

ETHNICITY AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES
IN SAN MARCOS: FACTORS BEHIND
SEGREGATION IN TWO
LOCAL CEMETERIES

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council
of Texas State University—San Marcos
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of ARTS

by

Jennifer Orosco Roth, B.A.

San Marcos, Texas
May 2007

COPYRIGHT

by

Jennifer Orosco Roth

2007

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my family who has been my strength throughout this process. Thank you for your love, for your patience, and most of all, thank you for your encouragement.

--JOR

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank John Carrillo, Elena Carrillo Contreras, and T.L. Torres of the San Pedro Cemetery Association for their contribution to this thesis. They allowed me to ask countless questions and always answered more than graciously.

Special thanks go to Jim Cullen of the Hays County Historical Commission for his aid and enthusiasm with this project.

I also wish to thank the professors at Texas State University—San Marcos and at St. Mary's University of San Antonio who have guided me through this process.

This manuscript was submitted on March 23, 2007.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	ix
INTRODUCTION.....	x
CHAPTER	
I. HISTORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Cemeteries.....	1
Mexican Americans in Texas.....	4
II. SEGREGATION OF MEXICAN AMERICANS IN SAN MARCOS.....	8
Introduction.....	8
Public School Education.....	9
Politics.....	12
Occupation.....	14
GI Forum.....	17
Conclusion.....	18
III. SAN MARCOS CEMETERY.....	20
Introduction.....	20
Background.....	21
Analyses of the Data.....	22
Change in Discriminatory Attitudes.....	30
Conclusion.....	32
IV. SAN PEDRO CEMETERY.....	33
Introduction.....	33
Background.....	33

Forms of Discrimination against Mexican Americans.....	36
Analysis of the San Pedro Cemetery Database.....	38
San Pedro Cemetery Association.....	41
Conclusion.....	42
CONCLUSION.....	43
APPENDIX A: Spanish Surname Veterans Buried at San Marcos Cemetery.....	44
APPENDIX B: List of Interviews.....	45
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	46

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: Numbers and Dates of Spanish Surname Burials in San Marcos Cemetery, by Section, according to the Hearn and Kerbow (1990) and Juarez (2006) Databases.....	24
Table 2: Spanish Surname Burials by Date of Death and Spanish Inscriptions, and % County Mexican American Population.....	30
Table 3: Numbers and Dates of Burials in San Pedro Cemetery.....	40

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: Map of San Marcos Cemetery.....	29

INTRODUCTION

Located in San Marcos, Texas are two distinct cemeteries: San Marcos “City” Cemetery and San Pedro Cemetery. The burials in San Marcos Cemetery are predominantly Anglo¹ while San Pedro is comprised of almost all Mexican American burials. In this thesis, I question why the need for a separate Mexican American cemetery arose. In addition to the family cohesiveness of Mexican Americans, I argue that ethnic discrimination against them and economic inequalities between the ethnic groups both led to the creation of San Pedro Cemetery.

To understand the background of the ethnic tensions taking place in San Marcos during the time of the cemeteries’ establishments, the literature review focuses on the history of Mexican Americans in Texas. Furthermore, a discussion of ethnic cemeteries reveals how they are places of cultural preservation.

Next, the chapter on racial tensions in San Marcos gives a deeper look as to why Mexican Americans wanted a cemetery of their own. I consulted several transcribed interviews, memoirs, and other papers by Mexican Americans (located in the San Marcos and Hays County Collection at the San Marcos Public Library) to understand the racial discrimination at a more personal level. Also documented is how the Mexican

¹ In this thesis, I use the term “Anglo” to distinguish non-Hispanic whites from Mexican Americans. However, as Foley states, “[i]n reducing all whites of European decent into one category, the term *Anglo*... fails completely to identify any single ethnic group” (1997:8). Furthermore, since Hispanics can be in any racial category (e.g. white or black), I refer to their discrimination as ethnic, not racial.

Americans in San Marcos fought to gain racial equality in education, politics, and in the business world.

The first cemetery analyzed for this project is San Marcos Cemetery. Using the *Hays County, Texas Cemetery Inscriptions Volume II* (Hearn and Kerbow, 1990), I developed a database of all burials listed with Spanish surnames at San Marcos Cemetery. These data allowed for analyses based on different variables. Examples of the information produced are the percentage of Spanish surname burials in the cemetery, spatial placement of Spanish surname burials, and a timeline showing dates of death correlated with Spanish language usage.

In addition, nine individuals found in Davis' oral history section in *Sueños y recuerdos del pasado/Dreams and Memories of the Past*, are buried in San Marcos Cemetery. The oral histories give insight to who these people were, and how they may have been considered a part of a special Mexican American "elite", and were thus interred in the Anglo cemetery.

A second cemetery database, compiled during April and May 2006, comes from Dr. Ana Juarez's Mexican American Cultures class at Texas State University—San Marcos. The database studies all decorated graves at San Marcos Cemetery. From the class' database, I was able to sort through the information for all Spanish surname graves. From this population I saw a significant increase in Hispanic burials at the cemetery, thus signifying a change in discriminatory attitudes toward Mexican Americans in San Marcos.

San Pedro Cemetery is the second cemetery analyzed. It shows that ethnic discrimination and economic inequalities were the pivotal reasons why this cemetery was

created, as related to me through interviews and correspondence with three members of the San Pedro Cemetery Association, and by Johnnie Armstead, the founder of the Calaboose Black History Museum in San Marcos.

San Pedro Cemetery also has a database of its own, created by John Carrillo of the San Pedro Cemetery Association. These data allowed for comparisons with San Marcos Cemetery. Dates of death show that as the Civil Rights Movement took place in the 1960s, less Mexican American burials occurred at San Pedro, and they increased at San Marcos Cemetery.

Last, attending meetings and events of the San Pedro Cemetery Association, and interviews with three of its members, gave me the opportunity to examine how they continue to run and maintain this “free” cemetery. Built out of necessity from discrimination, San Pedro continues today with its legacy of charity for all of those who need it.

CHAPTER I

HISTORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

San Marcos, Texas, is a multicultural city of 46,111 people (U.S. Census Bureau 2005 estimate²). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2002), in 2000 the city was comprised of White Americans (72.6%), Hispanic or Latino Americans (36.5%) of any race, and Black or African Americans (5.5%). With two large ethnicities residing in the city, San Marcos also is home to both Anglo and Hispanic cemeteries. Did these culturally distinct cemeteries arise out of preference or prejudice? Did the founders of the cemeteries want cultural cohesiveness even in death? Before any answers to these questions are considered, one must first understand the history behind these questions. Understanding the history of cemeteries, particularly in the state of Texas, and the history of Mexican Americans in Texas, helps explain how these cemeteries arose.

