man from Santa Rosalia, Mexico, reported that he witnessed Villa’s men capture two women, soak their hair in oil and light them on fire. These same men declared they would “kill all Americans and Chinese caught” by their forces.<sup>33</sup> The revolution took a gruesome turn when 224 foreign, mostly Chinese, workers were slain in Torreón, Mexico. Millionaire business partners Foon Chuck and Sam Wah, living in Ciudad Juárez, received a telegraph from their surviving agent. Wah, the proprietor of the International Hotel in Ciudad Porfirio Díaz, and Chuck, the owner of several farms, were businessmen who had profited off Mexican land during the *Porfiriato*. Mexican revolutionaries were as determined to

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<sup>31</sup> The United States Department of State/Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States with address of the president to Congress December 5, 1916, Mexico 463-799. (570-572); U.S. v. Basilio Ramos, Jr. et al., District Court, Brownsville, Federal Records Center, Fort Worth, Texas no. 2152.

<sup>32</sup> Benjamin Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 74.

<sup>33</sup> “Women Reported Burned,” *Galveston Daily News*, November 8, 1916, 1.

strike at them as at Americans.<sup>34</sup> Chuck and Wah were Chinese immigrants, who found themselves trapped in Mexico. Fleeing the revolution and returning to China was not preferred because the businessmen desired to remain close to their investments. Due to the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the men could not seek refuge in the United States. If caught on American soil, they would be deported back to China. However, anti-Chinese rhetoric, fueled by revolutionary leaders, forced Chuck and Wah to abandon their property and return to China. As for the victims and surviving family members of the Torreon Massacre, U.S. Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson helped negotiate an indemnity case that ordered the Mexican government to pay three million pesos to the Chinese government. By the summer of 1912, over a year after the Torreon Massacre, the Mexican government failed to yield to international demands.<sup>35</sup>

Additionally, Pancho Villa promulgated an “expulsion act” in 1914 to rid the city of Chinese families.<sup>36</sup> Similar to what the United States did following the completion of the Southern Pacific railroad in 1881, Villa wanted to remove the once sought after Chinese laborers. During the *Porfiriato*, President Díaz encouraged Chinese migration and went so far as to grant China a “most favored nation” status with the 1893 Treaty of Amity and Commerce.<sup>37</sup> Rebel leaders who opposed Díaz

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<sup>34</sup> “Report Rebels Kill Hundreds of Chinamen,” *San Antonio Light*, May 22, 1911, 1.

<sup>35</sup> Telegram to President William Taft from Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson in Mexico City, Mexico, in Gene Z. Hanrahan (ed.), *Documents on the Mexican Revolution*, Vol. I, Pt. 1, Salisbury, NC: Documentary Publications, 1976), 379.

<sup>36</sup> David Dorando Romo, *Ringside Seat to a Revolution: An Underground Cultural History of EL Paso and Juárez, 1893-1923* (El Paso: Cinco Punto Press, 2005), 201.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 199-200.

supported Chinese exclusion policies, and often used racist language such as “chinacate” to refer to unwanted Chinese foreigners. Propagandists “depicted Chinese immigration as ‘an avalanche that has inundated us.’”<sup>38</sup> Racism against the Chinese was far more common after the ousting of Díaz. Between 1916 and 1918, schoolteacher José Maria Arana was instrumental in organizing Mexican fraternal organizations that targeted Chinese laborers. These anti-Chinese leagues enrolled more than 5,000 members in the northern states of Chihuahua, Sonora, and Baja. In his weekly tabloid, *Pro-Patria*, Arana published the following statement in each issue:

“Improvement of the race is the supreme ideal of all civilized nations, so that if the Chinese are corrupting our race, we ought to restrict them. The Chinese produce on the towns the same effect that the locust has on the crops: they destroy them. The Mexican that defends the Chinese with detriment to the national good, is a traitor to the country.”<sup>39</sup>

Mexican violence against Chinese laborers during the 1910s was often racially motivated, and the Torreón massacre demonstrated the brutality.

These were the stories of Mexican-on-foreigner violence that made their way into Texas homes via the American press as thousands of refugees were entering the country. Revolutionary forces were already operating in northern Mexico in part to secure supplies. As the population in northern Mexico thinned, rebels started extending their raids in American territory, provoking Anglo Texans to resort to extra legal punishment for suspected Mexican criminals.

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<sup>38</sup> Evelyn Hu-DeHart, “Immigrants to a Developing Society: The Chinese in Northern Mexico, 1875-1932,” *Journal of Arizona History*, Volume 21, Fall 1980, 56-60.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

The most notorious raid on American soil was an attack in Columbus, New Mexico. The raid led by Pancho Villa's men in March of 1916 quickly escalated into a battle between American soldiers and Villistas, which resulted in the death of 80 Mexicans and 18 American soldiers. A fatal prison fire in El Paso might have provoked this raid; nineteen of the prisoners were Villista soldiers. Brigadier General S.L.A. Marshall recalled what happened at the prison. Almost a week before the Columbus raid, jailer Frank Scotten, Sr., was delousing the prisoners to prevent the spread of typhus. Nineteen Mexican soldiers had just been incarcerated after crossing the border, and the delousing procedure in the jail was to shower the prisoners with a mixture of gasoline, kerosene, and vinegar. The news reported that one prisoner, unknowing of the contents of the mixture, struck a match to light a cigarette and engulfed the prison in flames. Initial reports indicated that eighteen prisoners perished; the number grew in the following days.<sup>40</sup> Whether the Columbus raid was a response to the prison accident is unknown. There was further speculation that the prison fire might not have been an accident, and according to Marshall, "when the raid hit [in Columbus], we in El Paso thought that this was a reprisal for what had happened in the jail."<sup>41</sup> The press reported that in Ciudad Juarez rumors quickly spread that "200 Mexicans had been thrown in jail in El Paso and deliberately burned to death."<sup>42</sup> Marshall explained how dozens of El

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<sup>40</sup> "Death List is Eighteen," *Corsicana Daily Sun*, March 7, 1916, 1.

<sup>41</sup> University of Texas at El Paso Institute of Oral History, Interviewee: Brig. Gen. S.L.A. Marshall, Interviewer: Richard Estrada, Date: July 5, 7, 9, 11, and 19, 1975. Tape no: 181, Transcript no: 181 page 15-16.

<sup>42</sup> "Death List is Eighteen," *Corsicana Daily Sun*, March 7, 1916, 1.

Paso Anglo men responded: “The night after the [Columbus] raid I went downtown to San Antonio Street and there were mobs of Anglos...going up and down San Antonio Street armed with clubs and pistols and so on. Every time they ran into a Mexican they would beat him up and throw him into an alley. It was one of the most horrible scenes I’ve ever seen.”<sup>43</sup> The Anglo men in El Paso sent a message to ethnic Mexicans that night: Americans would punish them for raids on U.S. soil.

Two months after the Columbus raids, on the night of May 5, 1916, C.G. Compton, who ran both the general store and post office of Glenn Springs, awoke around 11:00 p.m. to the sound of armed Mexican men outside. Glenn Springs was an isolated community that employed up to 60 Mexican workers at a candelilla wax factory, some of whom were refugees. There were Anglos and Mexicans living at Glenn Springs, segregated in separate sections of the ranch: the east side housed the Anglo families and the west side was known as “Mexican Glenn Springs.” The location was perfect for the business because of the endless flow of “liquid gold” in this desert region—water. Candelilla is a perennial used to make shoe polishes, car waxes, and chewing gum. Workers were paid \$1 per day to boil the stem, separate the wax, and package it for shipping.<sup>44</sup> The armed men were suspected to be Carranza soldiers and Mexican outlaws from the “river section” of the Big Bend. The number of attackers is unclear. Some reports say there were 65 while others

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>44</sup> Casey Collection Texas—Glenn Springs Raid Box 423. Archive of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, “Glenn Spring: A little Desert Village in the Big Bend Born Overnight, Raided by Mexican Bandits, and Abandoned when it was only Five Years Old.”

estimate up to 400 men. Regardless, Glenn Springs had only nine soldiers of the 14<sup>th</sup> U.S. Cavalry stationed there.<sup>45</sup>

The Mexican raiders located the bunkhouse where the soldiers slept and set it on fire. When Private Cohen tried to escape through a window the raiders shot him in the face with a shotgun. Private Colock was shot in the back trying to round up the horses. Privates Defeers and Buck were both shot in their arms and legs respectively and badly burned. Compton took his daughter to a Mexican woman on the Mexican side of Glenn Springs for safety before returning to fight off the invaders. He fired roughly 140 rounds of ammunition before he escaped and fled the village. When he returned he found his nine-year-old son shot in the leg, stomach, and chest with his head battered in, “the blood stained floor of the room told a pitiful tale of the child’s frantic efforts to escape his assassins” before his death. Another Anglo family at Glenn Springs fell under attack. W.K. Ellis and his wife ran toward the nearby mountains and returned after daybreak to find one son dead on the floor lying next to his deaf brother who somehow escaped without harm.<sup>46</sup>

Mrs. Alice Hart escaped with the help of a Mexican family who smuggled her in their wagon and covered her up while they drove her to safety in McKinney Springs. They were stopped several times by armed Mexicans who let them pass unharmed. The press reported that Mexicans on the Texas side of the border knew of the planned attack as well as the identity of many of the attackers. Compton’s

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<sup>45</sup> “Glenn Springs Raided” *The Alpine Avalanche*, May 11, 1916, 1.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

story of the raid also led many to believe that the Mexicans living at Glenn Springs were aware of the raid and even provided necessary information about the layout of the property and where the soldiers were housed. However, Compton's evidence relied on the fact that his dog barked, while the Mexican dogs in Glenn Springs did not; he did not have much more evidence than that.<sup>47</sup>

It was later speculated that a Rodríguez Ramirez of Torreón, Mexico, a Villista living in El Paso, launched the raid, marching with 17 others along the Rio Grande toward Glenn Springs for 250 miles. Along the way they recruited more "river men" and crossed the river at the Teague Ranch 25 miles from Glenn Springs with 200 men.<sup>48</sup> Following the attack at Glenn Springs, President Woodrow Wilson ordered the Texas National Guard to reinforce the troops on the border and to mobilize at Glenn Springs. The brutality that left American soldiers and an American boy dead at Glenn Springs persuaded terrified Anglos to take up arms against suspicious foreigners. The region was engrossed in its own war, one that did not have a line of division along a border; the line was between two races that lived uneasily alongside of each other in the Big Bend.

### **Mobilization of the Organized Militia**

When the Glenn Springs raid occurred, U.S. General Pershing was leading the Punitive Expedition of 4,800 soldiers into Mexico, in a hunt for Pancho Villa because

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>48</sup> Casey Collection Texas—Glenn Springs Raid Box 423. Archive of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, "Story of Glenn Springs Raid Is Told From Eye Witnesses of Border Murders."

of the raid on Columbus, New Mexico. When news reached this expedition that Pancho Villa might have ordered the raid at Glenn Springs, the 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, led by Lieutenant George S. Patton, took revenge on the San Miguelito Ranch in Rubio, Chihuahua. It was here that Patton himself shot and killed three Villistas, one of whom was Julio Cardeñas, a Captain in Villa's ranks. Clashes between Villistas and American troops continued through February 1917.

President Venustiano Carranza of Mexico sent a letter to Washington charging that the United States invaded Mexico following the Columbus raid to seize northern Mexican territory under the guise that they were hunting Villa. Carranza demanded that the American troops depart immediately.<sup>49</sup> While searching for Villa, the 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry encountered Mexican federal troops at Carrizal, Chihuahua. The official order was to avoid a collision with federal Mexican soldiers; but, if attacked, the American troops were to "inflict as much damage as possible, having regard for the safety of your own command."<sup>50</sup> Francisco Dawl, an eyewitness and resident of Carrizal, explained that an American detachment led by Captain Charles T. Boyd was headed toward Villa Ahumada when they entered Carrizal. Two Mexican cavalry regiments led by General Felix Gomez were stationed at Carrizal, and ordered Boyd to by-pass the town. With "stubborn insistence," however, Boyd marched his men forward. "American troops fired first" according to Dawl, and the battle left eleven Americans and twenty-four Mexicans dead. The Mexican troops

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<sup>49</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1916, 577.

<sup>50</sup> War Diary, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, Punitive Expedition Records, National Archives, R.G. 120, Box 60.



took twenty-four American soldiers as prisoners.<sup>51</sup> The Punitive Expedition never captured Villa and strained diplomatic relations with Carranza, already under suspicion in the U.S. for his alleged pro-German attitudes.

In May 1916, following the raids at Columbus and Glenn Springs, President Wilson called upon the National Guard. On May 9, 1916, Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker, sent a telegram to the governors of Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico:

“Having in view the possibility of further aggression upon the territory of the United States from Mexico and the necessity for the proper protection of that frontier, the President has thought proper to exercise the authority vested in him by the Constitution and laws and call out the Organized Militia necessary for that purpose.”<sup>52</sup>

In June 1916, Mexican rebels entered Texas near Laredo and clashed with American soldiers. Wilson responded to this by calling out the National Guard of all 48 states. The first National Guard troops to reach the border were the First Illinois Infantry, which departed from Springfield, Illinois, and arrived in San Antonio on June 30, 1916. A week later, 27,160 troops from 14 states joined the Illinois personnel along the 2,000-mile border with Mexico. By August 1, 1916, 112,000 troops were stationed along the border from Brownsville, Texas, to Douglas, Arizona.<sup>53</sup>

Coordinating these groups of men proved to be a major test for the Army.

None of the troops had seen combat. Complicating matters further, the Governors

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<sup>51</sup> Vilanova, Antonio, “American Troops Fired First at El Carrizal, Says Writer,” *The Southwesterner*, February 1967.

<sup>52</sup> United States National Guard Bureau, *Report on Mobilization of the Organized Militia and National Guard of the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1916), 10.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12; Timothy Neeno, “The Mexican Revolution and US Intervention, 1910-1917, Military History Online, <http://www.militaryhistoryonline.com/20thcentury/articles/mexicanrevolution.aspx>, accessed June 2, 2013.

were unwilling to send their best-trained soldiers to the border. Once the Governors received orders to call up units, a problem with a system of dual control became clear. Each Governor did not always call up the most efficient units for service. The “Mexican problem” was not a pressing issue with the governors of states located hundreds of miles away from the border. Thus, “due to local or political considerations, any but the most efficient units were called out... the Federal Government thus failed to get the best the state was able to produce.”<sup>54</sup>

Private Roger Batchelder of the Eighth Massachusetts Regiment published a memoir of his experience as a Guardsman along the border, *Watching and Waiting on the Border*, in 1917. Batchelder faulted the U.S. military “system” for the “incompetency” of the soldiers along the border:

“It was the fault of the system—a system which drills men for two hours a week, neglects their needs for accouterments, asks a few to perform the duty of the many, and expects to institute a first-class fighting machine. Such expectation would be humorous, were it not now so tragic.”<sup>55</sup>

Guardsmen like Batchelder were aware of their poor training and soldiering skills, and even commented on how inefficient their reserve force was compared to the regular army in the region.

Many of the troops questioned the necessity of their service along the border, and wondered if the haste in which they were called up “was a political move and that they were making sacrifices for nothing.”<sup>56</sup> Training officers argued that the

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<sup>54</sup> United States National Guard Bureau, *Report on Mobilization of the Organized Militia and National Guard of the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1916), 11.

<sup>55</sup> Roger Batchelder, *Watching and Waiting on the Border* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1917), x-xi.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

troops were not properly trained, and several of the officers making the decisions were men of questionable character. Lieut. James W. Everington, National Guard inspector-instructor, sent troops to the border without requiring them to complete the 12-mile march; he reported that only one regiment made it as far as 3 miles. Everington would later go on to become Los Angeles Police Chief in 1922. After serving only 3 months as police chief, Mayor George E. Cryer fired Everington for “rank insubordination and disrespect to superior officers.” Everington stated that an honest man could not be chief, but “A crook can be thief, though, if he's clever enough not to get caught.”<sup>57</sup> Such individuals were making decisions to send troops to the border, poorly trained, and lacking the necessary desire to fight.

In June of 1916 the Texas National Guard stationed guardsmen in Glenn Springs. The cartoons of soldier Jodie P. Harris chronicled the daily lives of these guardsmen. Harris of Mineral Wells, Texas, sent postcards on a weekly basis to his family with sketches of daily life patrolling the border at Glenn Springs. The son of a Civil War veteran, Harris had family who fought in the American Revolutionary War. Harris would later serve in both World Wars. Harris provides a unique picture of the time as well as of national and international events. He penned satirist newspapers of the military efforts on the frontier, writing both the editorials and drawing the cartoons for *The Big Bend* and *La Noria* (see Figure 5.3).

His publication was a direct attack on the American press for raising Anglo hysterics about a Mexican threat along the border. The more excited Americans became about the problems in the region, he alleged, the more papers were sold

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid 113-119; “Mayor Fires L.A. Police Chief by Three-Line Note,” *Oakland Tribune*, April 21, 1922, p. 18.

