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**City of Phoenix  
Historic Preservation Office**

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**HISPANIC HISTORIC  
PROPERTY SURVEY**

**Final Report**

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**September 30, 2006**

Rev. 0

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## A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

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This survey of Hispanics in Phoenix is a product of the efforts of many. First of all, it is critical to acknowledge two team members who were instrumental in the successful completion of this project. Historians Dr. Christine Marin and Dr. Pete R. Dimas conducted research, oral interviews, and served as content reviewers, ensuring that both academic rigor and cultural sensitivity were maintained at each phase of the project. The team also included Community Outreach Specialists Frank Barrios, Dr. Santos Vega, and Julian Reveles. These individuals collected historical information, photographs, and conducted many interviews and one-on-one surveys with the community. Historian Jared Smith also contributed important research for the report. Other community members such as Connie Meza, Frank Valenzuela, Monique Cordova, Margot Cordova, and many others, also provided information to the project. Without the efforts of the entire team, this project could not have been accomplished.

Secondly, it is important to thank the City of Phoenix Historic Preservation Office for initiating this study in order to preserve the cultural history of Phoenix, as much as its physical buildings. The City of Phoenix funded this study in part with a federal pass-through grant from the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office. Without these resources, a study of this type would not be possible. Additionally, the Hispanic Historic Property Survey could not have been accomplished without the vision of Kevin Weight, the Lead Historic Preservation Planner and Project Manager for this study, and the advocacy for this project by Historic Preservation Officer Barbara Stocklin to secure the resources necessary to accomplish this study. Additionally, Athenaeum Public History Group would like to thank the professional staff at the Arizona Historical Society, Department of Archives and Special Collections, Hayden Library, Arizona State University; Arizona Historical Foundation; City of Phoenix, Burton Barr Library, Arizona Room; Arizona State Archives, Libraries, & Public Records; and the Maricopa County Assessor's Office and the County Recorder's Office. If there are any errors within these pages, the responsibility is fully ours.

Finally, the project would not have been successful were it not for members of the Hispanic community who stepped forward to answer questions, complete surveys, pose for pictures and share their memories. Many offered family photos and valuable primary source materials for our use. On behalf of Athenaeum Public History Group, thank you for your enthusiasm, comments, and insights with regards to this endeavor and for partnering with us to preserve the history of Hispanics in Phoenix.

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**T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S**

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<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b> .....	ii
<b>METHODOLOGY</b> .....	1
<b>HISTORIC CONTEXT</b> .....	8
<b>Introduction</b>	
Roots of Hispanic Arizona	
<b>Establishing a Community, 1870-1900</b> .....	13
Residential Development	
Agriculture	
Commerce	
Political Involvement and Social Organizations	
Religion	
Education	
<b>Migration, Marginalization and Community Development, 1900-1939</b> .....	27
Residential Development	
Agriculture	
Commerce	
Political Involvement and Social Organizations	
Religion	
Education	
Recreation and Leisure	
<b>Acculturation and the Roots of Social Change, 1940-1956</b> .....	68
World War II	
Residential Development	
Agriculture	
Commerce	
Political Involvement and Social Organizations	
Health Care	
Religion	
Education	
Recreation and Leisure	
<b>Community Expansion and the Struggle For Change, 1957-1975</b> .....	108
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	117

<b>ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES</b> .....	118
<b>EVALUATION</b> .....	134
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	146
<b>APPENDICES</b> .....	150
<b>Bibliography</b>	
<b>Surveys</b>	
<b>Oral Histories</b>	
<b>Lost Properties</b>	
<b>Inventory Forms (Volume II)</b>	

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## M E T H O D O L O G Y

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### PROJECT SCOPE

In order to broaden the city's historic property designation program, the city of Phoenix Historic Preservation Office contracted this historic property survey focusing on the theme of Hispanic history in Phoenix from 1870 to 1975. The purpose of this survey is to identify the number and locations of Hispanic associated historic properties citywide and document their significance to the community. Information is needed on the extent, distribution, and potential significance of those properties associated with Phoenix's Hispanic community. This survey will not only assist in prioritizing historically eligible properties for the designation process but it will further the goals and responsibilities of the city Historic Preservation Commission to 1) identify, protect, and enhance properties of historic significance, 2) provide the basis for compliance review, 3) identify areas for future study, 4) aid staff in responding to requests for information, and 5) provide an example for other community-focused historic context studies.