Cemeteries

Our society's funeral rites have taken place, for the most part, in cemeteries. David Sloane (1991:13) lists four types of final resting places used by Americans before the new nineteenth century cemeteries developed. First, pioneers interred their dead in isolated places, often in a disorganized manner. Second, due to increasing permanent settlement, family farms began to incorporate burial grounds onto their lands, thus

² The 2000 U.S. Census showed a population of 34,733 for San Marcos (2002).

allowing for a more intimate burial ceremony. Third, churchyard cemeteries were erected on church grounds. This led to the opportunity of entombment beneath churches in either public or private facilities. The fourth type of burial place is the town potter's field. These places were "designated for the destitute or those not accepted into other burial places. Potter's fields were transient places and were often abandoned after a severe epidemic" (Sloane 1991:13-14).

Although cemeteries are specific places to bury the dead, Richard Meyer (1993:3) suggests that the cemeteries of the past, as well as of the present, are excellent examples of American culture through the ages. An expression of this comes from two Ukrainian cemeteries Meyer studied in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Meyer states that

Rather than isolated examples of ethnicity or remembrances of Ukraine, I found a vibrant constellation of motifs which formed a full picture of Ukrainian culture, history, aspirations and religiosity. The spirit of being Ukrainian shines through these stones, both the longing for their homeland and what is considered to be morally appropriate for life on this earth. (1993:37)

In addition to headstone inscriptions, patterns of burial in ethnic cemeteries are also links to culture (Meyer 1993). In some Ukrainian cemeteries, for example, occupation determines where one rests (1993:55-59). In Hawaii, before Western contact, Hawaiians buried valuables or personal items with the dead, and they separated the deceased according to caste (1993:213-216). Mexican-American communities often share motifs, such as concrete crosses, niches with photographs, enclosures surrounding individual graves, and concrete potholders (1993:163). Many ethnic cemeteries reflect the cemeteries of the old countries, especially those of the Chinese (1993:193-199), Japanese (1993:199-213), and Polynesians (1993:213-220) in Hawaii.

Each culture and their cemeteries are unique; however, there are similarities that run through them. For example, ethnic cemeteries such as those of the Czechs began not

out of discrimination, but out of cultural cohesiveness (Meyer 1993:81). Many tombstone inscriptions are in mother tongues. Meyer found that over 90% of the inscriptions he studied in Ukrainian cemeteries were written in Ukrainian (1993:38). Another similarity found among the ethnic cemeteries is change. Although still keeping with tradition, the cemeteries change as the ethnic communities assimilate to, or incorporate themselves into surrounding cultures. Italian-Americans took wake practices out of the house and into the funeral parlor (1993:17). In some Jewish cemeteries, the elaborate and ornate grave styles from Europe have become more similar to the common American grave markers (1993:147). There is also a blending of traditions, as in the case of Alfred K. Lorenzo of New Mexico. Lorenzo lived a cross-cultural lifestyle and assisted researchers due to his unique cultural experiences (1993:175). Zuni, Navajo, and Mormon practices all took place at his funeral (1993:191).

Like other American ethnic cemeteries, Texas ethnic cemeteries have their own unique characteristics. Terry Jordan (1982) has shown how these cemeteries differ from one another in the form of “truths”, or reoccurring phenomena, and through the analysis of three different types of rural cemeteries found in Texas: Southern folk cemeteries, Mexican graveyards, and Texas German graveyards. The first truth is differences that occur between ethnic groups, between regions, and even between neighboring cemeteries. The second is cemeteries are primarily for the living, as shown through the reflection of traditional customs in cemeteries, by set dates for “decoration days,” and by welcoming items such as picnic tables and visitor registration boxes to welcome people in. The third truth of traditional Texas cemeteries is conservatism. Cemeteries are where folkways survive in a fast-changing world, especially in rural setting where Jordan states

people tend to be more superstitious. Jordan quotes James Deetz by stating, “religious institutions and their artifacts are known to be the most conservative aspects of a culture, resisting change” (1982:6). In contradiction to the third truth, the fourth truth is change. Few folk cemeteries remain unaltered. Many cemeteries have adapted to surrounding cultures, and others have fallen to neglect (1982:1-7).

Mexican Americans in Texas

Mexican American cemeteries are common throughout Texas. To understand these cemeteries, one must first appreciate the history of the people and their culture in the region. Several factors led to the segregation of Mexican Americans in Texas and to the segregation of Mexican Americans in Texas cemeteries.

David Montejano, in *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*, interprets Mexican and Anglo relations in Texas “since the Alamo” by not only giving historical accounts of events, but also by giving sociological accounts (1987:1). Social change, ethnicity, and society are crucial to a full understanding of the past and present (1987:3). Montejano fills the gap in the “absence of a sociological memory...nowhere more evident than in the study of race and ethnic relations in the Southwest” (Montejano 1987:1).

Beginning with the time of Incorporation (1836-1900), Montejano gives a glimpse of Texas after the Mexican War. During this time, the Rio Grande held expectations to rival the Mississippi River, and with the independence of Texas the Anglos felt this could not be anything but *manifest destiny* (1987:16,24). In other words, American control and domination was inevitable. Above the Nueces River towns were now overrun by Anglo businesses catering to Anglo needs, practically running off their

Texas Mexican populations. Along the Rio Grande, Texas Mexican populations remained steadfast, but repatriation after the Mexican War allowed new settlements to be established (1987:26-34). Anglo merchants made fortunes by flexibly adjusting to wavering political allegiances in the Mexican territories. Lawyers capitalized in the land market and claimed numerous Mexican lands for Anglos. Many Anglos are portrayed here as robbers of Mexican lands and cattle (1987:42-47).

During the time of Reconstruction (1900-1920), commercial agriculture changed the area. Farming communities from the North and Midwest moved into the area and disrupted the “peace structure” created by Anglos and Mexicans, igniting the fire of the “race struggle” in the early part of the 1900s (Montejano 1987:104). The feudal system of the Texas Mexican *haciendas* fascinated the new settlers, but their different views on economic development proved to be incompatible.

The newcomers wanted publicly financed improvements—paved roads, marketing facilities, irrigation projects, schools, and so on...Mexican landowners...were quite conservative about any change, about selling land or encouraging settlement, and thus generally acted to obstruct any venture that threatened to disrupt their way of life (Montejano 1987:111).

Soon, the Mexican ranch society collapsed, and again Mexicans were displaced from their lands. In counties where the majority of the land-owning population was Mexican, Anglos and European immigrants took control of trade and politics (1987:113-117).

The era of Segregation (1920-1940) brought more complications for Texas Mexicans. In general, agricultural communities, such as San Marcos, Anglos comprised the upper class while Mexicans filled the lower class of sharecroppers and laborers (Montejano 1987:160). Farm towns had two sides: an orderly and well-kept Anglo side, and the cheap hamlets of the Mexicans. Alongside segregated residential areas, separate

schools (and even hospitals, such as in Taft Ranch, San Patricio County) were established for Mexican use (1987:160,163-164,167).