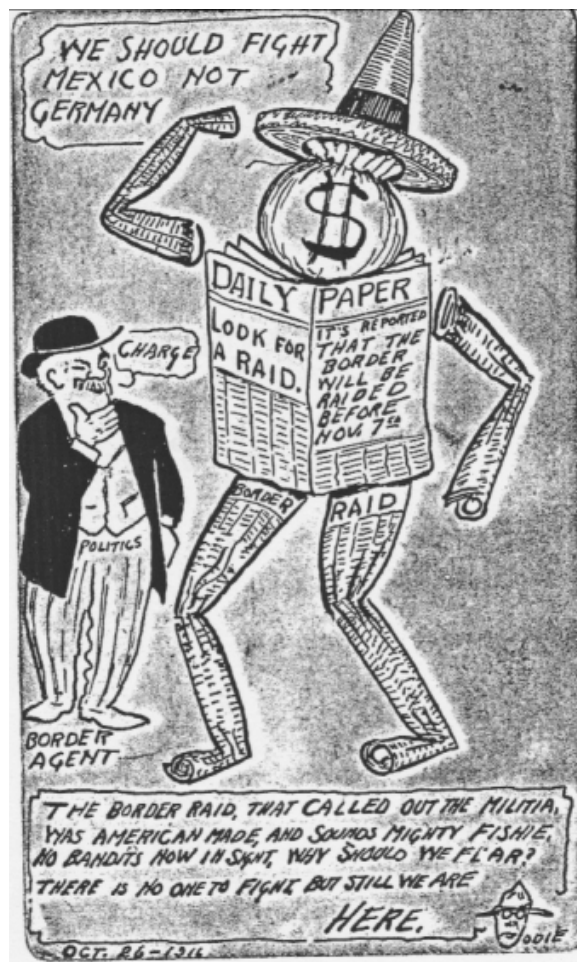
(see Figure 5.4). He argued that plots for border raids were “hatched on this side of the border by unscrupulous Americans.” Moreover, he was critical of the federal government’s motives for Mexican intervention. His cartoon diary voiced the



**Figure 5.3** Jodie P. Harris Collection, Folders AVF, 1-10, Archive of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas. In the image a militiaman appears bored while rocking a baby’s crib titled “Mexican Trouble.” President Woodrow Wilson is illustrated as an old woman knitting concerned that the “Mexican Trouble” might awaken, thus, forcing him to abandoned his highly criticized “watchful waiting” diplomacy. In the background is Uncle Sam who seems less concerned with Mexico and more about the war in Europe.

frustrations of his fellow soldiers guarding a nearly abandoned factory at Glenn Springs. Infused with humor and cynicism, his cartoons bordered on insubordination with his criticism of the U.S. military. In one section of his paper he posted: “Donkeys, \$5; Goats, \$1; Wax, \$0.19; an honorable discharge from the

United States Service, Unobtainable.” The only satisfied soldier was the company mascot, Chili, the soldiers’ dog. In an attempt to keep the soldiers entertained, the troops played baseball against each other, and even played against Mexican boys who lived in the region. Harris claimed in his cartoons that the press exaggerated the frequency of Mexican raids on Texas property. The reality left the men disappointed, and by the winter of 1916 they were cold, lonely, and missing their families (see Figure 5.5).<sup>58</sup>



**Figure 5.4** Jodie P. Harris Collection, Folders AVF, 1-10, Archive of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas.

<sup>58</sup> Jodie P. Harris Collection, Folders AVF, 1-10, Archive of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas.



**Figure 5.5** Jodie P. Harris Collection, Folders AVF, 1-10, Archive of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas.

Private Roger Batchelder's memoir supported Harris's assessment that the border was less volatile than he and other soldiers expected. His memoir further reveals an additional reason troop morale waned as their time along the border continued. Batchelder indulged in stereotypes of Mexicans as having poor hygiene and likened them to "a bloodthirsty animal that inhabits the wilderness beyond the Rio Grande."<sup>59</sup> However, he disliked Texans almost as much. He stated that all of the guardsmen he spoke with shared a similar feeling about Anglo Texans. The bitterness was a result of the poor conduct by Texans toward non-officer guardsmen. Texans showed respect to their Rangers, and any wearer of "the gold braid," an emblem that distinguished "an officer and a gentleman," but the enlisted men received little respect from Anglo men and women. Batchelder recalled a sign

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<sup>59</sup> Roger Batchelder, *Watching and Waiting on the Border* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1917), vii.

outside of a dancehall in Ysleta, a small town southeast of El Paso, which read, “DANCING FOR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, SOLDIERS AND DOGS NOT ALLOWED.”<sup>60</sup> These announcements were similar to those signs excluding Mexicans and blacks in all-white establishments. Restrictions like these often led to clashes between soldiers and attendees, reported in the press the following day as disturbances by “unruly soldiers.” Batchelder declared, “I merely claim that a soldier, or a Guardsman, should at least be treated as a man, and not as the Texans treat a Mexican.”<sup>61</sup> Batchelder’s memoirs and the Harris collection cartoons support the argument that banditry was less random and daily—leading Harris to argue that the stories were fabricated. However, the brief period of stability and decrease in raids was most likely a result of the large presence of the U.S. military in the region. Batchelder and the Eighth Massachusetts Regiment departed Texas in mid-October and arrived in Worcester Massachusetts on Saturday, October 21, 1916.<sup>62</sup> He recalled learning that raiding resumed in the region as the military pulled out of the borderland. In the end, Batchelder believed the deployment was a success because border raids on the American side decreased.<sup>63</sup> However, Mexicans experienced an increase in disturbances in Mexico as the American military sought Villa.

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, xii.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

## Lawlessness and Vengeance

The literature of the Big Bend is full of stories of bandits and raids. One of history's best-kept secrets is that Americans themselves engaged in a bit of raiding in the Big Bend. In order to make this claim, the Big Bend must be conceptualized as a region that includes both sides of the border, not exclusively the Texas region, and "bandits" must be understood as any person who attacked a community or group of people without warrant, and punished their targets through extra-legal measures.

Lajitas, in Brewster County, was home to a small detachment of the 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry of the U.S. Army. Their duty was to patrol the riverbed area. On back-to-back days, a patrolman reported that he had been fired upon from the Mexican side of the river. The lieutenant in charge took all of his men up the river to the little Mexican settlement known as Arroyo Fresno (ash creek). Without any proof that the community was involved, without any knowledge of weapons known to be on the property, and ignoring international law, the U.S. soldiers entered Mexico and searched Mexican homes. The Mexican families fled to the hills as the army approached. A Mexican witness of the raid reported that the only guns fired were by the American soldiers, and the only death was that of a pig shot by one of the raiders "to hear him squeal."<sup>64</sup> The American bandits stole corn, chili, honey, dried meats, and ten gallons of sotol (a liquor distilled from the sotol plant). As the Jingo bandits left, they lit the small village on fire and watched the homes quickly burn to

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<sup>64</sup> Casey Collection Texas—Mexican American Border Region Folder, Archive of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas; Eugenia Chandley, "Soldiers Tire of Quiet Life on River and Raid Homes For Amusement While Friends Fought in World War," *Sul Ross Skyline*, Vol. XVI, No. 2, October 26, 1938.



the ground. The burned out Mexican families walked 30 miles to San Carlos for aid and shelter.<sup>65</sup>

If it wasn't for the sotol, this story might not be known. The American soldiers consumed the intoxicant, and too much time passed without contact with their Captain stationed at the neighboring mining camp of Chisos. When he learned that the lieutenant left his post unguarded, and returned "lit up with Mexican fire water," the Captain relieved him of his duties and gave him a dishonorable discharge. Nevertheless, stories of Mexican bandits in the Big Bend led Anglo Texans to believe overwhelmingly that the perpetrators were more often than not, Mexican.

Raids continued in the Big Bend as American troops began to leave the region. In the foothills of the Copote Mountains in Presidio, County, the Lucas Brite Ranch, also known as the Bar-Cross Ranch, had uninvited guests arrive on Christmas morning 1917. There were fifty to seventy five men working and living on the ranch with their families. Christmas fell on a Tuesday in 1917, and many of the families began leaving over the weekend in order to spend Christmas Day in neighboring towns with relatives. The ranch foreman, Van Niell, planned to spend Christmas on the Ranch with his wife, his son, Van Jr., and his two daughters. Joining them would be his father, mother, and two teenage nieces.

A few days earlier on Saturday afternoon, a Mexican boy about 15 years old arrived on the ranch. He claimed to be meeting friends from Pecos for the holidays. The Niells let the boy stay the weekend in the bunkhouse, and he played with the

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

other ranch children. The youngsters, excited about their visitor's arrival, placed a gift for the boy on the Christmas tree. On Christmas Eve, Jose Sánchez, the cowhand, dressed up in a bright red Santa suit and handed out gifts to the children anxiously sitting around the Christmas tree. During the festivities the mysterious young visitor vanished, and was later seen far away from the house building a fire. He appeared to be waving a torch around in the sky. Those who noticed wondered if it was some traditional Mexican Christmas ceremony, while others just thought he was a lonely boy playing a game.

As the sun rose over the mountains and Sam Niell, the elder Niell, was drinking his morning coffee, two-dozen strangers on horseback approached from the Southwest. "Bandits!" Niell shouted throughout the house. Sam and Van took their shotguns and guarded either end of the house while their wives and daughters lay flat on the floor in the dining room. During the raid, Jose Sánchez met with both parties as a messenger in an attempt to end the hostilities. The Mexican raiders demanded the keys to the store. Once at the store they emptied sacks of corn all over the floor to make room for their loot. Mickey Welsch, who delivered the mail in the region, arrived at the store and interrupted the men. The raiders believed Welsch recognized them and took him into the store. The men tied a rope around his neck and hanged him from the beams. While Welsh struggled for his life, the men cut his throat.

During the gunfight, Mrs. Niell tried to get to the store, which had a telephone, with the assistance of Crescencia Natividad, a Mexican cook. Natividad would not let Niell go alone, and became known as the "Heroine of Brite Ranch"

because of her bravery. She protected Niell by covering Niell's body with her own as they crossed the ranch. The Niell men continued to defend the ranch and eventually shot and killed the leader of the bandit group—Placido Villanueva. Villanueva's jacket was examined and it was rumored that a letter was found on him addressed to Carranza from the Germans instructing the men to raid the ranch."<sup>66</sup> News of the raid reached neighboring Marfa, where U.S. troops were stationed. American soldiers followed the raiders into Mexico for two days, killing several of the Mexican men and recovering some of the goods.

There were many competing theories about who ordered the raid. Were these Carranza's men? Their uniforms would suggest that they were. Were they Villistas dressed as Carranza's men, or were there far more global implications with German interests in a United States and Mexican war? One thing is certain: the raid united Anglo civilians in the Big Bend with Texas Rangers and American soldiers in an effort to police the region. Fear of another raid quickly spread throughout the Big Bend. Women and children were sent to the Presidio County Courthouse, which was fortified by civilian men and soldiers. Anglo men armed themselves and those with automobiles patrolled the region. On December 29, 1917, a group of 200 men made up of ranchers, rangers, and other citizens formed a vigilance committee to protect the region. They met at the Stockman's Club in Marfa and listened to Lt. Col. George T. Langhorne and Texas Ranger Jim Gillette as they outlined a plan to monitor Mexicans in the region and to report any "suspicious Mexicans" to the

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<sup>66</sup> C.B. Casey Papers, Box 380/Folder Brite Ranch Raid, Archive of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas; The Big Bend Sentinel, Archive of the Big Bend; "Bandits on the Border," Williwood Meador Collection, Box 4/File 3, The West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

committee. The committee's top priority was to find the men responsible for the Brite Ranch raid. The Mexican outlaws who escaped capture took an estimated \$1500 in cash and merchandise that included hats, overalls, coats, and boots.<sup>67</sup>

One month later, on January 26, 1918, a group of Texas Rangers visited the village of El Porvenir. The Rangers were joined by a group of Anglo men: brothers Buck and Tom Pool, Raymond Fitzgerald, and Tom Snyder. Snyder had told the Rangers that Mexican men at El Porvenir were responsible for the Brite Ranch raid. Snyder, an opportunist, stole several "mares and colts" from the residents of El Porvenir, but used the "Mexican problem" to his advantage and made a false claim about the men at El Porvenir. Worried that he would be prosecuted, it is believed that "he schemed to have the Mexicans killed so there would be no witness against him."<sup>68</sup> During the early morning raid the soldiers entered the jacales (mud homes) and searched boxes and trunks for weapons and stolen goods. They found two rifles and a shotgun among the one hundred and forty people living in El Porvenir. The shotgun belonged to John Baily, the only Anglo man living in the village. The Rangers noticed that three men were wearing Hamilton Brown Shoes, similar to the ones stolen from the general store during the Brite Ranch raid. For the posse, this was enough evidence to take the three Mexican men wearing the Hamilton boots away for questioning. Based on these findings the Rangers took Manuel Fierro, Eutimio Gonzales, and Roman Nieves about ten miles away to their camp, an old

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<sup>67</sup> *El Paso Times*, December 27, 1917, 1.

<sup>68</sup> Harry Warren Collection, Folder 88, "The Porvenir Massacre in Presidio County, Texas, One January 28, 1918," Archive of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas; "Porvenir," Williwood Meador Collection, Box 4/File 11, The West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

railroad tunnel in the hills.<sup>69</sup> After a long day of questioning the men were set free to return to El Porvenir.

Capt. Henry H. Anderson of the 8th Cavalry joined the posse of Rangers and civilians the next day. The Cavalry soldiers and the Texas Rangers had a history of discontent with each other prior to 1918. The Cavalry responded to military orders from above, and had less personal interest in the Big Bend because they came from states as far away as Maine. The Rangers were much more ruthless, and grew up on the frontier, hardened by the violence of the region. For the Rangers and ranchers, border fury was much more personal, and on the night of January 27, 1918, they returned to El Porvenir with the Cavalry, but with two different plans. Several of the Rangers were intoxicated as the midnight hour approached. The posse searched the village a second time, finding two more rifles and several knives. Following the search, the Rangers and civilian men took fifteen Mexican men from their families. The Cavalrymen and Anderson stayed behind with the villagers.

The moon lit the night sky, and the air was cool and crisp with cries of the women and children of El Porvenir whistling through the canyon. The villagers knew that they were not going to see these men alive again; the mere mention of the word "Ranger" struck as much fear in the Mexican women and children as the word "bandit" terrified Anglo families. The sound of the footsteps from the men and horses grew softer and softer as they marched down the road. The Mexican men ranged in age from sixteen to seventy-two, and consisted of Mexican Americans and Mexican refugees. Back at the village the fearful women and children huddled

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<sup>69</sup> Williwood Meador Collection, Box 4/File 11, The West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

around campfires, as Anderson tried to reassure them that the Rangers were only questioning the men. Suddenly, the night air was filled with the distinctive sound of multiple gunshots that ended as quickly as they began—a firing squad.<sup>70</sup>

When Captain Fox and his men returned, Anderson cursed them and in a disgraceful tone replied, “What a nice piece of work you have done tonight!” As the Anglo men left Porvenir, the only sound that could be heard was that of wailing women and children of El Porvenir fearing what the daylight would uncover. The families of El Porvenir collected the deceased and took their bodies back to Mexico to be buried on their native soil. They fled to the desert region of northern Chihuahua without shelter, additional clothing, or food. “The Rangers and the four cow-men made 42 orphans that night.”<sup>71</sup> Tom Snyder’s plan had worked. Mexicans abandoned the village of Porvenir, and none were left to bear witness against him.

The men who died that night were most likely innocent of the crimes committed at the Brite Ranch raid. There were no uniforms at Porvenir that resembled those worn by the Brite raiders. All “bandits” were known to be “armed to the teeth” yet only a few weapons were found in the village.<sup>72</sup> Only the boots worn by three men matched the description of those sold at the Brite Ranch general store, but these Mexican men could have purchased them at any other time since the store was the closest outpost for miles, or they could have purchased the boots from

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<sup>70</sup> Harry Warren Collection, Folder 88, “The Porvenir Massacre in Presidio County, Texas, One January 28, 1918,” Archive of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas; “Porvenir,” Williwood Meador Collection, Box 4/File 11, The West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> “Mexicans Raid Brewster County Ranches,” *The Alpine Avalanche*, February 20, 1913, 1.

the actual raiders. In a court of law this evidence would be circumstantial at best, but following the Brite Ranch raid Anglo men in the Big Bend were suspicious of all Mexican activity, and decided that they would constitute themselves as the legal system—judge, jury, and executioners of the frontier.

Almost all of the Mexican men killed at El Porvenir were married with children, and lived with their families in the village. Thirty-year-old Macedonio Huertas left behind a wife, Rita. Rita now had to care for her four children: six-year-old Firomeno, three-year-old Elijo, two-year-old Francisco, and an infant girl. Huertas fled Mexico with Rita and Firomeno in 1913. Upon arrival in El Paso he had ten pesos, identified himself as a “laborer” and could not read or write.<sup>73</sup> Alberto Garcia died at the age of thirty-five and left behind his wife Victoria, two daughters, and a nineteen year old son, Alfonso, who was absent from the village that evening. The four surviving family members would eventually move to East Texas where Alfonso would work as a farm hand in Jim Wells County, Texas. His sisters eventually married, but Alfonso continued to care for his mother into his thirties.<sup>74</sup> Pedro Herrera had only been in Porvenir for four days, arriving with Severiano Herrera and Vivian Herrera, all residents of Pecos, Texas, who had left for El Porvenir only ten days earlier to live with their grandmother in the farming community. Eutimio Gonzales, a long-time resident of the Big Bend, left behind his

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<sup>73</sup> *National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington, D.C.; Non-statistical Manifests and Statistical Index Cards of Aliens Arriving at El Paso, Texas, 1905 - 1927; Record Group: 85, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service; Microfilm Serial: A3406; Microfilm Roll: 57. Processed in El Paso on March 25, 1913.*

<sup>74</sup> Year: 1920; Census Place: Jim Alice, Wells, Texas; Roll: T625\_1821; Page: 10B; Enumeration District: 109; Image: 366.

wife, Concepcion, six girls, and three boys, all born in the United States. Twenty seven year old Pedro Jimenez was unmarried, seventy two year old Antonio Castanedo was the oldest of the men killed that night, and Juan Jimenez was the youngest at sixteen years old. Longino Flores was about to become a grandfather by his oldest daughter Rosindo; Roman Nieves had a wife and six children with his seventh born three months after his death; and Manuel Morales died on the same night his fifth child, Julia, was born. The surviving families abandoned El Porvenir, "the future."

The truth about what happened at El Porvenir escaped when the Rangers and cowmen killed Tiburcio Jaquez. Jaquez's daughter, Maria, was married to the El Porvenir schoolmaster, Harry Warren. News of the massacre brought Warren to the scene of the crime the next day. When he arrived he described the following:

"All the bodies were found lying together, side by side. Some were partly lying upon others, about a hundred or so yards from the road, by a little rock bluff. I saw the bodies on the early morning of January 29. The assassins spared several old Mexicans: Besareo Huertas, Eulogio Gonzales, Gorgonio Hernandez, old man Jimenez, and one other (name forgotten)."<sup>75</sup>

Warren got word of this massacre to Adj. Gen. Harley of the State Rangers. Under orders from Governor William P. Hobby, who became governor in 1917, Harley discharged the Rangers responsible and forced the resignation of Captain Fox. In a letter to Governor Hobby, Fox accused Hobby of "playing politics" trying to gain the Mexican vote:

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<sup>75</sup> Harry Warren Collection, Folder 88, "The Porvenir Massacre in Presidio County, Texas, One January 28, 1918," Archive of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas; "Porvenir," Williwood Meador Collection, Box 4/File 11, The West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.