The survey was funded by city of Phoenix Historic Preservation Bond funds as well as a Certified Local Government grant received from the National Park Service through the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office.

### ASSURANCES

In order to accomplish this survey Athenaeum Public History Group followed three general principles:

- 1) The project adhered to the standards of research and scholarship established by the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation* and recognized practices of the historical discipline.<sup>1</sup>
- 2) The project involved the Hispanic community of Phoenix in significant and meaningful ways. This went beyond soliciting community members for information and participation in oral histories to include educational outreach activities to promote historic preservation, review and commentary on project reports via institutional participation<sup>2</sup>, and transmitted project materials (e.g. oral history tapes/transcripts, copies of the final report) to community accessible repositories.
- 3) The project went beyond the typical architectural survey and recommendations for eligibility. This report identifies other means for preserving and presenting (e.g. publications, exhibits, commemorative markers) the history of the Hispanic community in Phoenix.

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore J. Karamanski, *Ethics and Public History: An Anthology* (Malabar, FL: Robert Krieger Publishing Company, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> The project used experts and professionals from Arizona State University, Braun Sacred Heart Foundation, and community leaders identified through the project to review and comment on the work.

## **NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA**

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, it is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect our historic and archeological resources. The National Register is administered by the National Park Service under the Secretary of the Interior and through State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO). Properties listed in the National Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture.

Listing properties in the National Register often changes the way communities perceive their historic places and strengthens the credibility of efforts by private citizens and public officials to preserve these resources as living parts of our communities. Listing honors a property by recognizing its importance to its community, state, or the nation. The National Register, which recognizes the values of properties as diverse as a dugout shelter of an Oklahoma pioneer settler, the Breakers Mansion in Newport, and a 12,000-year-old prehistoric site, has helped many to appreciate the richness and variety of the Nation's heritage.

The National Register's standards for evaluating the significance of properties were developed to recognize the accomplishments of all peoples who have made a significant contribution to our country's history and heritage. The criteria are designed to guide state and local governments, Federal agencies, and others in evaluating potential entries in the National Register.

### **Criteria for Evaluation**

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A.** That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B.** That are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C.** That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D.** That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history; and be at least fifty years old.

This following report provides a historic context for evaluating properties for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The primary area of significance is *Ethnic Heritage: Hispanic*, as listed in National Register Bulletin 16A, pages 40 and 41. Other areas of significance within this context include *Community Planning and Development*, *Commerce*, *Agriculture*, *Social History*, *Politics/Government*, and *Entertainment/Recreation*.

This context focuses largely on the experiences and stories of Phoenix residents of Mexican descent before 1956, since they were the majority ethnic group in terms of what is defined as "Hispanic" today. Even if Hispanics came from other states to Arizona during this time, they primarily traced

their roots to Mexico (and some to Spain through Mexico). For example, the 1950 U.S. census for Arizona found that of the “foreign-born” white population under who would be considered “Hispanics” today, only 2 percent came from countries other than Mexico.<sup>3</sup> It is important to note here the use of terminology when describing the Hispanic community’s history. In this report, the terms “Mexican,” “Mexican American,” “Chicano,” and “Hispanic,” will be used when referring to people of Mexican descent. These terms are based on Phoenix residents’ self-identification as well as markers created by scholars to define different generations. The terms will be used, for the most part, chronologically. For example, the terms “Mexican” or “Mexican American,” is appropriate for use throughout the narrative, while in this study the term “Chicano” will be utilized for the period of 1960-1975, in reference to the generation linked to political activism at this time. Some long-time residents identified as “Chicano” prior to the 1970s, but most preferred “Mexican” or “Mexican American.” This report gives preference to historic nomenclature rather than the generic, modern term of “Hispanic,” and so this term is used sparingly throughout the report.<sup>4</sup>

While the National Register Criteria would indicate a historical context study that concentrated on the development of the Hispanic community in Phoenix prior to 1956, the period of significance must take into account the struggle for equality and growth of political involvement that defined and shaped the community today. Therefore, the project includes a discussion of the period between 1957 and 1975, in which various organizations, events and significant individuals are highlighted who played a role at this time.

Finally, this context study examines the development of the Hispanic community in Phoenix through its evidentiary remains on the built environment. This study identifies Hispanic neighborhoods or *barrios* which were restricted to the southern section of Phoenix until the 1970s, as well as commercial, religious and institutional properties. The project includes familiar properties like Immaculate Heart Church, the Marcos de Niza Housing Project, Grant Park, and the *Cuatro Milpas* neighborhood.

