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THE LATINIZATION OF OKLAHOMA: CASE STUDIES ON OKLAHOMA CITY, TULSA, AND GUYMON

by

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THESIS APPROVAL

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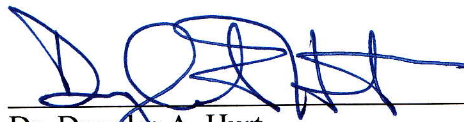

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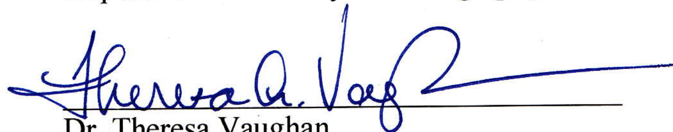

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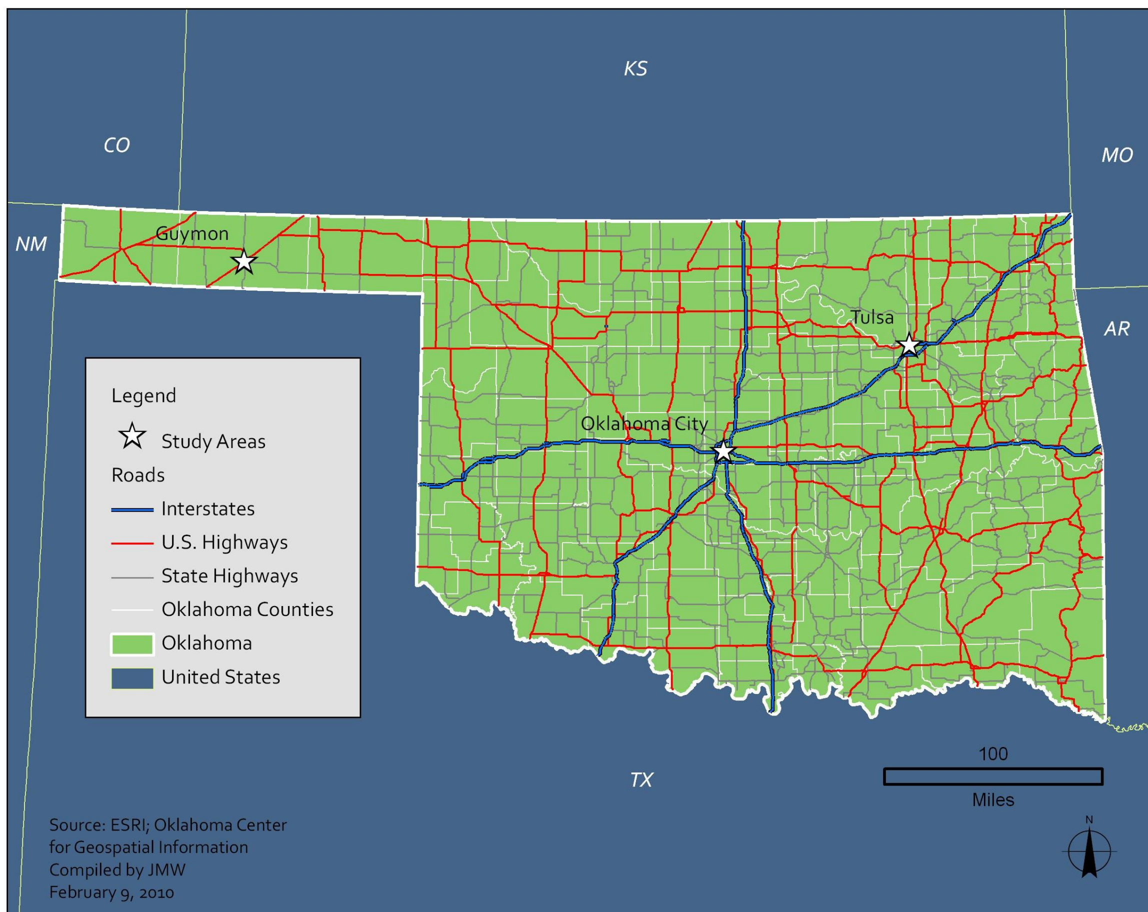
Abstract

Latin Americans have been a part of the geography and history of Oklahoma since the sixteenth century. Over the past two centuries, Latinos have trekked to Oklahoma to escape odious conditions in their mother countries. Hispanic immigrants came and continue to migrate to the United States. Oklahoma's employment opportunities made this state an attractive homeland for many Latinos and continue to draw new immigrants. Hispanics helped construct much of Oklahoma's infrastructure, albeit the Great Depression led many immigrants to return to their mother countries or search for refuge elsewhere. Since World War II, the Latino population has increased significantly in Oklahoma, just as it has in many other U.S. states. The sheer number of Latinos, concomitant with the support of various Latino agencies in Oklahoma, has facilitated the process of Latinization in many Oklahoma towns and cities. This study examines three of those places: Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Guymon. Each city has its own story of the way Latinization occurred. The findings suggest that Latinization is not simply a spontaneous result of the presence of so many Hispanics in these areas but is rather a palpable result of the combination of their perseverance through hard times, their innate yearning to establish a sense of place, and the invaluable support from Latino assistance organizations.

Study Areas



Chapter 1
Introduction

For over 450 years, Latinos[1] have been a part of Oklahoma's history. The Spanish initially claimed Oklahoma, particularly the Oklahoma Panhandle. The *conquistadores* were the earliest known group of Europeans to enter what is present-day Oklahoma.[2] The first exploration was by Francisco Vásquez Coronado and his army in 1541 on their trek to conquer the Seven Cities of Cíbola or Quivira.[3] During his mission, he journeyed over the northwest plains through the area known today as the Oklahoma Panhandle and crossed again on his route back to New Spain, present-day New Mexico.[4] Around the same time of Coronado's brief expedition, another Spanish *conquistador*, Hernando de Soto, possibly traversed the southeastern portion of Oklahoma and encountered the various Indian tribes in the region.[5] Don Juan de Oñate headed the last notable Spanish voyage through Oklahoma in 1601.[6] He and his crew walked along the *San Buenaventura* (Canadian) River and hiked through the Antelope Hills in the westernmost part of the state, beguiled by the splendor of the Great Plains.[7] From 1541 to 1700, Oklahoma was Spain's northern frontier in the New World but was not as important to them as New Mexico.[8] Oklahoma, therefore, was little more than an isolated peripheral frontier for the Spaniards.[9]

Since Spain lacked interest in and control over the area, France began exploring Spanish territory and created the new prefecture of Louisiana that included all of current-day Oklahoma.[10] Because of economic reasons, the French wanted to make use of the navigable Arkansas River tributary system, especially near its amalgamation with the Mississippi River. They claimed Oklahoma from 1700 to 1763. After France lost to

England in the French and Indian War (1754-63), the French renounced their land claims west of the Mississippi.[11] Consequently, Louisiana Territory returned to undisputed Spanish control.[12]

Spain ruled Oklahoma for another thirty-seven years. In 1800, King Charles IV of Spain and Napoleon Bonaparte of France created an accord returning Louisiana to France.[13] In 1803, France sold Louisiana to the United States (U.S.). After exploration of the Louisiana Purchase area, the U.S. negotiated the Adams-Onís Treaty (the Transcontinental Treaty) in 1819.[14] This treaty placed the Oklahoma Panhandle back under Spanish control. In 1821, however, Spain recognized Mexico as a sovereign nation and included the Panhandle in Mexico's domain. Thus, from 1821 to 1836, the Panhandle was part of the Mexican frontier. The secession of Texas in 1836 led to the end of Mexican control in Oklahoma. Mexico ignobly refused to acknowledge Texas' independence or its annexation to the U.S. from 1836 to 1848.[15] It was not until after the Mexican American War (1846-1848) that Mexico conceded the land with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848.[16] The impact of Mexicans and other Latin Americans in Oklahoma, however, endured. That perpetuating perseverance and the emergence of energetic, excited-to-be-American-and-Latin-American leaders have facilitated a process of Latinization—the impress of Latino cultural attributes on various aspects of society—upon the country and upon landscapes in many U.S. cities.

Significance

Unfortunately, the people of this unique culture have been unable to, have had little interest in, or have not been encouraged to record their history in Oklahoma. Tulsa, with the second largest Hispanic population in the state, has been the subject of more

studies than any other Oklahoma city. The statewide mushrooming Latino population, however, deserves more in-depth study, particularly since the Latino imprint on many of Oklahoma's cultural landscapes has become ubiquitous over the last twenty years.

This thesis will combine work in the fields of historical geography, cultural history, and cultural geography to add to the historic and geographic literature of this ethnic group. In particular, I will examine Latinization in three Oklahoma cities—Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Guymon. Historical geography is imperative to this study. One must trace the Hispanic population influx and settlement locations and patterns in Oklahoma and study the changes over time and place in order to assess how these locales adjusted to the growing Hispanic population. Additionally, the researcher must sift through archives and other historical documents that record these changes to fully grasp the Oklahoma Latino movement over time. Cultural history is just as important because it provides insight into the common traditions these individuals brought with them from their original homelands to Oklahoma. Cultural history also involves studying important leaders because they influence, guide, and unite others. Cultural geography is also a significant part of this thesis because a considerable portion of this manuscript explores the ongoing Latinization of the cultural landscape. Bright colors, Spanish-language billboards, and other specific historical attributes of Latino heritage are linchpins of the Latinized cultural landscape.

This thesis identifies the ways the Latino culture, over the last few decades, has become embedded in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Guymon. I describe and interpret the associated Hispanic landscape changes, including the opening of Latino-specific stores, restaurants, and health clinics; the development of Spanish-language newspapers,

television shows, and radio stations; and the obvious characteristics of Latino culture, such as vivid hues and flags, now prominent in these cities. Oklahoma City and Tulsa are pertinent case studies because they have the largest Hispanic populations in the state, and the aforementioned Latinization changes are conspicuous. Guymon's mushrooming Latino population, owing to the openings of a large corporate pork processing plant and nearby corporate hog farms, made this an interesting case study because of its isolated location and the relatively later onset of the Latinization that is occurring there. This thesis, therefore, not only adds to the broader literature on Latinos in the U.S. and on the Latinization of U.S. urban landscapes but also to the geography and history of Oklahoma.

Methods and Sources

Because the Latino population in Oklahoma is understudied, many questions remain unanswered. For a geographer and historian, the dearth of secondary literature on this topic makes it appealing for further study. For a geographer, the best way to study the landscape is through firsthand interpretation, historical photographs, and oral interviews. In order to construct this thesis, I spent many days in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Guymon assessing and interpreting the landscape. In each area, I drove, walked, and questioned passersby in order to assemble a better understanding of why Latino places are located where they are and how they are connected to the larger urban area. To reach a deeper understanding of the culture itself, I attended the local Hispanic/Latino festivals in each of the cities discussed in this thesis. I visited Hispanic-owned businesses and ate in Hispanic-run restaurants; informally, I asked basic questions about the length of time in business and about the makeup of the clientele.

For a historian, the best way to study a topic is to investigate archival collections. The Oral History Collection on Latinos at the Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS) Research Library contained oral histories of some past and present Hispanic residents. Additionally, the collections of photographs there are voluminous and make for an extremely useful source for interpreting the changing landscape—particularly for Oklahoma City. I visited the city libraries in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Guymon. Both Oklahoma City and Tulsa have helpful vertical files, but the same information in Guymon's Public Library is available at OHS. The Western History Collection at the University of Oklahoma in Norman had limited information regarding Latinos in the state. Besides a few photographs, most of the information here concerning Hispanics centered on a crime in the 1930s that involved two Mexican students. Another pertinent archive for researching Latinos in Oklahoma is the Carmelite Archives at Marylake Monastery, in East End, Arkansas. Personally conducted formal oral interviews, the U.S. censuses, newspapers, and supportive secondary literature complete the list of sources used for this study.

Chapter Summaries

This thesis is comprised of six chapters. The second chapter is the literature review and contains five subdivisions. Information about Latino immigration and settlement leads into Oklahoma-specific data. The third segment focuses on defining Latinization. The subsequent two sections cover the Latino landscape impress in greater depth.

Chapters Three, Four, and Five explain the Latinization in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Guymon respectively. Each chapter contains five parts: an introduction, facts about

the Latinos in that particular city or area, discussion of the historical Latinization (or historical development in the case of the city of Guymon), descriptions of the Latinization of the cultural landscapes, and a conclusion. The introduction gives a broad overview of the city's history and ends with a thesis statement about the ways Latinos are integrating in that area. The next section imparts census figures and articulates the initial and ongoing reasons why Hispanics moved to the area. The historical Latinization sections of Chapters Three and Four discuss the overlooked impact and history of Latinos in Oklahoma City and Tulsa, focusing on settlement patterns, churches, and the first Hispanic imprints and success stories. This section in the chapter on Guymon necessarily covers the development of the new industry that brought about the city's recent Latinization. The succeeding sections explicate the current Latino impact in each city, and the conclusions convey ongoing and future trends for the cities.

The final chapter links the thesis to the literature about Latinization cited in Chapter Two. In addition, I discuss the similarities of the case studies and re-emphasize the significant cultural changes. The conclusion ends with the Oklahoma Latinization model, notes about the future trends of Latinization in Oklahoma, and the likelihood of the continuation of Latinization.

[1] Hispanic, which refers to a person from a Spanish-speaking country, and Latino/Latina, which implies that a person is from Latin America, will be used interchangeably throughout this thesis. For discussions of terminology see: Marta E. Giménez, "Latino/Hispanic—Who Needs a Name? The Case against a Standard Terminology," *International Journal of Health Services* 19, no.3 (1989): 557-71; Geoffrey Fox, *Hispanic Nation: Culture, Politics, and the Constructing of Identity* (Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 1996), 12-18; Linda Martín Alcoff, "Latino vs. Hispanic: The Politics of Ethnic Names," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 31, no.4 (2005): 395-407.

[2] Edwin C. McReynolds, *Oklahoma*: *A History of the Sooner State* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), 3.

[3] McReynolds, *Oklahoma*: *A History of the Sooner State*, 4, 6-11; Edward Everett Dale and Morris L. Wardell, *History of Oklahoma* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1948), 25; Charles Robert Goins and Danney Goble, *Historical Atlas of Oklahoma*, 4th ed. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 38; W. David Baird and Danney Goble, *The Story of Oklahoma*, 2nd ed. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 62-63; Arrell Gibson, *Oklahoma*: *A History of Five Centuries*, 2nd ed. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 16-19; Sharon Cooper Calhoun and Billie Joan English, *Oklahoma Adventure* (Oklahoma City: ACP, 2000), 23-24.

[4] Historians have different interpretations of the path of Coronado's journey. Edwin McReynolds, Arrell Gibson, Sharon Cooper, and Billie English argue that Coronado barely crossed the western portion of the Panhandle while W. David Baird, Danney Goble, and Charles Goins believe he and his men covered all of western Oklahoma. See footnote three for sources.

[5] McReynolds, *Oklahoma*: *A History of the Sooner State*, 11-13.

[6] Gibson, *Oklahoma*: *A History of Five Centuries*, 19; Calhoun and English, *Oklahoma Adventure*, 25.

[7] Calhoun and English, *Oklahoma Adventure*, 25.

[8] Michael Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 3; Richard Nostrand, "The Spanish Borderlands," in *North America: The Historical Geography of a Changing Continent*, 2nd ed., edited by Thomas F. McIlwraith and Edward K. Muller (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 51-52.

[9] Gibson, *Oklahoma*: *A History of Five Centuries*, 19; Nostrand, "The Spanish Borderlands," 51-52.

[10] Gibson, *Oklahoma*: *A History of Five Centuries*, 19; David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 148.

[11] McReynolds, *Oklahoma*: *A History of the Sooner State*, 29-30; Baird and Goble, *The Story of Oklahoma*, 70.

[12] McReynolds, *Oklahoma*: *A History of the Sooner State*, 29-30; Goins and Goble, *Historical Atlas of Oklahoma*, 40-41; Baird and Goble, *The Story of Oklahoma*, 70.

[13] McReynolds, *Oklahoma*: *A History of the Sooner State*, 35.

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[14] McReynolds, *Oklahoma*: *A History of the Sooner State*, 62, 127; Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*, 299, 301.

[15] Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma*, 4; David Weber, *The Mexican Frontier 1821-1846*: *The American Southwest under Mexico* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 273-278.

[16] Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma*, 4; Weber, *The Mexican Frontier 1821-1846*, 274.

Chapter 2
Literature Review

Latino Immigration and Settlement

For more than two centuries, Latin Americans have trekked to the U.S. to escape odious treatment from various conquerors and rulers, to find work in order to provide for their families, and to live the American dream. During the early 1800s, an inrush of migrants came from Mexico. *Vaqueros*, or Mexican cowboys, drove cattle from the southern Texas plains into New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska.[1] Their migration lasted only until the advent of the railroad system when freight cars began to transport cattle, but many of their ranching methods are still in use.[2] When railroad construction began, a large ingress of seasonal laborers came from Mexico and followed these mobile jobs.[3] Contract laborers alighted near train depots across the U.S., including the main lines of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe (Santa Fe); the St. Louis and San Francisco (Frisco); the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific (Chicago Rock Island); and the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas (Katy).[4]

Many of the immigrants who came to Oklahoma or went farther north in search of jobs, in the late 1800s and early 1900s, were from the more interior regions of Mexico.[5] They had to “leapfrog” over the borderland Mexicans who were closer to the U.S and had already taken most of the jobs in cities and on farms in Texas.[6] Some immigrants brought their families and settled permanently within the U.S. Many migrants, however, came solo and stayed in the states only for the work season, sending the majority of their earnings back home to support their families.[7] Hispanics who entered the U.S. were typically willing to take any job—whether arduous, dangerous, or temporary—in order to

offer their families a better life.[8] Generally, the employment opportunities in the U.S. labor market in the 1800s, like most of the railroad jobs, required unskilled labor; ranching, mining, and seasonal agricultural work were jobs that were readily available at the time.[9]

In addition to attracting immigrants, the development of the railroad system in the U.S. fueled rapid industrialization and urbanization.[10] After the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, much work remained; and the new railway network made it even easier for more workers to enter the states, particularly during the 1900s in the U.S. Southwest.[11] Subsequent to the economic boom of the early 1900s, the depression of the late 1920s that lasted until the late 1930s affected not only Americans in general but migrant workers as well—specifically Hispanics.[12] Thus, the Great Depression (1929-39) brought about a massive decline in the Latino population throughout the U.S.[13]

After World War II (1939-45), however, suburbanization took root across the U.S. Columbia University Professor Kenneth T. Jackson studied the country's inimitably American suburbanization process and concluded that, because land and cars were inexpensive and easily obtainable, citizens could afford to live and play in neighborhoods away from where they worked.[14] Furthermore, the U.S. government, according to Jackson, "put the foot to the floorboard in the drive toward suburban sprawl" when, in the 1930s, the Federal Housing Administration created policies that made it easier for middle-class citizens to purchase homes, thus causing home building to increase significantly for many years thereafter.[15] By 1974, the total number of people living in the suburbs equaled more than the total number of inhabitants living in rural and urban

spaces combined.[16] As one writer summarized, suburbs had "reshaped the face of America since World War II and profoundly affected the country's life and institutions."[17] Suburbanization was an important reason why the next wave of Latino immigrants could find work. Specifically, planners and developers required cheap labor to construct suburban neighborhoods and shopping malls; and the upward-growing cities required workers to erect more skyscrapers—particularly in major economic centers like Chicago, Kansas City, Los Angeles, New York, and Phoenix.[18]

Auspiciously for the U.S., continuing corruption within Latin American countries resulted in more mass migration movements from the 1950s to the present day.[19] For example, tensions between the U.S. and Cuba in 1960 over Fidel Castro's regime led to a movement of anti-Castro Cuban immigrants to the U.S. and created a further spike in the Latino population.[20] Many Cubans settled in Florida, New Jersey, and New York while some found their way to Oklahoma.[21]

Numbers are obviously important for documenting Latino history and geography in the U.S. In 1983, Douglas Massey and Kathleen Schnabel stated that the U.S. is one of the only industrialized countries with no statistical system explicitly designed to collect information on the number of and characteristics of immigrants.[22] The federal agency in charge of this issue, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (I.N.S.), is in place to enforce immigration laws and not to collect and publish figures.[23] Furthermore, all U.S. censuses conducted until 1980 were somewhat erroneous because Latin Americans simply did not have a specific race category on the census paperwork.[24] Some early censuses, however, requested the specific country of origin. Consequently, the data these authors gathered fills a void in the census data.

Yearly Latino immigration to the U.S. rose from 59,000 for the year of 1960 to 193,000 in 1978.[25] During the span of those eighteen years, 2.4 million Latinos immigrated to the U.S., with around fourteen percent of the total from Mexico, seven percent from Cuba, and eleven percent from Central and South America.[26] Not surprisingly, Latino immigration rates fluctuated during those years. For instance, in 1964, the U.S. terminated the Bracero program, a plan that brought Mexican farm laborers to the American Southwest; its demise led to a significant decrease in immigration.[27] From 1976 to 1978, the number of immigrants from Mexico increased 283 percent—from 33,000 to 92,000—because of economic strife in the country and economic opportunity in the U.S.[28] Moreover, immigration from Central and South American countries rose fifty-six percent from 1970 to 1978, when it reached a peak of 71,000 immigrants, because of the political instability in those countries.[29]

Several noticeable trends emerged from Latino immigration to the U.S. during the 1960s and 1970s. First, between one-third and one-half of all Latino immigrants came from Mexico.[30] Next, by the latter part of the 1970s, Central and South American countries increased their contributions of migrants settling in the U.S., including Oklahoma.[31] Third, eighty percent of the Latino population in the country lived in six states: California, Texas, New York, Florida, New Jersey, and Illinois.[32] Fourth, incoming Latinos were usually workforce-aged males and childrearing-aged females.[33] Last, the migrants from Mexico were more likely to work blue collar, unskilled, and farm labor jobs while Cubans, Central Americans, and South Americans were more apt to become white-collar workers in service and craft industries, skilled construction workers, managers, clerical workers, and professional workers.[34] These trends imply a significant

change started within these two decades and suggest an increasing movement of Latinos toward urban environments.[35] Massey and Schnabel conclude by noting that growth in Latino immigration generally continued into the 1980s.[36] Indeed, favorable employment opportunities in the U.S., poor conditions in Latino homelands, and the 1986 passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act, which by 1991 allowed almost two million illegal Hispanics to attain citizenship, contributed to a mushrooming of the Latino population since 1980.[37]

U.S. Census data clearly showed that during the 1990s further shifts in nationality of the citizenry occurred.[38] The trend of a growing immigrant population continued. In 2000, one in ten Americans was foreign-born, with the biggest growth occurring in the Hispanic population that included Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and “others.”[39] In 2000, 35.3 million Latinos lived in the U.S.; sixty percent of them, 20.6 million, were Mexican—an increase of fifty-three percent over the ten year period.[40] Almost 3.5 million were Puerto Rican, an increase of twenty-five percent; and 1.2 million were Cuban, an increase of nineteen percent.[41] The group of Hispanics who claimed to be of another origin, such as from Central or South America, rose to ten million, an increase of almost 100 percent.[42]

Juan Figueroa, president of the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, said, “The Latinization of the country is not just happening in New York, Miami, or LA. Its greatest impact is in the heartland in places like Reading, PA, Lorain, Ohio, and Lowell, Mass.”[43] From 1990 to 1998, the Hispanic population doubled in four states—Arkansas, Georgia, Nevada, and North Carolina—because of their growing economies.[44] At least half of U.S. Hispanics lived in California, where thirty-two percent of the

population was Hispanic, and Texas.[45] Forty-two percent of New Mexicans were Hispanic.[46] Another notable feature of the Hispanic population in the year 2000 was their youth.[47] For the U.S. population overall, twenty-six percent were under the age of eighteen; but the percentage for the Hispanic population was thirty-five percent.[48] By 2007, the average age of Latinos was 27.6, whereas the overall median age of the populace was 36.6.[49] That year, Hispanics made up 15.1 percent of the nation's peoples at 45.5 million, and they continue to be the largest minority group in the U.S.[50] These changes will continue to have both political and social implications for the country.[51]

Throughout history, Latino immigrants have sought and they continue to seek a future that "ought to be brighter than their past" and that search clearly continues into the first part of the twenty-first century.[52] Latinos, however, are more than just numbers in a census. Information about their past has been scarce, but that is changing. In 1977, Julian Samora and Patricia Vandel Simon decried the fact that Latinos have trivial or non-existent roles in history textbooks, specifically texts used in U.S. history courses.[53] In 1980, Julian Nava, author of *Mexican Americans*: *A Brief Look at their History*, added to Samora's and Simon's voices by addressing pertinent issues among the most-overlooked minority group in the U.S.[54] They were often overlooked even though Hispanics provided many hours of manual labor to build the infrastructure of the U.S.[55] Seeking answers to the questions "Who is the real American?" and "*Quo vadis* America?," Nava found that Latinos have stronger historical ties to the North American landscape than most of the people occupying it today.[56] In the mid-1980s, the authors of *Hispanics in the United States*: *A New Social Agenda* emphasized that the U.S. began as a "nation of immigrants and thus a nation of ethnic groups."[57] This collection of eleven essays informs the reader

about social issues Latinos face in the U.S., such as religion, language, education, employment, and health care, so that those concerned are able to "ask the right questions" in order to develop apposite answers for cultural and social awareness.[58]

Between 1990 and 2000, the Latino population in the U.S. rose by fifty-eight percent.[59] This influx added to the community already established during the 1980s.[60] Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco and Mariela M. Páez reaffirmed Latinos as both the "oldest" Americans and the "newest" Americans and asserted that the changes in U.S. relations with Latin America enabled the "processes of 'racialization'" as Hispanics came into the country and complicated the "powerful 'black-white' binary logic that has driven U.S. racial relations."[61] The authors declared that Latinos had moved away from the pattern of "circular migration"—the notion that migrants would eventually return to their original homeland—toward permanent residency.[62]

An important factor in the permanent residency of immigrants is assimilation. In the 1950s, John Burma discussed assimilation in *Spanish-Speaking Groups in the United States*. Burma described the conditions that early Latino immigrants faced while trying to assimilate in America.[63] Burma observed that Latinos were unique compared to other migrant peoples.[64] Additionally, he found that no other group has combined to form as large a familiar hub of culture—*barrios*, galas, and Hispanic-specific businesses—and a linguistic concord as the Latinos.[65] In the 1990s, Linda Chavez argued that Latinos lived in a time that was comparable to the era before the 1960s civil rights movement changed the lives of African-Americans.[66] The process of assimilation into mainstream American society that had worked for so many immigrants from the outset of the colonization of this country failed to work for the blacks. Likewise, she professed, it would not work for

the Latinos. Chavez, however, avowed that native-born Latinos and Latino immigrants must adapt and learn from history in order to immerse themselves fully in the social, political, and economic life of this country.[67] Being a vital part of the workforce has been their gateway onto the path of assimilation. In the 1990s, James Cockcroft reiterated that Latin American groups brought their working hands and aptitude to the U.S. and that they are the ones who provided the moral fiber that created the nation that Americans live in today.[68] As Latinos move down the pathway today, however, they are integrating, mixing with American culture while keeping their own.

In *Hispanics/Latinos in the United States*: *Ethnicity, Race, and Rights*, the authors projected that by 2050 Latinos will be more numerous than all other non-white ethnic groups in the U.S combined.[69] The ubiety and the corresponding Hispanic imprint on American society are here to stay. Although Latinos are not a homogenous group—meaning Latinos differ in "origin, race, language, religion, political affiliation, customs, social altitudes, physical appearance, economic status, education, class, and taste, among other things," non-Latinos generally view them as such.[70] Indeed, because of the sheer numbers of Latinos, amalgamation among the various sub-groups is happening more slowly. Nevertheless, successful Latino assimilation is no longer a one-sided process; it is a two-sided process of integration. The American populace will gradually realize Latino standards, views, and rights; the ongoing Latinization is the bridge to understanding and acceptance. While the process of integration continues among the Latino sub-groups and into the general U.S. population, Latinization is rapidly changing portions of the landscape in many U.S. cities, including several in Oklahoma.

Latinos in Oklahoma

Even though Hispanics played a vital role in building Oklahoma, literature about their experiences is in short supply.[71] Michael Smith, in his monograph *The Mexicans in Oklahoma*, traced Mexican migration to Oklahoma from territorial days to the mid-1970s and asserted that they were an "invisible minority" in the state.[72] Smith found very few records revealing that Hispanics lived in Oklahoma before 1900.[73] He supplemented his text with information on "historical antecedents to Mexican migration" and connected it with their settlement patterns in Oklahoma.[74] Additionally, he enhanced the study with information obtained from the decennial censuses to 1970. The reports of Latinos residing in the state indicated the types of jobs they held and the general areas they resided.[75] Smith filled the remaining gaps with oral histories he conducted with local Hispanic residents or with people involved in the Latino community. The oral interviews elaborated on the cultural practices and social norms of Latinos in Oklahoma.