“Why do you not come clean and say that this is purely politics just to gain some Mexican votes? The five men you have discharged are good men and were the best of officers, and I want to ask you and all State Rangers how you expect to hold up the ranger force under such ruling as in this case. It hurts me to have my men treated in this manner... a short while ago you sent a man to investigate me as to whether or not I was for you for Governor or a Ferguson man, so you know that there is no use in trying to have me believe that this action was brought about by anything other than your political reasons. We have stood guard to prevent Mexican bandits from murdering the ranchmen, the women and children along this border while you slept on your feather bed of ease... You may consider this my resignation.”<sup>76</sup>

The investigation exonerated the Mexican men of any connection with the Brite Ranch raid, and found the actions of the Rangers and civilians to be extra-legal. However, no arrests were made in the murders of the men at El Porvenir. As for the political allegations made by Fox: Governors Colquitt, Ferguson, and Hobby had all tried to court the growing Mexican vote in Democratic primaries.

Warren took it upon himself to investigate the massacre at El Porvenir. The testimonies of the victims’ wives all told similar tales. The wife of Manuel Moralez stated that she lived in El Porvenir for eight years, and that two Americans with masks took her husband around midnight. Librada Montoya Jaquez said that four masked men in “civilian clothes” took her husband around the same time. When she fled to a neighbor’s house, she saw four additional men in uniform. Juana Bonilla Flores, who lived in El Porvenir for four years, with her husband, Logino, recognized two of the four masked civilian men who took her husband as Ben Frazier and his brother. Felipa Mendez Castaneda, wife of Antonio Castaneda, had only lived at El Porvenir with her husband for three weeks prior to the midnight massacre.

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<sup>76</sup> “Proceedings of the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House in the Investigation of the Texas State Ranger Force,” 839-840.

Castaneda and her husband were refugees and had not been in Texas long, thus, she did not recognize any of the men. Estefana Jaso Herrera, the grandmother of three of the murdered men, testified that four civilian men took the young men shortly before midnight. Finally, Eulalia Gonzalez Hernandez, wife of Ambrocio Hernandez, stated that the two were U.S. citizens and had lived in the farming community for two years. Hernandez believed her home was the first attacked. Two Rangers came to her house, stood guard at the door, as three civilian men broke down the door, punched her husband in the ribs with a pistol before taking him. Outside the house she saw “a large bunch of civilians and soldiers” approaching the community. At sunrise Hernandez was the only one of the aforementioned women to disregard Warren’s persistent request to remain in the community while the men retrieved the bodies of the deceased. At the scene, Hernandez found her husband’s body mutilated by many stab wounds and a bullet wound through his head.<sup>77</sup> The investigation concluded that none of the men murdered that night at El Porvenir were involved in the Christmas morning raid, and that “this unlawful deed has enraged the Mexicans on the other side to such an extent that we may hear soon of their retaliating on the whites on this side. It will be productive of the most evil consequences.”<sup>78</sup>

Warren continued his quest for the truth and for compensation for the victims’ families well into the 1930s. Warren wanted local citizens to know that the

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<sup>77</sup> “Proceedings of the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House in the Investigation of the Texas State Ranger Force,” 843-848.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 850.

men killed at El Porvenir, including his father-in-law, were not criminals, but innocent victims. However, immediately following the attack the surviving men of El Porvenir wanted another form of restitution—revenge.<sup>79</sup> Not far from El Porvenir was the Neville Ranch. Ed Neville’s ranch was not a large compound such as Glenn Springs; Ed, his son Glen, and a Mexican couple who worked for Neville occupied the ranch. The ranch was located along the Rio Grande; Mexican soldiers could often be seen traveling along the riverbed on the Mexican side. Neville reported that he had very little trouble on his ranch prior to 1918. On one occasion Ed and Glen Neville, along with four U.S. Militia men, noticed a large group of Mexican men camping about 75 yards from the Ranch. The elder Neville believed they were neither Villistas nor Carrancistas, but, rather, opportunists, refugees, and displaced Mexican citizens who lived along the border. In an exchange of “hot words” between the two groups, Neville heard a man who appeared to be the leader of the bunch order the group of fifty to “go over there and get those gringos.”<sup>80</sup> Neville’s group ordered them to stay on the Mexican side of the river. The sight of several Cavalrymen with Neville possibly helped diffuse the situation. Later that evening, while Neville was alone, the group broke the unofficial truce and stole

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<sup>79</sup> Harry Warren Collection, Folder 88, “The Porvenir Massacre in Presidio County, Texas, One January 28, 1918,” Archive of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas; “Porvenir,” Williwood Meador Collection, Box 4/File 11, The West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

<sup>80</sup> Preliminary Report and Hearing of the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate Pursuant to Senate Resolution 106, United States Senate, Investigation of Mexican Affairs, testimony of Ed Neville, Part 10, Page 1510-1515; C.B. Casey Papers, Box 468/Folder Neville Ranch Raid, Archive of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas; The Big Bend Sentinel, Archive of the Big Bend

seven heads of cattle. The rancher could only curse and chase the thieves across the border.<sup>81</sup>

Neville leased the ranch along with John Wyatt, but only Neville lived on the ranch while he managed it. Neville moved his wife and two daughters to Van Horn, Texas, for their safety as news of additional raids began to circulate throughout the ranches of the Big Bend. On March 15, 1918, less than two months after the massacre at El Porvenir, Neville was in Van Horn on one of his monthly visits to pay bills and visit his family. Van Horn was located 30 miles north of the ranch and had the nearest post office. That morning he encountered a patrol of cavalrymen in Van Horn. The soldiers said, "they had understood there was a bunch of Mexicans in the country somewhere; that they had heard that they were going to raid somebody."<sup>82</sup> That was around 10:30 in the morning. Neville suggested that the troops meet him at his ranch later that evening once he finished his business in Van Horn.<sup>83</sup>

Neville arrived at his ranch shortly after sundown. Rosa Castillo, the Mexican cook who lived on the Ranch, had just finished preparing dinner. Adrian Castillo and his wife were loyal workers of the Neville men, living on the ranch with their three young children. Prior to the El Porvenir massacre, Neville employed Mexican workers on his ranch who would return to their families at El Porvenir every Friday following each workweek. After the massacre, most of the families abandoned the village and fled back to Mexico, while the Castillos remained on the ranch with the

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

Nevilles. After dinner, as Ed Neville told his son of the rumors of a possible raid, they both heard horses approaching outside. The Neville's assumed it was the soldiers Ed met earlier that day. Waiting outside, however, were fifty armed Mexican men. Without any warning the raiders began firing at the ranch house. Both Nevilles grabbed their Winchesters and fired out the door at the Mexican men. Some of the raiders took cover at the hen house while others were protected by darkness. "Those bullets came in through the walls just like paper," and Ed told his son to flee with him to a large ditch about 250 yards behind the house where they could run for cover. As Ed ran across the property, his hat was shot off his head, and one bullet struck his hand causing him to lose his shotgun. Ed made it to the ditch, but his son was nowhere to be found. He hoped that Glen had escape by another route. From the ditch he could hear the raiders sacking the house after the gunfire ceased. Ed searched for his son in the hillside and hoped that he was hiding safely in bushes or up in the hills. He stayed clear of the ranch house until he heard the sound of Troop G of the 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry arrive around 3:30 in the morning.<sup>84</sup>

The ranch house had become a slaughterhouse. Rosa Castillo was dead on the floor from shots to her head and chest. The killers gruesomely desecrated the young mother by cutting off her breasts and leaving her three children in the house to mourn their mother's death; Jose, an infant, was lying in her pool of blood on the kitchen floor. Glen Neville's near lifeless body was found only a few feet from the door by his father who described "that he had been shot all to pieces, several times; there was a hole in his forehead; you could drop a hen egg through this hole in his

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid

forehead.”<sup>85</sup> And, in a clear sign of vengeance, the Mexican raiders repeatedly beat Glen’s face and head with their rifles and a bloody stick, leaving him “black and blue all over;” Glen Neville died two hours later in his father’s arms.<sup>86</sup>

The American troops that arrived at the scene vowed to avenge the Neville boy’s death and pursued the Mexican men responsible for the raid across the Rio Grande. Their pursuit covered 75 miles of Mexican countryside and left Mexican villages destroyed as they searched for the criminals. In Pilares, Mexico, two days after the Neville Ranch raid, American troops searched houses and businesses, and encountered a group of 35 Mexican men they suspected of the Neville Ranch raid. As the soldiers fired upon them, the men fled to the hills into an area known as “The Gap.” There the soldiers cornered the men, wounding 20, and killing 10 others.<sup>87</sup> Anglo men believed they were policing the border, and protecting Americans and American interests. The newspapers often pitted “soldiers” against “bandits” in a fight to the death. According to a majority of the newspaper reports, the battles between the two sides resulted in multiple casualties on the Mexican side, with very few American losses. The vicious cycle of vengeance showed no signs of ending.

## **Conclusion**

The violence of the region left a legacy with the youth of the frontier. Children of Anglos and Mexicans were baptized in the blood of the revolution.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> “American Troops Cross Border and Fight with Bandits,” *The San Antonio Light*, March 29, 1918, 1.

During the 1910s Anglo children and Mexican children were forced to grow up fast, and both witnessed violence on a daily basis along the border. In towns like Presidio in the Big Bend, residents witnessed “a curtain of fire” when fighting occurred at night.<sup>88</sup> Ciudad Juárez resident Oscar Martínez remembered that he and his Mexican friends would sit on rooftops to watch revolutionary fighting. On one occasion a seven-year-old friend standing a few feet from him was shot and killed by a stray bullet.<sup>89</sup> Lifelong El Paso resident George Barnhart reflected on being a young boy during the 1910s and desiring to take part in the fighting: “I was just a little kid at the time, of course—a young teenager—but I can remember the raiding up there. I remember one time in particular, they raided up within a few miles of Alpine, and the young federal officer was down trying to raise a posse to go after them. I sure wanted to go, but I was a little kid.”<sup>90</sup> Gen. S.L.A. Marshall, a World War I veteran, grew up as a teenager in El Paso during the revolution. Marshall was a young boy only 10 years old at the outbreak of the revolution, and recalled that border boys were much stronger than elsewhere in the United States because of their daily life during the 1910s: “The boys were much more mature... I think being on the border did that for them. Four or five juicy murders a day in El Paso shocked

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<sup>88</sup> Archive of the Big Bend, Alpine, Texas, Oral History Archives, Interviewee: Pedro Armendarez, Interviewer: Theresa Whittington, 1976, OH A728WH.

<sup>89</sup> University of Texas at El Paso Institute of Oral History, Interviewee: Pete Leyva, Interviewer: Oscar J. Martínez, Date: July 22, 1976. Tape no: 312, Transcript no: 312 page 25.

<sup>90</sup> University of Texas at El Paso Institute of Oral History, Interviewee: George Barnhart, Interviewer: Carlos Tapia, Date: December 1976. Tape no: 282, Transcript no: 282, page 4.

nobody. That was sort of par for the course.”<sup>91</sup> Marshall left the Big Bend to fight in World War I when he was eighteen, and eventually retired as Brig. Gen. S.L. A. Marshall.

The militaristic milieu of the border matured both the men and women of the region. High school students were forced to choose whether they believed the sensationalism of the press that ethnic Mexicans entering the U.S. from war-torn Mexico were criminals, or were like their Mexican American classmates they grew up with as children. The only identifier they could accept was that it must be the lowest class, the “peons,” that were most threatening. After the raid in Columbus, New Mexico, and the subsequent U.S. expedition in Mexico, teenage boys joined their high school ROTC organizations in an effort to “protect” their communities. In El Paso, following the Columbus raid, the El Paso High School ROTC boys took their Plug Sneeders (guns) and guarded El Paso High School at night. The school, situated high on the hillside, became their military fortress. These boys emulated what their fathers and other rugged men of the frontier were doing in Texas and Mexico. The Kelly sisters—Anne, Elizabeth, and Mary—remembered the boys years later in a 1973 interview. Elizabeth described them as “heroes protecting the school” and said that “everybody brought them fudge and cookies.” Mary thought “it was divine,” and remarked that the boys would come to school so tired that “they put their heads down on their desks, and nobody disturbed them.” These young men were relieved finally of their unofficial duty when the militia arrived. Yet, almost 60

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<sup>91</sup> University of Texas at El Paso Institute of Oral History, Interviewee: Brig. Gen. S.L.A. Marshall, Interviewer: Richard Estrada, Date: July 5, 7, 9, 11, and 19, 1975. Tape no: 181, Transcript no: 181 page 18.



years later these three women remember a tale of manly valor that exemplified men and boys of the border.<sup>92</sup> However, Andrew Smith remembers growing up quickly in the frontier when he learned about his father's participation with Anglo posses. Smith reflected upon the period, and how his father became involved in several raids, and possibly a lynching. He described his mother's apprehension with the thought of her husband's involvement with the Anglo posse, while she tried to raise her children in a Christian home.<sup>93</sup>

During the combative years of the Mexican Revolution, the raids on ranches, farms, and villages along the Rio Grande took the lives of more innocent victims than guilty. The border press criminalized ethnic Mexicans of the poorest class and reported only the raids on American ranches. The raids by Mexican bandits decreased with the U.S. military presence within the region. However, when the soldiers departed, raids increased and grew more violent by 1918. Policing the borderland evolved from complex to chaotic on both sides of the border. The civil war in Mexico led to competing factions of the revolution fighting the federal army, American troops, and each other, while on American soil there was a disorganized formation of National Guardsmen, federal troops, civilian posses, and Texas Rangers. Legal historian Michael Ariens argued that at least 20% of the 222 ethnic Mexicans killed during the "bandit War" (the term he used to describe the period

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<sup>92</sup> University of Texas at El Paso Institute of Oral History, Interviewees: Anne and Elizabeth Kelly and Mary Kelly Quinn, Interviewer: David Salazar and Midred Torok, Project: El Paso History, Date: March 26, 1973. Tape no: 87A, Transcript no: 87A page 13-14.

<sup>93</sup> University of Texas at El Paso Institute of Oral History, Interviewee: Brig. Gen. S.L.A. Marshall, Interviewer: Richard Estrada, Date: July 5, 7, 9, 11, and 19, 1975. Tape no: 181, Transcript no: 181 page 15-16.

examined in this chapter), were lynched by Texas Rangers who claimed to be acting legally.<sup>94</sup> They were not.

The violence along the border during the mid to late 1910s brought two countries—neighbors—close to war. And these two neighbors were easily distinguished by the color of their skin and their cultural characteristics. Many of the men on both sides of the border were not born evil. Innocent survivors at El Porvenir sought revenge for the midnight murder of their brethren. Ed Neville never looked at a Mexican man the same after holding his son's lifeless body. Andrew Smith wanted to remember his father as a good man and not a cold-blooded killer who lynched Mexican men. The violence along the border hardened the men, women, and children of both sides of the border. Fighting in the borderland made life in the region a living hell for some, stole the innocence of youth from children, and made cold-blooded killers out of innocent men.

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<sup>94</sup> Michael Ariens, *Lone Star Law: A Legal History of Texas* (Lubbock, Texas: Texas Tech University Press, 2011), 68.

## CHAPTER VI

### WORLD WAR I AND THE DECLINE OF MEXICAN LYNCHING

At first, the outbreak of war in Europe seemed to worsen circumstances for ethnic Mexicans in Texas, both because the government became more suspicious of all foreigners in the U.S., and because Germany seemed to see Mexico as a possible ally against the United States. But the war, once the United States became actively involved, actually worked in the opposite direction, causing a sizeable decline in lynching of ethnic Mexicans in Texas. Hundreds of ethnic Mexicans lost their lives to Texas Rangers and civilians during the three-year period leading up to the January 1918 massacre at El Porvenir. However, only two known lynchings of ethnic Mexicans occurred in Texas during the remainder of the year and only one occurred in 1919.<sup>1</sup> This significant change resulted from three major factors: first, America's actual involvement in World War I transferred the suspicions and negative stereotypes of the borderland enemy from Mexicans to Germans in Texas; second, emerging political stability within Mexico made the border between Texas and Mexico far less a site of revolutionary violence; and third, an investigation into Texas Ranger violence against ethnic Mexicans by the Mexican American lawyer and politician Jose T. Canales exposed hitherto hidden crimes by Rangers against ethnic Mexicans, and, energized a nascent Mexican-American civil rights movement.

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<sup>1</sup> William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1928* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), Appendix A and B.

Historians who have examined the lynching of ethnic Mexicans in the United States assert that a surge in violence occurred during the 1910s with a subsequent sharp decline during the 1920s. They credit the end of the combative years of the Mexican Revolution in 1920 as the reason why violence subsided when it did. While stability in Mexico was a contributing factor, this chapter focuses on an event of more global significance—World War I. The effects of World War I on ethnic Mexicans in Texas were complex. At first, they intensified the fear of ethnic Mexicans, who were suspected of being disloyal to America and as allies of the Germans. For a time, the Texas Rangers were given an even freer hand to mete out “justice” to them. Such vigilante actions caused tens of thousands to flee the state. But the war also created opportunities for Mexican Americans in Texas—to serve in the U.S. military and to find other ways to demonstrate their loyalty to America. Ethnic Mexicans also benefited in indirect ways: their flight from the state generated a labor shortage in Texas and impelled Anglos there to shift their attitudes toward needed Mexican laborers; and, by 1918, Germans had taken their place as the “other” whom Anglo Texans feared the most. These changes created a space in Texas politics for Mexican Americans that had not existed before. They used this space to demand and receive from the state government a formal investigation of Texas Ranger violence against ethnic Mexicans. For the first time, the atmosphere that had led to the lynching of people of Mexican descent was being given a public airing and an opportunity for redress. Hope spread that a new era for ethnic Mexicans in Texas was dawning. This chapter starts with the state investigation, even though, chronologically, it comes at the end of this story. I do so because the

investigation revealed how poor Anglo-Mexican relations became before they began to improve.