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<sup>3</sup> In the U.S. Census prior to 1960 (except in 1930), Hispanic individuals in Arizona were counted as “whites.” A break down of “foreign born” whites in the 1950 Arizona census confirms the analysis that a very tiny percentage of “Hispanics” were not from Mexico. During this year, nearly 25,000 individuals in Arizona identified themselves from Mexico, while 30 came from Guatemala, 20 from Nicaragua, 25 from El Salvador, 10 from Panama, 10 from Cuba, 5 from Venezuela, 5 from Ecuador, 10 from Peru, 40 from Brazil, 20 from Chile, 40 from Argentina, and 420 from Spain. Source from the *1950 U.S. Census of Population, Nativity and Parentage Report*.

<sup>4</sup> The use of racial and cultural identifiers conforms to the guidelines of *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15<sup>th</sup> edition, and the practice generally accepted by historians. Terms that may appear culturally charged were reviewed by members of the project team to ensure their appropriate use. It should be noted that the term “Chicano” was a self-identifying term used by some individuals prior to World War II, but became more commonly accepted after the 1960s.

**STUDY AREA BOUNDARY**

While the general study area boundary is designed to encompass the city as whole (in its present day annexed boundary), the actual study area was narrowed by the concentration of Hispanic populations as determined by census data and those areas found significant through interacting with the community (Figure 1). Specifically, the survey effort concentrated the region south of the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks to the Salt River, east of Central Avenue to 24<sup>th</sup> Street; west of Central Avenue to 27<sup>th</sup> Avenue and south of the Salt River to Baseline, east to 48<sup>th</sup> Street and west to 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

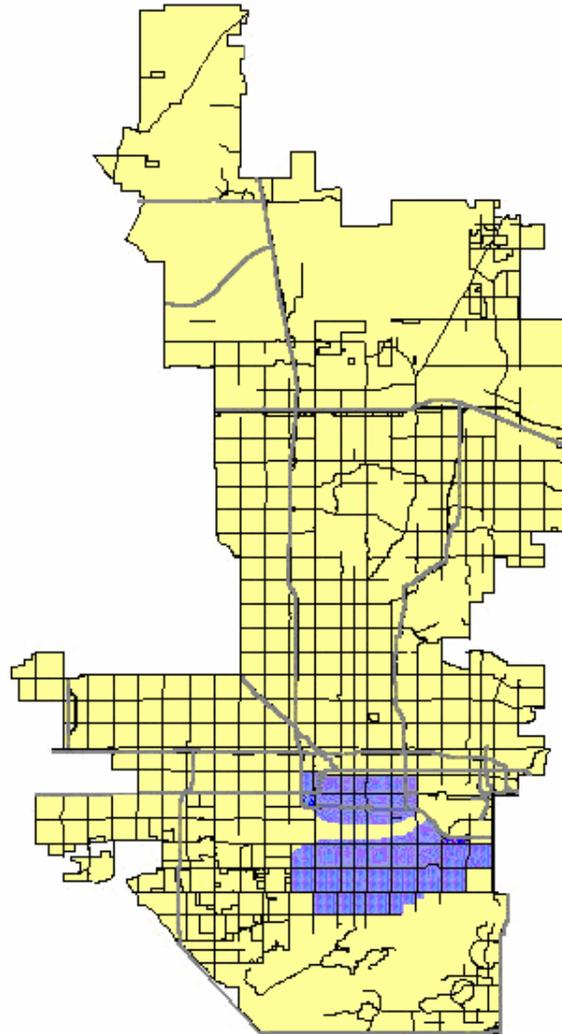


Figure 1

Hispanic Historic Property Survey Study Area

## **ARCHIVAL RESEARCH**

Archival research for this project included research at the city of Phoenix Historic Preservation Office; Arizona State Library, Archives, and Public Records; Phoenix Public Library; Office of the Maricopa County Assessor; Department of Archives and Special Collections, Hayden Library, Arizona State University; Arizona Historical Society; and the Arizona Historical Foundation. A bibliography of sources is provided under its own heading.