Smith found that the cultural adjustments Hispanics made in their new Oklahoma homeland were indeed difficult. Early migrants struggled with the language barrier and other impediments like the lack of education.[76] He gathered that, even though the majority of Mexicans found Oklahoma to be a decent place to reside and work, some "expressed the sentiment that Oklahoma was not a desirable place for Mexicans" in the "immigrant *corridos*" or ballads they regularly crooned as they longed for their mother country.[77] One possible reason, Smith noted, was that, unlike San Antonio, Chicago, or Kansas City, Oklahoma cities "had no large *colonias*."[78] Yet, wherever Latinos settled in Oklahoma, Smith found that they "placed great emphasis" on deference for other Hispanics and family life.[79]

Hispanics struggled during the Great Depression in Oklahoma; many Latinos returned to their countries of origin or moved to larger cities like Chicago with the hope of finding employment, while others persevered and remained in Oklahoma.[80] Those who did stay, Smith wrote, found work with the Works Progress Administration, filled jobs required to support World War II, or enlisted in the U.S. military to serve their new country in a different way.[81] Those who enlisted were mostly second generation Latinos.[82] When they returned from war, they "had largely integrated and gained acceptance with the broader culture."[83] Smith argued that third generation Hispanics in Oklahoma, by the 1970s, "had undergone nearly complete assimilation;" and first generation Hispanics, their grandparents, rued the loss of the use of the Spanish language and the fact that family members often moved away from the family unit.[84]

Smith added to his initial study with *The Mexican American Experience in Oklahoma* (1981). While reiterating much of the same information from the aforementioned monograph, this manuscript focuses more on the cultural history of Mexicans in Oklahoma. Smith avowed in this piece that "the cultural pride" of Oklahoma's first Hispanic generation, the regular arrival of new-to-Oklahoma Latinos, and the "enhanced consciousness of the 1960s and 1970s" allowed Oklahoma's Hispanic community to "maintain a strong ethnic tradition."[85] By the 1970s, the Latinos in Oklahoma lived in the larger urban cities of Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Lawton and began imprinting their culture and social traditions throughout these areas.

Furthering his observation of the Mexican experience in Oklahoma, in 2009 Smith published "Latinos in Oklahoma: A History of Four and a Half Centuries" in the *Chronicles of Oklahoma*. As the title indicates, Smith broadened his focus to include all

Hispanics that have migrated to Oklahoma. He found that Puerto Ricans historically represent the second largest Hispanic ethnic group in the state and that most have settled near Oklahoma's major military bases in Altus, Lawton, Midwest City, and Enid.[86] During the 1960s and 1980s, some Cuban refugees resettled in Oklahoma—most of them in either Tulsa or Oklahoma City.[87] Likewise, political conflict in Central and South America during the twentieth century led many of those ethnic groups to immigrate and relocate.[88] Some of those migrants chose to settle in Oklahoma; however, data on them is, according to Smith, "largely limited to spotty census data and anecdotal history."[89] Smith found that the 2000 census contained the best practical information about Latinos in Oklahoma but that it still lacked specific statistics about the numbers of migrants from each Spanish-speaking Latin American nation.[90] However, two things Smith concluded remain certain—Latinos in Oklahoma maintain their cultural identity with pride and it is obvious they are no longer the "invisible minority" within Oklahoma.[91]

Three documents specific to Tulsa, Oklahoma, have brought attention to Hispanic issues and helped preserve their heritage in the state: Tulsa Hispanic Study 2001, *¡Latinos Presentes!,* and a master's thesis titled "The Latinos of Tulsa." The Tulsa Hispanic Study was a research project of the Community Service Council of Greater Tulsa that surveyed 490 Hispanic families. A committee of sixty-five volunteers studied the survey results, discussed the results of surveys with the various organizations that served Hispanic families in Tulsa, and met with area employers in an attempt to discover and "understand the strengths, contributions, needs, and challenges within the Hispanic population" in Tulsa.[92]

Work on *¡Latinos Presentes!* began during Oklahoma's Centennial celebration in 2007 and celebrates the history of Hispanics in Tulsa.[93] Michael Smith delivered a speech on the history of Latinos in the state to kick off the history project and a copy of that address is the first chapter of the book. The remainder of the manuscript consists of personal life stories submitted by Tulsa residents. In his address, Smith advocated the importance of documenting history in this way—of recording the personal recollections of people before it is too late.

Around the same time (2007), Samuel Dent began working on a master's thesis in geography, "The Latinos of Tulsa: Their Place in Space and Patterns of Migration." Basing his thesis primarily on public sample surveys, Dent argued that Tulsa "does not fit" the destination profile for immigrants because its "economic growth," he claimed, went "unnoticed by the rest of the nation," thus making Tulsa an unfavorable place for Latinos to locate.[94] Although this argument is somewhat hard to accept since Tulsa had a variety of ranching, railroad, mining, and oil production and refining employment opportunities during the early and mid-1900s, the thesis does offer some pertinent information.[95] Dent studied two Latinized "ethnic islands" in Tulsa, the Kendall Whittier District and the Twenty-First Street and Garnett District, and found that Latino business districts began forming in Tulsa very early in the twenty-first century.[96] He asked his sample population where they migrated from, combined that information with census data, and concluded that most residents were from Mexico.[97] Furthermore, the majority arrived during the twenty-first century and came directly from Mexico to Tulsa.[98] More in-depth studies on Latinos in other areas of Oklahoma would be extremely interesting, and Dent's thesis provides a solid starting ground.

Latinization

Because the Latino population in the U.S. has become so large, the focus of research has changed. Geographers and historians are no longer writing about the past but also about the present and the future. The current Latino influence on the human and cultural landscape in rural and in urban areas is creating Latinization.[99] Latinization refers to the impress of typically Latino cultural attributes on various aspects of a non-Latino society. Mike Davis, in *Magical Urbanism* (2000), sought to provide a fundamental understanding of Latinization in U.S. cities. Davis researched some of the most currently significant trends in the U.S.: Latino demographic growth, Latino impact on the design of major American cities, Latino yearning for social and political change, and the new Latino claim to the American image. This text pays particular attention to already heavily Latinized areas of the U.S., including New York, Los Angeles, Houston, San Diego, Phoenix, Chicago, and San Antonio. Even though he focused on large U.S. cities, Davis gave a pertinent perspective on specific changes Latinos have made in the Anglo landscape. Davis found that these metropolises, particularly New York and Los Angeles, had very noticeable Latinized landscape changes because they had such large economies and diverse populations.[100] In these locations, he added, Latinos are "bringing redemptive energies to the neglected, worn-out cores and inner suburbs;" but he noted that Latinization is "most vivid" in cities in the U.S. Southwest.[101]

The Columbia History of Latinos in the United States since 1960, published in 2004, added to Davis' work. This text is comprised of a collection of essays that proffer a historical synopsis of Latinization over four decades. This book explores recent histories of major national and provincial Latino subpopulations, such as those in Chicago, Los

Angeles, Miami, and New York, and their modern movements into Arkansas, the Carolinas, Georgia, and Oklahoma. It also reflects on what historical trends might mean for the future of both the U. S. and the other lands of the Western Hemisphere.[102] In the same vein, the editors of *Borderless Borders*: *U.S. Latinos, Latin Americans, and the Paradox of Interdependence* (1998) claimed that America is Latinizing. Collectively, they found that "Latinos are now positioned to bring about change in the Americas from within the United States… prompting hemispheric governments to cultivate new forms of relationships with emigrant communities."[103] Furthermore, they argued that Latinization is happening demographically, politically, in the work force, and in everyday life.

The Latino Landscape Impress

Formed by the cultural and social attributes of a particular people, cultural landscapes are the result of the accretion of man's built environment on the natural environment. In his classic text, *The Cultural Geography of the United States* (1992), Wilbur Zelinsky argued that America's cultural landscapes are not dull or homogeneous features; they are unique creations fused from diverse cultural traditions.[104] Thus, landscapes provide distinctive clues about ethnic societies. Peirce F. Lewis declared that "all human landscape has cultural meaning" and that humans do not modify landscapes unless there is a greater influence driving that change.[105] Commonly, according to Lewis, push factors that transform the cultural landscape reveal broader historic trends. For instance, Latinization reflects the past few decades of major Hispanic population growth. The majority of historians, however, overlook the importance of the cultural landscape.

As Donald Meinig stated in his essay "The Beholding Eye" in *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes* (1979), "in its most inclusive form," a landscape can propel

one's curiosities into the archives and "deep into natural history and geology."[106] Restated, via archival research and landscape interpretation, landscapes serve as "layers of history."[107] Indeed, the concept of "landscape as history" can provide a researcher with powerful indicators of how cultural groups settled, of their movement patterns, and of how they have modified spaces to make them their places.[108]

Cultural geographer Daniel D. Arreola has written about many aspects of landscape history and dynamics, greatly adding to the literature of Latinization. In his 1984 publication, "Mexican American Exterior Murals," he argued that murals are social symbols that more often than not identify the history of a particular culture group.[109] Similarly, in "Mexican-American Housescapes," Arreola averred that exterior house paint colors in many U.S. *barrios* or *colonias* reflect Latin America's Spanish colonial era.[110] In an in-depth look at Mexican border cities, Arreola, along with geographer James Curtis, used archival collections concomitantly with landscape interpretation to determine whether Mexican landscape identity had disappeared because of the U.S. involvement along the border. They found that, even though many attributes of U.S. landscape identity are visible on Mexican border city landscapes—*maquiladoras* (large factories), strip malls, and big box stores such as Wal-Mart—Mexican border cities still exhibit Mexican landscape identities. Additionally, they argued that Mexican border cities are more than just economic centers; they are "equally cultural creations and need to be understood as such."[111]

In 2002, Arreola authored *Tejano South Texas: A Mexican American Cultural Province*, a case study of place, region, and location in southern Texas. By investigating the historical and cultural geography and cultural representation of south Texas, Arreola

traced the ways Mexican Americans shaped cultural landscapes from spaces into places in three small obviously-Mexican Texas towns and two larger south Texas urban centers. He found that south Texas had not been viewed as a separate region of Texas and that its "historical identity lacked clarity."[112] Therefore, after archival research and landscape interpretation, Arreola argued that south Texas was distinctly different from the rest of the state precisely because it has "a legacy of many generations of Mexican American attachment to place."[113]

In 2004, Arreola edited *Hispanic Spaces*, *Latino Places*. The text is a seminal work describing many facets of Latinization in the U.S. and its impress on a variety of landscapes. Arreola's intent was to "represent the fourth-largest concentration of Spanish-heritage people in the world," evaluate the diverse areas Latinos migrate to across America (not just New York, Los Angeles, and Miami but places like Phoenix, Kansas City, and Hereford, Texas), and investigate social and cultural themes from a geographic perspective.[114] He noted that geographic studies of ethnic groups—especially amongst the Latino populations—is sparse compared to other social sciences. Thus, this collection of essays is a significant work that draws attention to the ways this major ethnic group is transforming America so quickly and so noticeably.

The Latino Landscape Impress in Oklahoma

In *The Meaning of the Built Environment* (1982), Amos Rapoport found that cultural landscapes consist of fixed feature elements, elements that are expensive or difficult to readily alter, and semi-fixed feature elements, elements that may be changed relatively easily and/or inexpensively.[115] Albert Benedict and Robert B. Kent (2004) investigated that concept and found that "when a number of individuals of the same

ethnic background in a particular geographical area collectively use a set of shared semi-fixed feature elements, these combine to create a distinctive cultural landscape."[116] Thus, when Latinos reach a comfort zone that allows them to begin to make changes of a semi-fixed nature on the elements of their environment, the Latinization of the landscape begins. For instance, the distinctive style of an old Pizza Hut restaurant is unmistakable even when painted brown and featuring a sign identifying it as a business office. In the same way, an Oklahoma strip mall is easily recognizable as such. However, Spanish language signs on the stores, Hispanic employees in the stores, Latino products on the shelves, Spanish language background music, Spanish-speaking customers, and *piñatas* and *maracas* as decorations identify it as a Latino place. Additionally, while distinctive Latino groups will be able to categorize the specific ethnicity—Mexicans will recognize Mexican elements and Puerto Ricans will recognize Puerto Rican elements—untrained and non-Hispanic eyes will distinguish the cultural elements simply as Latino.

Clearly, Latinization is a process and the basic reason why it happens is obvious. As Joel Kotkin wrote in the *Tulsa World* (1997), "People still seek a sense of uniqueness, of home and history wherever they live. The new patterns of settlement and technology may have changed the nature of place, but they have not eliminated our need for it."[117] Benedict and Kent noted that other reasons, such as making political statements, may be the motivation for some semi-fixed cultural landscape feature changes; but they argued a Latinized landscape supports Latino identity and thus reinforces and enhances the comfort zone "regardless of its exact intent."[118]

Oklahoma Hispanics generally do not have Spanish missions like California Hispanics; they do not have plazas like New Mexico Hispanics have. Tulsa Hispanics do

have a fixed feature element in St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church and Oklahoma City Hispanics relate to the Spanish architectural features of the First Hispanic Baptist Church and of Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church. All three of these features are centers of Latino settlements in their respective cities. The majority of Latinized features in Oklahoma, however, are semi-fixed feature elements—aspects that can be changed facilely, such as facade colors, yard décor, and signage.[119]

Oklahoma c*arnicerías*, Latino retail stores vending groceries, meat, and other popular and often-purchased items, are generally excellent examples of Hispanic businesses operating in buildings with non-Hispanic architecture.[120] *Carnicería* owners use "names, symbols, décor, and store layouts" to "invoke nostalgic images of Mexico," proclaiming their Latinicity as they seek to attract customers.[121] *Carnicerías* are often anchors for other businesses because of their character as meeting places and, as Alex Oberle stated, "transnational conduits where Latino immigrants can purchase international phone cards, wire money to Latin America, and seek transportation to Mexico or other nations."[122] Many c*arnicería* owners allow patrons to post advertisements and other information pertinent to their fellow Latinos and their families.[123]

Other visible features commonly perceived to denote Latinicity are "authentic" restaurants, religious iconography, colorful walls, wall murals, saguaro cacti, flags and the use of colors from flags, Spanish language signs, menus, and newspapers, and street vendors.[124] While some more-upscale neighborhoods restrict the use of some of these types of expressions of Latinicity, many Oklahoma Hispanics live in neighborhoods

where they are free to express themselves and their culture.[125] Many of these features are readily observable in the Oklahoma cities of Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Guymon.

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[2] Rodger Harris (folk life director and oral historian, Oklahoma Historical Society), in discussion with the author, February 18, 2009; Brown, 74.

[3] Michael Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 19; Brown, 74; Michael Smith, *The Mexican American Experience in Oklahoma* (Stillwater, OK: Crossroads Oklahoma Project, 1981), 3-4; Philip Martin, "Mexican Workers and U.S. Agriculture: The Revolving Door," *International Migration Review* 36, no. 4 (2002): 1127.

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[6] Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma*, 24; Smith, "Beyond the Borderlands: Mexican Labor in the Central Plains, 1900-1930," 240-41.

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[15] Keith Henderson, “Chronicling the American Suburb,” *Christian Science Monitor*, March 6, 1986, 21.

[16] “Suburbia Unlimited,” *The New York Times*, January 20, 1974, 194.

[17] “Suburbia Unlimited,” *The New York Times*, January 20, 1974, 194.

[18] William H. Frey, “Central City White Flight: Racial and Nonracial Causes,” *American Sociological Review* 44, no. 3 (1979): 426.

[19] Douglas S. Massey and Kathleen M. Schnabel, “Recent Trends in Hispanic Immigration to the United States,” *International Migration Review* 17, no. 2 (1983): 212.

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[27] Massey and Schnabel, “Recent Trends in Hispanic Immigration to the United States,” 220.

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[122] Oberle, "*Se Venden Aquí*: Phoenix's Latino Retail Landscape, Urban Change, and Hispanic Identity," 3; Oberle, "*Se Venden Aquí*: Latino Commercial Landscapes in Phoenix, Arizona," 251; Oberle, "Latino Business Landscape and the Hispanic Ethnic Economy," 157.

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[124] Benedict and Kent, "The Cultural Landscape of a Puerto Rican Neighborhood in Cleveland, Ohio," 187, 200; Ines M. Miyares, "Changing Latinization of New York City" in *Hispanic Spaces, Latino Places: Community and Cultural Diversity in Contemporary America* edited by Daniel D. Arreola (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2004), 147. For a discussion on ethnic foodscapes see: Sylvia Ferrero, "*Comida Sin Par* Consumption of Mexican Food in Los Angeles: 'Foodscapes' in a Transnational Consumer Society" in *Food Nations: Selling Taste in Consumer Societies* edited by Warren Belasco and Philip Scranton (New York: Routledge, 2002), 194-219.

[125] Benedict and Kent, "The Cultural Landscape of a Puerto Rican Neighborhood in Cleveland, Ohio," 187. A just-as-obvious, but heard-rather-than-seen feature is the use of the Spanish language by people on the streets and over radio and television airwaves.

Chapter 3
The "Future is Ours:" The Latinization of Oklahoma City

Introduction

On April 22, 1889, thousands of homesteaders participated in the Unassigned Land Run in Oklahoma Territory. They came by foot, train, and wagon to stake their claims. A stopgap city, Oklahoma City, formed overnight and in a few years matured to become the state capital in 1910. Its location is a crossroads where various culture groups assembled. Some of these people settled permanently while others continued moving. The development of commerce at this urban hub, including at first the construction of four railroad lines and later three interstates, attracted immigrants from throughout the world, including those from Latin America.

Latinos were one of the early culture groups to begin settling Oklahoma, specifically in Oklahoma City (Figure 1). They continue to maintain a strong presence in the city. From the 1890s to the 1980s, the number, especially of Mexicans, in Oklahoma City remained fairly steady; but in recent years their numbers increased significantly. Hispanic migrants came from the nineteen Latin American Spanish-speaking countries, especially Mexico and the Commonwealth Puerto Rico. An after-effect of Latino settlement is the modification of the urban landscape as they establish their own traditions in Oklahoma City. This alteration of the landscape not only shapes a place for them but also signifies an inveterate cultural change that indicates they have settled permanently. The combination of their resolute perseverance in the city and the contributions of several dynamic Latin American leaders facilitated the process of Latinization that continues in Oklahoma City.

Latinos in Oklahoma City

In 1910, 379 of Oklahoma City's 64,205 residents were of Mexican descent; the majority of those Hispanics worked for railroads—the Santa Fe, the Frisco, the Katy, and the Chicago Rock Island.[1] By 1920, the state's Latino population doubled, and Oklahoma City's population, totaling 91,295 by then, reflected that pattern at 788.[2] The escalation of Latino population during the early part of the century even led the Mexican government to open a consulate in Oklahoma City to administer labor issues and to regulate the number of Mexican immigrants to avoid having a labor surplus in Oklahoma City and throughout the state.[3] Growth continued until the 1930s. When the Great Depression (1929-1939) and the Dust Bowl of the 1930s devastated Oklahoma's economy, Latinos, just like many Anglos in the state, searched for refuge elsewhere.[4]

In 1930, as an early sign of hard times, the decennial census showed only a small increase of Hispanics. The largest concentration was within Oklahoma City's 185,389 inhabitants where the Latino population rose to 988.[5] Throughout the Great Depression, many Latinos in Oklahoma City continued to work on section gangs for the railroad or in the various meatpacking facilities in Packingtown.[6] Some Latinos adversely affected by the economy lived in community camps created by city officials to aid destitute civilians hit hardest by the economic downturn (Figure 2).[7] The 1940 decennial census showed that the state's Latino population had decreased.[8] Oklahoma City's Latinos declined to around 342 of its 204,424 residents, reflecting the same two-thirds drop the rest of the U.S. experienced.[9] When the Hispanic migration increased overall in the U.S in the late

1950s and into the 1960s and continued with a notable acceleration in the 1970s, a parallel pattern of growth occurred in Oklahoma and in Oklahoma City.[10]

Latinos sought to settle in Oklahoma in the 1900s for the same two reasons they went to other parts of the U.S. at the time: to take advantage of the economic opportunities and to escape negative situations in their mother countries.[11] Many chose to work on railroad gangs, in coalmines, in cotton fields, and on farms and ranches throughout the state, willing to perform work that few Americans wanted to do.[12] Most Latinos in Oklahoma City initially resided near their places of work. The Riverside District, located north of the North Canadian River, was one major Latino neighborhood.[13] Another heavily Hispanic-populated district was Packingtown. George Ochoa, owner of the restaurant *Las Carnitas*, recalled that by 1955 a large Latino community lived from Southwest Second Street to Southwest Fifteenth Street with very few Latinos elsewhere.[14] They settled in these two sections of Oklahoma City initially because of employment opportunities, and they stayed in those areas for various reasons—particularly because of the social networks and the propinquity to Little Flower Church.[15]

Hispanics left their impress on the Riverside District over the last century because of their shared workplaces and their common use of the Spanish language.[16] During the early 1900s, most Riverside settlers relocated from the small coal mining towns of southeastern Oklahoma or railroad towns in the southwestern section of the state.[17] Some migrants came directly from Latin America throughout the 1900s, generally en route to other destinations such as Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, and Indiana. However, immigrants that stopped in Oklahoma usually found that jobs were procurable in a region where

immigration officers were, according to an editor for *The Oklahoman* in 1975, "not too active."[18] Some of the newcomers who reached Oklahoma City learned about the Riverside District by word of mouth from friends or relatives; others simply looked for those unwanted jobs and then easily found the Latino community.[19] The homes in this neighborhood were, and still are, cheap (Figure 3).[20] In the 1960s, when immigration rates began to rise significantly, the majority of the homes in this vicinity sold for about $15,000 each.[21] According to the Oklahoma County Assessor website, a typical house in the same neighborhood sold for $20,500 in 2008.[22]

From the early 1900s to the 1980s, the community stayed relatively confined because the immigrants knew being north of the railroad tracks after dark was dangerous.[23] Likewise, few other Oklahoma Citians ventured around this part of town, enhancing the region's segregation.[24] In fact, even the City of Oklahoma City ignored the Riverside region until the Urban Renewal Authority decided it wanted to bulldoze much of the neighborhood and redevelop it in the 1960s.[25] This action scared many of the Hispanics out of the Riverside District and into locations further north, south, and west, resulting in a smattering of Latinos across Oklahoma City (Figure 4).[26] Moreover, few non-Hispanic residents knew about the rapidly increasing Hispanic population that resided in two heavily populated locations of their hometown. For example, when Oklahoma City Mayor Patience Latting (1971-83) came into office, she did not even know about a Mexican community in Oklahoma City until a group of Mexican Americans complained to her about not being able to participate in the Saturday evening dances at the Civic Center Music Hall.[27]

Over time, another large Latino community formed in Packingtown, better known today as the Historic Stockyards City. In the 1910s, Packingtown was a new locale dependent on employment opportunities. During the early to mid-1900s, this area housed numerous meat-processing plants, including an Armour Packinghouse, several leather shops, and an important U.S. cattle-trading feedlot, which proffered a plethora of jobs and attracted a diverse clientele (Figure 5).[28] Today the area still has a few leather shops, the stockyards, the famous Cattlemen's Steakhouse, which opened in 1910 as Cattlemen's Café, but no packing plants.[29] Packingtown was in close proximity to the Riverside District and catered to both immigrants and the "American Spanish."[30]

Another example of an early to mid-1900s Latino neighborhood in Oklahoma City was Walnut Grove, located near the Bricktown warehouse district on the north and south banks of the Oklahoma River and just to the east of the Riverside District.[31] Although better known for its large African-American population, the location was also home to a number of Latinos.[32] Walnut Grove was in close proximity to a variety of mills and warehouses and to the railroad tracks. During the 1920s and 1930s, the region was an important part of the Oklahoma City Oilfield.[33] In general, Latinos who settled in southwest Oklahoma City stayed there until they reached a secure level of income.[34] Over the last few decades, the Walnut Grove vicinity and the other southern Oklahoma City neighborhoods have been subject to gentrification due to the rerouting of the North Canadian River (Oklahoma River), the realignment of Interstate 40, and the implementation of the Core to Shore plan by the City of Oklahoma City.[35]

The second reason why Latinos wanted to stay in these neighborhoods was the founding of Little Flower Church, first known as Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St.

Thérèse, just west of the Riverside District and south of downtown Oklahoma City (Figure 6).[36] After their expulsion from Mexico after Pancho Villa's persecutions, three priests from the Order of Discalced Carmelites arrived in Oklahoma in 1914.[37] The Catholic Diocese in Oklahoma City sent them first to Hartshorne near McAlester, but they returned to Oklahoma City in 1921 when Bishop Theophile Meerschaert decided to build a Catholic church to accommodate the large number of Latinos residing in Oklahoma City.[38] Before construction, some Latinos attended Mass in the basement of the old St. Joseph Cathedral in downtown Oklahoma City because they were not allowed to partake in the services at the main altar because of their race.[39] In 1927, engineers finished constructing the church.[40] Not long after the canonization of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower of Jesus, officials dedicated one of the altars in the new building to her.[41] In 1932, the church officially became the Shrine of the Little Flower.[42]

Packingtown had a small Catholic parish, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and the First Mexican Baptist Church, known today as *Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana* (First Hispanic Baptist Church), was also a successful parish there (Figures 7,8).[43] Little Flower Church, however, quickly became the hub or "mama parish" for most of the Latino community (Figure 9).[44] Its priests held Spanish-language services, readily giving a sense of place to the Latino community.[45] The church established a school for Latino children, provided relief for migrant families until their breadwinners found work, started a health clinic for Hispanic residents, and generally helped new arrivals settle into their new community (Figure 10).[46] The parish also aided Latinos during the Great Depression and afterwards by making certain they had something to eat and a place to stay.[47] In the 1950s, Little Flower Church welcomed another influx of immigrants and continued to be a

pivotal landmark for the Latino settlement in Oklahoma City.[48] Since the lives of so many families were "steeped" in the church, Little Flower Church personnel strived to make sure that Latinos received an education to help them overcome their trepidation as they faced current and future hardships.[49] No other institution provided such support until the late 1970s; therefore, Little Flower Church continued to minister to destitute Latinos with little assistance from other community organizations.[50] Thus, from the 1950s on, the Latino population continued growing, settling into this southern region of Oklahoma City but expanding outward, by the late 1970s, into the once-burgeoning vicinage of Capitol Hill.

Established on the day of the Unassigned Land Run in 1889, Capitol Hill was a community in what is today south Oklahoma City.[51] Many of the first homes on the hill, according to *The Capitol Hill Beacon,* were little more than a "hole in the ground with a tent pitched over the top."[52] In 1905, the populace had grown enough to incorporate itself as an independent municipality.[53] Two years later, on November 16, 1907—the day Oklahoma became the forty-sixth state—the city became part of Oklahoma City. Even though Capitol Hill lost its distinct status, this "city within a city" continued to thrive.[54] Furthermore, Capitol Hill maintained a reputation of being a "workingman's home" and the "City's Bible Belt," "right close up to the buckle."[55] The site appealed to Anglo Packingtown workers. Several families lived there in the small white cottages and shotgun houses built from 1905 to 1915.[56] The discovery of the Oklahoma City Oilfield in the late 1920s and the later addition of Tinker Air Force base in Midwest City (about six miles east of Capitol Hill) in 1942 during World War II (1939-45) brought many more dwellers and businesses to this convenient location.[57]

The main thoroughfare in Capitol Hill was Commerce Street (Southwest Twenty-Fifth Street) which ran east-to-west from Central Avenue to Walker (Figure 11). From the 1950s until the 1970s, Capitol Hill flourished, housing stores like J.C. Penney, John A. Brown, and Langston's and services including banks, hospitals, religious institutions, schools, and restaurants.[58] This locality was also an entertainment venue, home to Knob Hill Theatre (now called Oklahoma Opry), and Circle Theatre, both of which featured live theatre performances and motion pictures.[59] The construction of a large mall and interstate bypass route, however, changed the course of Capitol Hill's development.