## **Resistance**

The 1915-1918 raids by Rangers and “bandits” discussed in Chapter Four led to the death of hundreds of ethnic Mexicans in the borderland. Many of the dead were innocent victims of over zealous Rangers determined to eliminate the “Mexican problem.” Resistance to these men, and the kind of violence that they could unleash on ethnic Mexicans came in Austin from Jose T. Canales. In 1918 Canales launched a year-long investigation into the Ranger force for alleged misconduct and violence against ethnic Mexicans. In January of 1919, a joint House-Senate committee of the Texas legislature heard the testimony of dozens of witnesses about the conduct of the Texas Rangers. The investigation brought increased awareness of crimes committed by the Rangers against ethnic Mexicans, their violation of American neutrality with Mexico by crossing the border in search of suspected criminals, and their frequent abuse of alcohol while on patrol. Canales was not simply targeting the Rangers in order to defend ethnic Mexican rights. He also wanted the investigation to help reduce the Ranger force in numbers and to increase their pay in order to attract the best possible force Texas could produce. Prior to the investigation, stories of Mexican raids on ranches in the United States and Mexico dominated the press. The investigation revealed that violence against ethnic Mexicans was at the forefront of Ranger crimes, and, that at times, Rangers formed posses with Texas citizens to locate and punish suspected Mexican

criminals. Stories of Ranger-on-Mexican violence had long circulated throughout ethnic Mexican communities, but rarely in the Anglo press, unless the latter took up such a story to frame Ranger actions as necessary to defend the people of the state. The testimony of eyewitnesses in the Canales investigation, including Mexicans, Tejanos, Anglos, and Rangers, gave unprecedented publicity and legitimacy to ethnic Mexican grievances about Ranger violence.

Born in in Nueces County, Texas, in 1877, Canales was the son of Andreas and Tomasa (Covazos) Canales. Andreas was a descendant of José Salvador de la Garza, to whom the Spanish, in 1781, had granted 284,414 acres in south Texas, the area that is now Cameron County, Texas. Jose Canales was born and raised on the family ranch that was once part of the land grant. He attended several schools in the area before attending Texas Business College in Austin. In 1899 Canales earned his law degree from the University of Michigan. He returned to Texas following graduation and practiced criminal and civil law. In addition to a legal career Canales became a public servant, beginning with his election as State Representative in 1904. He represented the Ninety-fifth District of south Texas that included his Brownsville home.<sup>2</sup> In addition to spearheading the Ranger investigation, Canales was called to testify about his own grievances with the Rangers. Canales recalled that he had once admired the Rangers. As a boy he recalled that his family's ranch, La Cabra Ranch, was a Ranger "haven" where these men were often stationed and ate their meals. He argued that it wasn't until hostilities between Anglo Texans and

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<sup>2</sup> Evan Anders, "Canales, José Tomas," *Handbook of Texas Online* ([www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fcaag](http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fcaag) accessed June 22, 2012), accessed on July 3, 2013. Published by the Texas Sate Historical Association.

Mexicans intensified because of Mexican Revolution trouble that the Ranger force followed a darker course. Specifically he recalled that the year 1915 marked the moment when the misdeeds perpetrated by the new Ranger force began to overshadow their distinguished history.<sup>3</sup> The Rangers he recalled knowing as a child were not the same men carrying on the tradition of the Rangers. In 1911, shortly after the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution, the Ranger force was only authorized to have 80 active men. Since the border had been relatively peaceful during the pre-revolutionary years, the actual force numbered only 14 when revolutionary fighting broke out. As border problems related to the Mexican Revolution increased, so did the Ranger Force. Initially Governor Colquitt increased the force to only 43, but then it mushroomed beyond 1200.<sup>4</sup> The new Rangers and their increasing anti-Mexican actions were a direct result of border problems related to the Mexican Revolution, and, more often than not, the targeted criminals were “suspicious” ethnic Mexicans along the border.

Canales’s 1918 investigation revealed that the Ranger force degenerated into a “posse” of men who sought out suspicious ethnic Mexicans. Canales himself admitted that there were some “bandit troubles” in the region, but he also insisted their significance was magnified by German propaganda. As examples of this propaganda he entered into the record unsigned letters allegedly from

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<sup>3</sup> “Proceedings of the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House in the Investigation of the Texas State Ranger Force,” 856-857.

<sup>4</sup> Charles H. Harris III and Louis R. Sadler, “The 1911 Reyes Conspiracy: The Texas Side,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. LXXXIII, No. 4 April, 1980, 329; Charles H. Harris III and Louis R. Sadler, *The Texas Rangers and the Mexican Revolution: The Bloodiest Decade, 1910-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 427.; Harris and Sadler list Regular Rangers to number 150, Special Rangers to number 400, and Loyalty Rangers to number possibly as few as 427 or as numerous as an estimated 800.

“revolutionaries,” but really manufactured by Germans, urging Tejanos to join bands of rebels to take up arms against Anglos in Texas. Canales believed that the German propaganda was initiated for the purpose of keeping the United States out of the European war by creating a threat of war in the United States and Mexico borderland. However, the German propaganda actually led to a suspicion of German-American communities in Texas (a topic to be discussed later in this chapter).<sup>5</sup>

The Canales investigation depicted the Rangers as a group of cowboys that ruled the border through swift justice and practiced a policy of “shoot first and investigate later,” their actions often requiring a cover up that included prominent citizens. The new Rangers carried with them a whip, a rifle, and, most damaging to their reputation, whiskey. Canales further charged that the Adjutant General was either negligent in the selection of unqualified men or that he actually sought out “characters in the Ranger force to terrorize and intimidate the citizens of this State.”<sup>6</sup> Canales reported on an incident in Hidalgo County where Arturo Garcia and Pedro Tamez were taken out of a jail cell by several Rangers and driven out to a sparse region of the county where they were released only for the purpose of target practice. Garcia was shot in the leg and Tamez escaped unharmed. Once the story leaked, Captain Hanson of the Rangers quickly placed the blame on the local law enforcement. Still, no arrests were made.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> “Proceedings of the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House in the Investigation of the Texas State Ranger Force,” 856-857.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 146-148.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 146-147.



Rangers defended their actions by arguing that most of the men they pursued were bandits. A significant threat along the border from outlawry did exist. But the Rangers used the term “bandit” to describe not just thieves but any revolutionary who found his or her way into Texas, and, at times, any ethnic Mexican living along the border. It is estimated that at least 300 ethnic Mexicans perished during the height of the skirmishing between the Rangers and Mexican bandits in 1915. Historians now mostly agree that most of those killed by Rangers were innocent.<sup>8</sup> Historian Benjamin Johnson described the overreach of the Rangers with examples such as a Captain H. L. Ransom boasting about driving “all the Mexicans” from three Texas ranches.<sup>9</sup>

As a result of the anti-Mexican campaign of the Rangers, ethnic Mexicans began an exodus from Texas to Mexico. Thousands of Mexicans fled the lower Rio Grande Valley in the first few weeks of September 1915. Immigration officials reported that more than 500 families departed for Matamoros, “2500 persons have emigrated, most of them taking all of their worldly possessions, including hogs, chickens, goats, horses, mules, burros, and all, including water barrels and tubs.”<sup>10</sup> Those who fled did so without plans to return. The conditions in Texas proved more dangerous for Mexicans than in their home nation engulfed in a civil war.

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<sup>8</sup> Don M. Coerver and Linda B. Hall, *Texas and the Mexican Revolution: A Study in State and National Border Policy 1910-1920* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1984), 106-107; Benjamin Heber Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 122-123.

<sup>9</sup> Benjamin Heber Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 123.

<sup>10</sup> “Exodus is Continued,” *Brownsville Herald*, September 15, 1915, 1.

During the Canales investigation, Constable Ventura Sanchez testified to what he described as standard behavior by Rangers when alcohol was consumed in his town of San Diego, Texas. He described one Saturday night in December 1918. Sanchez was getting a hair cut when both he and his barber heard the sound of gunshots fired in the street. When they looked out they were relieved to see that it was only drunken Rangers causing a stir in the streets, which was a common occurrence. As he approached one of the men, George Hurst, he was greeted with a belligerent quip, "Now, here, you Ventura, you son of a bitch, I don't like to see you in front of me, and if I ever see you before me [again] I am going to shoot [the] hell out of you, you son of a bitch."<sup>11</sup> Ventura ignored the Ranger but approached the deputy sheriff to have him arrested, only further angering the Ranger. The deputy ignored the plea, thus, satisfying Hurst that he was above punishment with his Ranger status. A week later Hurst continued his harassment of Ventura, following him home and once again threatening his life. Several people in the county knew that Hurst was looking for any reason to shoot and kill Ventura. However, Ventura's request for a warrant to arrest Hurst he was refused. The county clerk said there was no warrant for Hurst, that he was just drunk, and stated "You might as will let [it] go."<sup>12</sup>

Anglo citizens generally turned a blind eye to Ranger misconduct. They believed that Rangers were protecting the border and the safety of residents in

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<sup>11</sup> "Proceedings of the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House in the Investigation of the Texas State Ranger Force," 335-341.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 335-341.

border communities. They did not protest the money the Rangers extorted from illicit gambling and prostitution businesses in return for protection. One report noted that the Rangers “collected ten dollars a week from Booze Gows and Pussy joints.”<sup>13</sup> Moreover, it was commonly known that the best place to get a drink in the dry counties was in a Ranger camp.<sup>14</sup>

The testimony of R.B. Creager, a Brownsville attorney, before the Canales committee, identified one of the most atrocious miscarriages of justice—Mexican “evaporation.” No Texas newspaper discussed this injustice, but in the Canales investigation Creager, Canales, and several member of the joint committee appear to be commonly familiar with this term. “Evaporation” referred to the disappearance of an ethnic Mexican who once appeared on a “black list” held by Ranger officials. Creager estimated that between 1915 and 1916 an estimated 200 ethnic Mexicans were killed by Texas Rangers and civilian posses in his home county of Cameron alone. He believed that 90% of those killed were innocent.<sup>15</sup> Many of these victims and countless unknown victims were part of a “black list” system that Rangers and civilians used to monitor suspicious ethnic Mexicans in South Texas. The name of any ethnic Mexican, male or female, suspected of a crime, could be placed on the list by “any men of standing in the valley or even half way standing.” Accusers could place a suspected “bad Mexican” on the list if they suspected such people of having committed a crime. Creager reported, “it was a common rumor and report, and it

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 338.

<sup>15</sup> “Proceedings of the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House in the Investigation of the Texas State Ranger Force,” 354-355.

was true, that in most instances that Mexican would disappear.”<sup>16</sup> In one case, five ethnic Mexican men whose names were part of these lists were found shot to death, laying on their bellies, with the butts of a beer bottles protruding from their mouths. Creager testified that he actually saw one of these lists. The mere suspicion that their names might be on one of these lists led ethnic Mexicans to flee across the border. Others who were on the list, but unaware of it, just disappeared. Their disappearance led community members to say the missing Mexicans simply evaporated; many of the missing were never seen or heard from again.<sup>17</sup>

On April 4, 1918, the Mexican consul’s office contacted Cameron County attorney Oscar C. Dancy to say that the father of Florencia Garcia reported his teenage son missing and presumably dead at the hands of Texas Rangers. The elder Garcia made several visits to Dancy’s Brownsville office, providing a physical description of the boy including his shoes, the light colored Stetson cowboy hat he wore, and a reddish-brown jumpsuit. Dancy learned that the boy was arrested by the county sheriff at a rural farm, but he was never taken to the county jail. It is unknown whether an arrest actually occurred or if the boy was arrested and released to Rangers in the area. However, on May 20, 1918, an unidentifiable body of a boy, mostly only hair, bones, and decomposed flesh, was found near Ray Waits’ pasture between Brownsville and Point Isabel. Dancy’s testimony during the Canales investigation revealed that the clothes matched those of the missing Mexican boy. The jacket had bullet holes in the back, and a Stetson hat had the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 355.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 354-355.

words “L. Garebo & Sons” stitched on the inside. This was the name of the merchant that sold Garcia his cowboy hat.<sup>18</sup>

The evidence at the crime scene and eyewitness testimony that Sheriff Williams of Cameron County arrested the boy on the day of his disappearance should have been enough to make some arrests. Attorney Dancy conducted a vigorous investigation at first. He identified three Rangers, Sadler, Sitter, and Loche, who were known to have been seen with the boy. But Captain Stevens of the Rangers explained that the three men took Garcia that day but eventually released him, and what happened thereafter was unknown to them. Dancy wrote to Governor William Hobby about the alleged misconduct of the three Rangers and the possible murder they committed. His protest got the men reassigned to Marfa, in the Texas Big Bend. But even Dancy himself was reluctant to see them tried for murder.<sup>19</sup> Dancy worried more that the Mexican Government would use the trial to drum up pro-German and anti-American sentiment in Mexico. He explained: “I did not think it was to the best interests of the public for that testimony to be put in writing to be spread by German propagandists probably in Mexico, and I maneuvered Judge W.R. Jones, ex-United States District Attorney...and [the] examination was waived.”<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, the Canales investigation had at least brought the existence of these events to the publics’ attention. It also brought to light additional stories of

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 545-547.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 543-546.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 543-546

Anglo Texans complicity in covering up other suspected Ranger crimes. In Sweetwater, Texas, a man was brought into the local jail by Rangers late one evening while they were transporting him to another county. The jailer agreed to keep the prisoner for the night as the Rangers enjoyed an evening of rest and relaxation that included alcohol. In the morning, the man was found hanging by his belt from the jail cell doors. Dr. S.M. Leach ruled it a suicide. During the Canales investigation Dr. Leach was called to testify to how he came to that conclusion. Five different members of the investigation questioned Leach, all of whom were skeptical that it was a suicide because of the following details: the forty five year old man's legs were drawn, he was found bruised, and a handkerchief was found lodged deep in his throat past his larynx. Chairman Bledsoe questioned Leach whether it was possible that a man of that age could hold himself up on the side of the cell, keep his legs drawn as to avoid touching the ground, and, with a handkerchief stuffed down his throat tie a belt in such a way so as to be able to complete the task of suicide. Dr. Leach's response was that to him it was a clear case of suicide.<sup>21</sup> Nobody really knows what happened in that cell, but if this was a murder made to look like a suicide the culprits had the help of a local citizen.

Some of the testimonies during the Canales investigation were based on hearsay. In the case of Toribio Rodriguez, however, the testimony was the signed declaration of a dying man. In Tres Puentes, near Brownsville, Rodriguez came upon several men identified as Rangers late at night. The men cursed at him and

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<sup>21</sup> "Proceedings of the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House in the Investigation of the Texas State Ranger Force," 291-293.

shot him as he rode away on horseback. Rodriguez went to the house of Dr. Stell who cleaned and dressed the wound on his arm and sent him home. Shortly thereafter the men spotted Rodriguez and fired shots into his back, and declared that they had more if he desired. Rodriguez was not wanted for any crime. On his deathbed, he gave witnesses a description of the Rangers who attacked him and declared: "I understand and believe I am going to die."<sup>22</sup>

Canales argued that an increase in Ranger-on-Mexican violence had begun in 1915. As demonstrated in Chapter Four, rampant fear and violence along the border turned law-abiding men into revenge killers. Canales supported this claim with evidence of a "shoot first ask questions later" approach by the Rangers that resulted in retaliation by Mexicans living in close proximity of the border who learned of the outrages. Canales argues that banditry had declined in the region due to a new technique of "scouting" initiated by the Rangers. Scouts were Mexicans hired by the Ranger force to scout or spy on revolutionary factions suspected of operating near the border. Rangers were often criticized for violating a United States and Mexico neutrality agreement by crossing the border armed and seeking suspected bandits. These Mexican men were paid \$45 per month by the United States government as federal scouts. Two scouts were assigned to each camp of Rangers, and their duties included gathering intelligence information, trapping suspected bandits, and watching the camp at night while the soldiers slept. The camps were positioned along the border from Brownsville to Rio Grande City, stretching across 100 miles, and each camp was set up within five miles of the next.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 375-376.

Their most important discovery, however, was that Mexican revolutionaries most often fought each other rather than attacked Anglos. Their actions did not justify the “shoot first” attitudes of the Rangers.<sup>23</sup>

Further testimony on banditry by attorney R.B. Creager claimed that bandit problems arose from misconduct by the Rangers and local law enforcement along the border. Creager stated that Rangers, deputy sheriffs, and local peace officers added “fuel to the flame, to make worse the bandit conditions. In fact I believe—I know that the conduct of the officers more than any other one thing caused that bandit trouble to attain the dimensions that it did.”<sup>24</sup> Further supporting the argument that the Mexican Revolution hardened the men and women on either side of the border, Creager opined: “Up to the time the Mexican Revolution started there was never a more friendly people on earth than the Mexicans on the Mexican side of the river and the Americans on the American side.”<sup>25</sup>

Canales used the evidence to argue that Texas Rangers and their violent campaigns on suspected criminals and innocent Mexicans led to retaliation by ethnic Mexicans. This retaliation, he argued, is what the press saw unfairly as Mexican banditry along the border. Canales told a personal story that involved a court stenographer friend of his. Her father was one of ten men who had been targeted by Texas Rangers seeking a suspected murderer near San Benito, a Texas town well within the protective line of the Ranger’s 100-mile long camps. The men

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<sup>23</sup> Proceedings of the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House in the Investigation of the Texas State Ranger Force,” 859-861.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 354.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 354.



were ordered out of their homes and required to relinquish any weapons. After they complied, they were released back to their homes. For unknown reasons the Rangers returned, entered the homes, and shot all ten men. Canales reported that the men were not given any chance to prove their innocence of any crimes, and declared that the story of the murders quickly made its way into Mexico via relatives and friends of the deceased. The news “aroused a strong feeling between them and the bandits.” Instead of minimizing a desire for retaliation, the actions of the Rangers allied law-abiding men with potential criminals. That feeling increased at an alarming rate, to the extent that most civilian Mexicans on the Mexican side of the border believed they were at war with armed men from the United States.<sup>26</sup>

The Canales investigation brought attention to vigilante acts carried out by the Texas Rangers leading up to his call for an investigation in January 1918. In addition to the threat posed by Rangers, ethnic Mexicans in Texas believed they were being unjustly targeted by the state’s highest ranking political figure—Governor James E. Ferguson. In 1916 Ferguson urged ethnic Mexicans in Texas to report “suspicious” Mexicans to authorities, and demonstrate their allegiance to Texas and the United States in his Loyalty Proclamation. Ferguson delivered his demands as American involvement in World War I appeared imminent and as rumors of a possible alliance between Germany and Mexico intensified.

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<sup>26</sup> “Proceedings of the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House in the Investigation of the Texas State Ranger Force,” 864-866.