The period of Integration (1940-1986) saw Mexican Americans struggling for full citizenship. Segregation for the Mexicans began to deteriorate with the political influence of Anglo farmers. As agribusiness “urbanized,” many, but not all, Anglo merchants developed profitable relationships with Mexican customers (Montejano 1987:259). During the years of World War II, despite improvements in race relations, many Mexican Americans still could find only menial jobs (1987:268-269). Through the Civil Rights and Chicano Movements (social movements spanning the mid-1950s through the 1960s), Mexican Americans began to gain more positions of power, as was seen in the growing Hispanic representation in San Antonio’s City Council during 1952 through 1985 (1987:294). This pattern of integration is evidenced in the cemeteries. By the 1960s, more and more Mexican Americans in San Marcos were buried in the Anglo cemetery, where once before only the “elite” Hispanics rested. Integration continues today, and in cities such as San Antonio, Texas, Hispanic populations have become population majorities (Reda 2001).

Neil Foley, in *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (1997), offers another interpretation on how ethnic tension between Anglo Americans and Mexican Americans arose. As industrial cotton production in the 1920s moved from the South United States to the West, Texas became the merging point of Anglo ethnoracial relations with blacks (South) and Mexicans (Southwest) (1997:3-4). South-central Texas cotton ranches soon replaced black and poor white tenant farmers and sharecroppers with Mexicans “because owners believed they could better control and

exploit Mexican immigrants” (1997:5). Race relations were no longer just black and white. Under what category would “partly colored races” fall (1997:5)? Furthermore, “[f]or many white Texans, a Mexican American was simply a contradiction in terms, a hybridization of mutually exclusive races, nationalities, and cultures” (1997:8).

CHAPTER II

SEGREGATION OF MEXICAN AMERICANS IN SAN MARCOS

Introduction

The city of San Marcos, Texas, is home to two commonly used cemeteries, both of which have been in continuous operation throughout the twentieth century. These two cemeteries, San Marcos Cemetery and San Pedro Cemetery, boast their own unique cultural identities. San Marcos Cemetery is the predominantly Anglo cemetery in town, while San Pedro Cemetery is one of the larger Mexican American cemeteries in the area. The segregation and discrimination of Mexican Americans in San Marcos is one reason for such distinctiveness.

For one to comprehend why cultural separation occurs in San Marcos cemeteries, it is critical to understand other forms of segregation and discrimination against Mexican Americans evident in the city's history. The Mexican American struggle for equal opportunity in education, political representation, and in occupation clearly reveals ethnic tensions in San Marcos history. Exploring the educational, political, and occupational woes of San Marcos Mexican Americans reveals distinct racial/ethnic barriers. Great change in favor of Mexican Americans in their efforts for racial equality is exemplified in the discrimination against Pvt. Felix Longoria, a Mexican American veteran (see p.23).

Public School Education

According to Davis (2000:26), Mexican American children in San Marcos during the latter part of the 1800s received little to no formal education. On the one hand, families needed their children to work on farms and ranches; and on the other, city schools refused Mexican American students' attendance. Any chance for these students to receive an education fell to country schools. Not until 1899 was there considerable discussion by the San Marcos School Board to open school doors to Mexican American children (2000:26).

Researching the minutes of the San Marcos School Board, Dr. Yolanda Fuentes Espinoza (2001) accounts for much of the history of early Mexican American education in the city. Espinoza states that it was not until April 1901, that the Mexican American students received their own schoolhouse (the former "Colored School"). An average of 15 to 20 students attended this newly formed Mexican school. Later in March 1902, El Buen Pastor United Methodist Church became the new location of the Mexican School (Davis 2000).

According to Davis (2000:27), "...at one point the school board nearly closed the school because of poor attendance." No doubt the fact that the harvest season lasted through September and October lowered school attendance. Ultimately, the school remained open due to an influx of a large number of Mexican immigrants looking to prosper in the United States in 1914 (2000:7,27). In spite of finally gaining a house of education, Davis reports that the Mexican school was terribly behind "white school" standards. Mexican American students received inadequate resources; for example, pleas

from parents requesting running water in the schoolhouse went unanswered for years, and a permanent teaching staff was nonexistent.

...few Mexican American students were able to make it to junior high school, due to the inherent limitations imposed on them. The Hispanics were made to feel inferior in many ways. They were not expected to succeed academically. Their language was banned from the school grounds. The school buses would not pick up Mexican American children. (2000:27).

During the 1950s (public school records from 1929 to 1951 were destroyed in a fire), Mexican American school campuses became classified as “white” (Espinoza 2001:2). Even with this reclassification, school identifications of “white” and “brown” still separated the institutions. Despite the rulings in *Brown vs. the Board of Education* that led to the integration of schools, “for many Mexican Americans in San Marcos, the schools continued to be unresponsive to their needs and interests” (Davis 2000:28).

Not until the 1960s and 1970s was there significant change for Mexican Americans in the school system (Espinoza 2001:3-4). More Mexican American teachers received employment and more Mexican American administrators held positions in integrated schools. In 2001, Espinoza states that “all the elementary schools in San Marcos offer... bilingual program[s] to students of limited English proficiency” (2001:4). Based on the evidence above, it is not hard to see how the institution of education segregated and discriminated against Mexican Americans. Fortunately, much has changed to improve Mexican American education.

Oral histories found in the San Marcos and Hays County Collection located in the San Marcos Public Library, lend a more personal side to the situation. The first selection comes from an interview with Luciano Flores (1978), the first Mexican American mayor of San Marcos. Flores states that during the 1930s roughly 50 Mexican American families resided in San Marcos. The children of these families went to the Mexican

school, or Southside School. Flores recalls that “[t]he schools were completely segregated,” (1978:1) and if their sports teams defeated the teams of the Anglo schools, “...they would have stones thrown at them (1978:1).” Flores recounts that few Mexican American students attended Southwest Texas State University, and the Anglo students usually ridiculed those who did. In 1978, Flores believed that racism against Mexican Americans in San Marcos had declined.

The memoir of Celestino Mendez (ND), the first Mexican American elected to the San Marcos School Board, also describes segregation and discrimination. Mendez recalls that schools for Mexican American students “were segregated and inferior,” and the words of equality in the Pledge of Allegiance seemed “empty” to him. Mendez goes on to write that school districts throughout Texas “were under Anglo domination”, and it was hard for Mexican Americans with an education to gain leadership roles in the school system. Furthermore, during the 1970s, several Mexican American students took part in school boycotts in order to have their demands met (e.g. for “educational success for all”) (pp.1-2,8).