In the late 1960s, Oklahoma City planners and officials concurred that building an interstate bypass in south Oklahoma City, known as the West Bypass or I-240, would open up a large sector of the city to "rapid traffic and access."[60] In February 1972, owners broke ground for a new 1.3 million square feet, air-conditioned shopping complex named Crossroads Mall, contiguous to the barely-begun bypass.[61] Planners envisaged that 2,800 new jobs would result from the brand new urban center and that the West Bypass would be capable of conveying 60,000 people daily, impelling people further south out of Capitol Hill and into southern suburban locations.[62] By the late 1970s, therefore, many Anglos flocked to south Oklahoma City, causing significant expansion there.[63] In an attempt to learn how they might recover some of the economic losses, the Capitol Hill neighborhood organization authorized two University of Oklahoma students to conduct a survey; the results, however, proved unhelpful.[64] Both students agreed the district was definitely deteriorating.[65] One cited the cause as rapid population growth to the south while the other student determined the "area is regarded as so 'stable' it has a 'stagnant' image."[66]

Residents and businessmen of Capitol Hill acknowledged that the 1970s were years of retrogression.[67] From 1970 to 1980, nine percent of the population left the neighborhood.[68] One home owner simply said, "The children of the people who established here long ago moved to SW 36, and their children moved farther" after the bypass and shopping mall encouraged flight to the suburbs.[69] In 1975, the Urban Renewal Authority, seeking to revitalize the surrounding district, selected a square mile around the heart of Capitol Hill—Commerce Street—for an $8.2 million community development block grant from the federal government.[70] Unfortunately, the project failed to curb the exodus to the newly built southern suburbs.[71] According to an editor for *The Oklahoman,* by the early 1980s, Capitol Hill was notorious for its "deteriorating housing, an abundance of low-income residents [Latinos], sagging businesses, and crime."[72] None of these disincentives, however, slowed the movement of Latinos to this locale. Abandoned by the big retailers who either moved to the new mall or were put out of business altogether during the late 1970s and early 1980s, Capitol Hill was a blighted neighborhood until the late 1980s when its Latino residents reinvigorated the vicinity.[73]

Historical Latinization of Oklahoma City

Latinization, enhanced and facilitated over time by various Latino citizens and organizations, is clearly visible in Riverside, Packingtown, Capitol Hill, and other areas of Oklahoma City. Because Latinos in the state recorded little of their history, most Oklahomans knew little about them until the Latino urban imprint in cities like Oklahoma City became visible.[74] Indeed, in the 1900s, Latinos were one of the only ethnic groups throughout the state that complained little about discrimination.[75] During the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s, the civil rights movement, led by African-Americans,

preoccupied Anglos in Oklahoma City and elsewhere in the country. As a result, many Anglos failed to notice the rapidly increasing Latino population.[76] Instead of marching at the Oklahoma Capitol or forming a distinct sub-culture, Latinos quietly attempted to assimilate and adapt to American culture.[77] A writer of an article in *The Oklahoman* in 1967 declared that Latinos occupied an "almost forgotten third place among minority groups" and had "been left behind along with their needs."[78] Oklahoma Citians of Hispanic heritage, however, did not forget their traditions.[79] Thus, Latinos did leave their history behind—not in the form of text but in a visible way upon the Oklahoma landscape. Over time, Latinization became more noticeable to outsiders and the successful accomplishments of many Latino citizens drew attention to that fact.

The first heavily reported and advertised entrepreneurial success of Latinos in Oklahoma City occurred during the 1950s when the Luis Alvarado family opened four *El Charrito* Mexican restaurants, using family recipes and preparing food the way "real Mexicans know how."[80] The restaurant not only offered traditional-style Mexican food and the rapidly emerging Tex-Mex cuisine but also often featured performances by Spanish dancers in an attempt to promote that tradition.[81] Their newspaper promotions showed evidence of their increasing success and acceptance in the city. In 1955, the ad for the restaurant was small and said simply, "Want a Lunch That Is Different? Why Not Try Mexican Food!"[82] By February 1956, the advertisement was much larger and touted "Famous Mexican and American Foods amid the Romance of Old Mexico."[83] The owners also helped fellow Latinos who were in trouble. For example, a man supposedly transporting Gilberto Alviso to Indiana abandoned him in Oklahoma City.[84] Furthermore, the driver took everything Alviso brought with him from Reynosa, Mexico.[85] Unable to

speak English, he slept in the bus station for ten days until someone told him about *El Charrito* where he might find employment.[86] Later, Alviso went on to open his own bistro, *La Roca*.[87]

In 1968, the Alvarado family united with the Cueller brothers, who owned *El Chico* restaurants (opened originally in Dallas, Texas, in 1940), to make "one *El* of a family" by forming the biggest Mexican restaurant chain in the country.[88] They operated eateries under the name *El Chico*, which continue to serve Mexican cuisine to Americans.[89] The successes of *El Charrito* and *La Roca* paved the way for other Latino-based businesses, many of them in the food industry.[90] Specialized import stores and other establishments specific to the Latino culture, such as *panaderías* (bakeries), *carnicerías* (meat markets), *mercados* (grocery stores), *tortillarías* (tortilla outlets), *taquerías* (taco stands), etc., began opening in the late 1960s and early 1970s and were even more prevalent by the 1980s and 1990s.[91]

By 1975, a journalist for *The Oklahoman* indicated that Oklahoma City's Mexican American population was in the "throes of a social boom that is changing its long-standing image of primarily a core of impoverished aliens holding low-paying jobs" to one of success and stability.[92] In some cases, the children of the first generation of Latinos had gone to school, learned English, acquired better jobs, and moved into "more affluent areas."[93] In 1975, Mexican Americans owned eighty-four businesses in Oklahoma City and their customers were both Anglo and Latino.[94] David Castillo, the current Executive Director of the Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, is a good example of that metamorphosis.

Born in Nebraska in 1960 to migrant farm workers from Mexico, Castillo was six months old when his family moved to the Riverside District in Oklahoma City. When he was a child, Castillo remembered that Oklahoma City had very little variety in its restaurants and businesses that purveyed goods and services to the Latino community. He recalled that few Hispanics attempted to preserve their customs due to the bigoted rules enforced in the schools and at public spaces like restaurants. For instance, when Castillo was in school, his teachers sometimes punished students who spoke Spanish. By the age of eleven, he had lost all of his Spanish vocabulary and did not begin practicing Spanish again until he was fifteen. When Castillo was a teenager in the mid-1970s, he and three friends, an African-American and two Anglos, went to downtown Oklahoma City for lunch; the restaurant refused service to the four young men because one was black and one was Mexican. The ethnic discrimination, however, did not thwart Castillo from venturing into the Oklahoma City business community a few years later.[95]

In 1982, Castillo and his in-laws, also of Mexican descent, opened what was the second Mexican import store in Oklahoma City, *Crillos de Mexico* (Traditional Mexico), across the street from Little Flower Church. Before his store opened, Latinos in Oklahoma City could not find fresh *tortillas*, *pan dulce* (sweet bread), or many other common Mexican products, even in the existing Mexican import store.[96] Long time Oklahoma City resident Sheryle Marlow agreed that Mexican products were hard to find in the city and added that one was more likely to find "Chinese and other Oriental knick-knacks in the first Mexican import store" rather than distinctly Mexican products.[97] In order to acquire the fresh breads to sell on their own shelves, Castillo's in-laws had to drive to Fort Worth, Texas, every Thursday to pick up the *pan dulce* and some *tortillas*.[98]

On every other Friday, they drove to Laredo, Texas, to buy music cassettes, candies, and other hard-to-find Mexican baubles to sell in Oklahoma City.[99]

The location of the Mexican import store in the Riverside District and its nearness to Capitol Hill smoothed the progress toward success for Castillo and his family. In addition, Castillo joined with other Hispanics to form, publish, and distribute the first Spanish-language newspaper in Oklahoma, *La Prinsa*, a periodical released every month for a year. After that, however, the editor left, taking all of the equipment with him. Additionally, Castillo had one of the first, if not the first, Spanish radio shows. *Lo Mejor de Maestro* (The Best Music Master) aired on Saturday mornings for an hour and, after a year of successfully selling advertisements, expanded to three to four hours on Saturday morning and afternoon. The assiduous Castillo also ran a limousine service that catered to *quinceañeras* (birthday galas for fifteen-year-old Latinas) and dances before he took on the role of Executive Director of the Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.[100] The successes enjoyed by the owners of *El Charrito/El Chico* and the amazing accomplishments of David Castillo and his family are clearly indicative of the rich and changing history of Latinos in Oklahoma City from 1950 to 1980. During this time, Latinos began to collaborate and work collectively in various organizations that would create more personal success stories and modify the social and urban landscape in Oklahoma City.

Latinization of the Cultural Landscape

Since Latinos were relatively silent about their situation, their needs in the way of civic, economic, and educational aid and support generally went unnoticed.[101] Indeed, the difficult process of integrating into the American lifestyle left many émigrés, both legal

and illegal, impoverished and with few resources besides the assistance from Little Flower Church and its Catholic Action Club.[102] In 1967, the advice of a Mexican resident in Oklahoma City was that "the best way to get ahead is learn as much and accept as much of the different culture as possible."[103] However, not everyone agreed with that assessment. That same year Reverend Orra G. Compton of the Oklahoma City Community Relations Commission avowed, "There is no organized attempt to help the Latin Americans in Oklahoma City and no group knows much about their 'ill-defined' problems."[104]

By the mid 1970s, after countless meetings with various Oklahoma City community organizations, concerned citizens began forming agencies that would specifically aid Hispanics. One of the first was the Riverside Neighborhood Association, established in response to the Urban Renewal Authority's planned destruction of their community.[105] Once this alliance developed, a sense of identity began to spread across the Latino population; the collaboration of the participants in the Riverside Neighborhood Association sparked interest in other Latinos to begin their own support coalitions.[106] For example, two major groups evolved in Oklahoma City in the late 1970s—the Mexican American Cultural Center (later named the Oklahoma Hispanic Cultural Center) and the Oklahoma Hispanic Heritage Association—while a branch of a national assemblage, the United Latin Association, organized in the city as well.[107]

The Mexican American Cultural Center focused on making Hispanics in Oklahoma City more aware of their own specific needs, especially in the areas of education, learning English, and understanding the American system of business.[108] In 1979, the Mexican American Cultural Center allowed the Oklahoma Immigration

Counseling Project to establish an office in their facility to serve the populace and to provide not only money but also technical advice and assistance.[109] They met with Hispanic visitors from as far away as the Panhandle.[110] During the 1980s, the Oklahoma Hispanic Cultural Center, as it became known, supported the publication of a four-page monthly tabloid *La Voz* (*The Voice*) that was "sporadically" published.[111] By 1983, the editors claimed to reach over 100,000 Hispanics throughout Oklahoma, giving them "news and information not available elsewhere."[112]

According to newspaper articles, the Oklahoma Hispanic Heritage Association focused more on Latino identity and culture.[113] The group planned various events, including *fiestas*, carnivals, and parades; set up cultural display booths at places like Crossroads Mall, especially during National Hispanic Heritage Week; and hosted folkloric dances, *mariachis* (Mexican musical groups), and celebrations on September 16 (Mexican Independence Day).[114] Other smaller organizations formed throughout the 1980s, such as the Annual Mexican Fiesta Organization, Pan American Golf for Men and Women, and a group of the Hispanic Churches of Oklahoma City.[115] By 1982, Capitol Hill's neighborhood association reorganized, establishing a voice for the Latino population living there.[116] While groups like these helped Hispanics in many ways, their children's education suffered ever since they began migrating to Oklahoma.[117]

A serious lack of interest in education persisted among many Latino families owing to their cultural norms.[118] One reason they brought with them from their homelands was that families simply could not afford to allow their teenagers to attend school; they needed the income the young people could provide.[119] A second motive was that Latinos were not accustomed to valuing education as a way to improve their lives.

The first efforts toward improving education came when Little Flower Church officials built a schoolhouse to accommodate the Spanish-speaking community.[120] Few state-funded schools met the needs of the Latino populace until the 1950s.[121] By the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, public schools in south Oklahoma City began seeing new faces as more Latinos began seeking public education.[122] Clearly, more help was vital.

The problem was indeed serious: a Latino with little schooling would not be able to find a desirable job and uneducated Hispanics who were "lucky enough to get a job work[ed] for $3 an hour."[123] A similar situation occurred for Latino entrepreneurs who were in danger of losing their businesses altogether.[124] One man stated that merchants in Capitol Hill attempted to obtain assistance for their "businesses from government agencies" and called it a "frustrating experience" with little results.[125] With the number of dropouts and those unemployed rising daily, someone had to step up to help.[126] In the late 1970s, the Mexican American Cultural Center and the Oklahoma Hispanic Heritage Association began working together to promote education for families.[127] These organizations realized that the state's yearly budgets for education did not include enough funds to hire the number of Spanish-speaking teachers needed to accommodate all of the Latino children.[128] The need became even greater when, in 1982, a U.S. Supreme Court order forced Oklahoma public schools to allow all Latinos, whether legal or illegal, to enroll in the school district where they lived, whether or not their parents could prove residency.[129]

Several other groups have organized to assist with the education, adjustment, and integration of Latinos in Oklahoma City and the rest of Oklahoma. These include the Latino Development Agency, Legal Aid of Western Oklahoma, the League of United

Latin American Citizens, the American G.I. Forum, the Oklahoma Association of Hispanic Professionals, the Latin American Council for Human Rights, the Salvation Army, the Catholic Hispanic Affairs Commission, Catholic Charities, and the Governor's Hispanic Council.[130] These associations offer educational services, employment direction, medical assistance, social and legal guidance, immigration and naturalization information, programs for youths, and consulting services for entrepreneurs.[131] In addition, they help fund bilingual signs, pamphlets, and other items Latinos may need to make the transition to the American lifestyle.[132]

While Latinos continued to witness improvement in their situations in Oklahoma City during the late 1970s and early 1980s, despite statewide economic problems caused by the downturn in the oil business, Latinization on the city’s cultural landscape has increased since the late 1980s along with the numbers of Hispanics.[133] In 1980, the Hispanic segment of Oklahoma City’s total population of 403,213 numbered 7,265.[134] By 1990, the Hispanic count nearly tripled to 22,003 of the 444,719 total residents; and, in 2000, it swelled to 51,368 of the overall populace of 506,132.[135] By 2006, the U.S. Census Bureau reported 79,617 Latinos lived in the city; and, in 2008, that estimate rose to 82,395.[136] The importance of organization and guidance also increased accordingly, and Latinos responded over the ensuing years.

Leaders have come forward to serve as important advocates for the Latinos in the city. In 1991, long-established Oklahoma City resident John Martinez helped organize activities for National Hispanic Month and aided other Hispanic leaders in obtaining a gymnasium for Latino youths, hoping to combat gang activity.[137] That same year, Patricia Fennell, a native of Ecuador and also a longtime Oklahoma City resident, established the

Latino Community Development Agency (LCDA) with a mission "to enhance the life of the Latino community through education, leadership, services, and advocacy" (Figure 12).[138] Over the years, Fennell assisted a number of Latino students, entrepreneurs, and families in getting a head start on a new life.[139] In addition, she has been a primary voice for Latinos on many issues in the Riverside District, Capitol Hill, and other locations of Oklahoma City, working to preserve Latino identity in important ways.[140]

Oklahoma City metro universities have also been reaching out to the surrounding Latino population. The University of Oklahoma joined the "Hot List" of the top 700 best colleges for Hispanics to attend in 1997.[141] The University of Central Oklahoma started a Miss Hispanic UCO Pageant in 1999.[142] Oklahoma City Community College (OCCC) and the Hispanic Organization to Promote Education worked together to increase the Hispanic student population there from two percent in 1990, to five percent in 2001, and to eight percent of the total student population in 2009.[143] The education outreach by Latino organizations and Oklahoma's educational institutions has without a doubt improved the situations of many Hispanic residents.

Hispanic businesses, undoubtedly the most noticeable Latinized cultural landscape feature, continue to develop and prosper with help from local organizations. In 2000, an organization formed to support local Hispanic businesses and to assist with maintaining their uniqueness. Inspired by the Dallas Hispanic Chamber, Oklahoma City residents Cerval "Ray" Doonkeen, Yvonne Gonzales, and other prominent Hispanic business people opened the Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to serve and "create a vibrant economic environment" for the mushrooming Latino business population in Oklahoma City.[144] This Hispanic chamber was their second effort to

organize in the city within a five-year period, and founders made sure the second time was successful.[145] The chamber aids Latino entrepreneurs by making a “bridge between the Hispanic and Anglo communities in Oklahoma City,” creating a network with other Latino businesses, and helping with the development of “business plans and successful marketing strategies.”[146] State Senator Jim Reynolds supported the chamber’s efforts and encouraged Hispanics to “get involved and become more a part of what’s going on in the state” because, he said, “It’s a benefit to them, as well as to the entire city.”[147] Charles Garner, former owner of Budget Foods in Capitol Hill, where many Hispanics used to shop, joined the chamber when it opened.[148] Garner did not speak Spanish, but, from firsthand experiences, knew that the Hispanic Chamber was essential in order for Oklahoma City Latinos to become flourishing capitalists.[149] Gonzales hoped that within ten years the chamber would have a permanent office, a full time staff, workshops, and a business incubator program.[150] Almost a decade later, the Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce is running strong; and for the past five years, David Castillo has made sure the chamber met Gonzales’s wishes.

Since 2005, Castillo has served as the Executive Director of the Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (Figure 13). He assisted with developing the mission of the Hispanic Chamber—to support “the economic development, competitive advancement and improvements in the skills of business owners, [and] merchants in the Hispanic community of the City.”[151] In 2006, after receiving a $141,000 economic development grant from the Regents for Higher Education, OCCC teamed up with the Hispanic Chamber to help Latino-owned businesses in Oklahoma City.[152] Castillo stated that not only will this “bring good

development to the city because you're going to have more Hispanic business and more Hispanic business that will be flourishing" but also that administration by OCCC will mean "a great outreach to bring Hispanic students to college."[153]

In 2007, the Hispanic Chamber, after receiving a $20,000 CasaCyber Technology Grant from the AT&T Foundation, began offering a Business Incubator Program to help Latino entrepreneurs succeed with their capitalist ventures, fulfilling a dream of founding member Yvonne Gonzales.[154] Castillo believes that, with education and with the support of the Hispanic Chamber, Latino capitalists will "drive the economy" with their small businesses.[155] Other Hispanic Chamber programs are its Governmental Affairs Committee "to promote and protect political interests of the organization and the Hispanic community" and the Chamber Foundation "to provide Hispanic youth with academic opportunities and professional experience."[156] Since 2002, they have also sponsored an annual Hispanic Expo, the largest event for Latino businesses and services in the state.[157]

In 2001, when *The Oklahoman* began running articles about the rising Hispanic population, a journalist reported the state of Oklahoma had about 2,000 Latino-owned businesses that generated an estimated $600 million dollars in sales, a by-product of the state's 114 percent Hispanic population increase between 1990 and 2000.[158] In 2008, a journalist for *The Oklahoman* wrote, "Hispanic-owned businesses line SW 44 and SW 29 as well as Western and Walker avenues, diversifying this once homogenous community" in south Oklahoma City.[159] One resident reported, "'There has been a lot of Mexican restaurants opening up, and now there's this big Mexican grocery store in the old Homeland building'" (*El Mariachi Supermercado*).[160]

Hispanics also began to be recognized as important consumers. In 2003, former chair of the Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Cerval "Ray" Doonkeen stated that few Oklahoma City businesses actually "comprehend the enormity of the economic impact" that the Latino population's buying power would have in the city over the next ten years.[161] Using the example of Capitol Hill, Doonkeen noted that leasers were "giving away office space;" but he projected a shortage within the next few years because of continued Hispanic growth.[162] In 2003, First Commercial Bank Vice-President Lynn Groves stated that the bank was "cognizant of the shift in Oklahoma City's demographics" and had implemented a plan in the late 1990s to target Hispanic customers by seeking out bilingual employees to work at each of their local branches—particularly the one in Capitol Hill.[163] Other businesses also acknowledged the increasing Latino population. Buy for Less grocery stores in south Oklahoma City recognized the growing Hispanic community, and storeowners in the Latinized parts of Oklahoma City changed the name to "Buy for Less Super *Mercado*" and began selling more Latino-specific products (Figure 14). For example, in December 2009, One Buy for Less grocery store owner in the Little Flower Church area said that he ordered "extra corn husks and masa, a corn-based dough, every year in the weeks leading up to the Christmas holiday" because those were "key components" of the foods Hispanics traditionally enjoy more of at Christmas.[164]

In the early 2000s, an Asian-American opened *El Mariachi Supermercado*; Mario Delgado and Sandra Vallejo-Delgado joked that it is the only place one can purchase a *wok* and a *molcajete* (the Spanish version of the mortar and pestle tool used for grinding spices) on the same aisle.[165] Besides this anomaly, shoppers at *El Mariachi*

Supermercado can purchase specific items rarely found in Oklahoma's Anglo-oriented grocery stores, such as an entire *cabeza de baca* (cow's head), fresh *churros* (cinnamon fry bread), fresh *tortillas*, and fresh *tamales*. Most *mercados*, including *El Mariachi Supermercado*, also have full service delis and bakeries that serve *tacos*, *tortas* (sandwiches), various *pans* (breads), and *dulces* (sweets).

In addition to major businesses and various medical centers catering to the rapidly increasing Latino population, a surfeit of small businesses, such as *cantinas* (bars), *discotecas* (dance clubs), restaurants, remittance shops, and *carnicerías* (meat markets/general stores) have opened in Oklahoma City over the years and in surrounding metro areas as well since the 1990s. While the names of these businesses typically indicate the Latinized impress, the businesses also exhibit other characteristics of Latinization. Stores with multi-colored facades and business signs exhibiting symbols of Hispanic heritage or the colors of their ethnic flags line the streets in some areas. Some establishments have murals, often on both the outside and the inside of the building, that signify ethnicity by portraying popular landscape scenes or important historic figures of the owner's country of origin (Figure 15). Decorations like *piñatas*, cacti and other plants, rugs, vases, and other trinkets fill spaces within the restaurants and other businesses. Latinization is profound in many of these businesses, whether the owner is a Latino or a non-Latino seeking to attract Latino customers.

Hispanic-run eateries, such as *El Charrito* and *La Roca*, were the first Latinized businesses to appear on the Oklahoma City cultural landscape; and Latinized restaurants abound in the city. One of the oldest small restaurants is Tacoville located in southwest Oklahoma City (Figure 16). Residents there recall that the eatery started in the late 1960s;

indeed, when the Urban Renewal Authority stated they wanted to bulldoze much of the Riverside neighborhood in the 1960s, some of those residents had moved to this area.[166] Another restaurant locals frequented was *El Alex*, which, like Tacoville, is still in business today in Capitol Hill. David Castillo estimated that this establishment began its operation during the 1980s.[167]

Other small Hispanic-influenced businesses were becoming common in the 1990s. For instance, residents reported that Mexico Transfers, a remittance shop in Capitol Hill that is painted bright yellow opened in the mid-1990s. *San Nachos*, a Latino-owned *cantina*, and *Panadería La Mexican* Bakery and Imports, a Latino-owned *panadería*, *carnicería*, and *tamalería* (tamale shop), originated around the same time during the 1990s in the Capitol Hill area (Figure 17). In Packingtown, *Panadería La Herradura* commenced in the late 1990s (Figure 18). *Carnicerías*, such as *Super Mercados Morelos/*Cash America Pawn in northwest Oklahoma City, *Carnicería El Rodeo,* with a colorful mural painted on its windows, in west Oklahoma City, and *Carnicería La Hacienda* in south Oklahoma City, started up during the first few years of the 2000s.[168] Likewise, *discotecas,* such as *OK Corral* in northwest Oklahoma City, and *Copa Cabana*, Safari, and *Chihuahua's* Bar, with its business sign painted in the colors of the Mexican flag, on the southwest Oklahoma City landscape, began appearing around the same time (Figure 19).

Over the last several years, diversified Latino businesses have opened. *Curiosidades* Guatemala (also known as *Tienda* Guatemala) in northwest Oklahoma City sells food during lunch and *curios* (souvenirs). The store also has a remittance license and allows customers to pay their bills there. Diversity is also apparent in the various

restaurants that offer ethnic cuisines of specific Latin American countries. Such establishments include *Café Anigua* and The Brothers Restaurant, both of which serve Guatemalan fare and are located in northwest Oklahoma City, and *El Salvador Restaurante Y Pupusería* located near Bethany. One favorite among locals is *Café do Brasil*—owned by native Brazilian Ana Paixao Davis—which started in northwest Oklahoma City and moved to the Midtown area of downtown Oklahoma City in 2005 (Figure 20).[169]

Other Hispanic businesses have also diffused throughout the greater Oklahoma City metropolitian area. For instance, in Edmond, a suburb fifteen miles north of Oklahoma City, the general store/restaurant *La Perla* has a neon business sign that displays the Mexican flag colors. A Peruvian in Edmond manages *Zarate's* Latin Mexican Grill, a brightly painted Latin American restaurant. The sunny yellow *Pepe's* Mexican Restaurant with its Spanish architectural flare is one of Edmond's oldest restaurants. Additionally, the fast food eatery *Carnitas Michoacán*, *El Parian* Mexican Restaurant and a convenience store *Guadalupana* enliven Edmond's cultural landscape. Norman, a suburb fifteen miles south of Oklahoma City, boasts a restaurant that serves Peruvian food, *Mamaveca* Mexican Restaurant, and a Caribbean-influenced restaurant named Monique's Corner, operated by a Venezuelan and located near The Univerisity of Oklahoma's Campus Corner.[170]

Other vital innovations seen and heard throughout the city include Spanish-language newspapers, such as *Viva Oklahoma* (which is part of *The Oklahoman* production line), *El National de Oklahoma*, and *Nuestra Comunidad*. Additionally, three Latino radio stations now serve Oklahoma City and surrounding metro areas: FM 106.7

Anúnciate en La Zeta, FM 105.3 *La Indomable,* and AM 1460 *La Tremenda Radio Mexico en Oklahoma*. Television stations KTUZ *Telemundo* and KUOK *Univisión* provide the Latino population in Oklahoma City and nearby cities with news and Spanish-language television programming. Although much of their history may still not be in written form today, the current history of Latinos has indeed become more discernible across the Oklahoma City landscape in many ways and forms.

Conclusion

After World War II, Oklahoma successfully transitioned to a post-war economy. Migrants, particularly those from Latin America, trekked to the state with hope for better live than the ones they left behind. Oklahoma's economic bust in the late 1970s and early 1980s created hardships on some and opened doors for others, namely the Latinos. The abandonment of the white community—who left Capitol Hill and went to the suburbs—proffered an opportunity for Latinos to buy up property and create *colonias* (colonies) within a city there. Such *colonias* are unique to Hispanic cultural identity.

Today, Oklahoma City's cultural landscape, particularly in the southern portion of the city and in adjacent metro areas, consists of full Spanish-language billboard advertisements and a plethora of *carnicerías*, *panaderías*, *tortillarías*, *taquerías*, *tamalerías,* and *cantinas* (Figure 21). Additionally, *iglesias* (churches) of denominations other than Catholic, such as Baptist, First Christian, and Assembly of God, have names that denote their Latinicity (Figure 22). Little Flower Church is thriving as a "large, urban parish" and has around 3,000 Hispanic parishioners who attend the four Spanish masses offered each weekend.[171] In January 2009, state Superintendent Sandy Garrett said that forty percent of Oklahoma City Public Schools' students in 2008 were Hispanic but that

the state continued to have a serious shortage of English-as-a-Second-Language teachers.[172] Obviously further work awaits in the public schools.

New land uses might affect historic Hispanic ties to the area in the near future. The 2006 "Core to Shore" redevelopment plan implemented by the City of Oklahoma City envisages a total revitalization of the historic Riverside District. While the church will remain, the Riverside District neighborhood will eventually become the site for an urban park and residential development. The upscale housing the plan envisions will undoubtedly force Hispanic residents to relocate from their traditional Oklahoma City community to one of the other Latino *colonias* or possibly to a new area.

Recently, Hispanics suffered a small setback in the state. Passed in 2007, House Bill 1804, an attempt to crack down on illegal immigration, initially caused many legal Hispanics to feel fearful of discrimination and caused some establishments to go out of business because of a decline in clientele.[173] According to a 2010 report by the Washington, D.C.-based Urban Land Institute, however, House Bill 1804 has had "little effect on decreasing the number of immigrant families" in Oklahoma City.[174] The lead author of the report, Robin Koralek, stated nonetheless a "culture of fear and confusion" still exists among Oklahoma City's Hispanic community." [175] After two and a half years, and with some parts of the law still contested in court, concern about House Bill 1804 has lessened. More businesses are obtaining licenses to open, and the Latino population continues to swell.

Latinos have over a century's worth of significant history in Oklahoma City and the dearth of documentation about Hispanics here makes it an intriguing case for further research. The description of Latinos as Oklahoma City's invisible minority is no longer

valid. The present reality is that Latinos have persevered in Oklahoma City and will no doubt continue to persevere despite anything city planners might decide to undertake. Wilfredo Santos-Riviera, an active Oklahoma City educator, commented that the Latino history in Oklahoma has been "a struggle of slow but steady progress" and avowed that, with new programs and with cooperation among organized groups throughout the state, "the future is ours."[176] Oklahoma City's Latino cultural landscape depicts that progress, and the city's landscape will likely continue to change and to delineate the ways Hispanics integrate in Oklahoma (Figure 23).