## **ORAL HISTORIES**

Research for the historic context narrative includes the use of oral history interviews with long-time Mexican American residents. Oral history interviews in conjunction with written historical sources provide a more thorough understanding of the past, especially since the history of minority communities is often difficult to locate in traditional sources. Researchers examined and incorporated information from oral histories completed in local history projects such as the 1998 Grant Park History project, the 2005 *Los Veteranos of World War II: A Mission for Social Change in Central Arizona* video project, and the 2003 Barrios Unidos History project.

This project selected fourteen interview candidates who could convey a breadth of information on a variety of subjects within the community. As a result, researchers conducted oral interviews with long-time residents Adam Diaz, Mary López Garcia, Leo Dominguez, Encarnación “Chon” Hernandez, Arsenia Cota Torres, Mary Gonzales, Katie Valenzuela Macias, Rosalia Soto Burriel, Dr. José Burruel, Concepción Muñoz Joya, Joe Torres, Mary Walker Camarena, Rudy Domenzain, and Frank Barrios. Two were telephone interviews, and twelve were recorded. Six of the interviews were conducted through the Braun Sacred Heart Center Inc., and of these interviews, three of these recorded interviews are released for use by the City of Phoenix. All interviews conducted by the Braun Sacred Heart Center Inc. are available in their office. Special thanks to Dr. Pete Dimas, Dr. Santos Vega, Dr. Christine Marin, Frank Barrios, and Jean Reynolds for collecting these important stories—and to the individuals who shared the stories of their lives.

## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH ACTIVITIES**

The project team gathered information from the community through various outreach strategies. The community outreach phase included interacting with major Hispanic cultural institutions in the community to locate historical information and identify potential oral history candidates. The outreach team conducted written surveys with community members. Each survey was a one-on-one “mini-interview” personally conducted by the Historians and Community Outreach Specialists, either in person or over the telephone. The target audience has been women and men of the Hispanic community who remember Phoenix and places important to the community prior to 1956. Other outreach efforts have included passing out flyers and survey forms, and conducting short presentations on the project.

Organizations targeted and events conducted include:

- Phoenix Union High School Alumni Reunion
- Golden Gate Settlement Center
- Arizona State University alumni
- Phoenix First Families

Community meeting at El Portal Restaurant  
 Phoenix College's "Symposium on the Latino Community: Issues, Challenges and Future"  
 Latino Advisory Board for Phoenix Boys Choir presentation  
 Wesley Community Center (senior program) outreach  
 South Mountain Village Planning Committee  
 Tamale Festival in Phoenix  
 Christmas Day Mass at Sacred Heart Church  
 American Legion Post 41  
 Central City Village Planning Committee  
 El Grupo meeting  
 Marcos de Niza Senior Center outreach  
 Arizona Historical Society Central Arizona Division Board  
 Phoenix Memorial Hospital Advisory Board  
 LULAC District 1  
 Phoenix Inner City Collaborative  
 Phoenix College's "Politics, the Catholic Church, and the Mexican Community in Pre World  
     War II Phoenix" presentation  
 Barrios Unidos community meeting  
 REFORMA meeting, presentation to Phoenix Hispanic librarians  
 Project results presentations at Emmett McLoughlin Community Center, Immaculate Heart  
     Church, and Phoenix College

In the final phase of the project, the team conducted three community presentations to present preliminary findings to the public, and to solicit public comment. These presentations were held at:

Emmett McLoughlin Recreation Center, August 14, 2006  
 Immaculate Heart Church Social Hall, August 24, 2006  
 Phoenix College, August 21, 2006

In addition to presentations, survey distribution and personal outreach/data collection efforts, the Survey project received some media publicity:

Phoenix Channel 11 features (2 total)  
 Spanish-language talk show on 1190 AM  
*Latino Perspectives* December 2005 article  
*Arizona Republic, La Voz*- articles written on the survey in 2005 and 2006.  
 Various electronic newsletter/listserv announcements  
 American Legion Post 41 newsletter announcement.  
*Our Neighborhood/Nuestro Barrio* newsletter article, published by Phoenix Revitalization Corporation, Inc.

### **FIELD SURVEY**

In order to obtain an indication of the extent and location of properties considered, field work consisted of a series of reconnaissance surveys and intensive field surveys. Project historians, teamed with community liaisons, drove through specific study areas "talking through" the places

encountered and making notes for further research. Subsequent reconnaissance surveys and intense field studies were conducted to take photographs and gather pertinent property level information.