A interview with Augustine Lucio in 1985 also reveals discrimination. He was a decorated WWII veteran and was the first Mexican American to run for a San Marcos public office—a slot on the school board in 1950 (Lucio 1985). Lucio remembers that school semesters occurred during work seasons in the fields. Despite his parents’ insistence to continue his education, and despite his taking summer school classes, he could not keep up with full-time students. Eventually in 1940, Lucio dropped out of school (1985:2). Soon afterward he joined the military, thinking that he would be more mature when he returned and would be able to complete his education. In the military,

those who had obtained education went on to become officers, thus inspiring Lucio even more to receive an education. Because of their education, Lucio felt his comrades had bright futures ahead of them. He believed education was everything (1985:3).

Eventually Lucio received his GED and took a course in Business Administration.

Isabel Fuentez Preuss (ND), though from nearby Luling and not San Marcos, remembers that not all Mexican American students could speak English, and students living on the Mexican side of town went to the two-roomed Mexican school. Mostly the boys attended school. Many children had to sacrifice their education to help their families with work, but Preuss' parents wanted their daughters to continue their educations. Despite this wish, Preuss left school at the age of 15 to work in the cotton fields, and her sister left school because she could not get along with the teacher (Preuss, pp.2-3,5,10,18).

Though education for Mexican Americans during this time was limited and hard to achieve, it is evident that some Mexican Americans believed education was the key to the future.

Politics

Mexican Americans in San Marcos fought yet another battle, which was for political representation. With the end of World War II, veterans and their families moved into the cities "...possess[ing] the training, skill, experience, and courage to demand the same freedoms at home that they had fought for abroad" (Davis 2000). With support from the GI Forum (discussed later) and Better Citizens for Better Government (BCBG), Mexican Americans in San Marcos had a base from which to campaign for representation.

Augustine Lucio believes the Mexican American political movement in San Marcos initially began in the form of a social movement (Lucio 1985). The movement “...became political simply because of the fact that...we felt that we could not use public facilities simply because we were Hispanics” (1985:13). Lucio goes on to say that as they encouraged people to pay poll taxes and register to vote (see below), they needed to give the people an issue about which to vote. He ran for the school board in 1950 and lost, but it was a beginning for Mexican American representation in education.

In 1960, Ruben Ruiz, a write-in candidate, became the first Mexican American to run for the San Marcos City Council. Though he lost the race, the next year he won the election and “...bec[ame] the first Mexican American elected to public office in San Marcos” (Davis 2000:60). Celestino Mendez (ND) believes that

Ruben Ruiz’s success at City Hall, coupled with more receptive and progressive Anglo council members insured more opportunity for minorities as city employees and a more equitable distribution of services and infrastructure improvement projects. (Mendez, page 9)

Realizing in the 1960s that election of more Mexican Americans to office required more Mexican American registered voters, the people turned to the GI Forum (see p.22) (Davis 2000). Legally, the Forum could not pay for others’ poll taxes, so they devised a plan to sponsor dances. These popular community gatherings charged admission--an admission that was the precise cost of the poll tax (\$1.75 in the 1960s). As the patrons paid admission to the dances, the money also registered them to vote. Regardless of the success, “...few Hispanics were economically independent enough to allow them to run for office” (2000:60-61), so Mexican American candidates were limited in number.

Fear of Anglo repercussions also loomed over potential Mexican American candidates. Frank Castañeda is a perfect example of this. In the mid-1950s, Castañeda ran for election to the San Marcos School Board. His employer's wife happened to be a member of the Board. Castañeda knew if he did not drop out of the election, he would soon be in search of another job. Refusing to give up, Castañeda lost both the election and his employment (Davis 2000:61).

In recent times, there have been numerous Mexican Americans, both male and female, who have earned positions of leadership in San Marcos. It was a slow and steady gain for representation in the face of discrimination.

Occupation

Mexican Americans in San Marcos were not only told what schools they could put their children in, they were also limited in the occupations they could hold. Mexican Americans once again experienced discrimination, this time in the workforce.

Especially during the late nineteenth century, Mexican Americans in San Marcos made up the majority of the agricultural workforce (Davis 2000:9). There were not many other positions open to them during this time. Most families were sharecroppers or managed ranches. They were frequently able to produce their own food and sometimes received credit at town stores for other necessities (Davis 2000:9). Other families did not have it so good. Many Mexican Americans had to settle for migrant labor work. These jobs (e.g. farm work and the cotton industry) required travel for months of the year, the work consisted of hard labor, and entire families contributed to the work force. Landowners also were not always fair with compensation (Davis 2000:10). There was nothing for the laborers to do but accept the situation.

Neil Foley's (1997) account of the segregation of Mexican Americans states that during the 1920s, the continuing immigration of Mexicans across the border and into Texas had the Anglos fearing the demise of "white" civilization. The apprehension of "the social, economic, and biological consequences" to the ethnoracial order was great for many (1997:41). On the other hand, Anglo employers of Mexicans saw these immigrants as inferior. In no way could they threaten the "white" way of life (1997:40-1). Though the lives of Anglos and Mexicans were segregated, and although Anglos vehemently rejected social interaction between them, "clean" or Mexicans that seemed more "white" were somewhat tolerated (1997:41-2).

Although there is an account of a farm worker rally held in Umland in 1912 with the goal of improving the lives of laborers and sharecroppers, it was not until World War II that any significant changes came about for Mexican American workers in San Marcos (Davis 2000:10). Wartime labor shortages brought rural workers into the city. Women who were once domestic workers now were able to work in such places as department stores and restaurants but they were not encouraged to take positions of authority (2000:11). Veterans utilized the GI Bill of Rights and attended college and trade schools. Factories moving to the area allowed further opportunities for work. Mexican Americans believed this was definitely better than sharecropping and migrant labor (2000:13).

Mexican Americans who ventured to open their own businesses took great risk. Most businesses that succeeded were ethnically segregated. (This was true for Anglo businesses too.) Many Mexican American businesses were small, such as little restaurants, fruit stands and bakeries. There were also larger companies, such as Mexican

American-owned funeral homes, and despite the obstacles some became professionals such as doctors (Davis 2000:14).

Luciano Flores recalls that during his childhood (Flores was 55 years old at the time of his interview in 1978), drug stores would not let Mexican Americans eat their ice cream in the stores, so they began selling the ice cream on the streets (1978:7). Flores also remembers that many university students would not enter the Mexican or south side of town³. Many Mexican restaurants, however, were located in other areas of the city, and "...the biggest customers were the students" (Flores 1978:6). Celestino Mendez (ND) states that Mexican Americans holding degrees at the time had it hard in the business world. Anglo domination in the school districts forced many teachers to move to the Valley. Isabel Fuentez Preuss remembers that there were stores just for "white" people (ND:26). Interestingly, in stores in which Mexican Americans were welcome, Preuss refers to the owners as German or Catholic (ND:21,29). She never calls them white. It appears that these European immigrants were not associated with the top racial rung of whiteness; therefore, they tend to be not as discriminatory toward immigrants of color. As explained by Foley, "...not all European groups became white at the same time..." (1997:8). An illustration of this is the Irish people. They

remained outside the circle of whiteness until they learned the meaning of whiteness and adopted its racial ideology. Texas Germans who belonged to the Republican Party did not share the racial animosity of other whites toward Mexicans and blacks and were frequently suspected of being traitors to their race. (1997:8)

After World War II, the Mexican American businesses seemed to grow. In 1985, a Hispanic Chamber of Commerce opened and today Mexican American businesses thrive in the community (Davis 2000:18).