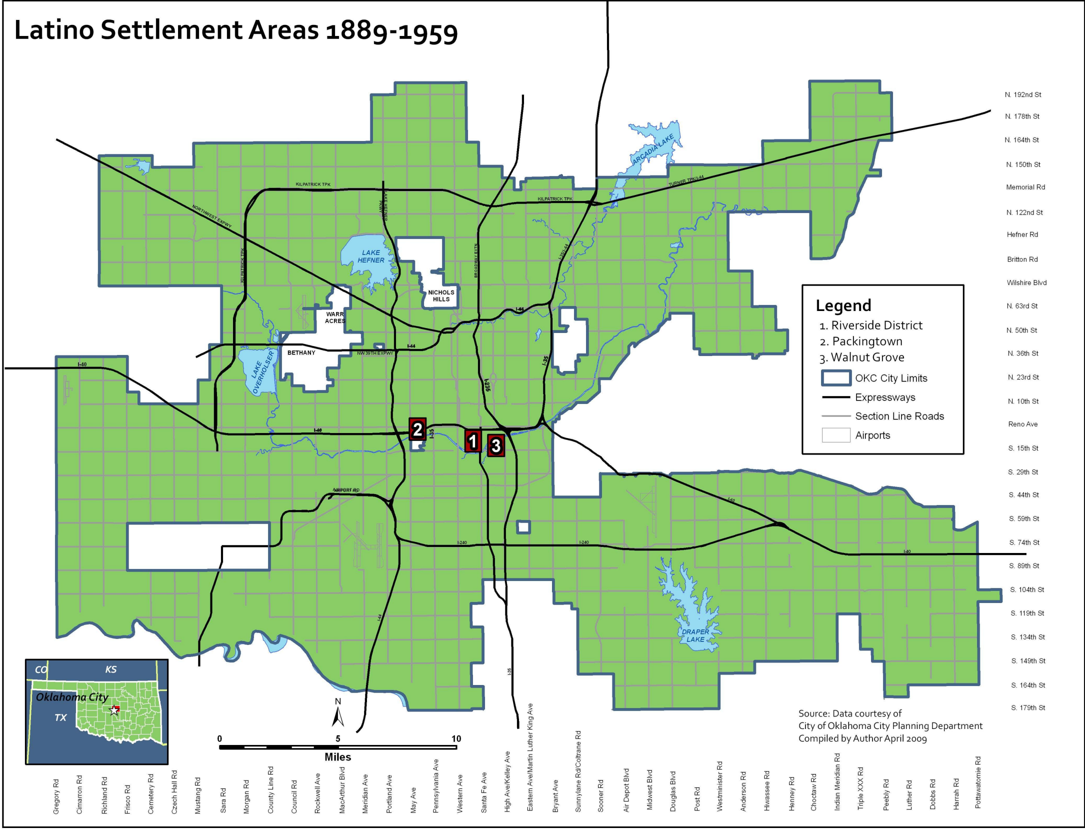

Figure 1. Initially, Latinos who migrated to Oklahoma City settled in three locations: the Riverside District, Packingtown, and Walnut Grove.

Figure 2. During the Great Depression (1929-39), Oklahoma City officials built community camps for destitute civilians to live in; some of those needy residents were Hispanic. [Photo courtesy of the Oklahoma City Metropolitan Library System, Oklahoma City Images Collection, circa 1932].

Figure 3. Cheap shotgun-style homes like this one are common in the Riverside District (Widener June 2009).

Latino Settlement Areas 1960-2010

Legend
1. Riverside District
2. Packingtown
3. Walnut Grove
4. Southwest OKC
5. Capitol Hill/South OKC
6. Northwest OKC
Oklahoma City Limits
Expressways
Section Line Roads
Airports

Source: Data courtesy of
City of Oklahoma City Planning Department
Compiled by Author March 2010

Figure 4. After the Urban Renewal Authority threatened to raze the Riverside District, nervous Hispanics scattered throughout the city creating three new Latinized areas.

Figure 5. Aerial view of Packingtown looking towards the west. [Photo courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society, Ray Jacoby Collection, September 14, 1959].

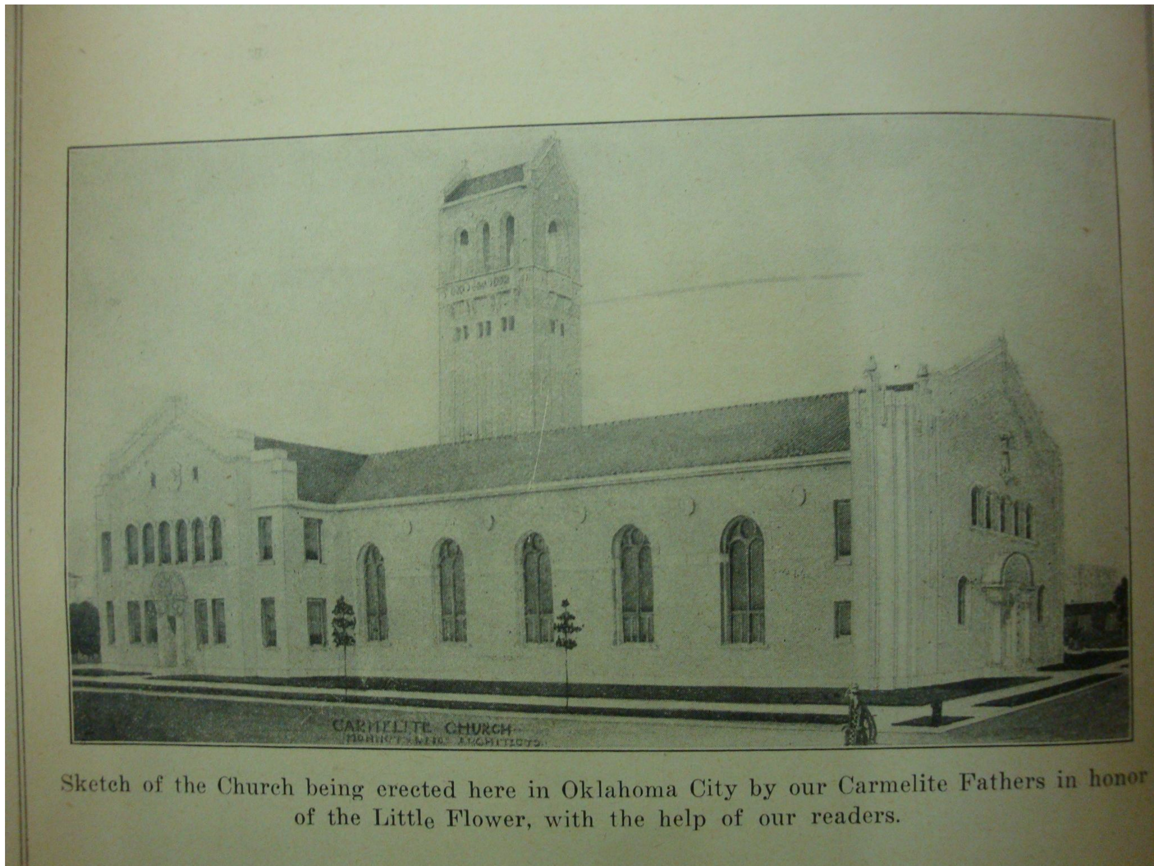

Figure 6. This is a photograph of a rendering of the Little Flower Church that appeared in the *Little Flower Magazine* in June 1926 (Widener October 2009). [*Little Flower Magazine* is available at the Carmelite Archives at Marylake Monastery in East End, Arkansas].

Figure 7. Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church is adjacent to *Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana* in Packingtown. While its congregation never grew to the same size as that of the Baptist church in the first half of the 1900s, Our Lady of Guadalupe remains an important artifact of the history of Latinos in Oklahoma City (Widener March 2009). [Top photograph dates back to the early 1930s and is a photography of an image at the Carmelite Archives at Marylake Monastery in East End, Arkansas].

Figure 8. *Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana*, in Packingtown, dates back to the early 1900s. The church still has services; however, its congregation is much smaller than when it was then (Widener March 2009).

Figure 9. Little Flower Church remains a landmark not only for the Latino population but for the skyline of the city of Oklahoma City. Each Weekend there are six Masses—four celebrated in Spanish and two in English—to serve the current parish population of around 3,000 (Widener May 2009).

View of the playground of the Little Flower School.

View of several patients in the Waiting Room of the Clinic.

Figure 10. Little Flower Church officials in the mid 1920s established a school and health clinic that catered to Hispanics in Oklahoma City (Widener October 2009). [These photographs are of images that appeared in the *Church of the Little Flower Dedication* pamphlet March 24, 1927, courtesy of the Carmelite Archives at Marylake Monastery in East End, Arkansas].

Figure 11. View looking east down Commerce Street (Southwest Twenty-Fifth Street) in Capitol Hill. Oil derricks in the Oklahoma City Oilfield can be seen in the background. **[**Photo courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society, Barney Hillerman Collection, date unknown].

Figure 12. The Latino Community Development Agency, located in the Riverside Neighborhood, provides Hispanic residents with education, healthcare, and other means of support. The center also has an early head start program that caters to children with impoverished parents of any race (Widener May 2009).

Figure 13. Greater Oklahoma Hispanic Chamber of Commerce located in south Oklahoma City (Widener February 2009).

Figure 14. Some Buy for Less grocery store owners changed their stores' names to target the Hispanic community in the city (Widener March 2009).

Figure 15. Latino murals are common along many south Oklahoma City streets. This mural appears to be a bridge between two cultures—American (Bud Light) and Mexican (Corona) (Widener March 2009).

Figure 16. Tacoville, according to local residents, has been open in southwest Oklahoma City since the late 1960s (Widener March 2009).

Figure 17. Once lined with middle class department stores and theatres, this street in Capitol Hill is an example of a Latinized Main Street. Several Hispanic owned and influenced stores and restaurants line this avenue (Widener September 2008).

Figure 18. *La Herradura*, located in Packingtown, is one of the largest *panaderías* in the Oklahoma City metro (Widener March 2009).

Figure 19. An old strip mall in southwest Oklahoma City is home to a few Hispanic *discotecas* (Widener March 2009).

Figure 20. A mural in *Café do Brasil* depicting the "Christ the Redeemer" statue in Rio de Janeiro (Widener April 2009).

Figure 21. *Tamalería* located in southwest Oklahoma City (Widener March 2009).

Figure 22. Since the 1990s, many churches in the southern area of Oklahoma City have Latinized. This church's exterior is painted pink (Widener March 2009).

Figure 23. Chicano Lowrider culture is becoming more popular in Oklahoma City. This gentleman was preparing his car for a Lowrider contest at a local park (Widener March 2009).

[1] Michael Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 25-26; Michael Smith, *The Mexican American Experience in Oklahoma* (Stillwater, OK: Crossroads Oklahoma Project, 1981), 11; *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "Mexicans," (by Michael Smith), http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/M/ME024.html (last accessed January 24, 2009); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States 1910, vol. 3*, "Table 2," 480; U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Characteristics of the Population: Oklahoma," *Census of Population 1950, vol. II, part 36*, "Table 4," 36-8. For Oklahoma City's overall population totals from 1910 to 1940, the 1950 census will be cited.

[2] Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma*, 25, 27; Smith, *The Mexican American Experience in Oklahoma*, 11-12; *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "Mexicans," (by Michael Smith), http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/M/ME024.html (last accessed January 24, 2009); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, vol. III, Composition and Characteristics of the Population by States*, "Table 6," 815; U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Characteristics of the Population: Oklahoma," *Census of Population 1950, vol. II, part 36*, "Table 4," 36-8.

[3] Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma*, 30.

[4] Smith, *The Mexican American Experience in Oklahoma*, 11-12; *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "Immigration," (by Donald N. Brown), http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/I/IM001.html (last accessed January 24, 2009); *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "Mexicans," (by Michael Smith), http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/M/ME024.html (last accessed January 24, 2009).

[5] Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma*, 30; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States 1930 Population, vol. III, part 2: Montana-Wyoming*, "Table 17," 573; U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Characteristics of the Population: Oklahoma," *Census of Population 1950, vol. II, part 36*, "Table 4," 36-8.

[6] Larry "Buddy" Johnson (librarian, Ronald J. Norick Downtown Library), in discussion with the author, February 4, 2009.

[7] Larry "Buddy" Johnson (librarian, Ronald J. Norick Downtown Library), in discussion with the author, February 4, 2009.

[8] Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma*, 30.

[9] Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma*, 30; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States 1940, vol. II, part 5: New York-Oregon*, "Table A49," 948; U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Characteristics of the Population: Oklahoma," *Census of Population 1950, vol. II, part 36*, "Table 4," 36-8. The 1940 number is the total for residents from Mexico (317), Cuba and other West Indies (15), and Central and South America (10).

[10] Douglas S. Massey and Kathleen M. Schnabel, "Recent Trends in Hispanic Immigration to the United States," *International Migration Review* 17, no. 2 (1983): 212; *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "Hispanics," (by Michael Smith), http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/H/HI014.html (last accessed January 24, 2009).

[11] Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma*, 11, 17; Smith, *The Mexican American Experience in Oklahoma*, 1; *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "Mexicans," (by Michael Smith), http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/M/ME024.html (last accessed January 24, 2009).

[12] Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma*, 17; *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "Mexicans," (by Michael Smith), http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/M/ME024.html (last accessed January 24, 2009).

[13] Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma*, 25-26; Smith, *The Mexican American Experience in Oklahoma*, 11; Larry "Buddy" Johnson (librarian, Ronald J. Norick Downtown Library), in discussion with the author, February 4, 2009; Mario Delgado (teacher) and Sandra Vallejo-Delgado (realtor), in discussion with the author, February 7, 2009; Steve Hoffman, "Mexican Community Began in Riverside," *The Oklahoma Journal*, March 1, 1975, 1. Today this portion of the North Canadian River is known as the Oklahoma River. It is located just south of the Oklahoma City central business district.

[14] Tom McCarthy, "A Look at City's Mexican-Americans," *The Oklahoman*, April 6, 1975, 190.

[15] Steve Hoffman, "Mexican Community Began in Riverside," *The Oklahoma Journal*, March 1, 1975, 1.

[16] Larry "Buddy" Johnson (librarian, Ronald J. Norick Downtown Library), in discussion with the author, February 4, 2009; David Castillo (executive director, The Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce), in discussion with the author, February 17, 2009; Mario Delgado (teacher) and Sandra Vallejo-Delgado (realtor), in discussion with the author, February 7, 2009; Patricia Fennell (executive director, Latino Community Development Agency), in discussion with the author, February 13, 2009; Teresa Rendon (attorney), in discussion with the author, March 3, 2009.

[17] Steve Hoffman, "Mexican Community Began in Riverside," *The Oklahoma Journal*, March 1, 1975, 1.

[18] Sigrid Abbott, "Aliens 'Walk in Shadows,'" *The Oklahoman*, April 6, 1975, 181.

[19] David Castillo (executive director, The Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce), in discussion with the author, February 17, 2009.

[20] Steve Hoffman, "Mexican Community Began in Riverside," *The Oklahoma Journal*, March 1, 1975, 1.

[21] Steve Hoffman, "Mexican Community Began in Riverside," *The Oklahoma Journal*, March 1, 1975, 1.

[22] Sales within Riverside Addition, http://www.oklahomacounty.org/assessor/Searches/SubdivSearchSalesDate.asp?SUBNO=09063 (last accessed April 3, 2009).

[23] David Castillo (executive director, The Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce), in discussion with the author, February 17, 2009; Mario Delgado (teacher) and Sandra Vallejo-Delgado (realtor), in discussion with the author, February 7, 2009; Steve Hoffman, "Mexican Community Began in Riverside," *The Oklahoma Journal*, March 1, 1975, 1; Teresa Rendon (attorney), in discussion with the author, March 3, 2009.

[24] David Castillo (executive director, The Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce), in discussion with the author, February 17, 2009; Mario Delgado (teacher) and Sandra Vallejo-Delgado (realtor), in discussion with the author, February 7, 2009; Steve Hoffman, "Mexican

Community Began in Riverside," *The Oklahoma Journal*, March 1, 1975, 1; Teresa Rendon (attorney), in discussion with the author, March 3, 2009.

[25] Steve Hoffman, "Mexican Community Began in Riverside," *The Oklahoma Journal*, March 1, 1975, 1; Tom McCarthy, "A Look at City's Mexican-Americans," *The Oklahoman*, April 6, 1975, 190.

[26] David Castillo (executive director, The Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce), in discussion with the author, February 17, 2009; Steve Hoffman, "Mexican Community Began in Riverside," *The Oklahoma Journal*, March 1, 1975, 1; Tom McCarthy, "A Look at City's Mexican-Americans," *The Oklahoman*, April 6, 1975, 190.

[27] Steve Hoffman, "Mexican Community Began in Riverside," *The Oklahoma Journal*, March 1, 1975, 1.

[28] Brian Brus, "Stockyards Beef Up Security," *The Journal Record*, February 20, 2009, www.journalrecord.com (last accessed February 20, 2009).

[29] John Greiner, "*Que Problemas*? Needs of Latins in City Clouded," *The Oklahoman*, September 3, 1967, 15; Charles Robert Goins and Danney Goble, *Historical Atlas of Oklahoma*, 4th ed. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 119, 191.

[30] John Greiner, "*Que Problemas*? Needs of Latins in City Clouded," *The Oklahoman*, September 3, 1967, 15.

[31] John Martinez, interview by Rodger Harris, April 16, 2008, Oral History Collection, Research Center, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.

[32] Rodger Harris (folk life director and oral historian, Oklahoma Historical Society), in discussion with the author, February 18, 2009; David Castillo (executive director, The Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce), in discussion with the author, February 17, 2009; John Martinez, interview by Rodger Harris, April 16, 2008, Oral History Collection, Research Center, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK; Sam Stalcup, e-mail message to Bob Waldrop, July 15, 2007, http://shire.symonds.net/pipermail/ok-sus/2007-July/003668.html (last accessed April 3, 2009).

[33] Michael Smith, "Beyond the Borderlands: Mexican Labor in the Central Plains, 1900-1930," *Great Plains Quarterly* 1 (Fall 1981): 240; Rodger Harris (folk life director and oral historian, Oklahoma Historical Society), in discussion with the author, February 18, 2009; David Castillo (executive director, The Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce), in discussion with the author, February 17, 2009; Katherine Hatch, "Life Is a Fiesta," *Orbit Magazine* (*The Oklahoman*), June 27, 1971, 4.

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Chapter 4
The Latinization of
"America's Most Beautiful City:" Tulsa

Introduction

The northeastern Oklahoma city of Tulsa enjoys a unique and colorful history. Incorporated in 1898, the state's second-most-populated city is well known for its ties to the Creek Nation, its status as the world's former oil capital, its Race Riot of 1921, its ranking as "America's most beautiful city," and its Spartan School of Aeronautics.[1] Tulsa also has a culturally rich geography and history that includes Latin American populations from south of the Rio Grande and from the Caribbean. The 1900 census counted 134 Latino residents of Mexican ancestry in the combined Oklahoma and Indian Territories.[2] A century later, the census showed that Tulsa County alone had 33,616 Latinos, with 28,111 of them, about sixteen percent of the state's total Latino population of 179,304, living in the city of Tulsa.[3] Tulsa area Latinos come from all nineteen Spanish-speaking Latin American republics and the U.S. Commonwealth Puerto Rico (Figure 1).[4]

The largest influx of Latinos to Tulsa has come since the 1970s when the city's overall population began to swell and as suburban sprawl began to accelerate. Several areas that were once predominantly made up of Anglo Americans, mainly in east Tulsa and in the vicinity just north of the University of Tulsa known as the Kendall-Whittier District, are today Latino *barrios* or *colonias* (Figure 2). This culture group has modified Tulsa's urban landscape, making these once Anglo spaces Latino places. Latinos are finding their niche in American culture, creating cultural landscapes, and in the process establishing their own traditions in Tulsa. The combination of their determination to stay

in Tulsa and of the contributions made by Latin American leaders who have organized assistance for their fellow Latinos have facilitated the process of Latinization.

Latinos in Tulsa

In the early 1830s, Tulsa, originally called Tallasi (a Creek term meaning old town), began as a settlement area of the Lochapoka, Lower Creek, from Georgia and Alabama.[5] After establishing boundaries with the Cherokee to the east, the Creek began raising cattle.[6] By 1879, ranches covered a major portion of what is now Tulsa, giving it a reputation as a cow town that was in the "middle of some of the best cow country on earth."[7] In 1882, the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad (Frisco) laid its tracks through the area, transporting many heads of cattle from the nearby pastures and serving as a catalyst for the city's growth and for the development of the central business district that flanked the north and south sides of the rail line.[8] By 1886, Frisco tracks spanned the Arkansas River and united Tulsa with Sapulpa and Red Fork; by 1899, a line connected Sapulpa to Oklahoma City.[9] In 1901, two men struck oil in Red Fork and overnight Tulsa went from a "sleepy little town" to one fully roused by oil and oil exploration (Figure 3).[10] As a result, the next decade witnessed the establishment of several nearby oil fields, including Glenn Pool, Cushing, and Boston (near Cleveland, Oklahoma), and the building of rail connections to these locations for hauling workers and oil field equipment and for transporting crude.[11] According to Robert Gregory, oil brought to Tulsa "gamblers, promoters, speculators, lawyers, hucksters, even fortune tellers."[12] Gregory, however, failed to document the immigrants attracted to the arduous jobs associated with this new industry.

The exact numbers of Latinos in Tulsa, Oklahoma, from 1900 to 1980 remain elusive, but some decennial censuses did provide information regarding Mexicans during that period.[13] After the 1980 census, the U.S. Census Bureau began using the specific term "Hispanic" to better encompass the ethnicity of that rapidly increasing section of the population.[14] Before statehood, the census recorded sixty-four official Latino residents in Indian Territory, all of whom were of Mexican descent.[15] By 1910, the state's Latino population jumped to 2,700 Mexican, Cuban, Central American, and South American-born citizens; but the exact number for the city of Tulsa, with its overall population of 18,182, is unknown.[16] In 1920, the state's Latino population totaled 6,779, tripling over ten years, with Tulsa having 168 (Mexican only) of Tulsa County's 346 Hispanics; Bartlesville, a city north of Tulsa, recorded over 100 of Washington County's 270 Latinos.[17] The increase in the Latino population in Tulsa reflects the growth that the city had with the burgeoning oil industry. The city's overall population nearly quadrupled from the 1910 census to total 72,075.[18]

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, most Latinos living in the Tulsa metropolitan area worked for section gangs along the various rail lines and city streetcar lines; some migrants worked in the Tulsa coal mines located near present day Fifteenth Street and Yale Avenue during the first three decades of the twentieth century.[19] Growth continued because of the abundance of jobs until the 1930s. However, when the Great Depression (1929-39) and the Dust Bowl of the 1930s reached Oklahoma, Latinos, just like many of the Anglos in the state, searched for refuge elsewhere.[20] The 1930 decennial census showed only a small increase, an early sign of the depression. 7,345 Latinos lived in the state and Tulsa County recorded 486 Latinos with 294 of them in Tulsa.[21]

During the Great Depression, some Latinos returned to Mexico because state and federal officials stressed that places employing these residents needed to "reduce drastically…or eliminate them" and some moved to *colonias* in Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York, San Antonio, or elsewhere.[22] The 1940 decennial census data confirmed that the state's Latino population had sharply decreased—to 1,540.[23] When Latino migration increased in the U.S in the late 1950s and continued with a notable acceleration in the 1970s, a parallel pattern of growth occurred in Oklahoma and in Tulsa.[24]

Growth stepped up again in the 1980s and 1990s due to federal immigration reforms. In 1980, 4,322 Hispanics lived in the city of Tulsa, which had an overall populace of 360,919.[25] In 1990, the Latino population more than doubled to total 9,564; and, in 2000, that figure swelled to 28,111, while Tulsa's overall numbers rose only slightly—to 367,302 in 1990 and to 393,049 in 2000.[26] This "unprecedented" growth in Hispanic residents was because of the high numbers of entry-level jobs, of available and affordable houses, and of Hispanic relatives and friends already in the area.[27] Many of the newcomers migrated from Texas, California, and Mexico.[28] In April 1999, *Tulsa World* writers called Tulsa's Latino community a "collage of cultures and histories:" grandsons and granddaughters of pioneer Mexican railroad workers, Cubans from the 1980s wave of migration, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans from the northeastern U.S., and South Americans.[29] The primary reason for the increasing population remained the abundance of jobs in Oklahoma.

Historical Latinization of Tulsa

Latinos were major contributors to the work necessary for the industrialization and settlement of the U.S. and work drew Latinos to Tulsa also. In *The Mexicans in Oklahoma*, Michael Smith declared that the spate of new arrivals after the Mexican Revolution in the early 1900s enabled railroad companies to hire Mexican workers to help lay new lines and assist with the upkeep of existing lines.[30] Rail companies enticed migrants by building houses for their employees.[31] Tulsa was in need of help with the construction of the connection lines, but living conditions were worse there than in other areas such as Oklahoma City.[32] Smith noted that, although the rail companies in the state allegedly remunerated their employees better than those in neighboring states, the first Mexicans to work for the Frisco in Tulsa resided in "tents pitched along the right of way," dilapidated box cars, or other impermanent spaces; oftentimes "the firemen on the locomotives…cast them their quota of coal as the train passed" their unplumbed, unfurnished, and non-electrical living quarters.[33] Railroad officials promoted living near the tracks in small *barrios* or settling in nearby towns.[34]

As a child in the early 1920s, Cecil Gomez, whose father worked full time for the Frisco, lived in an area known as the "Y" in West Tulsa near the Arkansas River and the Twenty-First Street bridge, about one mile from Red Fork and about five miles from Sapulpa.[35] According to Gomez, the *barrio*, or the Y, consisted of about five acres "smack dab in the middle of the Frisco train yards" and was a "colony of Mexican migrant railroad workers all crammed together in a sunken hollow with restricted access to the town."[36] The area was dangerous; in order to leave the Y, residents had to cross the Twenty-First Street bridge—commonly known to the Mexican community as "*Cruzero*

del Diablo" or "The Devil's Crossing"—where a sentry had to direct drivers and walkers and watch for others who tried to jump onto the passing trains.[37] Gomez depicted the area as a "slummy little barrio comprised of poor humble Mexican families" in "squalid-like surroundings," even though it "sharply resembled many of the places where they'd [Gomez's parents] previously lived—either in Mexico or America."[38] Gomez remembered "at least 45 people living in eleven one-and-two-room ramshackle shacks all bunched up together."[39] Essentially segregated, residents inexorably heard the "rumbling of switch engines, chugging, puffing, bumping and humping" and "the lonesome freight train whistles that constantly warned of their presence."[40] In October 1948, after Gomez returned from serving in the U.S. Navy in World War II (1939-45), the Frisco evicted everyone from the Y in order to expand its operations.[41] Upon his return, Gomez and his wife settled in a home along the Sand Springs Trolley line.[42] In order to assist his parents and younger brothers and sisters after their eviction from the Y, he built them a home at 2427 South Olympia Avenue in West Tulsa for $5,093.[43] Certainly, the "social and cultural" changes many Latinos had to make to survive were onerous.[44]

The church was an important resource for Tulsa Latinos needing to make life changes, just as it was for Oklahoma City's Latinos. A Catholic church that Latinos frequented in their early years in Tulsa was Saint Catherine's. Built in 1914, Saint Catherine's Catholic Church was the first place of worship to reach out to the growing Mexican community that lived near the West Tulsa refinery and the rail yards.[45] In addition, Saint Catherine's also had a kindergarten through eighth grade school where a few of the laborers' children, including Cecil Gomez, attended.[46]

Gomez recalled that, during his "early childhood days," Holy Family Cathedral in downtown Tulsa, the "mother church," tried to meet the needs of the Mexican families by bringing in a Spanish-speaking priest and giving the Latinos their own place to worship at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church (Figure 4).[47] According to Tulsa Diocese Historian James D. White, the original Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church, was a plain wooden chapel, established in Tulsa in 1928 for the Mexican coal miners.[48] Gomez described the facility as "a small country church located away from mainstream downtown Tulsa…near the Tulsa coal mines."[49] This area was, according to Gomez, quite different from the Y where his family lived. He called it a "thriving community of Mexican nationals" because of the nearby employment opportunities in factories and coal mines.[50]

Plans for another church near this area—in the Kendall-Whittier neighborhood—began in 1926.[51] Although the area was mostly Anglo at the time, the church became more important to Latinos later on. Indeed, the church, with its "Spanish-style bell tower," served as a reminder of home for many Latinos in the area then.[52] Although not fully completed until 1949 because of World War II, St. Francis Xavier began offering services in its basement in 1937 (Figure 5).[53] In 1937, Our Lady of Guadalupe closed because of declining attendance related to the shutdown of the coal mines.[54] In 1940, the pastor of St. Francis had the old chapel moved to a pasture at 1329 North Trenton Avenue and reopened it as a mission.[55] In the 1960s, construction on a new brick building began; the dedication celebration of the new chapel of Our Lady of Guadalupe occurred in May 1963 (Figure 6).[56] In the 1970s, because of increased movement to suburban areas, the number of Anglo-Americans in the congregation decreased at St. Francis; and,

by the 1980s, the "Hispanic Catholics" began demanding mass there in their own language.[57] The parish of St. Francis was in financial trouble; long time St. Francis parishioner Imogene Kozak told a *Tulsa World* reporter in 1999, "Construction of Interstate 244 in the early 1970s was the beginning of the St. Francis decline. The Crosstown Expressway eliminated numerous Anglo homes just north of the parish."[58]