## Governor Ferguson's "Loyalty" Proclamation

The possibility of the United States entering World War I initially worsened the ethnic Mexican experience in Texas. By 1917, the borderland was in more disarray than it had been in the previous seven years. Law enforcement from the Texas Rangers to the local sheriffs' departments stepped up their recruiting efforts to acquire the manpower to intervene in border hostilities on the Texas side of the border. In Mexico, Venustiano Carranza had declared himself president following the surrender of Victoriano Huerta's soldiers on August 15, 1914, and sought to bring all the rebels together under his leadership. But the division among revolutionary factions actually worsened as the uneasy alliance of rebels that defeated Huerta began to fracture leaving Carranza at odds with Villa. President Woodrow Wilson and Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan had little confidence by the summer of 1915 that Mexico was anywhere near ending its civil war. Wilson and Bryan made the safety of Americans in Mexico a high priority. Bryan warned that if Americans living in Mexico continued to suffer as a result of revolutionary fighting, or if the Mexican government failed to protect American life and property, "the government of the United States would hold General Obregon and General Carranza personally responsible."<sup>27</sup>

Conditions in Mexico grew worse along with events in Europe. On May 7, 1915, a German U-boat (U-20) torpedoed the British ocean liner RMS *Lusitania*. The *Lusitania* carried 1,959 passengers, mostly British and Canadian, and 1,195 passengers perished due to drowning and hypothermia. The American casualties

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<sup>27</sup> Foreign Relations to the United States, Washington, March 6, 1915—9 p.m., page 660.

totaled 123, and drew intense criticism of Germany by the American public. The sinking became an important factor leading Wilson to believe intervention in World War I was necessary and just. Secretary of State Bryan was a proponent for intervention in Mexico, but not in Europe, leading to a fracture in Wilson's administration. Bryan resigned during the summer of 1915. Robert Lansing followed Bryan as Secretary of State, and eventually supported American participation in World War I.

Lansing immediately led an effort to recognize the Carranza government, assembling a Pan-American Conference of six Latin American countries to do just that in October 1915.<sup>28</sup> This decision, in turn, infuriated Villa, who issued a proclamation in December stating he "would kill every gringo that fell into his hands if the Washington administration gave further aid to Carranza by permitting his troops to pass through United States territory."<sup>29</sup> Weeks after Villa's proclamation, the U.S. department telegraphed General Obregon and Carranza permission to pass 1,000 Mexican federal troops through the United States from Nogales, Arizona, to El Paso, in an effort to enter Ciudad Juarez and catch Villistas in Northern Mexico by surprise. Furthermore, Carranza invited American mine operators who had fled

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<sup>28</sup> "The New Pan Americanism: First Pan American Financial Conference, 1915. Pan American Action Regarding Mexico. President Wilson's Annual Address to Congress, December 7, 1915. Second Pan American Scientific Congress." World Peace Foundation Pamphlet Series, Publications of World Peace Foundation, Column VII, 1917.

<sup>29</sup> "Mining Men Stripped Naked and Ruthlessly Shot Down by Band of Villa Savages," *El Paso Morning Times*, January 12, 1916, 1.

Mexico to return and promised that they would be assured full protection in Mexico, “armed with passports and personal letters from Carranza authorities.”<sup>30</sup>

On January 1, 1916, at a New Year’s Day celebration, Obregon was one of the invited guests of the El Paso mayor Tom Lea. At the banquet Obregon announced to the crowd:

“I invite all you men to come to Mexico. I want you to come down into our territory and open up you mines and smelters. I give you my word that you will be given full protection. Our government is in complete control of every important center in Chihuahua. Nothing will happen to you, because the Villistas are whipped. Villa is a thing of the past.”<sup>31</sup>

Nineteen American men signed on to reopen the Cusi Mine in Cusi, Chihuahua. They left ten days after the New Year’s Day celebration, but were gunned down by Villa’s men within 48 hours of entering Mexico.

The murder of the eighteen of the nineteen Americans enraged Anglos in El Paso, especially as the bodies of the deceased arrived, and news circulated that the victims had been mutilated as well as killed. Former president Theodore Roosevelt expressed his anger with Washington fueling Anglo El Pasoan rage over the massacre:

“President Wilson has permitted these different bandit factions to get from us or with our permission the arms with which they have killed American private citizens, American soldiers, the husbands and fathers of American women whom they have outraged. There is a hundred times the justification for interfering in Mexico that there was for interfering in Cuba. We should have interfered in Mexico years ago.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>32</sup> Edward J. Wheeler, “The Mexican Situation Again becomes Acute,” *Current Opinion: Vol. LX, January-June, 1915* (New York: Current Literature Publishing Company, 1916), 74.

Large scale anti-Mexican rioting broke out in the city, led by local Anglo Texans. During the first night of anti-Mexican attacks, over forty ethnic Mexican men were treated at the hospital and over 150 Anglo Texans were arrested. The mob spontaneously grew out of an “indignation meeting” held in Cleveland Square in the center of town. Witnesses reported that it happened all at once, “Mexicans were denounced and attacked, and the police wagon had to go out several times to quell fights in the streets and saloons.”<sup>33</sup> Cries of “avenge the murdered Americans” and “Remember Cusi” could be heard echoing down alleys. In several hotels, bellboys reportedly attacked Mexican guests in their rooms.<sup>34</sup> The police closed the saloons early and crowds formed at Overland and Santa Fe Street, and began to parade through the city. Unsuspecting Mexicans fell victim to the growing mob. The crowd grew to 1,500 men, and included civilians and army soldiers stationed in El Paso. Mayor Lea and Captain Hall of the El Paso police had only 65 members of the police force to suppress the mob.<sup>35</sup>

Ethnic Mexicans told stories that Anglo Texans entered their homes while they slept, threw men into the streets as their families witnessed the abuse. The violence, and fears of additional violence, drew newspaper headlines across the country (see Figure 6.1). On the second day, a squad of American soldiers marched

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<sup>33</sup> “Mining Men Stripped Naked and Ruthlessly Shot Down by Band of Villa Savages,” *El Paso Morning Times*, January 12, 1916, 1.

<sup>34</sup> “Americans Enraged Over Massacre,” *The Lacrosse Tribune*, January 14, 1916, 6.

<sup>35</sup> “Mining Men Stripped Naked and Ruthlessly Shot Down by Band of Villa Savages,” *El Paso Morning Times*, January 12, 1916, 1.

through the streets and declared they would “clean the streets” of Mexicans. Rumors spread throughout the city of plans by several cattlemen who were friends of the deceased to enter Mexico and kill any Mexican they saw that might be a Villista. An El Paso printing company produced postcards to send to newspapers throughout the country announcing the desire to fight with the slogan:

“Remember the Alamo, Did we watch and wait?  
Remember the Cusi, Shall we watch and wait?”<sup>36</sup>

Across the river in Ciudad Juarez, anti-American hostilities intensified as news reports alerted ethnic Mexicans in the city of the riots and Anglo assaults on ethnic Mexicans in El Paso. Rumors that Mexicans were killed in the riots complicated the situation further. The riots produced hundreds of injured ethnic Mexicans, but no known fatalities. A United States customs officer at the border was approached by a Mexican citizen who asked him, “What do these gringos mean by killing Mexicans over there?”<sup>37</sup> The official denied that killing had occurred, but the man explained that Ciudad Juarez residents believed that three Mexican men were killed during the rioting and reported that Villa supporters were organizing for retaliation. No such attack was carried out, but El Paso police responded by seeking out suspected Villistas and beginning deportation procedures. An estimated 200 ethnic Mexicans fled El Paso within 48 hours of the riots. Texas cities appeared to

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<sup>36</sup> “El Paso Quiet After Night of Fighting,” *The Boston Globe*, January 14, 1916, 2.

<sup>37</sup> “Mexicans Hate Americans,” *The Ogden Standard*, January 14, 1916, 1.

be no place for refuge for the thousands of Mexicans who feared for their safety from revolutionary fighting.<sup>38</sup>

By the summer of 1916, Anglo Texans feared that the cities with large Mexican populations and separate districts had become havens for violent men.



Figure 6.1 *The Portsmouth Daily Times*, Portsmouth, Ohio.

Governor James Ferguson now demanded that all ethnic Mexicans living in Texas show complete loyalty to the state of Texas. Those who refused were warned that “they will bring trouble on themselves.”<sup>39</sup> Ferguson’s demand for 100% loyalty and cooperation, issued on June 18, 1916, read as follows:

<sup>38</sup> “More Arrests Made,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, January 16, 1916, 1.

<sup>39</sup> “Texas Mexicans Told They Will Not Be Harmed,” *San Antonio Light*, June 19, 1916, 1.

“To Texas Mexicans: At this time I want to say a word to citizens of Mexican parentage regarding permanently or temporarily in Texas. The state of Texas demands of all persons while in her borders absolute obedience and respect to her laws and constituted authorities. If Texas Mexicans will aid by words and deeds the various peace officers in Texas to carry out this demand they need have no fear of bodily harm and they will receive the protection of our laws. If they do not in some manner show their loyalty to this state and nation, they will bring trouble upon themselves and many crimes will be committed which cannot be prevented.<sup>40</sup>

That this warning came from the highest ranking political figure in the state frightened ethnic Mexicans, who, as a result made their September 1916 independence celebrations much smaller in size and filled them with tributes to the United States. Ferguson’s proclamation deepened the fear among ethnic Mexicans that the state of Texas either could not or would not provide them protection for anti-Mexican hostilities. Ferguson’s proclamation not only threatened ethnic Mexican safety, but livelihood—“employment will continue,” he warned, only so long as Mexicans remain loyal to Texas.<sup>41</sup>

Many Mexican Americans in Texas began writing Ferguson to declare their loyalty to the Lone Star State. Francisco Guerra Morales of Edinburg, Texas, wrote on behalf of his family and friends, declaring their allegiance to the American flag. Ferguson thanked Morales in a return letter and praised the man for the “patriotic attitude” reflected in his communication.<sup>42</sup> In Comal County, Texas, north of San Antonio, J.M. Cordonia wrote on behalf of all ethnic Mexicans living within the

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>42</sup> Archives Division, Texas State Library, Governors’ Papers: James E. Ferguson, Letter Press Books: Box 301-378, Volume 30, Letter dated July 13, 1916.



county, and included the signatures of dozens of ethnic Mexican men. He assured the governor of their loyalty to the United States and their “unwavering fidelity to the laws of the country.”<sup>43</sup> Cordonia received a similar reply to that of Morales, thanking him for his good faith and urging Cordonia to express the governor’s gratitude to all the men who signed the letter. The governor’s proclamation appeared only in English and all the letters to Ferguson were written in English, suggesting that his Proclamation had reached mostly English-speaking portions of the ethnic Mexican community in Texas.

Francisco A. Chapa of San Antonio led an effort to distribute the proclamation in Spanish to ethnic Mexicans living in and around the city. Chapa belonged to a pro-American Mexican elite living in Texas that believed inclusion of Mexicans into the American family came through assimilation. Chapa was considered the most powerful Mexican American politician in Texas during the 1910s. Chapa celebrated his Mexican heritage, but in American society he found newly arriving poor refugees culturally foreign. The previous governor, Oscar Colquitt, considered Chapa a close friend. During the 1910 Democratic primary race in Texas, Chapa mobilized support among Mexican Americans for Colquitt. Prohibition in Texas was a key voter issue, and Colquitt, who was anti-prohibition, relied heavily on Chapa to garner support among Mexican Americans in Texas.

Anglo Texans saw an assimilation success story in Chapa and liked him for it. Born in Matamoros, Tamaulipas, on October 4, 1870, Chapa immigrated to the United States at the age of seventeen, and had naturalization by age twenty. Having

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<sup>43</sup> Archives Division, Texas State Library, Governors’ Papers: James E. Ferguson, Letter Press Books: Box 301-378, Volume 29, Letter dated July 6, 1916.

been educated in Spanish and English, and having completed primary school and some secondary education in Mexico, he arrived in New Orleans and enrolled at Tulane University where he studied pharmacy. He worked as a drugstore clerk in Brownsville, and eventually as a pharmacist in San Antonio. It was there that he opened his pharmacy, La Botica del Leon, in 1894, which he operated until his death in 1924.<sup>44</sup> Ethnic Mexicans looked up to Chapa not only for his success, but for his commitment to the Mexican American community. Chapa published a San Antonio newspaper, *El Imparcial de Texas*. Chapa provided a political voice for ethnic Mexicans in Texas. With his endorsement Colquitt carried the Mexican American vote and won the 1910 Democratic primary, which all but guaranteed his election as governor of Texas in the fall. <sup>45</sup>

After Colquitt was sworn in as Governor of Texas he appointed Chapa to one of twelve advisory positions with the title "Lieutenant Colonel," a title and position he would maintain with subsequent Governors Ferguson and William P. Hobby. Chapa had gotten himself in trouble with a weapons smuggling plan into Mexico in the first year after the *Porfiriato* had come to an end, but his political career survived, with the assistance of a pardon from President Taft. Chapa thus remained on the governor's staff and became one of the most powerful Mexican American

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<sup>44</sup> Teresa Palomo Acosta, "Chapa, Francisco A.," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fch50>), accessed September 10, 2012. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

<sup>45</sup> Teresa Palomo Acosta, "Chapa, Francisco A.," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fch50>), accessed September 10, 2012. Published by the Texas State Historical Association; Charles H. Harris III and Louis R Sadler, "The 1911 Reyes Conspiracy: The Texas Side," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Col. 83, No. 4 (April 1980), 325-348.; George R. Nielsen, *Vengeance in a Small Town: The Thorndale Lynching of 1911*, (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2011), 82-83.

politicians of the period. Because Anglos in Texas and Washington had bailed him out, however, he was acutely conscious of his dependence on their goodwill. Thus, he stayed clear of any criticism of United States' policy toward Mexico. Moreover, he placed issues of English only in the schools and Americanization of immigrants at the forefront of policies.<sup>46</sup> This may help explain why Chapa was quick to praise Governor Ferguson for his loyalty proclamation and to offer his assistance with distributing it throughout the ethnic Mexican population of San Antonio. Ferguson replied with a request to have 25,000 copies printed in Spanish on June 21, and an additional request of 15,000 more on July 6, 1916.<sup>47</sup>

Sherriff Antonio Salinas of Webb County, Texas, meanwhile, distributed a Spanish translation of the Texas-Mexican proclamation through the ethnic Mexican areas of Laredo, Texas. When news of this reached Ferguson, the governor instructed his secretary to immediately and cordially thank Salinas. The letter read that Ferguson "heartily appreciates the interest you have manifested."<sup>48</sup> Salina's interest with the proclamation was mostly with the section about banditry along the border. Webb County shared a 60-mile stretch of the Rio Grande in South Texas with Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, where rumors of Mexican on American raids appeared in the press weekly.

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<sup>46</sup> Teresa Palomo Acosta, "Chapa, Francisco A.," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fch50>), accessed September 10, 2012. Published by the Texas State Historical Association; Charles H. Harris III and Louis R Sadler, "The 1911 Reyes Conspiracy: The Texas Side," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Col. 83, No. 4 (April 1980), 325-348.

<sup>47</sup> Archives Division, Texas State Library, Governors' Papers: James E. Ferguson, Letter Press Books: Box 301-378, Volume 28, Letters dated June 21, 1916, and July 6, 1916.

<sup>48</sup> Archives Division, Texas State Library, Governors' Papers: James E. Ferguson, Letter Press Books: Box 301-378, Volume 29, Letters dated June 28, 1916.

The Texas-Mexican proclamation addressed banditry by urging ethnic Mexicans to report any suspicious activity, and alert authorities of any known Mexican bandits living in Texas. Ferguson stated:

Unfortunately the prejudice of many Mexicans, who might otherwise remain loyal to Texas, has been aroused by bandit leaders from Mexico and feeling of hatred exists along our Texas border which should not be. In the future when one of these bandit leaders from Mexico comes among you and tries to tell you that Americans want to mistreat you and wants you to join some secret movement, report him at once to the first officer you can get to. Report the names of other Mexicans who are mixed up in the gang. Show that you are loyal to this country.<sup>49</sup>

As in the Big Bend, South Texas was inundated with border violence as well. The *Laredo Times* published daily reports of suspicious activity by ethnic Mexicans and clashes between “Cowboys and Greasers.” On the day that Ferguson made his proclamation, the *Laredo Times* reported that three Mexican bandits were killed and three captured by a posse of ranchers.” The report stated that the Mexican bandits “took two American cowboys prisoners, but subsequently released them after holding the men in custody throughout the day in Mexico.” Two other cowboys, George Conover and Arthur Myers, led an armed posse to apprehend the suspected bandits, killing three and capturing three more.<sup>50</sup>

Ferguson appealed to the Mexican press as well, urging it to publish his proclamation to warn Mexicans that if they come to Texas and “stir up trouble” they will worsen the “race hatred and strife” that already exists between two peoples. Ferguson argued that publishing the proclamation in Mexico would “render a great

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<sup>49</sup> “Texas Mexicans Told They Will Not Be Harmed,” *San Antonio Light*, June 19, 1916, 1.

<sup>50</sup> “Three Mexican Bandits Killed and Three Captured By Posse,” *Laredo Times*, June 18, 1916, 6.

service to your people and you will be the means of promoting peace and good will.”<sup>51</sup> He concluded with a promise to Texas Mexicans who report reliable information leading to the apprehension of disloyal Mexicans, “a very liberal reward in gold.”<sup>52</sup> However, none of the archival records indicate that anyone received such a reward.

Only a handful of letters arrived at Governor Ferguson and the Adjutant General, Henry Hutchings, offices warning of “suspicious” Mexicans. The first to arrive was on June 26, 1916, from J.N. Delavan of Lyra, Texas, a mining town of about 1,000 people. Delavan warned of Mexican insurrectionists “delivering incendiary speeches to the Mexican population” of Lyra.<sup>53</sup> However, most of the letters arrived from ethnic Mexicans pledging their allegiance to the United States, and did not report the names of suspected Mexican criminals.

The impact of the loyalty proclamation can be seen in a rise of arrests following its delivery. In San Antonio, Fanstino Reyeo was arrested on July 6, 1916, on charges of “inciting rebellion.” The following week eleven Mexican men were arrested as co-conspirators. In addition to these arrests, San Antonio police arrested J. Jiminez and Gaspero Ortiz for “carrying a pistol,” T Tostado for breaking “neutrality laws,” and T. Louis for “carrying a slingshot.” The arrest totals for non-violent crimes committed by ethnic Mexicans in San Antonio during the month of July were over four times higher than the previous month, and accounted for 40% of

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<sup>51</sup> Archives Division, Texas State Library, Governors’ Papers: James E. Ferguson.

<sup>52</sup> “Texas Mexicans Told They Will Not Be Harmed,” *San Antonio Light*, June 19, 1916, 1.