³ There is a gap of information in the transcription, but I believe the timeframe is during the 1950s to early 1960s.

GI Forum

Though racial tensions were widespread between Anglos and Mexican Americans for the better part of the twentieth century, the American GI Forum was an organization that finally got Mexican American voices heard and progress began to bloom. The GI Forum was founded in 1948 by Corpus Christi, Texas physician and veteran Army Major, Hector P. Garcia (American GI Forum 2007). Mexican American and other Hispanic veterans returning from overseas were eager to put their GI Bill of Rights to good use. Education, housing, and medical care are some of the benefits offered under the GI Bill, but many authorities denied these rights to returning soldiers based on their Hispanic heritage (2007). Dr. Garcia was so enraged that he established the forum to ensure the Hispanic population their well-deserved rights under the GI Bill (de la Teja, et al. 2004:407).

The GI Forum not only enforced the GI Bill, it quickly allowed Mexican Americans to become involved in other issues. One of the earliest cases the GI Forum brought to the public's attention was the case involving Pvt. Felix Longoria (Davis 2000). Longoria fought in the Philippines at the end of World War II, and was killed in action in 1945. His body was not returned to United States soil until 1949 (de la Teja, et al. 2004:407-8; American GI Forum 2007). The problem was that "the funeral director in his hometown of Three Rivers, Texas, refused to handle his body because he was 'a Mexican'" (Davis 2000:55). With the help of then U.S. Congressman from Texas Lyndon B. Johnson, Longoria received a full military burial at Arlington National Cemetery (Washington, D.C.) (2000).

The G.I. Forum quickly became the most effective advocate in the state for improving the lives of Mexican Americans by organizing whole communities for

school integration, to overturn institutional discrimination, and to wage successful campaigns for political power. (Davis 2000:55)

In 1948, Dr. Hector Garcia founded the third chapter of the American GI Forum in San Marcos. To the public, the veterans were heroes. People were willing to listen to veterans, and Anglos began to pay attention. In San Marcos, the forum helped elect Mexican Americans to the school board and to other public offices. (Davis 2000)

Community leaders in San Marcos such as Celestino Mendez, saw the GI Forum as “a vital instrument in the Hispanic Civil Rights Movement” (ND:3). Augustine Lucio was so impressed by the Forum that he joined the organization; he saw the organization as a “necessity” to accomplish the goals of the Mexican American community (Lucio 1985:13). With the people acting together, discrimination began to dissipate.

Conclusion

Mexican Americans battled the plague of discrimination in several spheres of life. The blatant discrimination that has been documented in public education, jobs, and politics extended to the city’s cemeteries. If Anglos did not want Mexican Americans in school with their children, if they were not welcome to run for public office, if the majority of jobs open to them were performing menial labor, then why would Anglos want Mexican Americans buried beside them?

The Mexican American Civil Rights Movement of the post World War II era strived to eliminate segregation and discriminatory practices in education, politics, and in the workforce. During the 1950s the American GI Forum and the League of United Latin American Citizens were the leaders in this fight for equal rights (De León and Calvert 2001:3). By the 1960s national movements such as the Chicano Movement became prominent. In 1968, “[t]he Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund...

emerged as the most successful civil-rights organization of the late twentieth century” (2001:4). By the 1970s the *Raza Unida* became a political party, further fighting to eliminate ethnoracial inequalities (2001:3). Mexican Americans made great strides battling the injustices forced upon them during these years, and they continue to progress even today.

CHAPTER III

SAN MARCOS CEMETERY

Introduction

Graveyards are not just places where people bury the dead, they are places for the living to gather and remember. Furthermore, they are testament to the cultures they represent. Throughout Texas, there are many “ethnic” graveyards, and each is truly unique. Anglos, Germans, Hispanics and Blacks are some of the ethnic groups that have cemeteries in Texas; each is easily distinguishable from the other (Jordan 1982).

In the city of San Marcos “[I]ittle information is available about the burial grounds of Mexican Americans during the 1800s” (Davis 2000:37). This era finds the farms and the land on which Mexican Americans worked serving as their final resting places. Many of the burial sites have been lost to weather and time but occasionally an exciting rediscovery occurs, such as a farmer locating a headstone while tilling the land.

...Herold “Buddy” Abel, Jr... discovered a small burial site on his land about three miles southwest of San Marcos in the area known as Stringtown. The site appears to have been for the Hispanic laborers who lived and worked there. All that remains are rotted crosses and limestone rocks depicting the headstones and footstones of graves. (Davis 2000:37)

Throughout Hays County today there are several established Mexican American cemeteries, including San Pedro Cemetery (San Marcos), LosVasquez (near Buda), San Vicente (Kyle), and “La Luz” Cemetery (near Staples) (Davis 2000:38).

Discrimination existed against Mexican Americans in San Marcos, Texas through the 1960s, and there are patterns of this discrimination in the city's cemeteries. This chapter will cover San Marcos Cemetery, which is Anglo in majority but has a significant number of Hispanic burials. After discussing the history of San Marcos Cemetery, the use of two San Marcos Cemetery databases aid in the analysis of segregation in the cemetery.

Background

In 1846, according to the Friends of the San Marcos Cemetery (2006), a small cemetery was located in present-day downtown San Marcos on the corner of Hutchison and Comanche Streets. Hearn and Kerbow (1990) of the Hays County Historical Commission, provide more of the history: After 30 years, the city outgrew the space allotted. The choice was made to move some of the interred bodies to other cemeteries in cities around the area, such as Buda and Seguin. The newly established San Marcos Cemetery received the other bodies. Mrs. Judy Shadrach Dixon sold a ten-acre tract of land to the San Marcos Cemetery Association in 1876. Because of the relocation of the cemetery, at least four grave inscriptions date earlier than 1876 at City Cemetery. Up until 1989 there had been three more land additions to the cemetery. Several slave graves are located in Section U (See Table 1), and were already in place before the cemetery purchased the original plot of land. The San Marcos Cemetery Association sold the cemetery to the city of San Marcos in 1924, and the city still owns and manages the cemetery today (Hearn and Kerbow 1990:10).