In 1991, the primarily Anglo and Black parish of St. Francis Xavier Church united with the mostly Spanish parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church; currently the church is known as St. Francis Xavier with a shrine to Our Lady of Guadalupe.[59] At first, the new church was supported by about 200 to 250 Anglo members and 400 or more Latino members.[60] Although some Anglos did abandon the church after the merger, many stayed, according to a journalist for the *Tulsa World,* because "they have said too many prayers, watched too many baptisms and attended too many weddings just to walk away."[61] Initially, the two groups worshipped separately—in the same building but at different times.[62] At first, they had an integrated parish council but it did not work effectively.[63] They set up two separate parish councils and "a few signs of acceptance and cooperation began to bud."[64] When Latinos took charge of the annual Hispanic carnival and proceeds rose from the usual $3,000 to $12,000, Anglo parishioner Frank Friedl called it a "godsend" because the parish had struggled for so long to make ends meet.[65]

By 1999, the Kendall-Whittier area of Tulsa was thirty-five percent Hispanic; according to the parish priest that year, "about 150 white and black families and 2,000 Hispanic families" attended the church.[66] Priests conducted three Spanish Masses and one English-language Mass on weekends.[67] Signs of acceptance on the part of the Anglos continued and in March 1999 the two groups actually worshipped together for the first

time at St. Francis at a joint service with Grace Lutheran Church.[68] Furthermore, several Anglo members decided they wanted to learn Spanish.[69] Today, the church is one of the top ten churches in Tulsa in terms of attendance and each Sunday the priests celebrate seven masses in Spanish and only one mass in English.[70]

Churches were an important gathering place and certainly made notable differences in the lives of many Latinos. Education, after employment, is likely the second most important step for Latinos on the pathway to integration into life in the U.S. Many Latinos that resided in Oklahoma in the years of pre-statehood and early statehood could not speak English; indeed, most were even illiterate in Spanish.[71] Culturally, they had seen no benefits of education in their own countries and the majority of Latino migrants brought that mentality with them to Oklahoma.[72] Often Latinos sent their young children to work alongside adults rather than to school.[73] The parents of children that did receive an education and could speak English often relied on those children to translate in important situations. For instance, in *A Mexican Twilight* Cecil Gomez recounts that, even at the age of eleven, he was "becoming a young interpreter" and that "all this time in America, neither my parents nor the 'Y' families had learned to speak English beyond a smattering of comprehensibility."[74] Gomez went on to say non-English speakers needed his help because "they couldn't read the street signs or the destination signs of the buses and trolley cars."[75]

Tulsa Public Schools' English-immersion program began when children of the Vietnamese came to the U.S. in the 1970s.[76] Brazilian Ludmila Davison recalled that, when she first visited Tulsa in 1982, Tulsa school systems were ill-prepared to teach non-English speakers.[77] When Margarita Trevino moved from Chihuahua, Mexico, to Tulsa in

the 1980s, she attended Nathan Hale High School and was the only one in the English-as-a-Second-Language class. Margarita stated that she found that the biggest barrier was language; when she began applying for college, she avowed that the counselor at the high school actually told her to go to Tulsa Community College instead of the University of Tulsa (TU) because of her language skills. Margarita went to TU, received her degree, and met her husband Francisco Trevino. Like his wife, Francisco had also struggled with language; he moved to Tulsa in 1978 and did not know any English. He learned English by "listening to the Beatles, Kiss, and the Rolling Stones." Francisco stated that he knew only a few other Mexicans in town and that most of his friends were Black, Indian, or Anglo. When he was twenty years old, he moved back to Mexico for six months; when he returned to Tulsa, he began mingling with the Hispanic community and met Margarita when he was volunteering at a Spanish immersion class.[78] Trevino continues to stress the importance of learning English. He argues the important of togetherness and encourages parents to make sure their children are "fully bilingual," emphasizing that his family members speak Spanish when they are at home but use English when they are away from home.[79]

Together, the Trevinos became more active in the Tulsa Latino community and began attending Our Lady of Guadalupe Church regularly. Margarita participated in a dance group—National Association of Folkloric Dance—from 1994 to 2000 and Francisco joined the Tulsa Mariachi band. Both the dance group and the band helped spread Hispanic culture through the city. Francisco also made connections during his days with the band. One man he met was David Zapata, owner of Zapata Media Group, which aired a two-hours-long Spanish radio show on 1430 AM on Sundays and published

the newspaper *Hispano de Tulsa*. In 1995, Zapata had to leave his business and offered Francisco the radio program or the newspaper. Francisco decided to keep the newspaper; behind Margarita's back, he bought "a box of stuff" that contained everything he needed to keep the newspaper going. For five years, Margarita had nothing to do with the newspaper—until Francisco began running the Clear Channel radio station, the first twenty-four-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week Spanish broadcasting station. Today, the Trevinos' newspaper is still successful, is published in both Spanish and English, and has a webpage that contains listings for Spanish-owned businesses or establishments that cater to the Latino population.[80]

While the language barrier was perhaps the biggest difficulty for immigrants in the twentieth-century, Tulsa Hispanics, like Oklahoma City Hispanics, relied on various local support organizations to help ease social and cultural tensions. Some of these early groups in Tulsa were the *Comisión Honorífica* (Honorary Commission), the *Cruz Azul* (Blue Cross), and the *Sociedad Benéfica Nacional* (National Benefit Society).[81] New groups, however, were on the horizon. The growth in the numbers of Latinos after World War II, specifically in the 1960s and 1970s, led Tulsa city officials to seek other resources.

In 1975, Reverend Victor Orta, a *Tejano* (Texan of Mexican ancestry), came to Tulsa to start a Baptist church. Orta, not really wanting to move away from Texas, felt in his heart that Latinos in Tulsa deserved an option other than Catholicism. Even though his first impression was that "Tulsa was not open to foreign-looking people," he instantly fell in love with "America's most beautiful city" and stayed to make his home there. In addition to starting a church, in 1979 he initiated the Hispanic Affairs Commission to

help the Latino population in Tulsa. One of Orta's first projects was to seek fair treatment for Latinos working at a farm in Bixby, located south and east of Tulsa, where "eight to nine people lived in a nine by ten foot room with no water system." The most important goal of the organization was to portray a correct image of and create an awareness of Latinos in Tulsa. In addition, they sought to watch for and thwart barriers to employment, housing, and health services and unfair treatment from law enforcement. The majority of Tulsans in the 1970s, according to Orta, had the image of a Latino as a "*Tejano* leaning on a cactus with a *sombrero* over his head and a bottle of *tequila* in his hand." To combat this image, leaders like Orta encouraged the first Latino celebration in downtown Tulsa in 1979. The gala had the support of city officials—James Inhofe, city mayor at the time (1978-1984), even spoke at the event—but there were no funds to support the gala. As a result, the community came together and raised enough money to bring in a dance group from Guadalajara and a *mariachi* band. With "*estamos aquí y vamos a vivir"*—"we are here and we are going to live"—as the aphorism of the event, Tulsa's Latino population made themselves known in the community. As a result, the Hispanic Affairs Commission began promoting Latino culture, particularly in schools.[82]

Yolanda Verlarde-Charney, a second generation Mexican-American, moved to Owasso (a suburb fifteen miles northeast of Tulsa) over fifty years ago when only 600 people lived in the town.[83] She said that when she arrived the main cultural connection for the Mexican community was the *El Rancho Grande* restaurant.[84] After raising her family, Verlarde-Charney became the Director of Community Relations for the Jewish Federation in Tulsa in 1975.[85] She stated she soon began meeting other people who worried about the needs of the rising Hispanic population and in 1985 Aurora Ramírez

Helton talked Verlarde-Charney into joining the Greater Tulsa Hispanic Affairs Commission.[86] In 1990, Verlarde-Charney, along with Dr. Julio Cuadra, Dr. Luis Reinoso, and Margarita Bloese, left the Greater Tulsa Hispanic Affairs Commission and created the Hispanic American Foundation.[87] This organization raises funds for cultural programs and scholarships for Latino students to attend college.[88] During the late 1990s, Verlarde-Charney aided Reinoso and Ben Windham in creating a resource center in the Martin Regional Library in east Tulsa that would promote and assist lifelong learning for Hispanics in Tulsa.[89] They received a three-year grant and were able to create a "favorable environment for the Latino and Spanish-speaking community" by providing books, pamphlets, literacy classes, and job and residency courses in Spanish.[90]

Another one of the early ways Tulsans became aware of Hispanics in their city was through professional baseball. By the 1960s, during what Wayne McCombs in *Baseball in Tulsa* terms "The Golden Decade," baseball players with Latino surnames, like Ramon Hernandez and Pedro Gonzalez, began appearing in the lineup of the Triple-A Tulsa Oilers (presently known as the Tulsa Drillers).[91] In the early 1970s, first baseman and power slugger Keith Hernandez played for the Drillers.[92] Hernandez went on to play for the St. Louis Cardinals and received the National League Co-Most Valuable Player award in 1979 (although he might be better known for his appearance on the television sitcom *Seinfeld*).[93] In 1982, the roster contained more players with Hispanic surnames, such as Cha Cho Gonzalez, Carmelo Aguayo, and Oscar Meija.[94] Later on, players included local favorites Sammy Sosa, who went on to play for the Chicago Cubs, and Juan Gonzalez, the 1996 and 1998 American League Most Valuable Player.[95] In 1991, ten-time Gold Glove recipient and ten-time American League All-Star Ivan Rodriguez

played for the Drillers before going into the major league.[96] During the late 1990s, future major league players Fernando Tatis, Ruben Mateo, and Carlos Pena kept the Latino tradition alive on the Tulsa Drillers roster.[97] These Hispanic baseball players certainly raised awareness that Latinos lived and worked in Tulsa.

Latinization of Tulsa's Cultural Landscape

During the intense population growth of the 1990s, Pastor Victor Orta, then the director of Parkview Baptist Multi-Ethnic Center, helped set up twenty-four Hispanic ministries in northeastern Oklahoma.[98] In addition, Tulsa's American Red Cross chapter started up a Spanish-speaking response team, the local YWCA began offering English classes and first-aid training, and the local health department hired interpreters.[99] Churches continued to be a primary source for social services, such as providing information on laws and jobs, English lessons, and medical assistance. For example, the Catholic Charities Hispanic Helping Center served 5,000 Hispanic families in 1998.[100] These aid organizations, their leaders, and the increasing Latino population fueled the process of Latinization on Tulsa's landscape.

The most noticeable effects were the establishment of many Latino restaurants. Tulsa's first successful Latino-run restaurant opened in 1950 on Eleventh Street near Our Lady of Guadalupe Church.[101] At the age of fourteen, Guadalupe Almendares married Francisco Rodrigues, a Frisco Railroad worker, in Tulsa.[102] Guadalupe, who became known as Ruby Rodrigues, had left school after the second grade; but, in 1950, she opened the restaurant *El Rancho Grande* and operated it for thirty-five years (Figure 7).[103] Francisco even went to work in the restaurant after his health forced him to retire from the railroad.[104] Christine Rodrigues, Ruby's granddaughter, wrote, "The Mexicans

living here in the 1920s faced hard times because of their nationality. Ruby encountered many hardships living in Tulsa—especially during the war, the depression and the race riot—but she overcame them all."[105] She added that Ruby stayed involved in three churches—Holy Family, St. Francis, Xavier, and Our Lady of Guadalupe.[106] *El Rancho Grande* remains a Tulsa favorite.

Another Latino-owned restaurant *Casa Monterrey* opened in the late 1960s on East Forty-First and South Peoria. The owner's parents Mike and Fermina Puente had "paid a fee of 25 cents" to cross into the U.S in the 1920s.[107] They made their way to a Tulsa coal mining camp near the fairgrounds called the Hickory Coal Mine and lived in a tent until they were able to find a house.[108] Linda Cervantes, granddaughter of Mike Puente, wrote that in the early 1920s he "made a little white cart and used it to sell tamales made from original recipes that had been handed down to him from his family."[109] She said that her grandparents would at times "stay up all night making tamales by hand" and that her grandfather would then go "anywhere he could sell tamales."[110] After a while, they also began to sell pies, pralines, "homemade ice wafers," and ice cream sandwiches.[111] They later moved to the Paul Adamson Mining Camp, "located by the railroad tracks near East Fifteenth Street and South Yale Avenue," and continued to go "all over town" to sell their food.[112] She stated that the Puentes were the "first ones to sell Mexican food in Tulsa" and that they planted a dream of owning a restaurant "deep into the hearts of their daughters."[113]

Their daughter Sarah met her future husband Cate Cervantes at the Paul Adamson Mining Camp.[114] Her sister Lillie opened a small restaurant in Tulsa in the 1940s but she later moved away.[115] Sarah, after raising her family, decided to open a restaurant in

Tulsa; she happened upon an ideal location when she was out to lunch with a friend one day.[116] Despite her husband's misgivings, in March 1968, Sarah Cervantes opened *Casa Monterrey* in a building at East Forty-First Street and South Peoria Avenue.[117] According to Linda Cervantes, "It had two small rooms and an old fashioned stove and refrigerator like the ones used at home."[118] She said that, although her mother "knew nothing about how to run a restaurant," she was "determined to make her restaurant a success."[119] After the old stove blew up one day, "she closed the restaurant for three days, gave all the food away, brought in family and friends to help, and started all over from top to bottom."[120]

The restaurant soon became known for "serving the best Mexican food available" in Tulsa; they also offered "old time Mexican entertainment."[121] One well-known feature, added in 1978, was a wall mural of Monterrey painted by Robin Polhamus that contained pictures of some of their customers and workers.[122] Ms. Cervantes said that "several trips were made to Mexico to get the exact details."[123] Katie Ryan, who lives twenty-five miles west of Tulsa, used to go there often and remembered the "exquisite mural," as well as the "superb Tex-Mex" and traditional Mexican dishes the restaurant served.[124] Sand Springs residents Mark and Vicki Claiborne said that "the restaurant was always jam packed" and that it was Mark's grandmother's favorite place to dine in Tulsa.[125] The restaurant closed in 1987.[126]

Tex-Mex restaurants, or what Tulsan Denny Widener calls "Okie-Mex" because "none of the food is as spicy as traditional Tex-Mex," began appearing on Tulsa's landscape during the 1970s.[127] While non-Hispanics operated these restaurants, they do nonetheless draw attention to Latino culture in Tulsa. In 1971, *Casa Bonita*, part of a chain restaurant founded and run by Oklahoma Citian Bill Waugh, opened in Tulsa

(Figure 8).[128] *Casa Bonita's* renown was its all-you-can-eat deluxe dinners and its entertaining atmosphere.[129] Inside Tulsa's *Casa Bonita* restaurant, a guest could dine in various themed rooms, including the Volcano Room, the Cave Room, the Waterfall Room, the *El Presidente* Room, and the Jail Room, or in other seating areas decorated in Latin American decor.[130] The restaurant also boasted an enormous arcade that entertained both children and adults.[131] The original *Casa Bonita* closed in 2005, reopened in 2006 as *Casa Viva*, and closed again in 2007; in 2008, the original owner reopened the establishment as *Casa Bonita*.[132] Another local favorite is *Ricardos: A Fine Mexican Restaurant*; in 1975, Richard Hunt opened this restaurant at 5629 East Forty-First Street because he wanted "a fine Mexican restaurant for the locals."[133] His success enabled him to expand the size of his restaurant three times over the last thirty-five years.[134] Additionally, the popular chain *El Chico* operates five eateries in the Tulsa area.

In the 1990s, Hispanics continued their tradition of working hard in Tulsa. In 1999, the median income for Tulsa County Latinos was $23,307, with Oklahoma Department of Commerce records showing that twenty-three percent of the Latino families in Tulsa County lived below the poverty level.[135] Many Tulsa Latinos held the same types of jobs their ancestors had when they first came to the U.S.—arduous occupations with low wages; some Latinos, however, had founded companies or learned skills allowing them to make higher salaries.[136] State records indicated that 2,854 Hispanic-owned businesses operated in Oklahoma in 1992, with 1,204 of those involved in landscaping, labor, and food service and the rest in agricultural, retail, wholesale, construction, and manufacturing areas.[137] In 1999, Manhattan Construction's Chief Executive Officer, Francis Rooney, said his company had employed Latinos for twenty

years and that a third of their North American employees were Hispanic; he said they were reliable and hardworking and brought “diversity and strong cultural values to the workplace.”[138] In 1999, *Delta Café* manager Dana Miller said, “Thank God for the Mexican workers. I don’t know what we’d do without them. That’s the truth.”[139] Twenty percent of Flintco Construction’s 800 workers and fifteen percent of North American Galvanizing Company’s employees were Latino in 1999.[140] Furthermore, Tulsa’s business owners increasingly recognized Hispanics as important consumers. In 1999, 9,286 Tulsa County Latino households had pre-tax incomes of $215 million, according to the Tulsa Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce.[141] A Tulsa convenience store owner, who charged 1.5 percent to cash payroll checks, reported he cashed over $1.5 million in paychecks from Spanish-speaking construction workers and manufacturing employees each month.[142]

Tulsa’s Hispanics continue to celebrate their culture and shape the surrounding landscape. As one *Tulsa World* writer summarized it in 1997, “People still seek a sense of uniqueness, of home and history wherever they live. The new patterns of settlement and technology may have changed the nature of place, but they have not eliminated our need for it.”[143] During the “*Macarena*” craze, three Filipino women helped create *Fiesta Latino* “so that Latino people will have a place in Tulsa to dance in the Latin styles.”[144] The *Flamenco*, a dance influenced by 5,000 years of Spanish history, was also popular in the area.[145] In 1996, the Hispanic American Foundation held a fundraiser that made the society page of the *Tulsa World.*[146] In 1997, a Mexican Elvis impersonator named *El Vez* came to town; of his show, he said, “When you come to an *El Vez* show, you walk away proud to be a Mexican. Even when you’re not.”[147]

In 1998, the Hispanic American Foundation of Tulsa published a cookbook called *El Sabor Latino*, or the Latin Flavor.[148] Evelyn Hatfield, vice-president of the organization, said, “You are not just sharing a recipe but you are sharing part of your culture and you are helping people to get to know your culture better.”[149] *La Mas Buena* was a Spanish radio station in Tulsa that benefited from the new interest in all things Latino in the 1990s, broadcasting from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. in the summer and from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. during the rest of the year.[150] General Manager Blas Gaytan said these were the same hours his parents used to work in the fields.[151] Mexican families could stay in touch in the 1990s via the “makeshift shuttle service” run by Noe Rodriguez called the Mexican Bus.[152] The bus usually left on Fridays from a Hispanic club at Forty-First Street and Memorial Drive and delivered keepsakes and riders to locations over 900 miles away in Mexico.[153] For $30-$50, a Latino could ride one-way or send a package to Mexico.[154] According to *Hispano de Tulsa* publisher Francisco Trevino, this was one of the reasons why University of Tulsa shirts and Tulsa Drillers hats were perceptible in various regions of Mexico in the 1990s.[155]

Tulsa’s annual Hispanic Festival, dating to 1979, is now held in conjunction with Hispanic Heritage Month, officially designated by the state as September 15 to October 15 in 1991 (Figure 9).[156] Canceled in 1997 because of the lack of a sponsor, the Trevino family, led by Francisco Trevino, revived the festival the next year in order to “highlight the area’s Latino culture while offering familiarity to the crush of new Hispanics moving to Tulsa County.”[157] According to the *Tulsa World*, the event drew “blond Hispanics, black Hispanics, Jewish Hispanics, and Indian Hispanics. There were even Hispanics who didn’t speak fluent Spanish.”[158] At the time, Tulsa Mayor Susan Savage (1992-2002)

commented that the Hispanic culture is of great value to "the fabric of life in Tulsa."[159] In January 1999, Clear Channel Communications, the country's biggest Spanish-language programming broadcaster, gave its corporate sponsorship to the Tulsa Hispanic Festival and the annual *Cinco de Mayo* celebration, promising to heavily broadcast the events, provide monetary support, and work hard "to give the Anglos more reasons to attend the festival."[160]

In 1999, a *Tulsa World* reporter commented on the decade's Latino growth rate stating, "History's longest, most intense migration of Latin Americans has been washing across the Midwest in silent waves since 1990. A phenomenon previously affecting states bordering Mexico, in Tulsa it has meant that never before have so many Latinos started businesses, attended school, bought homes, and in some cases, sought citizenship."[161] Anglos were slow to notice the change because, according to a writer for the *Tulsa World*, Latinos "keep to themselves, working and trying to make a new home in a strange and sometimes unfriendly land."[162] Three major developments occurred during 1999 that would hasten that notice: a *Tulsa World* series dedicated to Latinos in Tulsa, the inception of the Greater Tulsa Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and the opening of the Hispanic Resource Center. The April 1999 series in the *Tulsa World* documented several aspects of Hispanic life in Tulsa: the ongoing surge of Latino migration, local agencies that assist Latino residents, specific Latino families and businesses, illegal immigrants, and important churches.[163]

The Tulsa Hispanic Chamber was Oklahoma's first, while at the time the state of Texas had twenty-seven.[164] The Chamber's initial goals were to have 300-400 members from the Tulsa area and northeastern Oklahoma by the end of its first year of operation

and to start plans for a permanent facility.[165] According to the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce, in 1999 there were 260 Hispanic-owned businesses that collectively generated $171.6 million in revenue within the Tulsa metropolitan area, an increase of twenty-five percent since 1995.[166] In 2006, the Greater Tulsa Hispanic Chamber of Commerce graduated the second class from its eight-month-long Small Business Academy.[167] The Hispanic Resource Center, located in the Martin East Regional Library, held its grand opening in October with activities including a talk by a representative from the Census Bureau about the importance of the 2000 census, free immunizations, a seminar on buying and selling a home, a bilingual story time conducted by a class of Spanish III students from a local high school, Spanish-language prenatal care classes, and an address about immigration by author Roberto Suro.[168] Librarian Christy Chilton called the center a "bridge between cultures."[169] The center had 1,400 books in Spanish when it opened and hoped to have 8,000 within a year.[170] In 2009, the center had 16,775 Spanish items.[171]

The Tulsa Hispanic Study, published in 2001, provided important information for city leaders about the significant change in the city's demographics. In 1997, when Hispanics numbered 17,664 in the city, members of the Tulsa Hispanic community met with the Community Service Council of Greater Tulsa and requested a study. The study found that educational backgrounds of Hispanics in Tulsa vary greatly; the most recent newcomers, however, have "impoverished backgrounds" and "little formal education." Economically, the Hispanic workforce and Hispanic business owners have made an impact. The Homebuilders Association of Greater Tulsa reported "they would never have been able to build" 3,200 houses in Tulsa in 2000 without a "reliable Hispanic

workforce." Many Hispanic businesses, however, need help "taking advantage of available education and technology resources."[172]

In the area of public awareness and community involvement, the committee noted that in Tulsa Public Schools the number of Hispanic students increased by seventy-three percent from 1997 to 2001.[173] Furthermore, about forty percent of those surveyed had registered to vote, forty-eight percent had drivers' licenses, and seventy-nine percent had cars.[174] In the area of health and social services, the study recommended increasing access to services, implementing prevention programs, ensuring means of transportation for accessing services, utilizing bilingual staff members, and promoting advocacy efforts to reach those who do not access needed services.[175]

As noted in the study, the impact on Tulsa area schools was enormous by the 1990s and early 2000s. Hispanic enrollment in Tulsa Public Schools increased by 175 percent in the 1990s and in 1999 more than 2,700 Hispanic students attended Tulsa area schools.[176] In 1999, Tulsa Public Schools spent $453,000 on 325 Spanish-speaking students and forty-eight students from other countries in their English-immersion program; Tucky Roger, the coordinator of the program, said that Spanish-speaking students usually were functional in English after eighteen months and proficient after five years.[177] Roger said Hispanic families moved in and out of the district so suddenly that school officials had trouble planning curriculum and coordinating personnel.[178] At Kendall-Whittier Elementary School, the "centerpiece of one of Tulsa's Hispanic Communities east of downtown" where thirty-five percent of the students were Hispanic in 1999, some Spanish-speaking students were on a waiting list for classes because of a shortage of bilingual teachers.[179] In January 2009, state Superintendent Sandy Garrett

said that in 2008 twenty percent of Tulsa Public Schools' students were Hispanic.[180] Garrett also reported that the state continued to have a serious shortage of English-as-a-Second-Language teachers.[181] In 2006, the fourth Educare in the country opened in Tulsa and their initial enrollment information indicated that indeed much work remained in this area.[182] Educare aids children who come from "families at or below federal poverty levels" and operates using federal and state funds and private donations.[183] At the time, fifty-eight percent of the 200 children at Educare were Hispanic or Latino with only about six percent of them bilingual.[184]

During the decade of the 1990s, events, organizations, and businesses made Latinization readily and increasingly apparent to Latinos and to non-Latinos in Tulsa; by the early 2000s the changes were dramatic. In January 2010, a journalist for the *Tulsa World* called the growth of Hispanic Catholics over the decade in Tulsa "explosive."[185] Three of the top ten churches in Tulsa in 2000 were Catholic but none of those Catholic parishes was on the list for 2010.[186] The two Catholic churches in Tulsa's top ten in 2010 are the predominantly Hispanic parishes of St. Thomas More in east Tulsa and St. Francis Xavier in midtown Tulsa.[187] By late 1999, Latino *barrios* were visible in these parts of east and midtown Tulsa where few Hispanics had lived previously. Hispanic residents had moved to areas where Mexican restaurants and other culturally distinct businesses had opened.[188]

When Margarita and Francisco Trevino first came to Tulsa, there were no "*mercaritos*" (stores) that catered to the Hispanic population.[189] By the late 1990s, however, that had changed. Restaurants were still the most obvious signs of the changing cultural landscape in east Tulsa, thanks to their colorful signage, but other types of

businesses increased there also. In 2000, a block-large shopping center *Plaza Santa Cecilia*, previously an old bowling alley and strip mall, became an agglomeration of Latino-based businesses (Figure 10). Across the street (to the east), *Supermercados Morelos,* a large Hispanic grocery store, also opened. Painted bright yellow, the grocery store stands out with its banner advertising the *Salidas a Mexico* bus service (Figure 11). Besides their Spanish names, other characteristics of Latinization are also visible. *Plaza Santa Cecilia* has a multitude of stores, including *panaderías*, *carnicerías*, *tortillerías*, and others. Some of the stores have Latino-influenced murals painted on the windows; they also have business advertisements in the windows and schedules of buses that run to various south Texas and Mexican cities (Figure 12). On Admiral Street, a large flea market spans both the north and south sides of the street. Since the mid-1990s, the once-Anglo stores have become Latino retail outlets. Rather than Blues and Bluegrass music, the sounds of *norteño*, *tejano*, or *mariachi* music resonate throughout the block at the flea market.

A good example of one of the newer small restaurants in east Tulsa with many Latinized features is *Papusas* [sic] *y Tienda,* opened by El Salvadoran Delmy Cruz, one of about 200 El Salvadorans in Tulsa, in 2000; *pupusas* are the national dish of her country.[190] Her family members help her and the majority of her customers are Central Americans and Mexicans.[191] According to a writer for the *Tulsa World*:

> Cruz also sells Central American videos, CDs, souvenirs and food items (creams, soft drinks, plantains) out of her nine-table restaurant located in a strip center on the southeast side of Admiral Boulevard and Sheridan Road. Flags from El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, and a wall hanging featuring a street scene in El Salvador are the main decorations.[192]

In 2007, Tulsa resident, Gary Rutledge, a political science professor at Rogers State University, commented on the changes, "It's happened so quickly and our neighborhoods have changed so rapidly."[193] He said that near where he lived in East Tulsa, "the broad avenues are now peppered with signs in Spanish and malls catering to Latino shoppers—offering everything from soccer wear and *piñatas* to check cashing services and Latin pop music" and that "that whole part of the city has become a miniature Juarez or Tijuana or whatever you want to call it." [194]

Similar changes have taken place in the midtown area. Hispanics residing in the midtown/Kendall-Whittier area enjoy a view of America's most beautiful city's downtown and the bell tower at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church. *El Rancho Grande,* with its decades-old recipes and glowing neon sign, attracts locals and tourists alike with its location on Route 66 and its propinquity to downtown. Other Latino-influenced restaurants are also in the area, like the Acapulco Mexican Restaurant, the brightly painted Tacos *Don Francisco*, Tacos *San Pedro*, and Blazin' Peppers; taco trucks often settle temporarily in areas with room for a picnic (Figure 13). Midtown has *Las Americas,* a large grocery store, similar to the one in east Tulsa, that purveys Hispanic-oriented food. (Figure 14). In addition, many Hispanic-operated auto body shops line the street in the old industrial area of Midtown. Bright colors and multicolored place names painted on the facades mark these Latinos places. For instance, the facades of *Los Huaches* Paint and Body and *El Leon Mecanico y Electrico en General* are bright hues of blue and yellow. A few Latino car lots, like *El Chanillo* Motors, also established in this area to meet the demands of the growing population (Figure 15).