<sup>53</sup> Archives Division, Texas State Library, Governors’ Papers: James E. Ferguson, Letter Press Books: Box 301-378, Volume 28, Letters dated June 26, 1916.

the arrests for the entire year.<sup>54</sup> The Loyalty Proclamation of 1916 encouraged Anglo suspicions of ethnic Mexicans and made it more difficult for them to receive the full protection of Texas laws. Additionally, Chapa, who had emerged as a political voice for ethnic Mexicans, supported this measure. Chapa, with his Spanish language newspaper and influence with Mexican Americans, maintained his position within the Governor's office throughout the remainder of the decade and was more concerned with Americanizing ethnic Mexicans than advocating their right to full protection before the laws. Chapa represented a social group of ethnic Mexican elites that was closely allied with Anglo Texans and believed inclusion required assimilation—and whatever degree of loyalty the Anglo government demanded.

The Loyalty Proclamation illustrated the complexity of the ethnic Mexican community in Texas. Tejanos, like Chapa, who had established themselves as social and political elites in ethnic Mexican communities of Texas, distanced themselves from Mexicans who supported revolutionary causes in Mexico. Mexican refugees who fled to Texas for safety during the 1910s were not as familiar with Anglo society and, thus, found comfort and safety within Mexican neighborhoods—reading Mexican papers, eating Mexican food, and openly celebrating Mexican heritage through festivals. The governor's proclamation unleashed new pressures on ethnic Mexicans in Texas, warning them that their jobs and safety could be in trouble if they failed to pledge allegiance to the Stars and Stripes.

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<sup>54</sup> Bexar County Arrest Records, San Antonio, 1910-1920, Archives Division, Texas State Library.

## Loyalty and Honor: World War I

American citizens were divided on whether American intervention in World War I was necessary. President Woodrow Wilson initially opposed intervention, but was also a proponent for securing democracy in America and abroad. By 1917 Wilson had already warned that the United States would not tolerate unrestricted submarine warfare following the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915. Thus, when the British intercepted a German telegram intended for the Government of Mexico that called for the latter to engage the United States in war, American public opinion changed in favor of intervention in Europe. The Zimmermann Telegram, authored by the Foreign Secretary of the German Emperor Arthur Zimmerman, made the following declaration:

“We intend to begin on the first of February unrestricted submarine warfare. We shall endeavor in spite of this to keep the United States of America neutral. In the event of this not succeeding, we make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: make war together, make peace together, generous financial support and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to conquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona.”<sup>55</sup>

As stated in the telegram, Germany did resume unrestricted submarine warfare. Wilson continued to remain neutral, but after the seventh U.S. merchant ship was destroyed by German U-boats, Congress declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917.<sup>56</sup> Surprisingly, two events that appeared unrelated and separated by the Atlantic Ocean—the Mexican Revolution and World War I—would both have an

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<sup>55</sup> Thomas Boghardt, *The Zimmermann Telegram: Intelligence, Diplomacy, and America's Entry into World War I* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2012), 123.

<sup>56</sup> P. Edward Haley, *Revolution and Intervention: The Diplomacy of Taft and Wilson with Mexico, 1910-1917* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970), 248-253.

impact on the lynching and violent attacks on ethnic Mexicans in Texas. The Mexican Revolution contributed to the increase in violence, and World War I played a role in its decline.

As the world war engulfed more and more of the world, ethnic Mexicans in Texas had begun returning to Mexico out of fear of conscription in the U.S. Army and in response to Ranger terror. The Coroner of Cameron County, Henry J. Kirk, who examined the body of Florencia Garcia, testified during the Canales investigation that he was regularly called to collect the remains of decomposing bodies—sometimes one or two, others six—and recounted a time when he was called to the scene of twenty dead ethnic Mexicans. Kirk explained that ethnic Mexicans were afraid to search the countryside for the “evaporated” because of fear that they too would disappear. When he asked a man why he didn’t go and retrieve or bury the bodies Kirk explained, “He said he was afraid that the Rangers would shoot them.”<sup>57</sup> As a consequence Kirk feared that ethnic Mexicans would once again flee Texas, as had happened in 1915, and laborers necessary for farming and agricultural work would be in short supply. “We don’t want them to leave,” declared Kirk, and “they have been leaving there for some cause in an alarming way. It was a common occurrence to see team after team loaded with household goods going across into

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<sup>57</sup> “Proceedings of the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House in the Investigation of the Texas State Ranger Force,” 595-600.



Mexico.”<sup>58</sup> In 1917 immigration records show that 93,000 people left the United States for Mexico.<sup>59</sup>

By 1918 Rangers and border agents were claiming that ethnic Mexicans, some of whom were Mexican Americans, were dodging military service for the United States and fleeing into Mexico. Ironically, as Congress passed the 1917 Immigration Act requiring immigrants to be literate and subjecting them to head taxes, making immigration more restrictive, agents were also attempting to prevent ethnic Mexicans from fleeing because they believed these men were citizens avoiding the war. Secretary of Labor W.B. Wilson “suspended the literacy test, head tax, and contract labor clause for agricultural workers, effective until March 2, 1921,” in a effort to encourage Mexican laborers to return to the United States.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, if foreign workers could prove they did not begin the naturalization process, then they were excluded from a draft. However, this did little to convince ethnic Mexicans to remain in Texas or encourage Mexican laborers to return.<sup>61</sup> Jesus Villareal testified to being tortured on the suspicion he was smuggling two Mexican American teenage boys out of the United States to escape the draft. Driving west from Brownsville to Roma, Texas, with the two boys headed to Villareal’s niece’s wedding, the most direct path along the Rio Grande required them to cross

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 603-604.

<sup>59</sup> Cynthia E. Orozco, *No Mexicans, Women, or Dogs Allowed* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 51.

<sup>60</sup> José Ramirez, *To the Line of Fire! Mexican Texans and World War I* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009), 35.

<sup>61</sup> Benjamin Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 151.

the river where the waterway snaked around the terrain. When stopped by two Rangers, Villareal was beaten because the officers believed he was helping the young men avoid “registration day.”<sup>62</sup> In fact, one of the young Mexican American boys had registration papers in his possession.

Intimidation by Rangers and now the fear of being called to serve in World War I for the United States led to a considerable decline in the ethnic Mexican labor force. While the number is uncertain, border agents reported that thousands of ethnic Mexican crossed into Mexico from Brownsville alone shortly after the American entrance in World War I. Historians refer to this movement as an exodus. Ethnic Mexicans left with their family, possessions, and in one case, an entire adobe-style home.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, 30,000 Americans (non-Mexican) sought to avoid conscription in Mexico, and an estimated 10,000 expats remained by 1921.<sup>64</sup>

Not all ethnic Mexicans were trying to avoid conscription. Approximately 200,000 people of Hispanic origin served in the United States military in World War I, and most of them were of Mexican descent.<sup>65</sup> Those Mexican Americans who willfully enlisted and served in World War I wanted to demonstrate their loyalty to the United States. They feared anti-Mexican violence in Texas; to some of them, losing their life abroad hardly seemed a worse alternative. One Mexican American

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<sup>62</sup> “Proceedings of the Joint Committee of the Senate and the House in the Investigation of the Texas State Ranger Force,” 465-470.

<sup>63</sup> Benjamin Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 150-154.

<sup>64</sup> Dan La Botz, “American ‘Slackers’ in the Mexican Revolution: International Proletarian Politics in the Midst of a National Revolution,” *The Americas* 62, No. 4 (2006): 563.

<sup>65</sup> Gilberto Villahermosa, “America’s Hispanics in American’s Wars,” *Army Magazine*, September 2002.

World War I veteran described the situation living in an intolerable situation in Texas as being caught “between the Devil and the deep blue sea.”<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, those who enlisted would continue to witness the Jim Crow South during their training days. Even though service was not segregated along white-Mexican lines as it was along white-black lines, military training in the South exposed ethnic Mexicans to a society and culture that was intolerable to men of color, even though they were leaving for Europe to defend the democratic ideals of the nation. What Mexican American soldiers experienced would awaken in some of them a determination to eradicate the culture of hatred in Texas. They believed that their military service had given them the right to protest the circumstances to which they and other Mexican Americans had been subjected.

Some ethnic Mexicans regarded service in the United States military as an opportunity to assimilate into the American mainstream, while others believed that refusal to register for the draft was a protest for being treated like second-class citizens. Those who chose service desired inclusion into the American ranks. If they could speak English, they trained and fought in integrated platoons. As for the Spanish-speaking Mexican Americans, the United States military implemented the Camp Gordon Plan. Under this plan, recruits were organized into units according to “nationality, loyalty, intellect, citizenship, and fitness for military service.”<sup>67</sup> Camp Gordon had companies of “Italians, Russians, Greeks, Swedes, and Mexicans.” To

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<sup>66</sup> University of Texas at El Paso Institute of Oral History, Interviewee: Charles V. Porras, Interviewer: Oscar J. Martínez, November 18, 1975. Tape no: 212, Transcript no: 212.

<sup>67</sup> “Making Americans of Alien Soldiers,” *The New York Times*, September 22, 1918, 40.

improve troop morale, the officers in charge of training the men came from northern cities; anti-Mexican officers from the South and the Southwest were avoided as much as possible. According to one report, the Mexican American willingness to fight in World War I increased 100% following the implementation of this plan: “The opportunity to train under and alongside their ethnic peers performed wonders for the soldiers in the so-called Foreign Legion Companies.”<sup>68</sup> Proponents of the Camp Gordon Plan believed the soldiers, referred to as a “Foreign Legion,” would have a greater opportunity for inclusion into the American mainstream once they return from the Great War as English speaking veterans.

Mexican American soldiers who served came from central Texas, the Big Bend, and South Texas. Francisco Ramirez, son of Pedro and Albina Ramirez of Alpine, was twenty one years old when he left for service with the United States Army in 1917 (see Figure 6.2). He was born the year as Antonio Gomez, the Thorndale lynching victim discussed in Chapter Two, and he was familiar with the anti-Mexican violence of the decade. Alpine was a neighboring town to Marfa where 3,500 Mexican refugees boarded trains to Fort Bliss for the internment discussed in

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<sup>68</sup> José Ramirez, *To the Line of Fire! Mexican Texans and World War I* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009), 80.



**Figure 6.2** Archive of the Big Bend. Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas. Collection ATTCCPC, image number 509. Francisco Ramirez, World War I. Roll #65493, Neg H31-32.

Chapter Four. Ramirez's town was 90 miles south of Pecos; residents there were familiar with the three year long legal case of Leon Martinez, Jr., which led to Martinez' execution. Ramirez had himself been forced to attend segregated schools. However, when called to duty he served the United States in Europe.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Archive of the Big Bend. Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas. Collection ATTCCPC, image number 509. Francisco Ramirez, World War I. Roll #65493, Neg H31-32.

Mexican American experiences in World War I as United States soldiers enhanced their sense of inclusion in America. However, it also made them more impatient with the Juan Crow systems in Texas that they experienced upon returning from the war.

Charles V. Porrás, born in El Paso on July 13, 1901, was a Mexican American World War I veteran whose experience abroad and anger at Anglo mistreatment of ethnic Mexicans in Texas led him to pursue activism. Porrás explained that in Texas there was a racial hierarchy and “Negros” were at the bottom, with “paisanos” considered to be “a couple of degrees above the Negro.”<sup>70</sup> A “paisano” was a Mexican man who lived most of his life in Mexico, but was now living in the United States, seen near the bottom of the racial standing because he was least likely to assimilate into Anglo American society because of his advanced age. “Paisanos” were not necessarily the lowest class of Mexicans or uneducated; many were middle class as well. They did not feel the need or desire to be accepted by Anglo Texans and were disliked in the urban areas for their political aspirations as they formed fraternal orders and clubs.<sup>71</sup> Porrás knew the term from an early age because his father often used the phrase to describe his friends. Porrás told a story about how his father and several of his companions from the mutual aid society La Protectora, (discussed in Chapter Two), were ordered to leave “one of the best cafés in El Paso at the corner of Oregon and Overland Streets.” The German American owner, Mr.

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<sup>70</sup> University of Texas at El Paso Institute of Oral History, Interviewee: Charles V. Porrás, Interviewer: Oscar J. Martínez, November 18, 1975. Tape no: 212, Transcript no: 212.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

Zieger, ordered them out, even though the Mexican men were properly dressed, because “Mexicans weren’t being served there.”<sup>72</sup> The younger Porras grew up in El Paso and witnessed the Jim Crow era segregation laws as a system that targeted ethnic Mexicans too. Porras did not question whether he was white; rather, he questioned why white Texans applied laws that targeted Negroes to Mexicans as well.

Porras attended the Mexican school, Juan Jacinto, until the eighth grade. As a teenager he attended El Paso High School; Anglos didn’t encourage Mexican American students to attend, but they were not prohibited. Most Mexican boys of that age did not continue beyond the Mexican primary schools because they sought employment to help provide for their families. Porras did not experience much discrimination from his fellow students, but the teachers were less favorable to ethnic Mexicans in the classroom. While in attendance he recalled having several Anglo friends, but socially outside of school there was less mixing. Anglo parents generally excluded ethnic Mexican teenagers from their social gatherings. Porras recalled only two families that invited him into their homes: an Irish family, the McQuarters; and a Jewish family. He didn’t recall at the time feeling excluded, a sentiment that only developed after his experience abroad serving in the United States Navy.<sup>73</sup>

In the Navy Porras developed a friendship with a black cook from his ship. The young cook was badly beaten by a drunken mob of white men when they left the ship together in Key West, Florida. Porras recalled, “Wherever we went away

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

from Texas, away from the South, we noticed that there was no difference [in their treatment because of their skin color]. When I first went to California—Los Angeles, San Diego—we used to go everywhere and nobody said a thing. Down South, in the southern states, that was different.”<sup>74</sup> While stationed at a camp in Gulf Port, Mississippi, Porrás feared leaving the base at night. The young Mexican American understood the Jim Crow Era rules of the south, and that he could not leave the base at night and enjoy a “picture show” or restaurants because “if your skin was just a little dark, brother, that’s it...trouble.”<sup>75</sup>

On his way to Chicago from New Orleans, Porrás was excited because the Navy transported its sailors in first-class, something a young sailor was eager to experience. Nevertheless, in the dining car of the train, while dressed in uniform, an Anglo man quickly alerted the steward when Porrás sat at the table next to him. He returned and demanded that Porrás be escorted out of first class shouting, “You think I’m going to sit along side of that black so-and so? That black son-of-a-bitch.” Porrás later explained that this experience in the South left him with a burning desire to stand up against social and racial injustice: “That left an everlasting memory in my mind that is bitter, very bitter. To think that I was in uniform and I was very well presented; I was a first-class petty officer; clean. And this yokel here—the way he called me ‘that Black son-of-a-bitch’—like that.”<sup>76</sup> His military experience was an awakening for him, one that would forever change Porrás. As a

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.



veteran, he would soon fight a war for Mexican American rights—“When I came back, they weren’t going to push me around. They weren’t going to tell me, ‘Well, you can’t sit here; you can’t come here.’ Then is when I woke up.”<sup>77</sup>

Historian José Ramírez points out that the Mexican American experience is largely absent from literature on World War I. He argues that military scholars struggled finding adequate sources because the military simply classified Mexican Americans as “white.”<sup>78</sup> However, the historical anonymity was further complicated by Tejanos who tried to disguise their Mexican-ness from Army officials. Ramírez discusses the case of David Cantú Barkley, the son of an Anglo man and an ethnic Mexican woman. Barkley, a light-skinned Tejano, “took every precaution to conceal his heritage in order to serve on the front lines.” These precautions included only disclosing his Anglo heritage and requesting that his mother not write to him using her Spanish surname.<sup>79</sup> Barkley had witnessed how ethnic Mexicans were treated in Texas during the Jim Crow Era and he feared being segregated like African Americans were during World War I. His motivation behind hiding his Mexican heritage was to avoid possible discrimination, segregation, or assignments to menial tasks forced upon African Americans. Barkley understood that while the military did not have a separate category for ethnic Mexicans, the culture of the South made him fully aware that Anglos did not view ethnic Mexicans as white. On November 9, 1918, Barkley died while on a reconnaissance mission. He was awarded the Medal

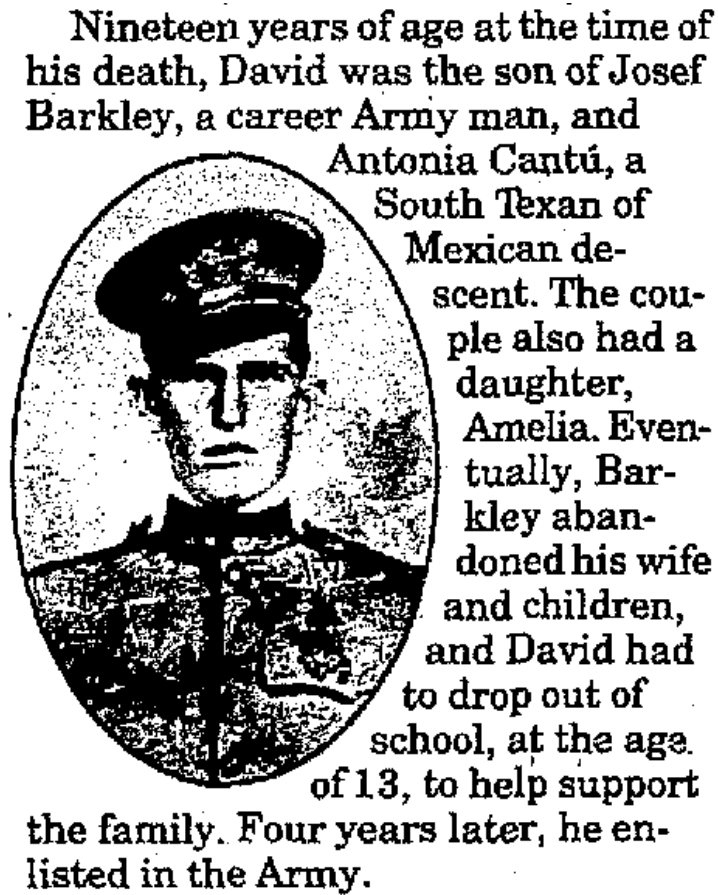
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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> José Ramírez, *To the Line of Fire: Mexican Texans and World War I* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009), xiv.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., xiii.

of Honor (the 38<sup>th</sup> Hispanic recipient), along with the Croix de Guerre by France, and the Croce Merito de Guerra by Italy (see Figure 6.3).<sup>80</sup> One group of ethnic Mexicans



**Figure 6.3** "Texan Who Concealed His Origin is 38<sup>th</sup> Hispanic Medal of Honor Recipient," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, January 6, 1992, 41.

in Texas who served in World War I, such as Barkley, who were lighter skinned, with an Anglo father that brought with him a non-Spanish family name, distanced themselves from ethnic Mexicans if they could pass as white. Another group was

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<sup>80</sup> "Texan Who Concealed His Origin is 38<sup>th</sup> Hispanic Medal of Honor Recipient," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, January 6, 1992, 41.

represented by Porras. This group did not hide its identity, and would continue to fight for equal protection and equal rights for ethnic Mexicans in Texas.