### **EXPECTED RESULTS**

This survey is a community based survey that focuses on a particular cultural community in Phoenix. Unlike a traditional architectural survey driven by National Register Criterion C, this survey examines the significant events and people that are associated with Hispanic history in Phoenix from 1870 to 1975. It is the expectation of this study that there will be a number of properties that meet National Register Criterion A – Association with events that have made significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; and Criterion B – Association with the lives of persons significant in our past.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, many properties identified will have integrity issues. Still this does not diminish their importance under Criteria A and B.

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<sup>5</sup> Patricia L. Parker and Thomas F. King, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties [National Register Bulletin 38]* (Washington DC: Department of Interior, 1990; revised 1992; 1998), 11. Additional discussion may be found in Antoinette J. Lee, Cultural Diversity and Historic Preservation. CRM Volume 15, Number 7. (Washington DC: Department of Interior, 1992).

## HISPANIC HISTORY IN PHOENIX, 1870-1975

### *INTRODUCTION*

“The Mexican people made this town. They made this town by supporting the legislators, supporting all the politicians, and also because of construction.... We, the Mexican laborers, built this town.... And all those little towns [around Phoenix] were born because of the Mexican labor in the farms....”—Joe Torres.<sup>6</sup>

The history of Phoenix’s Mexican American community dates to the founding of the city. From the beginning, Phoenicians of Mexican descent participated actively in its development. Although the Anglo population increased rapidly by 1900 and quickly overshadowed the Mexican community, Hispanics fiercely held their own and created thriving barrios, businesses and churches. This community included individuals from different social classes and experiences. Over the twentieth century, social and political organizations arose to create a political voice for an underrepresented population who did not see an elected city official from their community from 1886, when Henry Garfias worked his last year as city marshal, until Adam Diaz stepped into a city council seat in 1954. The Mexican American population grew and expanded in several sections of the city, most of them remaining in the central city area until after World War II. Although the city’s built environment has radically changed since 1870, the history of Phoenix’s Mexican American community is deeply connected to its buildings, neighborhoods and significant properties.

The story of Phoenix’s first city councilman of Mexican descent provides a rich example of the kinds of people that have come from the Hispanic community. In 1906, José and Soledad Diaz “took up arms” in Veracruz against Mexican dictator Porfirio Diaz. The couple traveled in northern Mexico with other rebels, until they fled the country and moved north to Flagstaff, Arizona. Their first son, Adam, was born in 1909, and the family moved to Phoenix shortly thereafter. They built a home at 12<sup>th</sup> and Madison Streets, and Adam attended Washington and Monroe elementary schools. The family worshiped at St. Mary’s Church. After experiencing discrimination there, Soledad and other Mexican women began selling enchiladas, tamales and other food to raise money to build a new Catholic church—the future Immaculate Heart of Mary Church. In 1923, Adam graduated from 8<sup>th</sup> grade but could not continue his education due to the death of his father. He began working at the age of 14, and eventually secured a position as an elevator operator for the Luhrs Hotel in downtown Phoenix. Adam later worked as a building manager and bookkeeper for George Luhrs, and met many prominent Anglo politicians and businessmen who patronized the Arizona Club in the building.

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<sup>6</sup> Joe Torres, Interview by Dr. Pete R. Dimas, May 8, 2006, CD recording.

Adam Diaz soon met his wife, Feliz, and they married in 1929 at the newly constructed Immaculate Heart Church. The young couple purchased a home at 25<sup>th</sup> Street and Monte Vista Road, but Anglo neighbors told them they were not welcome in the neighborhood. The couple moved to the Grant Park neighborhood, where Adam became active in the barrio. Between the 1930s and 1950s, he joined several local Mexican American organizations that promoted community betterment through political participation, education, and social services. All of this community work, coupled with interaction with prominent Anglos in Phoenix, led to his political involvement. Diaz became Phoenix's first Mexican American city councilman in 1954.<sup>7</sup>



Adam Diaz, c. 1940.  
Courtesy of Diaz Family

The story of Adam Diaz's rise from a young elevator operator to city councilman and community activist illustrates the connection between the Hispanic community and the development of Phoenix as a prominent southwest metropolis. Through personal and organizational histories, the Hispanic community in Phoenix demonstrates their significance in creating the built environment, and shaping the cultural landscapes of the community as a whole. The Hispanic Historic Property Survey provides an opportunity to reveal these stories, and to identify places associated with this context that may be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The following narrative provides an overview of the development of Phoenix's Mexican American community from 1870 until 1975.