Tulsa's businesses are transforming on the interior also in order to appeal to Hispanic consumers. Many products on the shelves of Tulsa's grocery stores display instructions in both English and Spanish. The Wal-Mart Supercenter on the southeast corner of the Admiral and Memorial intersection in Tulsa started carrying more Hispanic spices, foods, and other staples. Instead of Pringles on the end caps of that Wal-Mart's shelves, *veladoras* (Spanish religious candles) fill the spaces. Denny Widener, a vendor for Hispanic-food manufacturer Mission Foods, explained that since 2000 the "growth of the Latino population in this area has been astronomical" and noted that, within only a few hours of delivering and restocking the aforementioned Wal-Mart store, his shelves are empty. He added, "When I first started this route, I got by with stocking my shelves once a day, even on weekends. Two or three years ago, however, I began to have to replenish my shelves twice a day on Sundays. It is almost to the point that I might have to go out twice on Fridays and Saturdays." Widener further declared that, when he visits this particular Wal-Mart in the middle of the afternoon, many of the Hispanic shoppers he sees have several of his company's 100-count corn tortillas packages in their carts. Widener stated that, during 2009, he expanded into selling his products directly to the growing market of smaller Hispanic-owned businesses.[195]

Tenancy statistics have also changed in apartment complexes in the area. In October 2009, the property manager of Observation Point Apartments in east Tulsa reported that about seventy-five percent of the residents were Latino.[196] The complex even hired a Latino security officer in an effort to deter crime and make residents more comfortable about reporting a crime.[197] Because Hispanic areas experience three times more robberies than some other areas of the city, the city's police department is making a

concerted effort to reach out to Hispanics by studying crime statistics, meeting with community leaders for reciprocal learning experiences, and encouraging some residents to enroll in the Citizens' Police Academy.[198] Major Walter Evans said, "When I first came out here, I had a guy who waited about 45 minutes to decide whether or not to call the police when he'd been shot. We have to get people out of that mindset."[199]

A smaller business that is now a common feature of Tulsa's cultural landscape and is thus worth mentioning is the taco truck. Trucks can be spotted anywhere in the metropolitan area. Broken Arrow residents Brian and Jodi Carrico, who work in Tulsa, said that sometimes these trucks sell more than tacos. Brian swore that the "best hot dog in the world" came from one of these trucks that generally parked in southeast Tulsa (Figure 16).[200] A taco trailer sits in the parking lot of *Las Americas* grocery in Midtown Tulsa. Parked in east Tulsa is *Taqueria Mi Oficina*, which is adjacent to *Perez's Abarrotes* (general store) (Figure 17). In July 2009, Sarah Hart described the role of the taco trucks in her community for the *Tulsa World:*

> I live in east Tulsa, a culturally diverse part of our city, full of different sights and sounds than you would find at, say, Woodland Hills Mall. I drive past these… trucks… every day, trailer trucks with picnic tables out front. Spanish names. People lined up three-deep for food, people sitting outside under picnic umbrellas, eating happily.[201]

She took some fellow *Tulsa World* employees to visit three taco trucks; they visited *Los Unicos* and *Tacos Fiesta Mexicana* in Midtown and *Super Taqueria* in east Tulsa.[202] The owner of *Super Taqueria,* who also owns the Tulsa restaurant *El Refugio Azteca*, told them he had been there four years.[203] Hart reported, "This food isn't fast. It's all cooked to order, so you wait a bit. But it's worth it."[204] The consensus was that they tasted "some of the best Mexican food in town."[205] Hart also included a note stressing that the taco

trucks go through regular inspections by the Oklahoma Health Department and that they "aren't frequent violators of the rules."[206] Taco trucks, a mobile indicator of ethnicity, and the more permanent Latinized features that are also increasing in number on Tulsa's landscape indicate the beginnings of an inveterate change.

Conclusion

Over the past three decades, Tulsa's cultural landscape has changed in tandem with the ethnicity of its population. In the late 1800s and the first few years of the 1900s, Tulsa's slow population growth and limited employment opportunities attracted few immigrants. The founding of the nearby oil fields and the opening of mines, during the first couple of decades in the twentieth century, proffered several types of jobs that appealed to migrants, particularly those from Latin America. The economic growth in Tulsa continued to draw Latino workers until the Great Depression. Throughout the 1930s, however, many Hispanics left Tulsa and significant migration would not begin again until after World War II.

The massive development of Tulsa's suburbs over the past fifty years has facilitated a need for large numbers of laborers. Other industries requiring arduous labor, like the meat packing plant in Owasso, have also attracted more workers—especially Hispanics. As a result, the mushrooming Latino population has changed the appearance of the cityscape, adding features such as bright colors and Spanish-language billboards in midtown/Kendall-Whittier and east Tulsa. Indeed, other areas of Tulsa are also beginning to show signs of Latinization. For instance, *Mayamercado Carnicería Taquería* opened in southwest Tulsa in the early 2000s in an area home to more African-Americans and Anglos than Hispanics (Figure 18).[207] All of these changes have affected the way many

entities function in the city—most notably the schools where keeping up with the changes is so vitally important. Businesses that banked on the growing market are glad they did while others are adjusting and trying to attract the business of this new clientele. Latinos have persevered in the area and the influence of local Latino leaders, like Victor Orta, Francisco Trevino, and Yolanda Verlarde-Charney, has helped ease their transition to Tulsa and their integration into daily life there.

House Bill 1804, Oklahoma's strict legislation on illegal immigration passed in 2007, initially caused much apprehension among Oklahoma Hispanics. Tulsa, according to Oklahoma Citian Patricia Fennell, was one of the hardest hit communities after the law went into effect and a sense of fear spread in the community.[208] Some Hispanic establishments did go out of business because their customers were afraid of being targeted for arrest because of their skin color or of being torn from their families and deported.[209] Francisco Trevino noted that the combination of the new law and the recession had affected the revenues of Latino businesses and he believes some Latino residents still feel like they cannot go out in public.[210] A 2010 report on the effects of House Bill 1804, however, indicated "the new law appears to have had little effect on decreasing the number of immigrant families in Tulsa."[211] Parts of the new law remain unenforced in the state due to legal challenges. Latinos will no doubt persevere in the face of this new challenge just as they have in the past. The Hispanics who want to stay in Tulsa will do so; they will "get out" and make the most of it just as many already have, a fact that is conspicuous when one explores the Latinized social and physical landscape in Tulsa.

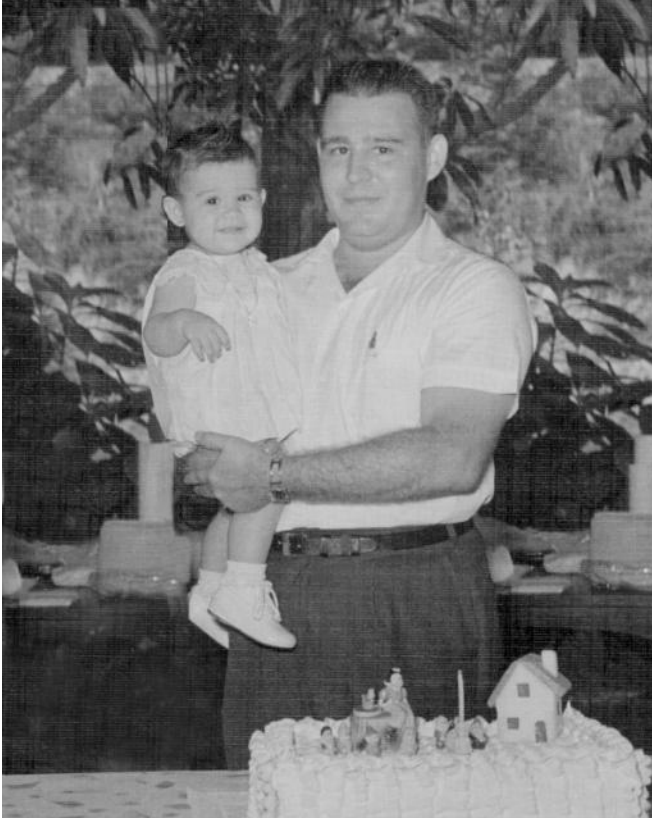

Figure 1. Gina Wozencraft of Mannford, just west of Tulsa, was born in Cuba in 1963. She and her siblings fled the country in 1969 to escape Fidel Castro's communist rule. Gina is pictured here with her father in Cuba on her first birthday in 1964. [Photo courtesy of Gina Wozencraft, September 1964].

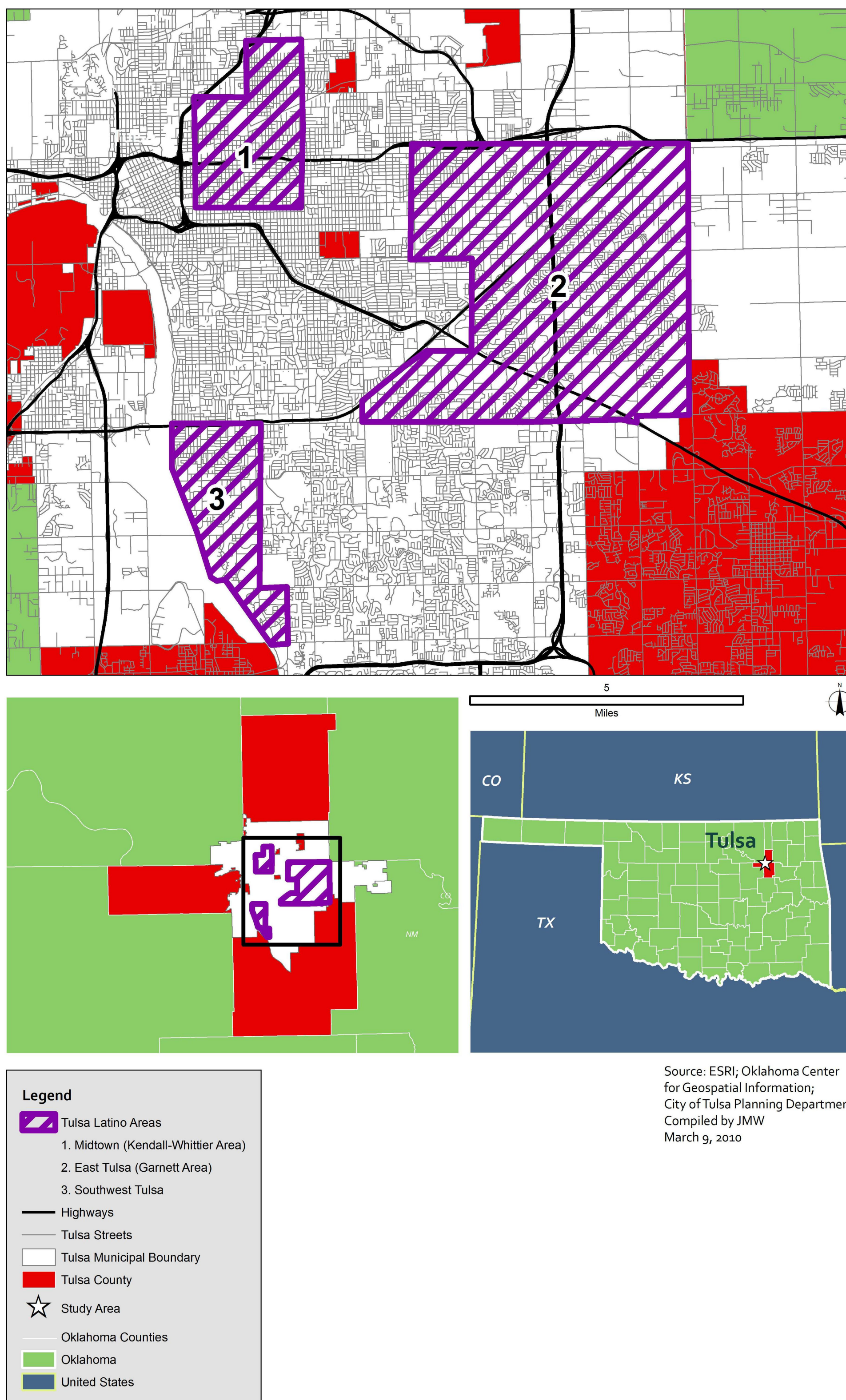

Figure 2. Tulsa has two distinct *barrios*, located in midtown and east Tulsa, and one that is emerging—in southwest Tulsa.

Figure 3. View of Tulsa’s skyline, looking east from the DX Oil Refinery. [Photo courtesy of the Tulsa City County Library and Tulsa Historical Society, Beryl Ford Collection/Rotary Club of Tulsa, circa 1940].

Figure 4. Holy Family Cathedral, the principal Catholic church in Tulsa, was one of the first institutions that tried to meet the needs of Tulsa's and northeast Oklahoma's Hispanic community. [Photo courtesy of the Tulsa City County Library and Tulsa Historical Society, Beryl Ford Collection/Rotary Club of Tulsa, circa 1916].

Figure 5. Saint Francis Xavier Catholic Church in Midtown or the Kendall-Whittier area of Tulsa is one of Tulsa’s largest churches. The church holds seven Masses in Spanish on Sunday and only one in English. Notice the miniature market in the bottom left-hand corner (Widener August 2009).

Figure 6. Church officials constructed Our Lady of Guadalupe, which neighbors St. Francis Xavier, in 1963 to accommodate the Hispanic population in midtown (Widener April 2010).

Figure 7. *El Rancho Grande* restaurant is likely the oldest Mexican restaurant in Tulsa. The bistro is not only an important artifact for the Hispanic community in Tulsa, but the establishment is also a popular landmark on Tulsa's portion of America's highway—Route 66 (Widener August 2009).

Figure 8. *Casa Bonita* has been a Tulsa staple since 1971. Its bright colors and Spanish architecture introduced Hispanic culture to many Tulsans (Widener August 2010).

Figure 9. Tulsa’s Festival Hispano has served as a community gathering event since 1979 (Widener September 2008).

Figure 10. *Plaza Santa Cecilia* is a massive Hispanic market in east Tulsa. A variety of stores and restaurants fill the spaces, displaying semi-fixed elements—bright colors, Spanish language billboards, and cultural landscape ornaments, such as the taco trailer in the center of the picture (Widener August 2009).

Figure 11. *Supermercados Morelos* is a distinctly Latino place. Besides the Spanish-language signage, the building is bright yellow and red (Widener August 2009).

Figure 12. Murals are another vivid sign of Latinization. Generally, they display a scene from a specific place relevant to the owner or they depict some type of historic event (Widener August 2009).

Figure 13. Tacos *Don Francisco* in midtown Tulsa (Widener August 2009).

Figure 14. *Las Americas* is the principal grocery store for Hispanics in midtown Tulsa. The parking lot is also often the business site for two taco trucks (not shown here) (Widener August 2009).

Figure 15. Midtown Tulsa has several Hispanic car lots. *El Chanillo* is one that displays Mexican culture. Notice the Mexican Coat-of-Arms painted on the sign (Widener August 2009).

Figure 16. Many of the taco trucks and trailers on Tulsa's landscape sell more than just tacos. In particular, this trailer sells *perro calientes* (hot dogs) (Widener August 2009).

Figure 17. *Taqueria mi Oficina* is often parked adjacent to a remittance shop in east Tulsa (Widener August 2009).

Figure 18. *Mayamercado Carnicería Taquería* is located in southwest Tulsa. This area of the city is in a cultural landscape transition and has started Latinizing since the turn of the twenty-first century (Widener April 2010).

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[2] Michael Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 25; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States 1900, vol.1, Population part 1*, "Table 33," 733-34.

[3] Michael Smith, "Latinos in Oklahoma: A History of Four and a Half Centuries," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 87, no. 2 (2009): 212-213; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *2000 Census of Population and Housing: Oklahoma*, "Table 4," 98.

[4] Smith, "Latinos in Oklahoma,"187.

[5] Goble, *Tulsa!: Biography of the American City*, 28-30; *Liberty and Tulsa: Making History Together for 100 Years, 1895-1995*, (Tulsa, OK: Liberty Bank and Trust Company, 1995), 1.

[6] Goble, *Tulsa!: Biography of the American City*, 34.

[7] Goble, *Tulsa!: Biography of the American City*, 34.

[8] Goble, *Tulsa!: Biography of the American City*, 37.

[9] Goble, *Tulsa!: Biography of the American City*, 30-31; James L. Allhands, "History of the Construction of the Frisco Railway Lines in Oklahoma," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 3, no. 3 (1925): 231; *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "St. Louis and San Francisco Railway," (by Augustus J. Veenendaal, Jr), http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/H/HI014.html (last accessed January 24, 2009).

[10] Robert Gregory, *Oil in Oklahoma* (Muskogee, OK: Leake Industries, 1976), 1.

[11] Kenny A. Franks, *The Rush Begins: A History of the Red Fork, Cleveland and Glenn Pool Oil Fields* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Heritage Association, 1984), 81, 87-88, 101, 118; Charles J. DeVilbiss, *The Sapulpa and Tulsa Trolley Connection* (Shreveport, LA: Eagle Chief Publishing, Co., 2007), 14.

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[13] Michael Smith, *The Mexican American Experience in Oklahoma* (Stillwater, OK: Crossroads Oklahoma Project, 1981), 10; Michael Smith (professor of history), in discussion with the author, February 19, 2010.

[14] Ryan Douglas Weichelt, "Scale Factors in Hispanic Voting Behavior" (PhD diss., University of Nebraska, 2008), 29-32.

[15] Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma*, 25-26; Smith, *The Mexican American Experience in Oklahoma*, 10; *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "Mexicans," (by Michael Smith), http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/M/ME024.html (last accessed January 24, 2009); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States 1900, vol.1, Population part 1*, "Table 33," 733-34. Oklahoma did not become a state until 1907. During the 1900 census, the state was divided into Oklahoma Territory (west part of state), which encompasses the Oklahoma City area, and Indian Territory (east part of state), which encompasses the Tulsa area.

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[16] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States 1940, Characteristics of the Population, vol. II, part 5: New York—Oregon*, "Table 15," 813; U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Characteristics of the Population: Oklahoma," *Census of Population 1950, vol. II, part 36*, "Table 4," 36-8. In 1910, only the cities with a population above 25,000 in Oklahoma recorded a Mexican population count.

[17] Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma*, 25, 30; Smith, *The Mexican American Experience in Oklahoma*, 11-12; *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "Mexicans," (by Michael Smith), http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/M/ME024.html (last accessed January 24, 2009); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, vol. III, Composition and Characteristics of the Population by States*, "Table 6," 815.

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[20] Smith, *The Mexican American Experience in Oklahoma*, 11-12; *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "Immigration," (by Donald N. Brown), http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/I/IM001.html (last accessed January 24, 2009); *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "Mexicans," (by Michael Smith), http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/M/ME024.html (last accessed January 24, 2009); Gene Curtis, *Only in Oklahoma: Collected Columns Originally Published in the Tulsa World during Oklahoma's Centennial Year* (Tulsa, OK: World Publishing Co., 2007), 110.

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[22] Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma*, 30; Smith, "Latinos in Oklahoma," 199.

[23] Smith, The Mexicans in Oklahoma, 30; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States 1940, Characteristics of the Population, vol. II, part 5: New York—Oregon,* "Table 15," 813. This number is based on 1,425 Mexicans, 29 Cubans, 14 Central Americans, and 72 South Americans.

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[27] Nicklas and Palacios, "Tulsa Hispanic Study 2001."

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[28] Nicklas and Palacios, "Tulsa Hispanic Study 2001."

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[30] Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma*, 39; Michael Smith (professor of history), in discussion with the author, February 19, 2010.

[31] Michael Smith (professor of history), in discussion with the author, February 19, 2010.

[32] Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma*, 37-39.

[33] Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma*, 40; Smith, *The Mexican American Experience in Oklahoma*, 13.

[34] Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma*, 40.

[35] Cecil Gomez, *A Mexican Twilight* (New York: iUniverse, 2005), 182; Cecil Gomez, *West Tulsa, Oklahoma 1939 Before and After: The Greatest Little American Town (That Once Was)* (Wyandotte, OK: The Gregath Publishing Company, 2007), 19; "Growing Up Hispanic in Oklahoma," Cecil Gomez, Aurora Helton, Maggie Bloese, Megan Cruz, Monique Garmy, and Megan Mondragon, interviewed by Sara Martínez, filmed by Roy and Sherry Heim, Oral History Collection, Research Library, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, SWTHS. V2008.535.A.

[36] Gomez, *A Mexican Twilight*, 182.

[37] Gomez, *A Mexican Twilight*, 182.

[38] Gomez, *A Mexican Twilight*, 182-83.

[39] Gomez, *A Mexican Twilight*, 183.

[40] Gomez, *A Mexican Twilight*, 182.

[41] Gomez, *A Mexican Twilight*, 336.

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[43] Gomez, *A Mexican Twilight*, 347.

[44] Smith *The Mexican American Experience in Oklahoma*, 19.

[45] *¡Lations Presentes!*, (Tulsa, OK: Oklahoma Centennial Hispanic History Project, 2007), 96; "History of the Church of Saint Catherine," http://saintcatherine.community.officelive.com/aboutus.aspx (last accessed December 16, 2009). Saint Catherine's was located at West Twenty-Third Street and South Olympia.

[46] Gomez, *A Mexican Twilight*, 214.

[47] Gomez, *A Mexican Twilight*, 211.

[48] *¡Lations Presentes!*, 96; James D. White, *This Far by Faith* (Strasburg, France: Èditions du Signe, 2001), 25, 32. Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church was located near Fifteenth Street and Sheridan Road.

[49] Gomez, *A Mexican Twilight*, 212.

[50] Gomez, *A Mexican Twilight*, 212.

[51] White, *This Far by Faith*, 32, 67; Omer Gillham, "Working Together to Make Two Cultures," *Tulsa World*, April 29, 1999, 1.

[52] Omer Gillham, "Working Together to Make Two Cultures," *Tulsa World*, April 29, 1999, 1.

[53] White, *This Far by Faith*, 67.

[54] *¡Lations Presentes!*, 97.

[55] *¡Lations Presentes!*, 97.

[56] *¡Lations Presentes!*, 97.

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[58] Omer Gillham, "Working Together to Make Two Cultures," *Tulsa World*, April 29, 1999, 1.

[59] Omer Gillham, "Working Together to Make Two Cultures," *Tulsa World*, April 29, 1999, 1.

[60] Omer Gillham, "Working Together to Make Two Cultures," *Tulsa World*, April 29, 1999, 1.

[61] Omer Gillham, "Working Together to Make Two Cultures," *Tulsa World*, April 29, 1999, 1.

[62] Omer Gillham, "Working Together to Make Two Cultures," *Tulsa World*, April 29, 1999, 1.

[63] Omer Gillham, "Working Together to Make Two Cultures," *Tulsa World*, April 29, 1999, 1.

[64] Omer Gillham, "Working Together to Make Two Cultures," *Tulsa World*, April 29, 1999, 1.

[65] Omer Gillham, "Working Together to Make Two Cultures," *Tulsa World*, April 29, 1999, 1.

[66] Omer Gillham, "Working Together to Make Two Cultures," *Tulsa World*, April 29, 1999, 1.

[67] Omer Gillham, "Working Together to Make Two Cultures," *Tulsa World*, April 29, 1999, 1.

[68] Omer Gillham, "Working Together to Make Two Cultures," *Tulsa World*, April 29, 1999, 1.

[69] Omer Gillham, "Working Together to Make Two Cultures," *Tulsa World*, April 29, 1999, 1.

[70] Bill Sherman, "Six Churches Move into Spots on Tulsa's Top 10 List," *Tulsa World,* January 3, 2010, A10.

[71] Smith, *The Mexican American Experience in Oklahoma*, 19.

[72] Smith, *The Mexican American Experience in Oklahoma*, 19.

[73] Smith, *The Mexican American Experience in Oklahoma*, 19.

[74] Gomez, *A Mexican Twilight*, 216.

[75] Gomez, *A Mexican Twilight*, 216-17.

[76] Omer Gillham, "*La Mayoria de los Oklahomeros No Pueden Leer Esto. Ellos Solamente Ven Palabras Que No Quieren Decir Nada*—Now You Know What It's Like to Live Here and Not Speak English," *Tulsa World*, April 26, 1999, 13.

[77] Ludmila Davison (instructor of English Language Learners), in discussion with author, August 14, 2009.

[78] Interview of Francisco and Margarita Trevino, October 28, 2006, interviewed by Sara Martínez, filmed by Sherry Heim, Oral History Collection, Research Library, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK, V2008.535.L.

[79] Matt Gleason, "Parent to Parent," *Tulsa World,* October 5, 2009, D1.

[80] Interview of Francisco and Margarita Trevino, October 28, 2006, interviewed by Sara Martínez, filmed by Sherry Heim, Oral History Collection, Research Library, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK, V2008.535.L.

[81] Smith, *The Mexicans in Oklahoma*, 55; Smith, *The Mexican American Experience in Oklahoma*, 21.

[82] Interview of Reverend Victor Orta, October 28, 2006, interviewed by Sara Martínez, filmed by Roy Heim, Oral History Collection, Research Library, Oklahoma Historical Society Oklahoma City, OK, V2008.535.G.

[83] Yolanda Verlarde-Charney (former director of Hispanic Affairs Commission), in discussion with author, July 3, 2009.

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[85] Yolanda Verlarde-Charney (former director of Hispanic Affairs Commission), in discussion with author, July 3, 2009.

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Chapter 5
"It's all about the Hogs:"
The Latinization of Guymon

Introduction

In 1541, the Europeans ventured for the first time into what is now the state of Oklahoma. These Spanish *conquistadores*, guided by Francisco Vásquez Coronado, journeyed in search of the "legendary Seven Cities of Cibola."[1] On their expedition, they passed through the Oklahoma Panhandle, a 34.5-mile wide, 168-mile long region of the state (Figure 1).[2] Despite the brevity of their passage through the area, the Spanish laid claim to this part of the New World although few Europeans actually settled in the high plains at the time. For over two-and-one-half centuries, Spain prevailed over the region until the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 altered the Spanish claim on the land. The Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819 further defined America's purchase of land west of the Mississippi River, leaving only the Oklahoma Panhandle in Spain's domain.[3] Two years later when Mexico gained its independence from Spain, the Mexican flag began to fly over the expanse.

While the pace of settlement remained slow, the Santa Fe Trail pierced the far northwestern panhandle and served as a thoroughfare for Anglo and Hispanic traders on their way to and from Santa Fe, New Mexico (Figure 2).[4] In 1848, after the U.S. defeated Mexico in the Mexican-American War, the U.S. claimed all of the lands north of the Rio Grande. The Latino influence, however, never completely left the Oklahoma Panhandle. Their impress has persisted in this area, both on the landscape and in the cultural traditions—from ranching methods, architecture, and the Spanish names carved in the rocks along the route of the Santa Fe Trail to the contemporary *carnicerías, iglesias*, and

panaderías. The growth of new industries that are desperate for laborers—particularly in the city of Guymon—has resulted in a recent and remarkable increase in the Latino population in this locale, driving and enhancing the Latinization of the landscape.

Latinos in the Oklahoma Panhandle

After Texas won its independence from Mexico and after the cession of Mexican lands to the U.S., the rectangle of land bounded between the 103 degrees and 100 degrees west meridians and the thirty-six degrees thirty minutes and thirty degrees north parallels remained unassigned to any state, territory, or reservation.[5] The Missouri Compromise of 1850 set the northernmost boundary of Texas, which had claimed the Oklahoma Panhandle from 1836 to 1850, south of the thirty-sixth parallel so the state could maintain its slave-holding status after its admittance to the Union.[6] From 1850 to the time of the Civil War, U.S. officials created new territories. In 1850, they established New Mexico's northernmost boundary at the thirty-seventh parallel, while Kansas and Colorado, in 1854 and 1861 respectively, adopted the thirty-seventh parallel as their southernmost boundaries. The Oklahoma Panhandle, labeled "No Man's Land," maintained its unassigned status.[7]

Although it was part of the U.S., the area fell under no territorial jurisdiction. In 1890, Congress passed the Organic Act, which renamed the area Beaver County, added it to Oklahoma Territory, and opened the area for Euro-American settlement.[8] On November 16, 1907, Oklahoma became a state; and officials divided territorial Beaver County into Cimarron County, Texas County, and Beaver County, with Boise City, Guymon, and Beaver City as their county seats. Throughout this period, Latinos continued to maintain a small but visible presence in the area.

During the 1800s, the majority of the Latino pioneers entering the region moved from New Mexico. Richard Nostrand found the easternmost drive of Hispanos—defined by Nostrand as “people possessing a basically Latin culture” whose “ancestors came…directly from Spain”—consisted of “*pastores,*” (generally sheep herdsmen) settlers who alighted “well into the panhandles of Texas and modern day Oklahoma.”[9] He affirmed Oklahoma Latinos “prevailed longer than those of Texas” and that, by 1872, the *pastores* “had moved down the Beaver River to establish plazas, including Nieto in the far western panhandle of Oklahoma,” in present-day Cimarron County.[10]

Over 150 Hispanos lived in the “extreme western panhandle of Oklahoma” in 1900.[11] That year also marked the establishment of the conjectural “Outland,” the most expansive area of New Mexican Latino settlement, as the economic opportunities proffered by the Anglo populace in the panhandle attracted new residents.[12] Some Oklahoma Panhandle place names still represent “their old Spanish colonial names or Anglicized variants.”[13] Examples of these Latinized features include the towns of Mexhoma and Castaneda and the creeks Cienequilla, Aqua Fria, and Carrizo.[14] While most of these place names are in Cimarron County, Texas County—especially the city of Guymon—is now the new Oklahoma Panhandle core for Latinos, particularly migrants from Mexico and Central America.