World War I provided an opportunity for ethnic Mexicans to demonstrate their loyalty to the United States, not only abroad, but on the home front as well. Just as Ferguson appealed to the aliens and citizens of Texas to demonstrate their loyalty to the state, President Woodrow Wilson urged the foreign born to demonstrate their loyalty by joining Americans in Fourth of July celebrations. The 1918 Fourth of July celebration became known as "Loyalty Day" in many cities around the country. Wilson declared that nothing had been more gratifying during the war "than the manner in which our foreign-born fellow citizens, and the sons and daughters of the foreign-born, have risen to this greatest of all national emergencies...your frequent professions of loyalty...your eager response to call for patriotic service, including the supreme service of offering life itself in battle for justice, freedom, and democracy."<sup>81</sup> Wilson believed that Independence Day in 1918 was a time to celebrate a diversified military united to fight in Europe for the greater good of Americans and humankind. As a result it was, he suggested, the second most significant July Fourth celebration in America's history: "As July 4, 1776, was the dawn of democracy for this nation," declared Wilson, "let us, on July 4, 1918, celebrate the birth of a new and greater spirit of democracy...what the signers of the

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<sup>81</sup>"President Calls for July 4 Celebration," *The New York Times*, May 25, 1918.

Declaration of Independence dreamed of for themselves and their fellow-countrymen shall be fulfilled for all mankind.”<sup>82</sup>

From coast to coast, Loyalty celebrations occurred in cities and neighborhoods that included citizens and the foreign born. Polish, Irish, and Jewish communities of Northeastern cities pledged to Wilson their commitment to the patriotic celebration. New York Italians, with the help of a national organization known as the Roman Legion of America, planned elaborate celebrations for Loyalty Day, and urged the Roman Legion to cooperate with Mayors of cities around the country.<sup>83</sup> In Texas, Wilson’s address reached ethnic Mexicans. Near the border in Kingsville, the Loyalty celebration included over 100 Mexican and Mexican American young men who offered their service to the United States military.<sup>84</sup> South, Central, and West Texas communities like San Angelo and El Paso all witnessed a demonstration of loyalty following Wilson’s address. Jose Canales saw this as an opportunity for Mexican Americans to demonstrate their loyalty to the United States. He was selected as one of 75,000 Americans to be a “Four-Minute Man.” With this title came the task of rallying support for the war effort by Texas-Mexicans, and giving four-minute speeches in support of the war at churches and movie theaters.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> “Italians to Take Big Part,” *The New York Times*, June 9, 1918.

<sup>84</sup> José Ramírez, *To the Line of Fire: Mexican Texans and World War I* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009), 19.

<sup>85</sup> Ben Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 159.

Demonstrating loyalty was important to a portion of ethnic Mexicans in Texas, but not all. Shortly after Congress declared war on Germany in April 1917 thousands of Mexicans unwilling to enlist and fight on behalf of the United States had already begun to flee south into Mexico, something Texans referred to as the “Mexican exodus.” Under the Selective Service Act of 1917, all adult males living in the United States were required to register. However, any foreign born male who had not made a declaration of intention to become a citizen of the United States was not liable for conscription. Upon satisfying draft board officials of their alien status, they were exempt from United States military service. The *Dallas Morning News* reported, “the impression prevails that Mexican citizens are liable for draft in the national army and this impression has caused the exodus to Mexico of many foreign laborers.”<sup>86</sup>

By the summer of 1917, Texas farmers became increasingly concerned with a labor shortage. Canales’s pro-American speeches to Mexican American communities urged them not to leave Texas for Mexico. Nevertheless, the Mexican flight drained the region of unskilled workers at the same time that northern cities began attracting African American workers because of better wages in manufacturing goods for the war effort. The Department of Agriculture sent representatives to Austin to work with state officials to solve the labor shortage in Texas, a shortage already worsened by the loss of laborers because of increased Ranger violence in the previous years.<sup>87</sup> As a result, the Department of Labor and

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<sup>86</sup> “Mexicans Not Liable for Service Under Draft Law,” *Dallas Morning News*, October 12, 1917, 13.

<sup>87</sup> “Federal Government to Aid Texas Solve Labor Problem,” *Dallas Morning News*, June 8, 1917, 4.

the Department of Agriculture organized a summer youth program that brought northern and eastern boys to the Southwest to fill the labor shortages. The United States Boy's Working Reserve brought more than 200,000 teenage boys to the region during their summer vacation from school.<sup>88</sup> In Chicago, boys from Lane Technical High School volunteered for the Working Reserves, (see Figure 6.4) and, like boys from participating schools, they received medals for service. Upon their return they were celebrated with a parade through the streets of Chicago, reinforcing Wilson's desire to see Americans come together for the war effort abroad and on the home front (see Figure 6.5).

"Boy Power," as it was referred to by the Department of Labor, was a patriotic war initiative, encouraging young men to enroll with the understanding that they were doing their part. Representatives from the Department of Agriculture met in St. Louis during the week of November 5 to 10, to evaluate the success of "Boy Power" from the previous summer. The representative members opined, "that school boys rightly trained and led would make capable farm helpers and would be a potent factor in winning the war against Germany."<sup>89</sup> William E. Hall, the national director of the Boys' Working Reserve, received a letter from former president Theodore Roosevelt expressing his support for the loyalty to the nation the program championed:

"One of the great benefits you confer is that of making a boy realize that he is part of Uncle Sam's team; that he is doing his share in the

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 4; "Boy Power: Official Bulletin of the United States Boys' Working Reserve, Department of Labor," *United States Boy's Working Reserve*, Volume I, Number 2, December 15, 1917.

<sup>89</sup> "Boy Power: Official Bulletin of the United States Boys' Working Reserve, Department of Labor," *United States Boy's Working Reserve*, Volume I, Number 2, December 15, 1917, 1.

great war, that he holds his services in trust for the Nation, and that although it is proper to consider the question of material gain and the question of his own desires, yet that what he must most strongly consider at this time is where his services will do most good to our people as a whole. I earnestly wish you every success in your wise and patriotic effort.

Faithfully yours, Theodore Roosevelt.”<sup>90</sup>



**Figure 6.4** Portrait of boys' working reserve at Lane Technical High School located at 1225 North Sedgwick in the Near North Side community area of Chicago, Illinois. This photonegative taken by a Chicago Daily News photographer may have been published in the newspaper. Cite as: DN-0070079, Chicago Daily News negatives collection, Chicago History Museum.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 5.



**Figure 6.5** Image of boys' working reserve parade in Chicago, Illinois. This photonegative taken by a Chicago Daily News photographer may have been published in the newspaper. Cite as: DN-0070085, Chicago Daily News negatives collection, Chicago History Museum.

The economic situation in Texas by 1918 was dire. The state needed Mexican laborers to return. The “Mexican problem” that had been redefined as the influx of undesirable aliens fleeing revolutionary Mexico now was defined as a severe shortage of essential Mexican labor. The labor shortage was worsened by the need to fill manufacturing positions related to wartime industries in the North, which also accelerated Mexican migration to Chicago, Gary, Indiana, and other northern cities. Labor shortages would eventually lead to the return of ethnic Mexicans by the



decade's end. In 1919, over 15,100 Mexican families would resettle in Texas.<sup>91</sup> Anglo and Mexican relations were not necessarily improving by the decade's end, but they were not getting worse. Anglo Texans were encouraging ethnic Mexicans to return to work the fields and mines. More often than any other time during the decade, newspapers reported the dire need for "good Mexicans" to return and work the fields. Mexicans were no longer characterized as the threat in the Texas and Mexico borderland. A new threat along the border had emerged—"Huns."

### **Questioning the Loyalty of German Americans**

A growing suspicion of German activity in South and West Texas led Anglos to focus on a new enemy of the state: Germans. Americans had long suspected that Germany was supporting Mexican Revolutionary efforts, and possibly Mexican raids on American soil such as the Villa raid on Columbus, New Mexico. Customs inspector Marcus Hines testified during a Senate investigation on Mexican affairs in 1919 that he removed a German flag from a rancher's house during the height of the Anglo-Mexican border raids of 1916-1917. The rancher had several Mexican laborers working for him and was told if he raised the German flag on his ranch, raiders would pass his property and he would be left unharmed. The ranch was located along the Rio Grande outside of the South Texas town of Santa Maria, Texas.<sup>92</sup> Tom Mayfield of the Texas Ranger force of Hidalgo County reported to the

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<sup>91</sup> "15,100 Mexican Families Came to Texas Last Year," *Dallas Morning News*, July 15, 1920, 3.

<sup>92</sup> Preliminary Report and Hearing of the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate Pursuant to Senate Resolution 106, United States Senate, Investigation of Mexican Affairs, testimony of Marcus Hines, Page 1311.

Senate committee that the region was plagued with rumors that bandits were armed with German weapons. These were the rumors Texans grew concerned with prior to the United States entering World War I.

A hunt for pro-German saboteurs and spies in the United States increased with American entrance in the Great War, and in Texas the negative campaign led to more favorable conditions for ethnic Mexicans. During the decade of the Mexican Revolution, Texans had convinced themselves that they were practically at war with Mexico, or, at the very least, suspicious of Mexicans in the state and near the border. Yet, when the United States declared war with Germany, and the government called upon men to fight, an actual war declared by Congress supplanted the near war against Mexico. Moreover, the infamous Zimmerman telegram was not rumor or myth of a possible threat; it demonstrated the existence of an actual threat. Nationally, terms like “liberty cabbage” and “liberty dogs” replaced the German words “sauerkraut” and “dachshunds.” The National Food Commission debated whether to ban sauerkraut entirely, and came to the decision in May 1918 to change officially only the name.<sup>93</sup> Germans were referred to as “Huns,” German schools and churches that primarily operated using the German language were forced to adopt “English only” practices, and in heavily German American regions of the country, like the Missouri Valley, towns “Americanized” their names. President Wilson ordered all German-born males fifteen and older to report to their local U.S. Post Office and file for a registration card. They were then investigated and at times interrogated. If they were found to be an enemy of the State they were interned at

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<sup>93</sup> “Liberty Cabbage,” *The Indianapolis Star*, May 3, 1918, 6.

one of two camps depending on where they lived in relation to the Mississippi River: Fort Douglas, Utah, and Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia. In Texas this growing suspicion of German Americans mirrored some aspects of the anti-Mexican rhetoric of the decade.

The *Galveston Daily News* reported that the United States Treasury Department uncovered a plan by pro-German agents operating in the country to direct their efforts at defeating the liberty loan program. The liberty loan encouraged Americans to purchase war bonds to help fund the military and American allies. The article suggested pro-German agents operated in Texas to discourage subscriptions.<sup>94</sup> Once again the press was responsible for fueling the anti-German rhetoric, and similar to the Mexican Revolution stories, mistreatment of Americans abroad became an important focus. The *San Antonio Light* reported that American POWs would be starving if not for packages from the American Red Cross and the Y.M.C.A. An American escapee reported that until the packages arrived their daily food ration consisted of a slice of black sour bread and a cup of cold coffee for breakfast. For dinner, they were lucky to receive a pint and a half of warm soup made of water and boiled turnips.<sup>95</sup>

Anglo paranoia now shifted from Mexican “bandits” to “German agents” operating in Texas. The Newcastle Coal Company in Wichita Falls, Texas, closed for two days because of a report that a “German agent” was hiding in the mine and

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<sup>94</sup> “Organized Effort to Defeat Liberty Loan,” *Galveston Daily News*, October 18, 1917, 1.

<sup>95</sup> “American Prisoners Starved by Germans,” *San Antonio Light*, October 18, 1917, 2.

prepared to blow it up once American workers arrived.<sup>96</sup> As with suspected banditry, many of the reports were false. A German American woman was accused of attempting to poison soldiers training at Camp Bowie, Fort Worth, even though she was visiting family in New York.<sup>97</sup> The *Corsicana Daily Sun*, of Corsicana, Texas, took the anti-German rhetoric in a more violent direction. Without literally encouraging mob violence, the paper suggested that anti-Americanism was punishable by death, and argued that German agents were escaping treasonous charges because of intellectually ill-equipped juries. The article was titled, "Let's Shoot Traitors," and appeared to urge Texans to seek out suspected German agents: "Kill the spies and traitors and they will be where they can do no further damage. Furthermore, the executioners will have a wholesome effect on others who might be tempted."<sup>98</sup> Across Texas, mobs organized to beat German Americans suspected of being German sympathizers, and in Shamrock, Texas, a Methodist preacher was nearly lynched by a group of men for "allegedly baptizing an infant in the name of Kaiser Wilhelm II."<sup>99</sup>

Anti-German feelings ran high throughout the county. The *New York Herald* printed a cartoon image, "enemy alien menace," looming over the city (see Figure 6.6). In Chicago, and cities around the Midwest, signs posted warnings that German-

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<sup>96</sup> "Scared of German Agent," *Laredo Times*, January 27, 1918, 9.

<sup>97</sup> "Efforts Being Made to Crush Lies of German Propagandists," *Denton Record-Chronicle*, , September 25, 1918, 3.

<sup>98</sup> "Let's Shoot Traitors," *Corsicana Daily Sun*, February 23, 1918, 2.

<sup>99</sup> Matthew D. Tippens, *Turning Germans into Texans: World War I and the Assimilation and Survival of German Culture in Texas, 1900-1930* (Austin: Kleingarten Press, 2010), 14.



**Figure 6.6** “Enemy Alien Menace,” *New York Herald*, March 28, 1918.

Americans were not welcome in public spaces. The *Los Angeles Times* printed an image of a sign warning the “alien enemy” they were not permitted any closer to the port. This sign, and many signs like it, were a direct result of federal restrictions prohibiting Germans from entering ports and warehouses.<sup>100</sup> Across the country Germans were harassed, beaten, and in one known case, lynched. Robert Prager of

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<sup>100</sup> Matt Hormann, “When Patriotic Fevers Ran High, *Hometown Pasadena*, <http://hometown-pasadena.com/history/when-patriotic-fevers-ran-high/28158>, accessed July 4, 2013; *Los Angeles Times*, April 7, 1917; *New York Herald*, March 28, 1918.

Collinsville, Illinois, was accused by his fellow miners of making seditious remarks. Walter Clark, superintendent of the mine, dismissed rumors that Prager had hoarded gun powder while employed at the mine. On April 4, 1918, after twice escaping a mob of miners, Prager was apprehended by a mob of over 350 men, and hanged from a tree. Before the lynching he wrote a final statement to his family in German: "Dear Parents [and brother] Carl Henry Prager... I must on this, the fourth day of April, 1918, die. Please pray for me, my dear parents. This is my last letter and testament, your dear son and brother, Robert Paul Prager."<sup>101</sup> When the police arrived only two men remained at the scene and tried to prevent the officers from removing Prager's body from the tree. Officials found a loyalty proclamation in his coat pocket that swore his allegiance to the United States. Germans and German Americans who feared for their safety carried such documents, and did what they could to prove their 100% Americanism to no avail. They were now the enemy of the state.

As Americans grew more confident that the war in Europe would end with an allied victory, nativists questioned what would happen with the interned German agents. In Denton, Texas, the *Denton Record-Chronicle* argued that the internment camps "cleaned up" Texas and the country. The essay, anonymously authored by "Harriman of the Vigilantes," was a nativist diatribe about the foreign born citizens of the United States. The author argued for swift assimilation of the subjects, and encouraged violence against them if they did not submit: "Get to work within the confines of your own country. Build up and purify your land. Purge it of the filth

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<sup>101</sup> "German Miner is Hanged by Illinois Mob," *San Antonio Light*, April 5, 1918, 1.

that clogs its spirit. Wash it clean of the evil it has clung to so long.” The writer’s concern originated with the releasing of Germans internees at the war’s end. He argued that the “rotten masses” would “spew out on our land.” The author concluded: “We have no room in America for the man who shouts ‘Hurrah for America!’ and follows it with a whisper of ‘Gott sei dank, Ich bin Deutsch’ (Thanks be to God, I am German).”<sup>102</sup>

As tension escalated the U.S. Attorney General, advised by his fellow cabinet members, argued that officers of the law must vigorously enforce the espionage law “with great vigor, and to leave nothing undone to stop German propaganda.” He feared that if non-German citizens took the law into their own hands, lynching of German Americans could become an everyday affair. Gregory believed, “there will be a reign of lynch law, and that German sympathizers will be found adorning lamp posts or suspended from the limbs of trees.”<sup>103</sup>

The anti-German hysteria made its way to the state’s highest office. Governor Ferguson’s hopes for reelection in 1918 were dashed after the Texas House of Representatives prepared twenty-one charges against him for impeachment over a high-publicized dispute with the University of Texas. Of those charges, one questioned a loan of \$156,500 from an unknown source. The press suggested that the money came from one of his numerous German-American supporters. The Senate convicted Ferguson on ten of the twenty-one charges. On January 18, 1917, William P. Hobby was sworn in as Lieutenant Governor of Texas.

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<sup>102</sup> “What are We Going to Do About It?,” *Denton Record-Chronicle*, September 25, 1918, 3.

<sup>103</sup> “Gregory Advised to Crush Spying,” *The City Times* (Galveston, Texas) April 20, 1918, 2.

Ferguson's support from the German community came largely from German businessmen who owned breweries, because Ferguson was an opponent of prohibition. In 1918 Ferguson ran against Hobby in the Democratic primary. William P. Hobby won with help from his supporters who spread rumors that the loan came directly from the German Kaiser. After the election it was revealed that the loan came from two brewers in San Antonio and Galveston.<sup>104</sup>

German language newspapers responded to the anti-German propaganda by printing articles expressing loyalty to the United States. The *Katholische Rundschau*, *Neu-Braunfelser*, and *Fredericksburger Wochenblatt* urged readers to demonstrate their commitment to the United States. In April of 1917 the *Giddings Deutsches Volkblatt* "printed the Star Spangled Banner on the front page and told its readers that the time had come for German Texans to sever their ties with Germany."<sup>105</sup> Across the state of Texas, German-American associations suspended celebrations of their heritage. During the American involvement in World War I, German Americans became the new "enemy other" in Texas, replacing ethnic Mexicans, and creating an opportunity for ethnic Mexican grievances to be heard.