It focuses on the people, places and events that create a historic context for association and evaluation of potentially eligible historic properties. The narrative begins with the roots of Mexican history in Arizona, and then develops the story of migration to Phoenix in its founding years. Next, the narrative traces the community's geographic and social development in periods between 1900-1939, and 1940-1959. The historic context narrative concludes with a discussion of the significant events and people in the period from 1960 to 1975, when a new generation of leaders and community members emerged to enter political office and take on civil rights issues connected to the Chicano experience.

## ***ROOTS OF HISPANIC ARIZONA***

The presence of Mexicans in Arizona dates back several centuries, since the area that includes present-day Arizona existed as the northern frontier of New Spain, and later, Mexico, until the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848. Through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the United States obtained the area of Arizona north of the Gila River, leaving Tucson and other southern Arizona settlements as part of Mexico. Five years later the Gadsden Purchase negotiated acquisition of land south of the Gila River to the present-day Mexican border, which completed the

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<sup>7</sup> Adam Diaz, Interview by Pete R. Dimas, May 8, 2006, CD recording; Elvia Diaz, "A Wise Mentor" *Arizona Republic*, n.d.

American expansion into its present continental borders. Suddenly recent Mexican citizens found themselves strangers in their own land. The area that is now Arizona began to change over time as more and more Americans arrived to try their fortunes in the West.

In the 1850s, Mexicans migrated northward into what is now Arizona to work in the mines and the supporting agricultural endeavors. In this early period, indigenous peoples lived, for the most part, as uneasy neighbors with Mexican settlers, and both were inextricably linked to the land. Long before the founding of Phoenix, the Mexican population of Arizona cultivated the soil and raised livestock with considerable success. Constant warfare with the Apache and other nomadic tribes kept the residents of southern Arizona — the Tucson and Tubac presidios, and numerous other scattered communities and ranchos — on alert throughout much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the 1700s and 1800s, these hardy Mexican settlers raised a variety of crops, as well as livestock like sheep, cattle, horses, and mules — much of the same animals associated with farming in the United States today. Mexican entrepreneurs, farmers, stock raisers, miners, and their families carved their existence on a harsh and unforgiving frontier long before the arrival of *Yanquis* (Anglo-Americans) to the region.<sup>8</sup>

Farther north, the Salt River Valley of Arizona remained uncultivated, despite its agricultural potential. Sporadic warfare between Apache and Yavapai raiders, and the Pimas of the Gila River Valley made the future site of Phoenix all but uninhabitable. It was not until the United States Army and a force of Arizona Volunteers (including Pima fighting men and their Maricopa allies) established Camp McDowell northeast of the Salt River Valley in September 1865 that long-term settlement in the area was possible.

From the beginning, it was clear that the economic basis of any Salt River Valley community was going to be agriculture. Aside from the ready market of hungry soldiers, ranchers, and miners, the Salt River Valley showed ample evidence of the agricultural potential of the region. Hundreds of miles of canals and countless archaeological sites remained as testimony to the efforts of what came to be known as the Hohokam civilization. For at least a thousand years, the Hohokam people thrived in the agricultural oasis of the Salt River Valley, before an untimely departure sometime in the fifteenth century that still remains something of a mystery. Regardless of the reasons for the demise of this irrigation-based civilization, numerous farmers, businessmen, and land speculators saw the potential value of re-vamping the system that the Hohokam created. Among these hopefuls were the Mexican farmers and ranchers of southern Arizona and northern Sonora, Mexico, who decided to come north. The movement north was further stimulated by Mexican miners owing to the growth of the mining frontier in central Arizona.<sup>9</sup>

The establishment of Camp McDowell to protect the mines led to the arrival of many *Mexicanos* drawn northward from Sonora, who sought opportunities for employment at Camp McDowell and along the Salt River with John Y.T. Smith. Smith possessed a legal contract to supply Camp McDowell with fodder in order to meet the needs of cavalry, draft animals, and other livestock at

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<sup>8</sup> James E. Officer, *Hispanic Arizona, 1536-1856* (Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 1987), 14-15. Officer notes specifically on p.15 of *Hispanic Arizona* that the “isolation of the Pimeria Alta [early name for Hispanic controlled Arizona] and its limited population provided little inspiration for major agricultural development...”