Historical Development of Guymon

In 1901, E. T. Guymon and fellow pioneers founded a city called Sanford, although, shortly thereafter, they changed the city’s name to Guymon.[15] According to a story in the 1976 Comprehensive Plan for the city, the reason for the name change was that a freight agent often confused Sanford, Guymon’s original name, with Stratford,

Texas; since Mr. Guymon was the only man who received shipments, the agent encouraged them to change the town's name.[16] Guymon's location was on the main line of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway that cut diagonally through what would become Texas County.[17] The town's first businesses consisted of a saloon, a hotel, a mercantile, a dry goods store, a hardware store, a bank, and a newspaper.[18]

In 1910, the population of Guymon numbered 1,342.[19] By 1950, the population more than tripled to 4,718 and increased to 7,674 people by 1975 as growing agricultural industries required additional labor.[20] The 1960s had witnessed the opening of the Hitch Ranch's cattle feedlots.[21] These feedlots served as a catalyst for the opening of the Swift and Company meatpacking plant; and, when a computer service, Diversified Data, Incorporated, opened in the late 1960s, the area experienced a plethora of job opportunities.[22] In 1976, the Oklahoma Employment Securities Commission projected Guymon would have a population of 10,850 by the year 2000 if the growth rate continued at that pace.[23] Based on the estimate and using the economic data available at the time, the Oklahoma Department of Economic and Community Affairs put together the "Report on the Guymon Comprehensive Plan," a 1976 update of a project originally done in 1967 for the Guymon Planning Commission.

At the time of the report, oil and gas production, agriculture, and retail sales and service epitomized Guymon's economy.[24] According to the framers of the document, however, the oil and gas industry was in a downward trend due to depletion of resources and the agriculture industry, while considered "strong" at the time, faced a future the study said "must be noted with caution," primarily due to projected ground water depletion.[25] The state of the retail industry in the city, based on sales tax collections,

declined slightly just before publication although, the study noted, the labor force was "fairly stable."[26] The comprehensive plan identified problem areas and offered definitive proposals for the further development of the city. For example, the school system, just recently renovated, was adequate at the time with its student/teacher ratio well within state recommendations and with its only anticipated need another elementary school once the population increased by at least 1,500 people.[27]

By the 1980s, Guymon's population had risen to 8,492 and 10.8 percent were of Spanish origin.[28] However, the "Panhandle staples of beef and oil" suffered alongside those industries in the rest of the country and "many people's thoughts of boom bordered on changing to doom."[29] The Swift meatpacking facility closed in 1987, reversing Guymon's two-decade-long economic and population growth trends.[30] Former City of Guymon Mayor Jess Nelson (1991-2005) affirms the census records showed the population decreased between 1980 and 1990, from 8,492 to 7,803, but asserts the census is short by about 400 people because residents continued to move to urban areas to find work at the time the government conducted the census.[31] Nelson surmises that between 1987 and 1995 a little over 1,000 people left the city because of economic stress.[32]

Guymon's unemployment rate remained the same during the late 1980s to the mid-1990s—at about 2.5 percent—because the number of jobs lost corresponded to the number of people who out-migrated.[33] City leaders actively sought new economic opportunities and "the watchwords became 'corporate hog farming'" after a change in Oklahoma statutes allowed that type of operation (Figure 3).[34] In 1992, Guymon, Texas County, and state officials began to entice Seaboard Farms, Inc. to open a hog processing facility. In Guymon, residents voted to pass a one-cent sales tax, known as the "Seaboard

sales tax," which provided an $8 million incentive to Seaboard over a fifteen-year period.[35] In addition, the state gave the company a five-year exemption on ad valorem taxes.[36] Accordingly, Seaboard Farms, Inc. bought the old Swift plant on Highway 54 in Guymon and opened a pork-processing facility there in late 1995 that generated over 2,500 jobs (Figure 4).[37] Latinos filled many of the jobs at Seaboard.[38] Residents believed their "town was dying" and that Seaboard would provide hope for its future.[39] In 1993, a writer for *The Oklahoman* declared, "If it goes oink and smells like a cat-box, it must be economic development."[40]

The increase in employment opportunities and Guymon's already low unemployment rate meant at least 2,500 new residents filtered into Guymon. Furthermore, owners projected Seaboard's opening would lead to even more jobs within the city. In 1994, Texas County voters passed a bond issue to permit the construction of and the maintenance of a new jail and an expansion of the Texas County Memorial Hospital.[41] Additionally, voters approved a bond issue in the city of Guymon calling for the building of a new elementary school; however, another 1994 bond issue for expansion of the high school failed because many school district supporters "felt over taxed."[42] Nevertheless, Guymon, "once a city of financial gloom" soon found itself in "economic boom;" and, as Nelson stated, "it was because of the hogs" (Figure 5).[43]

With Seaboard Farms set to enter Guymon's economic picture in 1995, Guymon city planners and Mayor Jess Nelson knew they needed help planning for the anticipated increase in population. In 1994, city officials estimated the town's population of 7,800 would double by 2000.[44] In order to circumvent a catastrophe, Nelson invited Donald Stull, a professor from the University of Kansas who studied the impacts of agricultural

processing upon small towns, to analyze Guymon. Working with David Griffith and Michael J. Broadway, Stull published a report in 1995 that observed "rural poverty and population decline are endemic to much of rural America."[45] To combat this trend, they argued, small communities should look for economic development opportunities, such as attracting food-processing plants. In fact, the U.S. Department of Agriculture had already predicted "meat, poultry, and fish processing will play crucial roles in the economies of many rural communities in the coming years."[46] Broadway, Griffith, and Stull noted, "Food-processing firms depend on a ready supply of willing labor… [and] despite increased automation, meat, poultry, and fish processing" continue to require a plethora of workers.[47] From 1990 to 1991, there were 2,400 new jobs in meatpacking and 12,800 in poultry slaughter and processing—one out of every sixteen new industrial jobs in the U.S. was in a poultry plant.[48]

Targeted recruitment, the authors wrote, as well as recent changes in the character and enforcement of immigration laws determined the composition and stability of this meat-processing labor force. Furthermore, they observed these types of jobs were far from attractive to most working-class citizens. Indeed, Broadway, Griffith, and Stull stated a meat processing job is one of the "most hazardous in America." Workers are more likely to have cumulative trauma disorders, such as carpal tunnel syndrome, in these types of jobs because of the rapid and continual motions required on the "disassembly line along which carcasses are processed."[49] As a result, health care is a big issue in meat processing communities. Until vested, which usually required several months of work, workers in this industry are generally uninsured.[50] Many, therefore, cannot afford proper medical attention, causing them to rely on the government for help.

Another problem is that most plants have at least a 100 percent turnover rate. All of these issues meant rural areas that attracted new industries like these could "expect to be confronted with school overcrowding, homelessness, housing shortages, elevated unemployment, crime, and social disorders." Additionally, the fact that many members of this labor force were new immigrants often posed linguistic and cultural difficulties for schools, law enforcement officials, and agencies attempting to serve their needs.[51]

Stull and Broadway were also working on another study on the effects of meat-processing plants on Garden City, Kansas, a town similar to Guymon.[52] In the 1980s, the world's largest beef-processing plant opened in Holcomb, ten miles from Garden City, and a packing plant in Garden City reopened and increased in size.[53] Together the two facilities had over 4,000 employees.[54] According to Stull and Broadway, meatpacking witnessed changes typifying the restructuring taking place in the U.S. economy.[55] For example, oligopolies were more common and the use of machinery increased while the use of physical human labor decreased in farming and manufacturing.[56] Furthermore, businesses constantly looked for cheaper ways and means of production, while "women, minorities and immigrants" filled low-paying and low-skilled jobs.[57] Meatpacking, once a "unionized, urban industry" with jobs paying better than manufacturing jobs, was now a nonunion, rural industry with jobs paying low wages.[58] The dangerous working conditions combined with the poor pay scale made the jobs "unattractive to many Americans."[59] The turnover rate was high, with an average of 72 to 98 percent per year, giving the industry an "insatiable appetite for workers."[60] Line workers in the meatpacking industry needed no specific job skills and did not need to speak English.[61] Social networks were a primary means of generating "information about employment

opportunities, working conditions, and housing."[62] As a result, Garden City, according to the authors, "became a magnet for labor migrants from far and wide."[63] In 1960, three Mexicans lived in Garden City.[64] From 1980 to 2000, the overall population grew fifty percent and the percentage of foreign-born population went from four to twenty-two percent.[65] In the 1980s, most immigrants were from Latin America and Asia.[66] Garden City was "bursting at the seams" in the 1980s, with a housing shortage city officials alleviated by rezoning parts of the city for mobile home parks.[67]

The authors concluded the meatpacking industry "enjoys billions of dollars in sales, hundreds of millions in profits, millions in tax incentives, and shows little consideration for the communities its plants and employees call home."[68] Stull and Broadway avowed, "Local communities clearly have no control over immigration policy or how it is enforced. Nor can they influence the meatpacking industry's working conditions, wages, or recruitment policies. But local leaders can influence public opinion and provide immigrants with a positive context of reception."[69] The authors noted the obvious changes they had seen since they first started their research in 1985—more public signs in various languages and many additional minorities—and called Garden City a reaffirmation of immigrants' dreams of making new lives for their families.[70] Since the 1980s, Garden City has had Latino city council members, a Latino high school principal, and Latino mayors.[71] At the time of writing, the mayor was Latina.[72] The authors clearly believed these were all favorable signs and were, therefore, "confident that Garden City is in good hands."[73]

Mayor Nelson and Guymon city planners wanted their city to be "in good hands" too. Stull's ongoing studies of other rural areas were important background for the work

Guymon officials asked him to do. Stull projected, with “eighty percent accuracy” according to Nelson, the number of and the age groups of those who might come to work and live in the city and how many new homes, police officers, hospital workers, and school teachers a city with a new meat processing industry would need.[74] Stull met with Guymon officials on multiple occasions between 1991 and 1995 to present and discuss his findings[75] Nelson and Stull agreed Guymon would need six more police officers and six additional firefighters, as well as more teachers.[76] Additionally, before Seaboard Farms opened, the city would need to build new schools, another hospital, a new jail, and more homes to accommodate the projected population increase.[77] The support of voters in passing bond issues helped the city fulfill some of these needs.

Unlike other meat processing communities, Guymon’s population grew at a somewhat slower pace after the introduction of the Seaboard facility. A principal reason was city officials did not relax the city’s zoning restrictions to allow the building of multiple residential units, apartments, or mobile home parks within city limits.[78] By 2000, the population of Guymon was 10,472, only about 400 people from the 1976 projection.[79] Leigh Bell, journalist for the *Tulsa World*, reported in 2007 that, according to city manager Mike Shannon, the “population has doubled from about 7000 [in 1990] to 14,000.”[80] Nelson confirmed the population did not double in size in “five years, but over the course of ten or twelve years” and stated unequivocally Seaboard Farms was chiefly responsible for that growth.[81] By 2007, Seaboard employed 4,300 people—2,300 at the plant and 2,000 on area hog farms—mostly from Guymon but some surrounding areas (Figure 6).[82]

Latinization of Guymon's Cultural Landscape

The majority of the workers coming in to fill those jobs are Latinos. As Stull envisaged, the new jobs attracted immigrants like a "magnet."[83] Terrence W. Haverluk wrote about a similar situation in "Hispanization of Hereford, Texas" in 2004.[84] When Hereford Bi-Products opened in 1970 in Hereford, a small town in the Texas Panhandle, Hispanics quickly migrated to find employment there.[85] Haverluk argued that food was the best way to gauge the Hispanization of the town. Grocery stores and restaurants in the 1970s carried few Latino-specific items.[86] By the mid-2000s, avowed Haverluk, the amount of Hispanic fare on the grocery stores' shelves and the number of Latino restaurants in town clearly showed that Latinos integrated into the area.[87] The growing Latino population soon filled vacancies along Hereford's Main Street.[88] Hispanic businesses now line the Main Street and their stores are popping up in other areas as well.[89]

Guymon is experiencing many of the same changes that residents in Hereford, Texas, witnessed. Years after Seaboard opened, Bob Fajen, the owner of an appliance store in Guymon, said, "The Hispanics come and do a lot of jobs we're not going to do because I'm not going to work on the kill floor of Seaboard."[90] He admitted in 2007 that his store would probably not be open if Seaboard had not come in when they did.[91] In 2008, Gerald Dixon, a Guymon-born, eighty-five-year-old, semi-retired real estate agent, recalled, "When I was a boy, I remember only one Hispanic family, and they worked on the railroad. Today, at least half the town is Hispanic—maybe 60 percent even."[92] Some town members had difficulty accepting the changes to the population geography of their town. In 2007 Mayor Larry Stump said, "I think it's getting better, but I think it's still an

us-and-them thing. It's on both sides."[93] Melyn Johnson, the city's director of community development at the time, added, "When you're in rural Oklahoma, it's if you can accept how you grow, or else you don't grow. Would I want an IBM here? Yes. Would I prefer an IBM over a beef-processing plant? Yes. Is IBM going to come to Guymon? Heavens no. When your town is dying, you don't have a choice. It's not good or bad. It's if you're going to survive."[94]

Survival has been and continues to be a process in the city—a progression that involves perpetually solving problems. City leaders must determine how to get workers, how to house them, how to hire bilingual teachers, and how to encourage citizens to work together. At first, Guymon's already low unemployment rate compelled Seaboard to recruit employees from processing plants in Iowa and from El Paso, Texas.[95] Indeed, Seaboard used to run buses to El Paso to pick up people wanting to work.[96] Many laborers they picked up were Mexicans who agreed to abide by the conditions of Guymon's temporary shelter so that they could stay there until they got on their feet.[97] Nelson stated, however, that many of these workers, after "earning enough money," actually went back to El Paso on the same bus and then returned to Mexico, despite the fact that conditions in Oklahoma were much better than the ones they returned to.[98] This strategy contributed to Seaboard's notorious 120 percent turnover rate.[99]

One way Guymon addressed the need for housing was to convert an old hotel into temporary living quarters.[100] Members of the community worked together on the project by adopting and repairing rooms. Newcomers, mostly Latinos according to Nelson, lived at no cost in these quarters under the conditions that they would apply for at least "three jobs a day" and "agree to a police background check."[101] Nelson affirmed, by the third

day, most had acquired a job.[102] While living there occupants received two hot meals per day thanks to Guymon churches and other institutions.[103] After finding a job, a resident could stay for $10 a night.[104] Nelson stated that the facility has enough space for forty people and at any given time has "between ten and twenty-five" customers.[105] However, shelter for forty temporary dwellers made just a very small dent in the problem of housing an escalating population.

Seaboard managers, other local business leaders, and city officials developed other plans for temporary housing. Business leaders invested in an apartment complex within the city limits and trailer parks outside the municipal boundaries to house the company's employees.[106] In 2001, journalists for *Time* explained that Seaboard deducted rent from the paychecks of workers.[107] A two-bedroom apartment rented for $420 a month and a three bedroom for $485, while, at the time, a Seaboard worker earned only $300 a week before taxes.[108] The shortage of permanent residences in Guymon remains a problem amid the ongoing population growth rate. The dilemma with attracting builders to the area, according to Nelson and current Community Development Director Vicki Ayers-McCune, is Guymon's rural location.[109] Ayers-McCune said, "Developers simply don't want to come out here when they can build in Oklahoma City, Tulsa," and other burgeoning urban centers.[110]

Although the city knew in advance that increased population would affect the school system in terms of requisite classroom space, its educators did not adequately prepare for so many new Latino residents. When the children of Seaboard Farms' employees entered the city's education system, the language barriers that came with the influx "left schools confused" about how to educate non-English speaking students.[111] In

2000, Miriam Bolyard, an English as a second language teacher in Guymon, said, "Some [students] barely speak English and cannot write or read the language. Others speak English well, but struggle with reading, writing or other academics."[112] Furthermore, Bolyard stressed parents also needed education in English and about their basic rights.[113] She went on to avow immigrant families "know education is important for their children…but they don't know how to access local schools."[114] Others have tried to help with these problems. In 2000, John Goodwin, then president of Oklahoma Panhandle State University (OPSU), located in Goodwell just south of Guymon, started an initiative to "reach out to Hispanic residents."[115]

Backed by a federally funded program which "pays for [someone to attain] further education in exchange for agreeing to work in small communities with growing Hispanic populations," Goodwin posted a job on the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* website for an English-as-a-second-language teacher.[116] The ad appeared twice before they filled the position.[117] Journalist Steve Lackmeyer of *The Oklahoman* reported the first class had thirteen non-English speaking students and that teacher Janet Livesy-McCauley deemed it "not bad for a first time effort."[118] OPSU continues with efforts to attract members of the Latino community. In 2005, OPSU set out to be the first recognized "Hispanic-serving institution in Oklahoma," according to the guidelines of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, which requires twenty-five percent of the student body to be of Latino heritage.[119] At the time, Vice-President of Academic Affairs Wayne Manning stated, "The designation by the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities would bring immediate bragging rights and open doors to new grants and scholarships."[120] Even though they did not receive accreditation, Teri Mora, Hispanic Coordinator for OPSU,

declared the school strives to recruit Latinos by offering scholarships to those who do well in school and serve in the community.[121] She added, "Efforts have and will continue, but there are still a lot of struggles and people need to take their blinders off."[122]

Frequently, Latino migrants markedly identify with the local Roman Catholic Church and other local social institutions. The conjecture that Latinos have significant ties to the local Catholic church in the city of Guymon, St. Peter's, however, does not hold true. During the half dozen interviews conducted for this project, the citizens rarely mentioned that particular church as a comfort zone for Guymon's Latino population. In fact, they instead acknowledged the *Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana* (First Hispanic Baptist Church) for its outreach (Figure 7).[123]

According to interviewees, the *Alma Folklórica* dance troupe provides an additional important tie to cultural identity for many Guymon Latinos (Figure 8). In 2000, Melyn Johnson, Community Development Director for Guymon at the time, entered Guymon in a cultural exchange program with Foley, Alabama.[124] Johnson stated she wanted Oklahoma "to be represented by Buffalo Soldiers, cowboys, Native Americans, and a Mexican dance group made up of Hispanic high school students."[125] While the first three were easy to organize, Johnson stated she had to work hard not only to put together the dance group but also to find someone to instruct it.[126] Johnson contacted Teri Mora, the Hispanic Coordinator, the director of Upward Bound, and a Spanish language professor at OPSU, in hopes she would undertake the job.[127] Mora accepted the task and added coordinator for *Alma Folklórica*, Guymon High School's Latino dance group, to her list of job titles.[128]

Mora was not Latino but had studied in Spain and had married a man of Mexican descent.[129] She laughingly said, "We had nothing, had to start from scratch, and had only three months to practice."[130] Albeit preparing the students to go to Foley was stressful, Mora declared it paid off. She noted that the people in Foley were impressed; and, after Guymon residents heard about the group's success, *Alma Folklórica* was invited to perform at twenty dances over a period of twenty-three days.[131] Mora went on to state, "Policemen, famous for putting kids on the ground and into cuffs, now saw them as more than just hoodlums. Now they give these kids hugs when they see them."[132] An editor for the *Tulsa World* stated the dance troupe, consisting of twelve Guymon High School students, is "in demand with almost daily requests to perform across the state and sometimes outside of it."[133] That same article quoted Mora: "'These kids came from a community that really didn't see them as a treasure;'" and, after they started dancing, the students themselves "'blossomed.'"[134] Currently, students have to try out to be a part of the troupe and they have to remain eligible in school.[135] In addition, the group added a professional choreographer and received a costume budget over the course of the past nine years.[136]

Alma Folklórica is now a regular feature of Guymon's *La Fiesta* festival, which organizers have celebrated every September since 1997.[137] The festival began, according to Ayers-McCune, in order to "introduce the Hispanic culture" to Guymon and sponsors hoped it would integrate Anglos with the Hispanic community (Figure 9).[138] More importantly, however, they wanted the newer residents to have a chance to "recognize their culture."[139] Johnson explained that, at first, the Anglo community actively participated in the gala but, over the last few years, their involvement has dwindled

because the majority of the speeches and activities, all but the introduction of city and county officials, are in Spanish.[140] Nevertheless, the successes of *Alma Folklórica* and *La Fiesta* were turning points for the Guymon community, bringing the Anglos and Latinos of Guymon closer together.[141]

Guymon's cultural landscape change is also a work in progress. Generally, most Latinos that migrate readily identify with a Latinized landscape, including the presence of rock-wall stucco architecture, bright colors, fences, and religious shrines, all features conspicuous in the Oklahoma Panhandle and in Guymon.[142] Johnson asserted in a *Guymon Daily Herald* editorial that in 1992, Antonio Ochoa, a Guymon resident of Mexican heritage, hosted a Spanish music radio broadcast from noon to 3 p.m. on Guymon's KGYN radio.[143] However, Guymon residents Ayers-McCune, Mora, Nelson, Johnson, Antonio Velasquez, and Elvia Hernandez agreed it was about five years after Seaboard opened that they first recognized cultural landscape changes.

Nelson said the three blocks that make up Guymon's Main Street had twenty empty stores in the early 1990s.[144] As Hispanics moved into the city, they opened various *tiendas* (stores) along the thoroughfare. In 2009, Nelson stated, "There are only about half a dozen empty buildings."[145] Stores like *Zapateria Gayra*, *La Amistad,* and *Novedades Angelica*, with their "reasonable prices and longer store hours," appeal not only to Latino shoppers but also to Anglos (Figure 10).[146] Some establishments anticipated the new clientele and opened before or around the same time as Seaboard. For instance, *La Morenita* has been in business for sixteen years, successfully selling foods and other necessities not only to Latinos but also to Anglos who come in to purchase authentic Mexican products (Figure 11).[147] Guymon does not have its own Spanish-

language newspaper yet. Area gas stations offer free Hispanic-targeted newspapers from Liberal, Kansas, which include some news about happenings in the Oklahoma Panhandle.

Other establishments opened within the last ten years. One popular place mentioned by locals was the *Mexican Seafood and Taco Shop* restaurant (Figure 12). After the owner migrated from Mexico, according to Johnson, he drove a taco truck for a while in California.[148] He steered his taco truck to the city of Guymon not too long after Seaboard opened and "was an instant hit."[149] The owner's high volume of sales enabled him to buy a gas station, which he renovated and converted into the restaurant.[150] At first, Johnson noted, the menus were in Spanish and the majority of employees spoke little English.[151] When Anglos began eating there, however, the owner quickly changed his business so it could accommodate both linguistic groups.[152] He included Spanish and English translations on his menus, hired bilingual employees, and purchased a contiguous building to expand his seating capacity.[153] Even more businesses like this and other types of *tiendas*, Ayers-McCune said, will undoubtedly open soon because Latinos continue to visit city offices and apply for licenses to open such establishments, further adding to the Latinization process and helping to make Guymon an inviting place for Latinos to settle.[154]

Most Hispanic stores in Guymon denote their Latinicity with large Spanish-language signs (Figure 13). Some Latino places in the city have bright paint on their exteriors, including a pink taco and burrito shop. Owners of *La Amistad* clothing store added color to Main Street by painting the store's façade purple (Figure 14). Most Latino businesses have advertisements placed in the windows. Additionally, yard signs written in Spanish dot the area and advertise items like salsa for sale at a Guymon residence.

Another imprint of Latinicity appears in the window of a Guymon home—a Mexican flag and a flag with the image of Jesus Christ draped the casements (Figure 15).

According to business owner Antonio Velasquez, the Latino population has recently diversified. He has noticed a shift in the sale of phone cards in his *tortilleria* (tortilla shop), from those serving Mexico to ones for other Latin American destinations (Figure 16).[155] "Now," he states, "a lot of Guatemalans, El Salvadorians, some Hondurans, and Panamanians are living here."[156] This diversification in the city's populace continues to contribute to the Latinization of Guymon's landscape.

Conclusion

Prior to Seaboard's advent in the mid-1990s, Guymon experienced an economic decline. Since 1995, Guymon's cultural landscape has changed drastically. In 2007, a *Tulsa World* reporter stated that in Guymon, "Stores advertise in Spanish. Authentic Mexican restaurants pepper street corners. The manager of Homeland is brushing up on his Spanish so he can talk to customers. The skeleton downtown revived with help from Hispanic-owned businesses selling tortillas, fruits and *quinceañera* dresses."[157] The jobs Seaboard created are without a doubt the reason this town turned from "doom" to "boom."[158] As a local business owner summarized, "It's all about the hogs."[159]

In spite of the fact that its workers perform arduous and messy jobs, including slaughtering 16,000 hogs a day, Seaboard revived Guymon and enabled the city to create a new identity, an opportunity other rural American cities rarely experience.[160] By 2007, Hispanics owned twenty-five percent of the businesses, most of which "offer a piece of Hispanic culture—tortillas, Mexican candies, clothes."[161] In 2007, the city's unemployment rate was well under three percent.[162] City manager Mike Shannon said,

"You cannot find anyone to work for you… because people already have jobs, and that is sweet."[163] Elvia Hernandez recently said, "We have people living in Guymon that hail from a myriad of countries around the world that include Mexico, Guatemala, Burma, Sudan, Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, Cuba, Philippines, Puerto Rico, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Venezuela and from every social strata thereof."[164]

Indeed, House Bill 1804, the state's strict legislation on illegal immigrants/immigration passed in 2007, temporarily slowed down the Latinization process in Guymon as it did in other parts of the state. However, until someone invents a machine that will do the work Seaboard's employees now do, available jobs will no doubt continue to attract numerous Latino immigrants to Guymon. After acclimatizing themselves to American culture and coalescing with other Latinos already in the community, migrants will become comfortable residents and will continue their cultural impress on Guymon's landscape. As time passes and generational roots take hold, Guymon will have its own effectively Latinized areas—just as portions of Oklahoma City and Tulsa have.

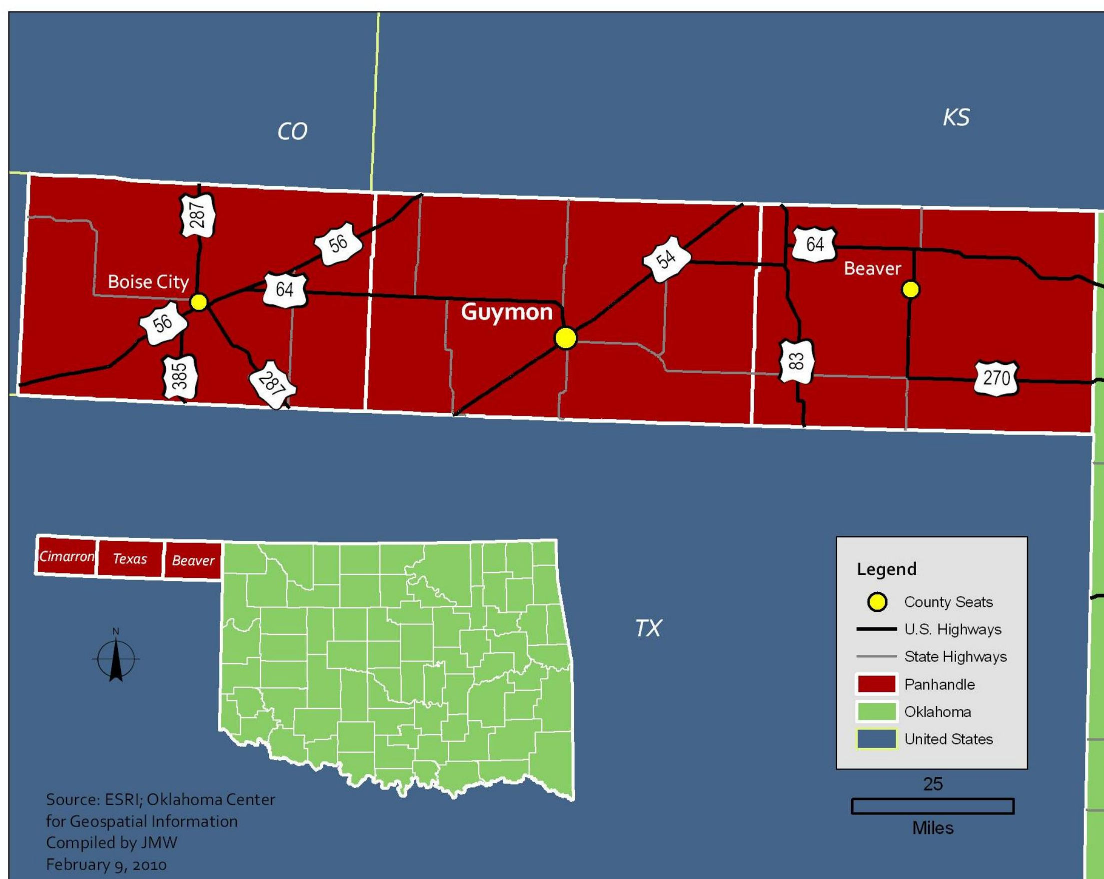

Figure 1. Guymon is the largest town in the Oklahoma Panhandle. The town is approximately a five hour drive from Oklahoma City, a six hour drive from Tulsa, and a two-and-a-half hour drive from Amarillo, Texas.