## **Conclusion**

The focus on Germans took a great deal of attention off ethnic Mexicans during World War I. Rangers and other border officers became more concerned

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<sup>104</sup> Matthew D. Tappan, *Turning Germans into Texans: World War I and the Assimilation and Survival of German Culture in Texas, 1900-1930* (Austin: Kleingarten Press, 2010), 20-24.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.



with hunting down alleged German spies, or Americans who crossed into Mexico to avoid the draft. Additionally, the depleted male population during the war led Texans to encourage Mexican immigration. Due to pressure from southwestern employers, literacy tests and head taxes implemented by the Immigration Act of 1917 went mostly ignored by border agents.<sup>106</sup> Tejanos like José T. Canales gave patriotic speeches to ethnic Mexicans praising 100% Americanism. Mexican and Anglo tension had not disappeared, but conditions significantly improved from the 1915-1917 period of intense hostility. The atmosphere in Texas was set up better than any time in the previous ten years for Mexican American demands to be heard.

The Canales investigation received serious attention. In addition to the crimes committed against ethnic Mexicans, Canales introduced into evidence Ranger abuse of German Americans. The information told of a group of men who unlawfully acted as judge, jury, and executioner when protecting the state of Texas was concerned. Canales intertwined the attacks on ethnic Mexicans with anti-German abuse, presenting a group of men who distrusted the “others” of Texas society. He included white on white violence by the Rangers, but pointed out that many of these incidents were a result of drunken behavior by the morally degenerate element of the group. At the conclusion of the investigation it was clear to the committee that Canales had made a strong case for a reconstitution of the Ranger force, with the elimination of the men who were most responsible for the atrocities against ethnic Mexicans.

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<sup>106</sup> David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 19.

The Canales investigation had a significant impact on the Texas Rangers, and on Mexican American rights statewide. The investigation brought attention specifically to Ranger-on-Mexican violence, and prevented the stories of vigilante violence such as El Porvenir Massacre, mysterious hangings in jail cells, and unlawful practices by unscrupulous law enforcers, from being buried along with unknown victims in the mesquite lined valleys of rural Texas. Texas newspapers reported the findings of the investigation and placed the once revered Rangers in a negative light. Moreover, witnesses who testified were not exclusively ethnic Mexicans. Anglo Texans willing to testify helped bring down the Ranger force as well. The Canales investigation gave Texans an opportunity to demonstrate that civility would win over lawlessness, and 1919 marked the end of the free wheeling Ranger force that had dominated this part of Frontier history. On March 31, 1919, the Texas State Legislature passed a law that reduced the Ranger force to four companies with a maximum of fifteen soldiers and two officers, and the law required that the adjutant general investigate all complaints filed against any Ranger in the future.<sup>107</sup>

Additionally, World War I marked a turning point for ethnic Mexicans in Texas. Mexican American World War I veterans returned from the war with a new hope for civility in Texas, and a greater confidence that they deserved to be treated as equals in the United States. Mexican American veterans were at the forefront of the Mexican American civil rights organizations that formed in the early 1920s.

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<sup>107</sup> *General Laws of Texas, Thirty-Sixth Legislature*, 263-266; Walter Prescott Webb, *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1935), 516.

These men returned from Europe while state officials investigated Anglo on Mexican violence of the decade. The investigation, along with evolving public opinion on lynching, the stability in Mexico, and veterans ready to fight a battle for equal rights generated additional and more effective investigations into suspected lynchings during the early 1920s.

During the 1910s there were 124 confirmed lynchings of ethnic Mexicans in the United States.<sup>108</sup> That number is much higher if we include unjust “legal” executions and the offenses committed by the Texas Rangers. In the end, Anglo on Mexican violence resulted in 3500-5000 casualties.<sup>109</sup> Most occurred between 1910-1918. Conditions had in fact improved by the 1920s, when only two confirmed lynchings, and three suspected lynchings of ethnic Mexicans, occurred in the state. The last confirmed lynching of an ethnic Mexican in the United States was Rafael Benavides in Farmington New Mexico on November 16, 1928.<sup>110</sup>

A Mexican American civil rights movement emerged out of the violence of the 1910s. By 1922, the Obregon government demanded that American officials

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<sup>108</sup> William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, “The Lynching of Persons of Mexican Origin or Descent in the United States, 1848 to 1928,” *Journal of Social History* 37 (2003): 412.

<sup>109</sup> This estimation is based on this research and the published numbers by the following historians: Walter Prescott Webb, *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1935), Don M. Coerver and Linda B. Hall, *Texas and the Mexican Revolution: A Study in State and National Border Policy, 1910-1920* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1984), F. Arturo Rosales, *¡Pobre Raza!: Violence, Justice, and Mobilization Among México Lindo Immigrants, 1900-1936* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), Benjamin Heber Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and Its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), and Miguel Antonio Levario, *Militarizing the Border: When Mexicans Became the Enemy* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2012). William Carrigan and Clive Webb, *Forgotten Dead: Mob Violence Against Mexicans in the United States, 1848-1928* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>110</sup> William Carrigan and Clive Webb, “A dangerous Experiment: The Lynching of Rafael Benavides,” *New Mexico Historical Review*, 80 (3), 265-292.

investigate Anglo abuse of Mexican nationals in the United States. These investigations led to the arrest and prosecution of mob participants and even provided reparations for the victim's family. And in Texas, when these charges were made, the Texas Rangers were summoned to protect the foreigners from additional violence—a Ranger force that had only a few years earlier believed ethnic Mexicans to be the sworn enemy of the State, now had the duty to protect foreign nationals from Anglo violence. The Mexican Revolution brought the devastation of war to the borderland, resulting in the loss of Mexican and American lives. Yet, civility returned to the region, and a voice could be heard from an emerging Mexican American civil rights movement that would only grow stronger as the twentieth century progressed.

## CHAPTER VII

### EPILOGUE: TOWARDS A MEXICAN AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

This study has documented the rise in lynching of ethnic Mexicans, and the emergence of a Mexican-American civil rights movement in Texas during the 1910s. Both occurred during a period of great social and political contestation along the United States and Mexico border. The legacy of this decade would be the fight for equal rights and protection in the United States by ethnic Mexican men and women in the 1920s and beyond. World War I diverted negative attention from ethnic Mexicans in Texas, while Germans took their place as the “other” whom Anglo Texans feared the most. With the end of the Mexican Revolution, political stability returned to Mexico, further stabilizing the region. During the 1920s, the Mexican families of lynching victims in the United States sought support from their new government to pressure American leaders to pursue legal measures against the perpetrators of the violence. Additionally, defenders of Anglo-on-Mexican lynching could no longer cite the violence of the Mexican Revolution to rationalize their actions, leading to a change in public opinion about whether these acts were necessary and justified.

This is not to suggest, however, that the same public opinion shifted fully toward the acceptance of ethnic Mexicans in the United States. In 1921, the term “wetback” was introduced by the American press, and eventually joined the term “greaser” as a derogatory term used to describe Mexican immigrants. The term

“wetback,” with its socio-political references to Mexicans who avoided the immigration regulations of literacy tests and head taxes, referred to those Mexicans who crossed the Rio Grande at unregulated locations. In Texas, a legacy of racism continued with segregated schools until the 1945 *Mendez v. Westminster* decision in California, in which Judge Paul McCormick ruled that segregation of Mexican children “found no justification in the Laws of California and furthermore was a clear denial of the ‘equal protection’ clause of the *Fourteenth Amendment*.” This decision desegregated the non-Mexican all-white public schools in California, and accelerated the fight of Mexican American rights organizations for desegregation in Texas. At that time in border towns as well as major cities like Dallas and Fort Worth, business associations were still implementing Jim Crow restrictions on ethnic Mexicans with signs that read, “No Dogs, Negros, and Mexicans.”<sup>1</sup>

The Canales investigation brought attention to the unjust acts carried out by the Texas Rangers, which, along with the evolving public opinion regarding lynching, and political stability in Mexico, led to successful campaigns to arrest and prosecute mob participants and even to provide reparations for victims’ families. Moreover, by 1922, when the Obregon government of Mexico demanded that American officials investigate Anglo abuse of Mexican nationals in Texas, the Texas Rangers were summoned to protect foreigners from additional violence—a Ranger force that had gone through a complete overhaul immediately following the Canales investigation. On Saturday, November 11, 1922, Elias Villareal Zarate, a Mexican

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<sup>1</sup> LULAC History, accessed January 14, 2013, <http://lulac.org/about/history/> 78 LULAC History, accessed January 14, 2013, <http://lulac.org/about/history/>

man incarcerated for fighting with an Anglo man, was taken from his Weslaco, Texas, jail and lynched. When an ethnic Mexican protest broke out in neighboring Breckenridge, Texas, 300 Anglo men paraded through the streets threatening the lives of every Mexican in town if they did not leave by the following day. Ethnic Mexicans in Breckenridge contacted the Mexican consul in San Antonio, Don Manuel Téllez, who then urged the U.S. State Department and Texas Governor Pat Morris Neff to protect Mexicans living in Breckenridge.

In 1923, the Mexican Embassy investigated allegations that suspected Mexican criminals in Dallas County were sent to jail and unofficially sentenced to 10-day work details before being released—without ever having seen their day in court. Octaviano Escutia, arrested in Dennison, Texas, for example, was placed on a “road gang” detail. Escutia stated that when he became thirsty and asked the Anglo foreman for a drink, the man began kicking him and threw him in a ditch, calling him a “dirty, low-down Mexican.”<sup>2</sup> Manuel Zamora, also a prisoner without a trial in Denison, Texas, described similar abuse: “I was forced to work from seven o’clock in the morning until five o’clock at night, and during that time I was not permitted to leave my work to go to the toilet . . . I became weak and exhausted and on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of February A.D. 1923, I fell to the ground . . . The man in charge refused to give me any assistance, but gathered about and laughed at me and abused me in bad language.”<sup>3</sup> With political stability in Mexico and American leaders optimistic about improved foreign relations, Téllez was successful in getting these cases investigated.

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<sup>2</sup> Letter from the Mexican Consulate in Dallas, Texas, regarding Octaviano Escutia U.S. Department of State, Record Group 59, Decimal File 311.1221m36-311.1221, Box 3575, College Park, MD.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

In addition to investigations, improved foreign relations led to reparations for family members of Mexican victims. In February 1921, an Anglo-American girl, Maria Schroeder, disappeared after school near Rio Hondo, Texas. After the community searched for the girl, her body was found in a dense thicket in Cameron County, where investigators determined she had been raped and murdered. When the press published accounts of the crime, it was said that the entire population of Cameron Country became aroused, "and immediately thereafter it became evident that the perpetrator of the crime, when apprehended, would be lynched."<sup>4</sup> When Salvador Saucedo's name was mentioned as a possible suspect, he immediately knew that lynching was sure to be his punishment without a trial. A posse that included law enforcement officials apprehended Saucedo and took him out to a deserted field. When the opportunity presented itself, Saucedo fled on foot only to be gunned down by the men. It was later discovered that two Anglo men had been responsible for the girl's death, and Mexican officials demanded justice: "In view of the facts herein above-mentioned, the Embassy of Mexico very respectfully again asks of the Department of State that due justice be done, through the proper channel, and that those who may be found guilty of the murder of Salvador Saucedo be punished, and also that a becoming indemnity be granted to Saucedo's widow and orphan."<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the American press reported the Mexican Embassy grievances with the United States, as well as Washington's response:

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<sup>4</sup> Letter from the Mexican Embassy to the United States regarding the death of Salvador Saucedo, U.S. Department of State, Record Group 59, Decimal File 311.1221m36-311.1221, Box 3575, College Park, MD.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.



Prompt action has been taken by Secretary Hughes on the protests made to the American Government yesterday by the Mexican Embassy, acting for the Obregon Government, against the alleged indiscriminant killing of Mexican citizens in the country, especially in Texas and along the international border.<sup>6</sup>

Unlike the mob leaders of the Gomez lynching discussed in Chapter Two, perpetrators of anti-Mexican violence in the 1920s were beginning to be brought to justice. International pressure forced the federal government to weigh in on anti-Mexican crimes in Texas, and Mexican American activists seized the opportunity to protect the rights of ethnic Mexicans in Texas in the 1920s.

Prior to the Mexican Revolution, various Mexican protective associations were mostly concerned about employee grievances and better educational facilities, as documented in Chapter One. Arturo Robles, one of the pioneers of Mexican rights, and a printer from Caldwell, Texas, wrote letters to the Mexican Consul describing the “peonage conditions” that Mexican field workers were subjected to. He was responsible for getting Texas Governor, Ferguson, to send investigators to probe these accusations; however, the investigation ended with Ferguson’s tenure, as a new governor (Colquitt) took office on January 17, 1911. Robles then received threats “for his activity on behalf of the Mexican field workers of that region.”<sup>7</sup>

In 1911, shortly after its formation, La Agrupacion Protectora Mexicana members attended the first Mexican Congress—El Primer Congreso Mexicanista. Mexican American activists believed that more exposure was needed for violence and injustices against ethnic Mexicans. The lynching of Antonio Rodriguez and

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<sup>6</sup> “Protect Mexicans, Hughes Tells Neff,” *The New York Times*, November 17, 1922.

<sup>7</sup> *San Antonio Light*, March 20, 1915 p. 5.

Antonio Gomez forced the organization to shift its focus from labor rights to protecting ethnic Mexicans “whenever they faced Anglo-perpetuated violence or illegal dispossession of their property.”<sup>8</sup> Activists who opposed these atrocities organized the annual meeting that began in the summer of 1911. The principal organizer, Nicasio Idar, was the editor of Laredo’s Spanish language newspaper, *La Crónica*.<sup>9</sup> In fact, Idar’s family might be considered the most politically successful Mexican-American family in the early twentieth century. His daughter, Jovita, was a young Mexican American woman who was a school teacher, turned journalist, turned activist, who organized La Liga Feminil Mexicanista (The Female Mexicanist League). Idar’s Brother, Eduardo Idar, was an influential labor rights activist in the 1920s.<sup>10</sup>

The discrimination against Mexican Americans that intensified during the years of the Mexican Revolution generated effects that lasted long after the revolution had ended. Jim Crow laws continued to prohibit Mexicans from entering public swimming pools and Anglo business owners displayed signs that read “No Mexicans or Dogs Allowed.” Drinking fountains were clearly marked “white only,” and the law barring Mexicans from using them were strictly enforced, even when a young Mexican girl choked to death on a tortilla because her friends were unable to

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<sup>8</sup> Francisco Arturo Rosales, *Dictionary of Latino Civil Rights History* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 2006), 4.

<sup>9</sup> Francisco Arturo Rosales, *Chicano!: The History of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1996), 62.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 226; LULAC History, accessed January 14, 2013, <http://lulac.org/about/history/>.

get water for her from a “whites only” fountain.<sup>11</sup>

In 1929, when the three largest Mexican American rights organizations (The Knights of America, The Sons of America, and The League of Latin American Citizens) met in Corpus Christi, Texas, the group leaders were skeptical of a successful merger. After four hours of deliberation, however, they agreed to combine their constitutions and form the League of United Latin American Citizens, accepting not only Mexican Americans, but including all American citizens of Latin origin. The key ingredient was “American.”<sup>12</sup> LULAC members united to protest ethnic violence, and advocate improved working conditions, and educational facilities for their children. Urging assimilation into Anglo-American society, LULAC founders wanted the organization to be a “safe haven” for members, and sought to avoid being perceived as “un-American.” Accordingly, LULAC members “adopted the American Flag as its official flag, ‘America the Beautiful’ as its official song, and ‘The George Washington Prayer’ as its official prayer.”<sup>13</sup> LULAC became a successful Mexican American rights organization, and one widely accepted by Anglo Americans because of the pro-American rhetoric. However, there were ethnic Mexicans who opposed what LULAC appeared to represent—assimilation. These ethnic Mexicans wanted a more aggressive plan for ethnic Mexican inclusion in Texas. They labeled LULAC members “a bunch of vendidos” (sellouts), and favored more confrontation

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<sup>11</sup> LULAC History, accessed January 14, 2013, <http://lulac.org/about/history/>.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

and militancy in pushing civil rights demands.<sup>14</sup>

Despite this divide, LULAC has grown to become the largest civil rights organization for Latinos in the United States. The Mexican Revolution and the Anglo-on-Mexican violence of that decade were the catalysts for such organizations to move forward into an ongoing Mexican American civil rights movement throughout the twentieth century. For Mexicans living in Mexico and the United States, the decade of the 1910s was one of fear and confusion. In towns along the U.S. and Mexican border, ethnic Mexicans were profiled by a prejudiced society, and became targets of unwarranted searches, unjust legal decisions, and one of the most evil acts of violence—lynching.

The lynching of ethnic Mexicans in the United States is a story that is largely absent from history books. It is generally agreed by scholars that the last known lynching of an ethnic Mexican in the United States occurred in 1928. This too could be debated by challenging what parameters are necessary to define a lynching. Furthermore, anti-Mexican prejudice and violence continued through a series of ebbs and flows throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. The historical memory of the lynching of ethnic Mexicans is skewed as well. In 2010, a Civil Rights museum in Cincinnati, Ohio, the Freedom Center, displayed the exhibit, “Without Sanctuary: Photographs and Postcards of Lynching in America.” Absent from this display were the stories of the hundreds of ethnic Mexicans who became part of this dark chapter in American history. Their exclusion is ironic because as visitors walked toward the entrance of the Freedom Center, a forty-by-forty-foot

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<sup>14</sup> LULAC History, accessed January 14, 2013, <http://lulac.org/about/history/>.

sign displayed the words of W.E.B du Bois, "We must remember, because if the world forgets evil, evil is reborn." Evil was not born during the decade of the Mexican Revolution, nor did it disappear thereafter. But it certainly intensified during that time. It is important that we know about the intensification and its effects on Mexicans in the United States. And it is important, too, that we understand those events not, in the final analysis, in terms of good versus evil, but through careful historical analysis of the forces that unleashed and tolerated racial violence and the forces that sought to, and, over the long term, succeeded in restraining it. This dissertation has attempted to provide such a historical analysis, and to locate it in the longer history of the Mexican American struggle for freedom in Texas and throughout the nation.

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