<sup>9</sup> Bradford Luckingham, *Phoenix: The History of a Southwestern Metropolis* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1989), 12-13.

the fort. He established his hay camp along the Salt River, at the eastern edge of present-day Sky Harbor International Airport. Smith hired the Mexicans who camped along the southern portion of the Salt River to cut the hay, and he constructed make-shift shelters for them along the natural flow of the river. These Mexicans served Smith and Camp McDowell as post guides, translators, laborers, and as interpreters for the military forces. For example, Paz Salazar served as post guide for Captain James Curtis, Troop 1, 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry, on missions to make contacts with the roaming Apaches in September, 1871. Post guide Pedro Lachesuo was hired to help the Mexican civilians, who were employed as adobe makers for the repair of run-down buildings. These Mexican artisans also built new structures for the garrison of Camp McDowell in early 1872. Rosalia Burriel and José Burruel, who trace their family's presence in Arizona to at least the Mexican period, reveal that their grandmother, a teacher at the Mission San Xavier del Bac, moved to Camp McDowell to engage in farming.<sup>10</sup>

In 1867, John W. "Jack" Swilling and his wife Trinidad arrived in the Salt River Valley. Trinidad Escalante, who may have been the first Mexican woman to live in the early settlement of Phoenix, was born in Hermosillo, Sonora in 1847. At the age of thirteen Trinidad traveled north with her mother to the small town of Tucson. At this time, Anglo American men were beginning to settle and intermingle in the long-established Mexican settlements in present-day southern Arizona. Since very few Anglo American women lived on the southwestern frontier, (the census recorded only 44 in the Arizona area in 1860), these men often took Mexican or American Indian women as wives. Jack Swilling, a Missouri native and ex-Confederate soldier, met Trinidad in Tucson. She was seventeen when they married in 1864. Swilling was a man of questionable integrity and high ambitions. He pursued mining claims in central and northern Arizona. After their wedding, they moved to Prescott, where Jack worked a mining claim with an Arizona mountain man, Pauline Weaver.<sup>11</sup>

Swilling and his wife moved again to Wickenburg where he obtained financial support to organize the Swilling Irrigating and Canal Company. This group dug the first modern canal system in the Phoenix area and established the town site of Phoenix, earning Swilling the title "The Father of Phoenix." As irrigation workers, Mexican laborers helped Swilling develop the Old Town Ditch, or the "Swilling Ditch," along Van Buren Street in the Phoenix town site. His wife Trinidad moved to her Phoenix homestead, called *Dos Casas*, in 1868, in time to witness the celebration as the men turned the first water from the Salt River into the town's main canal. Their adobe home, located near present-day 36<sup>th</sup> and Washington Streets, was recognized "as the first permanent American dwelling erected in the Salt River Valley by a White settler," meaning Swilling.<sup>12</sup> A few months after her arrival, several Anglo American women moved with their husbands to the small farming community located north of the Salt River. Trinidad raised seven children, two of whom died early, and cared for two Apache children as well. When she died in 1925, an *Arizona Republic*

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<sup>10</sup> Christine Marin. "The First Mexican Americans in Central and Salt River Valleys." Presented at the Third Annual Lecture Series of the Arizona Historical Society, Phoenix, 1987, 5-6; Rosalia Burriel, Interview by Pete R. Dimas, April 14, 2006; José Burruel, Interview by Pete R. Dimas, June 2, 2006. (Note: the two families spell their names differently).

<sup>11</sup> Mark Estes, "Anatomy of Early Arizona Marriages: Companionship, Status and Money." *The Pulse*, 1993, 4-5; "Statement of Mrs. Trinidad Shoemaker (Formerly Mrs. Jack Swilling)." Oral History transcript, March 2, 1923, Salt River Project History Services.

<sup>12</sup> Marin, "First Mexican Americans," 7.

article called her “one of the best known pioneer figures of the Salt River Valley.” Since some Phoenix historians recognize Jack Swilling as the “father” of Phoenix, Trinidad Escalante Swilling can be considered the “mother” of Phoenix, which suggests that one of Phoenix’s founders was a Mexican woman.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> “Pioneer Woman of Early Period Dies Following Illness.” *Arizona Republic*, December 28, 1925; “Statement of Mrs. Trinidad Shoemaker (Formerly Mrs. Jack Swilling).” Oral History transcript, March 2, 1923, Salt River Project History Services. Trinidad lived at a variety of locations according to city directories, particularly in the area between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenues, from Mohave to Apache Streets, between 1909 to 1920. There were no listings for Trinidad between 1921 and 1925.