Figure 2. Some traders traveling on the Santa Fe Trail through the Oklahoma Panhandle inscribed their names on this cliff. Today, the area is known as Autograph Rock and is on a private ranch in Cimarron County (Widener April 2009).

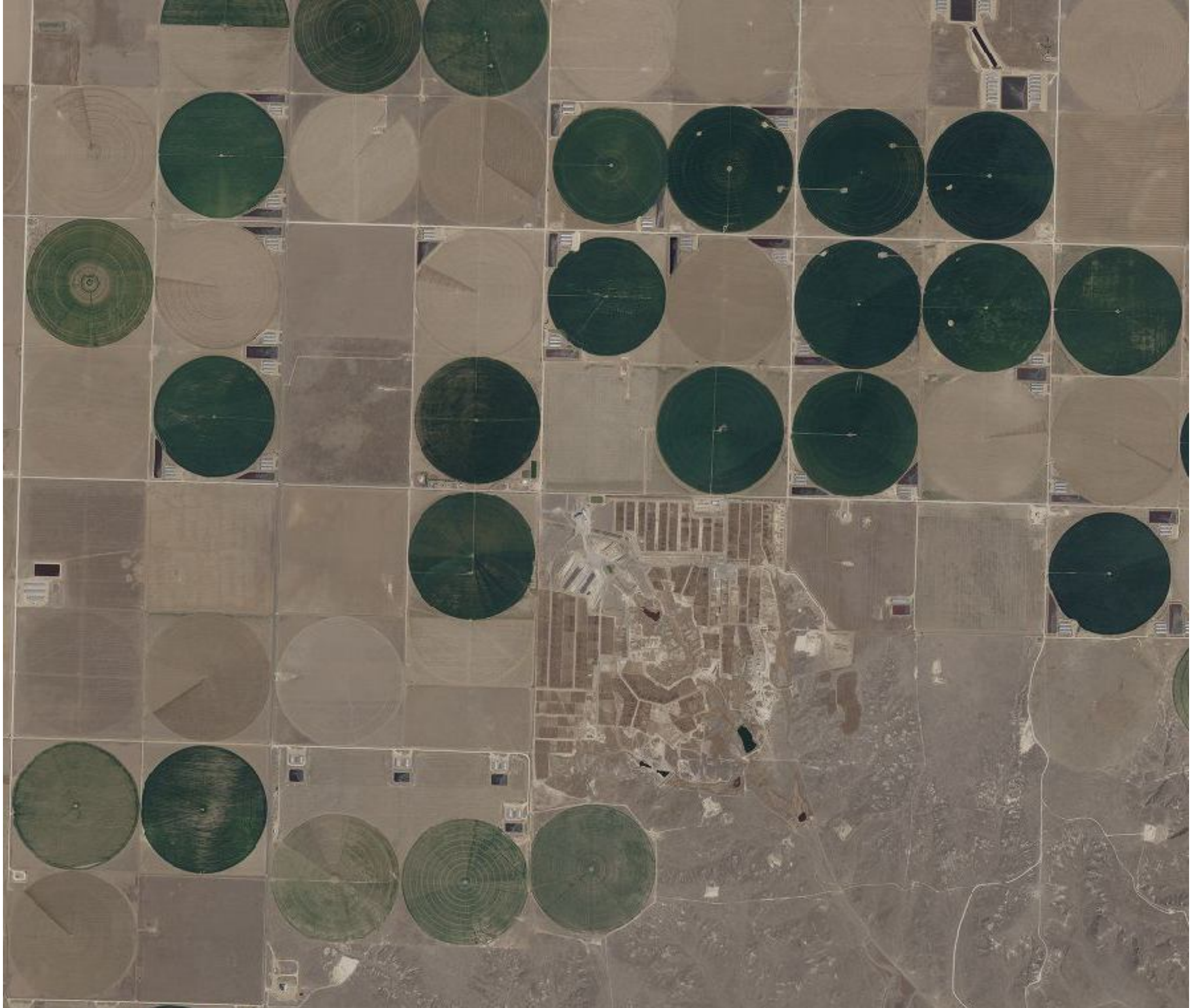

Figure 3. This 2008 Texas County mosaic shows the agricultural landscape southeast of Guymon. Corporate hog farms are located at the corners of several of the township and range section lines, often adjacent to crop circles. The dark rectangular-shaped areas on the outskirts of many of the crop circles shown are hog farm lagoons. [Source: Texas County 2008, NAIP County Mosaic Orthophotography, Center for Spatial Analysis, University of Oklahoma].

Figure 4. In 1992, Seaboard Farms, Inc. purchased the old Swift Packing Plant just outside Guymon's city limits. Since 1994, the company has operated and expanded the facility there (Widener April 2009).

Figure 5. Corporate hog farm in the Oklahoma Panhandle northwest of Guymon (Widener April 2009).

Oklahoma Panhandle Population Change 1990 to 2000: Emphasis on Texas County				
	1990 Total Population	**1990 Hispanic Population**	**2000 Total Population**	**2000 Hispanic Population**
Beaver County	6,203	300	5,857	630
Cimarron County	3,301	412	3,148	485
Texas County	16,149	1,634	20,107	6,003
Texas County Large Towns				
Guymon	**7,803**	**977**	**10,472**	**4,018**
Goodwell	1,065	91	1,192	103
Hooker	1,551	66	1,788	261
Optima	N/A	N/A	266	128
Texhoma	N/A	N/A	935	297
Tyrone	N/A	N/A	880	207

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1990 Census of Population: General Characteristics of the Population* (Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census), "Tables 5, 6," 11-12, 18, 26, 28; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *2000 Census of Population and Housing: Oklahoma* (Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census), "Table 4," 80, 88, 90, 94, 98.

Figure 6. Table showing the total population in the Oklahoma Panhandle counties with emphasis on Texas County, which is home to Seaboard Farms, Inc.

Figure 7. Guymon residents claim that *Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana* is the primary Hispanic outreach center for their growing Latino population, rather than the local Catholic church (Widener September 2009).

Figure 8. *Alma Folklórica*, Guymon High School's Hispanic dance group, has been a hit with the entire Guymon community since 2000. In this photo the dance troupe is performing at the annual Latino festival—*La Fiesta* (Widener September 2009).

Figure 9. Members of the parish of St. Peter's Catholic Church in Guymon serve traditional Mexican cuisine at the 2009 *La Fiesta* gala (Widener September 2009).

Figure 10. The Latino-influenced stores that fill the once vacant Guymon Main Street appeal not only to Hispanic shoppers but also to Anglo customers. Many of the Hispanic-run stores stay open longer to meet the needs of Seaboard employees (Widener September 2009).

Figure 11. The owner of *La Morenita* claims that he has the oldest Hispanic establishment in Guymon. He opened his doors in 1994—just before Seaboard began operations (Widener September 2009).

Figure 12. The "Taco Shop," as several Guymon residents referred to it, is one of the most popular restaurants in Guymon. The owner initially migrated from Mexico to California before coming to Oklahoma. The bright green and pink hues marks this as a distinctly Latino place (Widener September 2009).

Figure 13. *Ermosa's* clothing store replaced the restaurant formerly in the old Vestal Motel parking lot. The motel, located on Highway 54, has also changed names and is now the Pioneer Motel (Bottom photo: Widener September 2009). [Top photo courtesy of the Oklahoma Historical Society, Bob and Sue Vestal Photograph Collection, dates unknown].

Figure 14. *La Amistad's* purple facade brightens up Guymon's Main Street. The yellow sign on the door advertises the store as a licensed remittance dealer for Mexico (Widener September 2009).

Figure 15. Many of Guymon's housecapes have changed since a large number of Latinos have moved to the town. Besides the Mexican flag in the window, the resident of this home also displays a flag of Jesus Christ—both are common features of Hispanic cultural landscapes (Widener September 2009).

Figure 16. *Torrtilleria Velasquez and Sons* sells a variety of products, including phone cards. The owner, Antonio Velasquez, said that a good way to tell that Guymon's populace has diversified is from the phone cards that he sells. Customers who purchase country-specific phone cards can get better deals for their talking minutes (Widener September 2009).

[1] Edwin C. McReynolds, *Oklahoma: A History of the Sooner State* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), 3; Charles Robert Goins and Danney Goble, *Historical Atlas of Oklahoma*, 4th ed. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 38-39; *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "Coronado Expedition," (by Tom Lewis and Sara Jane Ritcher), http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/C/CO062.html (last accessed January 24, 2009).

[2] *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "Coronado Expedition," (by Tom Lewis and Sara Jane Ritcher), http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/C/CO062.html (last accessed January 24, 2009).

[3] Goins and Goble, *Historical Atlas of Oklahoma*, 4th ed., 42-43.

[4] Interview with Mr. Joe Garza, May 15, 1985, interviewed by Joe L. Todd and Judith Michener, Boise City, OK, Oral History Collection, Research Library, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK, V1985.100A.

[5] Goins and Goble, *Historical Atlas of Oklahoma*, 4th ed., 44-45.

[6] Louis Maynard, *Oklahoma Panhandle: A History and Stories of No Man's Land* (Published by author, 1956), 1.

[7] Frank Dale Healy IV and Deborah L. Dosh-Healy, eds., *They Called It Cimarron: Settling the West—Padre Island to "No Man's Land*" (Tucson, AZ: DDH Press, 1992), 3.

[8] *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "No Man's Land," (by Kenneth R. Turner), http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/N/NO001.html (last accessed January 24, 2009).

[9] Richard Nostrand, *The Hispano Homeland* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 3, 7, 81.

[10] Nostrand, *The Hispano Homeland*, 81.

[11] Nostrand, *The Hispano Homeland*, 82, 20n.

[12] Nostrand, *The Hispano Homeland*, 145.

[13] *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "No Man's Land," (by Kenneth R. Turner), http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/N/NO001.html (last accessed January 24, 2009).

[14] *The Roads of Oklahoma* (Fredericksburg, TX: Shearer Publishing, 1997), 16, 36.

[15] Oklahoma Economic Development Association, "Report on the Guymon Comprehensive Plan" (1976), report number: OEDA-76-00-00-03, B7; Lou Nelson and Rachel Sides, eds., *Guymon Area History Centennial Edition 2001* (Guymon, OK: Guymon Centennial Committee and Guymon Chapter No Man's Land Historical Society, 2001), 3, 5.

[16] Oklahoma Economic Development Association, "Report on the Guymon Comprehensive Plan" (1976), B7-B8; Nelson and Sides, eds., *Guymon Area History Centennial Edition 2001*, 3.

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[17] Oklahoma Economic Development Association, "Report on the Guymon Comprehensive Plan" (1976), B7; Nelson and Sides, eds., *Guymon Area History Centennial Edition 2001*, 5.

[18] Nelson and Sides, eds., *Guymon Area History Centennial Edition 2001*, 50.

[19] Oklahoma Economic Development Association, "Report on the Guymon Comprehensive Plan" (1976), B18.

[20] Oklahoma Economic Development Association, "Report on the Guymon Comprehensive Plan" (1976), B18.

[21] Ernest Shiner, "Texas County's Dust Bowl Image Washed Clean Away," *The Oklahoman*, April 3, 1966, 9; Shorty Shelburne, "Guymon Salutes Swift Plant," *The Oklahoman*, June 4, 1966, 5; Encyclopedia *of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "Guymon," (by Larry O'Dell), http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/G/GU007.html (last accessed January 24, 2009).

[22] *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, s.v. "Guymon," (by Larry O'Dell), http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/G/GU007.html (last accessed January 24, 2009).

[23] Oklahoma Economic Development Association, "Report on the Guymon Comprehensive Plan" (1976), B18.

[24] Oklahoma Economic Development Association, "Report on the Guymon Comprehensive Plan" (1976), B13.

[25] Oklahoma Economic Development Association, "Report on the Guymon Comprehensive Plan" (1976), B14-15.

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Chapter 6
The Future of Latinization

From 1500 to 1900, the U.S. was a refuge for European settlers. Over those same years, a number of Latin Americans sought refuge in the U.S. to a less noticeable degree. During the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, Hispanics have made their way into America to the extent that Latinization is not just worth noting but is decidedly obvious. Authors are now writing books and articles about the Latinization of America and have moved past arguing that the process is happening to describing it in detail. Indeed, as Daniel Arreola stated, Latinization is a topic geographers and historians need to address further. The existing literature, however, generally attributes the origin and growth of this process to the large number of Hispanics in certain areas. The fact that a city has a large Latino population, however, does not necessarily guarantee landscape change. Strong leaders and support organizations sustain the process and help Latinos integrate into American life while preserving and promoting aspects of their cultural heritage.

Latinos who migrated to Oklahoma in the 1900s sought work and a better life for their families. Family members and church organizations provided essentially the only help they received with their transition. That trend continued for many years. David Hayes-Bautista, Director of the Center for the Study of Latino Health at the University of California at Los Angeles in the 1990s, grew up in the 1940s and 1950s. He said that, at the time, his parents "thought the best they could do was to protect us from being Latino."[1] By then, however, children had the opportunity to attend school and better assimilate into American life. Later waves of Latino immigrants reaped the benefits of

the experience gained by the generations of Latinos already in the country. Latino leaders formed organizations that catered to their needs, helping them with education and with learning the English language. Without this kind of support, Latinos would not be integrating into American life the way they are and Latinization would not be happening in the way it currently is in Oklahoma and other states. In 1999, a *New York Times* journalist predicted, "As they find strength in numbers, as younger generations grow up with more ethnic pride and as a Latin influence starts permeating fields like entertainment, advertising and politics, Latinos are becoming visible in ways that offer glimpses of what their larger presence may mean for the United States."[2]

Three Cases of Latinization

While the written and oral histories of Latinos in Oklahoma certainly contain holes, the gaps are less apparent in historical census figures and current census estimates. Both make it unarguably clear that the state has experienced the same trend toward an ever-increasing Latino population that the nation has experienced. The Latino geographies and histories of Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Guymon are very similar. Their respective Latinizations, while occurring at different times, were initially generally a result of the same underlying foundation—work. Although Oklahoma City and Tulsa were not the first places of Oklahoma Hispanic occupation, these locations did engender the most permanent Latino settlements primarily because of the employment opportunities in each city. Guymon's current place in Oklahoma's Latino history came about much later but for the same reason—the availability of jobs.

Oklahoma City's Latino landscape is Oklahoma's most inveterate. The city's crossroads location brought and continues to bring many Hispanics. The Oklahoma City

Stockyards employed and still employs many Latino workers. Many Hispanics in both Oklahoma City and Tulsa worked for the rail lines passing through the state. Tulsa's Hispanic community, however, strengthened later than Oklahoma City's. The work associated with the oil business in the Tulsa vicinity was a magnet for immigrant labor.[3] Many Hispanics labored on the various rail lines used by the oil companies. After the coal mines closed in southeastern Oklahoma, some of those Hispanic workers migrated to the Tulsa area to work in the mines. Hispanics in both cities experienced harsh conditions during the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl era. Settlement pace remained slow in the state until after World War II. When the war was over and suburbanization became rampant throughout the U.S., many Hispanics began migrating to Oklahoma to work for the various construction companies building these new communities. White flight left areas of Oklahoma City and, later on, Tulsa blighted. These neglected areas and their cheap property prices appealed to Latinos. As a result, *barrios* began appearing in these abandoned spaces in Oklahoma City by the 1980s, giving the areas very-much-needed facelifts. By the 1990s, Tulsa's landscape had its own *barrios*. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, both cities had distinctly Latino places on their cultural landscapes.

Guymon's Latinization also centered on employment opportunities. Even though the Oklahoma Panhandle always had a few Hispanics, its Latino population did not increase rapidly until 1995 when Seaboard Foods opened up a large hog processing facility in the old Swift plant north of the city. Guymon was in an economic slump and was in the midst of its own version of white flight. A change in Oklahoma law allowed corporate hog farming and Guymon and Oklahoma wooed Seaboard to the area. This relocation was the catalyst for the Latino population growth there. About a decade later,

the town's population had doubled. The new population is principally Hispanic. Within a few years of Seaboard's opening and the forming of Latino support organizations, Guymon's landscape had Latinized. Because of Guymon's smaller size and the housing situation, Latinos have not settled in distinct *barrios* there but have dispersed within the general population. The once-vacant stores on Main Street are now Latino-run businesses that purvey goods to this culture group and to the non-Latino Guymon populace. Guymon has experienced something that many rural municipalities have not, an economic renaissance.

Furthermore, the school enrollment figures for each of the cities clearly denote the significant changes. Statewide, from 1990-2009, Hispanic student enrollment went from 15,574 to 73,172.[4] In 1990, Latinos made up about three percent of the total enrollment of 579,167.[5] In fall 2009, they made up about eleven percent of the total enrollment of 654,511.[6] According to 2008 numbers, Oklahoma City's schools were forty percent Hispanic and Tulsa's were twenty percent Hispanic.[7] One year later, those numbers changed again; Oklahoma City went up to forty-one percent and Tulsa went up to twenty-two percent.[8] In fall 2009, Oklahoma City surpassed Tulsa as the largest school district in the state.[9] Oklahoma City schools gained 1,481 students, 1,284 of them Hispanic.[10] Tulsa gained 298 students overall; however, total enrollment of Hispanics went up by 695 students.[11] In fall 2009, Guymon public school enrollment was sixty-four percent Hispanic, the highest level in the state.[12] Enrollment increased by more than 200 students over the previous year and the district hired four teachers and added two portable buildings.[13] Programs like Guymon High School's *Alma Folklórica* draw attention to the success of these students while schools continue to adjust not only to statewide funding

problems but also to the challenges, such as finding bilingual teachers and building new classrooms, presented by these student demographics. The Latino-associated changes will benefit all students. In 2009, Sandy Garrett noted, "Not all Hispanic students are new English language learners; but there are children of all ethnicities who need help learning English in virtually every Oklahoma school. The strategies educators use to help new students can help all students, as well."[14]

In all three cities, churches have anchored Hispanic growth. Little Flower Church in Oklahoma City, St. Francis Xavier in Tulsa, and *Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana* in Guymon are mainstays in the lives of Latinos. Latinos in both Oklahoma City and Tulsa received aid from Catholic Church support organizations over some rough years of existence in those cities. Other groups have formed over the ensuing years to aid, educate, and otherwise help integrate Latino newcomers and to unite and advocate recognition of and justice for Latinos intending to make Oklahoma their new permanent homeland. The combination of their increased populations, their staunch perseverance, and most importantly the support of Latin American leaders and assistance from Hispanic organizations and city officials facilitated Latinization on the landscapes of all three of these Oklahoma cities.

A variety of easily recognizable cultural features depict Latinization in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Guymon. Fieldwork documenting colorful storefronts, Spanish-language signs and billboards, Latino foods in restaurants and grocery stores, Hispanic merchandise on marketplace shelves, multi-hued murals on walls, recurrent festivals and celebrations, and the display of Mexican flags shows that these are commonplace sights now in certain areas of those cities. Hispanic newspapers, television channels, and radio

stations will now help fill in gaps and ensure that gaps will no longer be a problem in historical and geographical recordkeeping about Hispanics in Oklahoma.

Oklahoma's Latinization Model

Most scholars generally attribute the occurrence of Latinization as an outcome based solely on the number of Latinos in a certain area and as a process following a common model. The three case studies presented in this thesis, Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Guymon, initially followed the general model that intellectuals reference. That is, first generation Hispanics seek to give their families better lives than they could achieve in their countries of origin; second generation Latinos generally adapt to American culture or eventually revert to Hispanic traditions; and third generation Latinos commonly practice both Hispanic and American customs. In Oklahoma, I believe the model expanded to include a remarkable contribution by Latino community leaders that facilitated Latinization in the state. Latinization effects become noticeable when Latinos become comfortable in their environments, when they decide to make spaces into places. The ways they eventually arrive at their comfort zones are vitally important. In Oklahoma, leaders and organizations have been the key to change.

Early on in Oklahoma, many first generation Hispanics had to rely on Catholic charity organizations to get their needs in areas like healthcare and education met. Second generation Latinos, however, usually received an education and took better paying jobs than their parents. Some of these second generation Latinos in Oklahoma, such as David Castillo in Oklahoma City and Victor Orta and Yolanda Velarde-Charney of Tulsa, but also some first generation Latinos, like Patricia Fennell of Oklahoma City, have established or have been a part of a number of Hispanic organizations that assist

Hispanics in receiving education, particularly about immigration policies and the English language, in finding healthcare, and, maybe most importantly for significant Latinization, in becoming entrepreneurs.

The Hispanic Chambers of Commerce, local colleges, city officials in the case of Guymon, and other organizations have helped Latinos become knowledgeable and successful business men and women. Business incubator programs have taught them how to attain business loans, how to obtain business licenses, how to fill out the proper paper work to get their establishments opened, about bookkeeping, and about dealing with customers. Hispanic businesses are the most obvious evidence of Latinization in Oklahoma, and presumably in other cities as well. Since the 1970s, leaders in Oklahoma have formed organizations to help the Latino populace achieve the American dream, become comfortable in their environs, and effect changes on the cultural landscape.

The Future of Latinization

Latinization is happening in Oklahoma—just a little later than it did in some other areas of the country. Because of their high birth rate and ongoing migration, by 2050 the Hispanic populace in the U.S. may grow enough to cause Caucasians to lose their position as a majority group in the country.[15] In 1984, Lawrence H. Fuchs, an expert on immigration and ethnic history, envisaged, "We are probably going to have a browning of America over time. It will take six or seven generations, but ultimately, I believe, a majority of the population will be nonwhite."[16]

Latinization is increasingly noticeable in Oklahoma. Schools, services, Spanish-language media, churches, and people reflect that change. The Latinization of the cultural landscape is more evident to the casual observer. Latino businesses with their Spanish-

language signs and vibrant Latino decorations stand out along city streets. Latino leaders are working hard to build trust and support within Oklahoma communities. Oklahoma City's Latinos are clearly firmly established in the city, particularly in south Oklahoma City. Tulsa's Latinos are working on constructing a strong sense of place and are even beginning to move into other blighted areas of Tulsa like the South Peoria region. Guymon experienced a growth pattern that stemmed from and radiates from the Seaboard Farms plant and its associated hog farms. Latinos came to Guymon to fill jobs and have revitalized the city with their businesses that target and appeal to non-Latinos just as much as they do to Latinos. While most of the noticeable Latinized feature elements are semi-fixed, Latinos will no doubt begin adding fixed feature elements to the landscapes they are shaping.

Many Latinos reside in Oklahoma. This certainty and the geographical closeness of their homelands support the current premises that more will come and that Latinization is here to stay. In 2000, experts predicted that Oklahoma's Hispanic population would more than double by 2025 and that, because of intermarriage, Hispanics and other groups will "grow more alike than apart."[17] Pat Fennell commented on this prediction by saying she hopes the distinguishing cultural characteristics of ethnic groups will not be lost.[18] The visibility of Latinization on the cultural landscape is a positive step toward preserving those characteristics.

The upcoming 2010 census will likely support those predictions. In 1999, the *Tulsa World* editor wrote, "People like them—and weren't all of us like them at some point in our own histories—are the very best citizens. The determination on this end of the immigrant wave should be to help Latinos to succeed, to help us build still a better

America for everyone."[19] British, Irish, French, Italian, Spanish, and German Europeans became distinctly and solely American after several generations. Mexicans, Cubans, and other Latin Americans will likely become fully integrated and American in the not too distant future. Furthermore, distinctions between the Latin-American sub-groups will gradually lessen and may ultimately disappear. Latinized landscapes will become conventional American landscapes. Preservation of Latino cultural heritage attributes will continue but time and America will likely permeate that heritage with changed and even brand new characteristics. After all, time and Latinos have already imbued U.S. culture with Latinized characteristics.

The U.S. takes pride in its melting pot reputation, its distinction as a preeminent space for procuring a preeminent place. The predictions about 2025 and 2050 Latino population numbers cited in this thesis are necessarily based on principles of uniformity as to birth rates and migration rates. Will the current residents stay and have the expected number of babies? Latinos clearly have a history of perseverance in the state and a noticeably well-established place in the state. Will migration to Oklahoma continue at the current pace? Latinization certainly makes the state an inviting and viable place for Latinos.

Immigration legislation or the lack thereof remains an area to watch for the future. Achieving tolerance and narrowing the distinctions among all American sub-groups will continue to require vigorous efforts from intelligent and sincere leaders and from hardworking social and political organizations. Economic and environmental problems that appear to be headed toward overwhelming and possibly devastating consequences in the U.S. may require and quicken the development of that tolerance and unity. Indeed, a

solid nation will be better able to deal with issues like those that may prove to be much more harmful to the U.S. than the varying skin colors of its residents.

[1] Mireya Navarro, "Latinos Gain Visibility in Cultural Life of U.S.," *The New York Times*, September 19, 1999, 24.

[2] Mireya Navarro, "Latinos Gain Visibility in Cultural Life of U.S.," *The New York Times*, September 19, 1999, 24.

[3] Michael Smith (professor of history), in discussion with the author, February 19, 2010.

[4] Sandy Garrett (State Superintendent of Public Instruction), "Oklahoma City Surpasses Tulsa to Become the State's Largest School District," October 29, 2009, http://sde.state.ok.us/Services/News/2009/Enrollment.pdf (last accessed March 13, 2010).

[5] Sandy Garrett (State Superintendent of Public Instruction), "Oklahoma City Surpasses Tulsa to Become the State's Largest School District," October 29, 2009, http://sde.state.ok.us/Services/News/2009/Enrollment.pdf (last accessed March 13, 2010).

[6] Sandy Garrett (State Superintendent of Public Instruction), "More Students, More Challenges," November 13, 2009, http://sde.state.ok.us/Services/Column/2009/COLNov13text.txt (last accessed March 13, 2010); Sandy Garrett (State Superintendent of Public Instruction), "Oklahoma City Surpasses Tulsa to Become the State's Largest School District," October 29, 2009, http://sde.state.ok.us/Services/News/2009/Enrollment.pdf (last accessed March 13, 2010).

[7] Barbara Hoberock, "Hispanic Percentage up Sharply in Schools," *Tulsa World,* January 13, 2009, A5.

[8] Sandy Garrett (State Superintendent of Public Instruction), "Oklahoma City Surpasses Tulsa to Become the State's Largest School District," October 29, 2009, http://sde.state.ok.us/Services/News/2009/Enrollment.pdf (last accessed March 13, 2010).

[9] Sandy Garrett (State Superintendent of Public Instruction), "More Students, More Challenges," November 13, 2009, http://sde.state.ok.us/Services/Column/2009/COLNov13text.txt (last accessed March 13, 2010); Sandy Garrett (State Superintendent of Public Instruction), "Oklahoma City Surpasses Tulsa to Become the State's Largest School District," October 29, 2009, http://sde.state.ok.us/Services/News/2009/Enrollment.pdf (last accessed March 13, 2010).

[10] Sandy Garrett (State Superintendent of Public Instruction), "More Students, More Challenges," November 13, 2009, http://sde.state.ok.us/Services/Column/2009/COLNov13text.txt (last accessed March 13, 2010); Sandy Garrett (State Superintendent of Public Instruction), "Oklahoma City Surpasses Tulsa to Become the State's Largest School District," October 29, 2009, http://sde.state.ok.us/Services/News/2009/Enrollment.pdf (last accessed March 13, 2010).

[11] Sandy Garrett (State Superintendent of Public Instruction), "More Students, More Challenges," November 13, 2009, http://sde.state.ok.us/Services/Column/2009/COLNov13text.txt (last accessed March 13, 2010); Sandy Garrett (State Superintendent of Public Instruction), "Oklahoma City Surpasses Tulsa to Become the State's Largest School District," October 29, 2009, http://sde.state.ok.us/Services/News/2009/Enrollment.pdf (last accessed March 13, 2010).

[12] Sandy Garrett (State Superintendent of Public Instruction), "More Students, More Challenges," November 13, 2009, http://sde.state.ok.us/Services/Column/2009/COLNov13text.txt (last accessed March 13, 2010).

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[13] Sandy Garrett (State Superintendent of Public Instruction), "More Students, More Challenges," November 13, 2009, http://sde.state.ok.us/Services/Column/2009/COLNov13text.txt (last accessed March 13, 2010).

[14] Sandy Garrett (State Superintendent of Public Instruction), "More Students, More Challenges," November 13, 2009, http://sde.state.ok.us/Services/Column/2009/COLNov13text.txt (last accessed March 13, 2010).

[15] Devona Walker, "The Changing Face of the Heartland," *The Oklahoman*, February 18, 2008, 4A.

[16] Robert Pear, "Immigration and the Randomness of Ethnic Mix," Special to *The New York Times,* October 2, 1984, A28.

[17] David Zizzo, "State Foresees Growing Number of Minorities," *The Oklahoman*, January 24, 2000, 1-A.

[18] David Zizzo, "State Foresees Growing Number of Minorities," *The Oklahoman*, January 24, 2000, 1-A.

[19] "Immigrants—Latinos Coming to Tulsa," *Tulsa World*, April 27, 1999, 12.

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