City Cemetery is an important historical site in the eyes of many (Hearn and Kerbow 1990). In the 1890s the erection of an outdoor, Gothic-arched chapel added to

the scenery of the cemetery. In 1962 a mausoleum was built on cemetery grounds. In 1973 a declaration made this chapel a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark. In addition, during 1983, the National Register of Historic Places added the cemetery to its register (Hearn and Kerbow 1990:9). Furthermore, City Cemetery is the final resting place for several veterans from the War for Texas Independence, the War of 1812, the 1846 Mexican War, the U.S. Civil War (both Confederate and Union), Spanish American War, World Wars I and II, and from the Korean War and Vietnam conflict. Some families have six generations of relatives buried in City Cemetery (Hearn and Kerbow 1990:10).

Analyses of the Data

San Marcos Cemetery is comprised mainly of graves with non-Hispanic surnames, but there is a small amount of Hispanic representation within the cemetery. With such a significant Hispanic population in the region, I believe the lack of strong representation in the cemetery is due to ethnic and economic biases dating back to the days of the cemetery's founding. As stated in the 2000 U.S. Census, San Marcos is 36.5% Hispanic, from any race (U.S. Census Bureau 2002). The census did not use this category in 1910, and instead classified Hispanics as white; however, the 1910 Census did count the number of foreign-born persons in Hays County. Out of a total population of 15,518 persons, 1,767 individuals (11.39%) born in Mexico resided in Hays County (U.S. Census Bureau 2006a). In addition, Davis (2000:7) states the number of Mexican Americans in the state of Texas was 279,317 in 1910. This research, focusing on Mexican American representation at the cemetery until 1990, reveals some significant patterns.

The first analysis utilizes the *Hays County, Texas Cemetery Inscriptions Volume II* (Hearn and Kerbow, 1990). This volume is a compilation of the 4,764 grave inscriptions located in City Cemetery. The data includes inscriptions for all graves at City Cemetery (until 1990) and each grave's location by section (see map—Figure 1). Counting the number of Spanish surnames in the database allowed for an analysis of the Mexican American presence at City Cemetery. For the purposes of this study, Spanish surnames determined ethnic status, although there are limitations to this method⁴. Based on the percentage of the Hispanic population in San Marcos, I expected that at least several hundred Spanish surnames would be in the list, but only 176 Spanish surnames appeared. Thus, only 3.69% of the graves have Spanish surnames.

A compilation of the data available for all 176 Spanish surname burials included in Hearn and Kerbow (1990) was placed into a spreadsheet. Sorting the information using different variables (e.g. Spanish surname burials by section, military presence, dates of death, and Spanish-language inscriptions) showed the patterns that occurred for the Hispanics buried here. Below is a table that represents the number of Mexican American graves in each section of San Marcos Cemetery.

Out of twenty-three sections, twelve, or almost half, contain no known Spanish-surname graves. Another six sections contain four Hispanic graves or less. Only five sections of the cemetery hold a significant amount of Mexican American graves, and

⁴ For example, Hispanics and Latin Americans may have non-Spanish surnames, and intermarriage may influence these patronyms. Future research could seek out or develop better sources to determine ethnicity. For instance, one could examine death certificates, cemetery records, or oral histories for ethnic data. Future research should also consider the affects of intermarriage. Furthermore, some surnames were indefinite, and verification came with the assistance of Dr. Juarez. D'Spain was one such example. One of the first names was Alonzo, which might be a Hispanic family, although there was no evidence to support this. Since these four graves were the only possible Hispanics in their sections (E and N), they were excluded from the study.

David L. Word's and R. Colby Perkins, Jr.'s (1996) *Building a Spanish Surname List for the 1990s—A New Approach to an Old Problem*, was consulted for any name questioned to be Hispanic in origin.

these sections are B, C, D, I, and T. Looking at the map of City Cemetery (Figure 1, p.39), it is clear that all of these sections are located on the outskirts or edge of the cemetery near Ranch Road 12, suggesting ethnic segregation⁵. Of these, the densest population is in Section D, with sixty-one Hispanic graves. Dates of death for Spanish

Table 1: Numbers and Dates of Spanish Surname Burials in San Marcos Cemetery, by Section, according to the Hearn and Kerbow (1990) and Juarez (2006) Databases

Section	Number of Spanish Surname Burials (1990)	Dates of Death for Spanish Surname Burials (1990)	Number of Decorated Spanish Surname Burials ⁶ (2006)	Dates of Death for Decorated Spanish Surname Burials (2006)
A	4	1971-1986	1	2003
B	24	1934-1987	9	1969-2003
C	29	1936-1988	16	1936-2000
D	61	1928-1987	70	1906 ⁷ -2005
E	0	-----	2	2004
F	0	-----	3	2004
G	0	-----	0	-----
H	0	-----	0	-----
I	23	1928-1988	110	1928-2006
J	0	-----	0	-----
K	1	1982	3	1944-2004
L	1	1966	2	1966-1994
M	0	-----	1	2005
N	0	-----	0	-----
O	0	-----	0	-----
P	0	-----	0	-----
Q	1	1975	1	2003
R	3	1918-1975	9	1997-2006
S	0	-----	0	-----
T	27	1947-1988	43	1968-2005
U	2	1884-1920	0	-----
V	0	-----	0	-----
W	0	-----	0	-----

⁵ This could also reflect the natural growth of the cemetery (i.e. later burials).

⁶ Data were collected between March and April 2006. This information is discussed later in the chapter (pp.41-42).

⁷ Discrepancies between the 1990 and 2006 dates are due to human error in the data collections.

surname burials in this section range from 1928 to 1987. In addition, Section U of the cemetery contains slave graves.⁸ This pattern of reserving certain sections of cemeteries for persons of different religions and races or ethnicities is very common in Texas (e.g. see *Texas Graveyards*, 1982:1).

Once a pattern of segregation is established, it can be intensified by a family's desire to be buried together. Some Hispanic families buried at San Marcos Cemetery keep their families close together even in death, thus maintaining ethnic segregation and keeping the culture together. In these cases family solidarity, not segregation or discrimination, continues to separate the Hispanic from the Anglo burial sites. Several Hispanic interviewees confirmed this as they stated their wish of interment near their families (e.g. Contreras 2007; Gonzales 2006; Torres 2007). An example of this is the Carlos Mendez, Sr. family. Familial terms on the headstones confirm that Carlos, Juanita, Carlos, Jr., Julia and Roberto Mendez are all related. They are buried in section D of San Marcos Cemetery (Hearn and Kerbow 1990). Furthermore, a number of the Mexican Americans (who lived during the first half of the twentieth century) buried at San Marcos Cemetery may be part of a special "elite" (e.g. occupation, military veterans, etc.). Davis (2000) verified that several of those buried in the cemetery were prominent business people. Only one was a professional—a physician.

The "elite" graves include José C. (1899-1969) and Pauline Espinosa (1902-1974) were buried in Section C (Hearn and Kerbow 1990). As Davis (2000) states, the couple owned Pauline's Grocery, established in 1935. The store was located on what are now MLK and Guadalupe Streets. Davis also mentions that along with several others, José

⁸ Mrs. Johnnie Armstead, founder of the Calaboose Black History Museum, informed me that the slave graves at San Marcos Cemetery were on the land before it belonged to the cemetery (March 2, 2007). African Americans were not allowed burial here due to laws of segregation. It was not until after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that African Americans were allowed burial rights at San Marcos Cemetery.

Espinosa was a community leader. As a community leader he helped to plan not only business activities, but religious and civic events, too (2000:18,19,52).

Next, Eliseo Guerrero (1894-1969) was a recognized business owner. Buried in Section B (Hearn and Kerbow 1990), Guerrero was the owner of Alex Café. The restaurant, established in 1939, once stood on Cheatham Street, and later moved to Interstate Highway 35 (Davis 2000:19).

Emilio M. (1888-1963) and Benedicta B. Mendez (1893-1978) are buried in Section D (Hearn and Kerbow 1990). Davis states that the couple was married in San Marcos in 1910 after both had moved to the area from Mexico. In 1917 Emilio opened the Landis Shoe Shop and Watch Repair on West San Antonio Street. In addition to being a businessman, Emilio also served as a sheriff's deputy. Benedicta was busy in the community herself. She ran a boarding house (now the Charles S. Cock House Museum), and delivered several babies throughout the county as a midwife (2000:19,85).

Next are Fausto (1882-1969) and Maria Murillo (1894-1980), buried in Section I (Hearn and Kerbow 1990). According to Davis (2000), Fausto came to San Marcos by way of Spain and Mexico City and married Maria in 1913. After laying bricks for the new St. John's Catholic Church in 1914, the couple and their son moved to Cuba in 1916 due to hard times in San Marcos. Returning to San Marcos in 1920, Fausto worked in the Mendez and Alfredo Martinez Shoe Shops (Lyndon Johnson was one of his customers). In either 1935 or 1945 (both dates are mentioned), Fausto opened his own store, Murillo's Shoe Shop, on LBJ Street (formerly Austin St.). Maria was a seamstress for Hormachea and Waldrip Cleaners and did washing and ironing from her home (2000:19,88-89).

Not much is mentioned about Isaac Pinales (1919-1988), but he was one of the San Marcos World War II veterans honored at the 1945 Fourth of July celebration (Davis 2000:53). Pinales lies in San Marcos Cemetery Section T (Hearn and Kerbow 1990).

Finally there is Dr. Daniel Rojo (1904-1978), buried in Section B (Hearn and Kerbow 1990). Davis (2000) states that Dr. Rojo was born in Cuichapa Hidalgo, Mexico, in August 1904. He received his medical degree in Mexico City and then worked as the medical examiner for the Mexico City Police Department. In 1929, he married Guadalupe Belendez of Mexico City. He moved his family to Texas after learning that San Marcos needed a Spanish-speaking doctor and opened his own practice in 1930. The 1930s were hard times economically, but Dr. Rojo did not let his patients go without care. Items such as butter, poultry and vegetables were as good a payment for medical service as was cash. Dr. Daniel Rojo was loved by many in San Marcos (2000:10,101-102).

The next data analyzed from the Hearn and Kerbow (1990) volume were that of burials for those who served in the military. Nineteen of the 176 graves with Spanish surnames, or 10.80% of the Spanish surname grave population, are military veterans (see Appendix). Compared with the entire cemetery population of 4,764, there are 310 total military veterans (until 1990), or 6.51% of the total cemetery population. Indeed, the concentration of military veterans is higher in the Hispanic grave population. This shows that military service was an important avenue for civil rights, social integration and upward mobility, making it more likely that veterans would be buried in San Marcos Cemetery. There appears to be only one officer buried in the cemetery; presumably the rest are enlisted personnel. The veterans served in the United States Army, Marine Corps, and the National Guard. World War II and Vietnam are the only wars listed.

These veterans are all men⁹. The dates of death range from 1944 to 1988 with the majority in the 1980s. The graves of the veterans are generally well kept and sometimes contain flowers and United States flags.

Further data from Hearn and Kerbow (1990) allow the analysis of dates of death for those buried at San Marcos Cemetery (see Table 2). One hundred and fifty individuals, almost the entire Hispanic population laid to rest in San Marcos Cemetery, passed away during the 1960s through the 1980s. The other twenty-plus Hispanics (14.77%) buried there died between the 1910s and the 1950s, with one date of death recorded in the 1880s. Those interred in the decades of the 1960s and 1970s had the most inscriptions in Spanish (nine inscriptions), while the remaining two were in the 1980s.

Mexican Americans' fight against oppression filled the 1960s and 1970s with protests (Feagin and Feagin, 1993: 268-269). The fight for civil rights included assertions of ethnic pride and the right to speak Spanish¹⁰, and may have led to the increase of Spanish inscriptions during these decades. An example of this right to speak Spanish occurs in another arena—the media. *La Otra Voz* is a Spanish-language newspaper that “began publishing during a time of intense political turmoil and very active community organization, and it proved to be a strong voice for the Hispanic community” in terms of culture and politics (Davis 2000:47).

⁹One woman was among the military veterans found in the entire San Marcos Cemetery burial population. She served in World War II.

¹⁰ The right to speak Spanish in the Chicano and Civil Rights Movements was extremely important, especially in the realm of education. Feagin and Feagin (1993:281) explain that, “When placed in classrooms in which instruction is given only in English, children with limited English proficiency frequently become discouraged, develop low self-confidence, and fail to keep pace with their English-speaking peers.”

Table 2: Spanish Surname Burials by Date of Death and Spanish Inscriptions, and % County Mexican American Population

Year	Number of Burials	Number of Spanish Inscriptions	% Mexican American Population in Hays County ¹²
1860-1870	0	0	N/A
1880s	1	0	N/A
1890-1900	0	0	N/A
1910s	1	0	11.39 ¹³
1920s	3	0	20.49 ¹⁴
1930s	8	0	36.88 ¹⁵
1940s	4	0	Not Available ¹⁶
1950s	6	0	Not Available ¹⁷
1960s	45	4	Not Available ¹⁸
1970s	43	5	37.58 ¹⁹
1980s	61	2	28.68 ²⁰
1990s	Not Available	Not Available	25.66 ²¹

Change in Discriminatory Attitudes

Discriminatory attitudes toward Mexican Americans in San Marcos began to change by the 1960s. President Lyndon B. Johnson's administration had already abolished the poll tax. Now there were over three times more Hispanics voting in San Marcos than ever before (1963:587 registered Hispanic voters; 1970:2,500 registered Hispanic voters) (Davis 2000:63). Mexican American political gains extended to the local community. Ramiro Lugo, the city's first Mexican American department head, was

¹² From U.S. Census data at the beginning of each decade.

¹³ Represents foreign-born Mexicans in Hays County (U.S. Census Bureau 2006a).

¹⁴ Idem (U.S. Census Bureau 2006b).

¹⁵ Idem (U.S. Census Bureau 2007a).

¹⁶ Mexicans were classified as white in the 1940 U.S. Census; there were 1,244 foreign-born whites from Mexico in Hays county in 1940 (U.S. Census Bureau 2006c).

¹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau 2007b.

¹⁸ U.S. Census Bureau 2006d.

¹⁹ Represents the Spanish surname population (U.S. Census Bureau 2006e).

²⁰ Represents the population of Spanish origin Mexicans (U.S. Census Bureau 2006f).

²¹ Represents Hispanics of Mexican origin (U.S. Census Bureau 2004).

able to extend better wages and benefits for the Sanitation Department's workers. Lugo places his success in the fact that during this time (1970s), the San Marcos City Council had considerable Hispanic representation (2000:63).

An analysis of a second cemetery database explored the effects of the changing racial relations at San Marcos Cemetery. Dr. Ana Juarez (2006) and her Mexican American Cultures class at Texas State University-San Marcos, surveyed and documented all gravesites with decorations at San Marcos Cemetery. Even though these data are limited to the burials showing some sort of decorations, the data yielded interesting results.

The number of graves documented in this study is 1,133. Of these, 270 have Spanish surnames. This means that 23.83% of the decorated graves have Spanish surnames. Even though the population of this database examines not even one-fourth of the population Hearn and Kerbow (1990) studied²², there is still a significant increase of burial for those with Spanish surnames. Table 2 shows a significant increase of Spanish surname burials by the 1960s, the peak time of the fight for civil rights (Feagin and Feagin 1993:268-269).

As seen in Table 1 (listed earlier in the chapter), the number of burials by section is also significant. In several sections, the number of Spanish surname burials have increased. In sections where there were previously none of these burials, Spanish surname burials have been added. Furthermore, there are sections that had not contained any Spanish surname burials and have remained without them until 2006. This is probably because the sections of the cemetery were already full. Although accurate readings for the current San Marcos Cemetery population are not available through the

²² The Hearn and Kerbow Data ends in 1989.

2006 decorations database, it gives an indication that more and more Mexican Americans receive burial in the cemetery. This is also obvious by looking through the daily obituaries.

Conclusion

With the obvious discrimination against Mexican Americans in San Marcos, it is easy to see how those attitudes transferred to the cemeteries. With time, however, came change. As in the realms of education, occupation and politics, Mexican Americans, despite discrimination, have the freedom to choose where they wish to be buried. This is evident in the radical increase of Spanish surname burials at San Marcos Cemetery beginning in the 1960s, and from the data compiled by Juarez (2006).

The next chapter will examine how economic considerations such as cost of burial figure in burial placement. San Marcos Cemetery has set costs for burial (City of San Marcos 2004). On the other hand, San Pedro Cemetery provides low cost and free burials for those who cannot afford to pay (Carrillo et al. 20).

CHAPTER IV

SAN PEDRO CEMETERY

Introduction

The previous chapter showed that broader patterns of discrimination in San Marcos were reflected in burials in San Marcos Cemetery. This chapter now examines another cemetery in San Marcos, the San Pedro Cemetery (hereafter referred to as San Pedro). San Pedro's founding was influenced by both the necessity for a Mexican American cemetery in the area, and by the discrimination Mexican Americans endured.

Following information on the history of San Pedro, I discuss how racial discrimination against Mexican Americans and economic inequality affected San Pedro Cemetery. Next, I analyze the cemetery's database, including information on dates of death and Spanish language usage. Finally, based on my attendance at five meetings and events of the San Pedro Cemetery Association during the last six months of 2005, and after continuing communication with three of the association's members through March 2007, I give an account of current projects the association is undertaking.

Background

As related by John Carrillo, Elena Contreras, and Ofelia Vasquez-Philo (2005) (Carrillo and Contreras are members of the San Pedro Cemetery Association, and Vasquez-Philo is on the Hispanic Historical Committee in San Marcos), the period of the early 1900s was a time when the Mexican American community of the San Marcos-area

required a cemetery of its own. One member of the San Pedro Cemetery Association, T.L. Torres (2007), explained that the early 1900s was a time when many Mexican laborers came to San Marcos looking for jobs on farms, sharecropping, and picking cotton. With such a large Mexican community in the area, and due to the discrimination they suffered, the people needed a cemetery of their own.

Elena Contreras (2007), Secretary of the San Pedro Cemetery Association, stated that her family has served the cemetery beginning with her maternal and paternal grandparents, who helped with the cemetery's founding. She reiterates that the Mexican community of laborers desired their own Mexican cemetery, for there were not many Mexican cemeteries in the area near Center Point. Not only would such a cemetery benefit their own families, but also the cemetery would serve all Mexican Americans in the area.

These families rallied together in the form of a mutual society forum²³, established in May 1909 (President—Antonio Sanchez) (Carrillo, et al. 2005). The next step was to acquire the land. Luis Rosales collected funds from local residents to purchase land for the future cemetery. San Pedro Cemetery (*Cementerio San Pedro*) saw its first burial in that same month of May (Carrillo, et al. 2005:1). San Pedro is located just south of San Marcos on Old Bastrop Highway.

Elena Contreras recalled that the mutual society forum dues and donations were the major source of funds for San Pedro Cemetery. People gave what they could afford to give, since not everyone could meet the annual expense of the \$1 dues. Contreras proceeded to explain that the collection of these funds allowed for the purchase of the

²³ According to Davis, another such group in San Marcos called *Los Amigos Del Pueblo*, managed the care of *El Cementerio Del Rio*, or *El Cementerio de Morondel*. This cemetery was established for Mexican use around 1908-1909. In 1948, flooding and population movement out of the area caused the abandonment of the cemetery (2000:37-38).

first two acres of land (at the corner of Bastrop Highway and Posey Road). Contreras also mentioned that three collectors would gather the dues from the people. Since farms were widespread, each collector had his own area to service.

More than 300 members made up the mutual society in 1915. Annual dues were allotted for maintenance of the cemetery and burials for those who could not afford it (City of San Marcos 2004a). Davis (2000:38) documents that the fees went up to \$1.50 in 1921. With this amount, members and their families were guaranteed burial at San Pedro Cemetery. The funds were also used to expand the cemetery by one-half acre. According to deed records, properties once owned by the G.G. Johnson and L.G. Johnson families were acquired for the cemetery in 1909 and 1933, respectively (Carrillo, et al. 2005:1).

Although journals containing minutes from early mutual society meetings exist, important cemetery documents are missing and some questions remain to be answered. For example, John Carrillo (email to author, October 25, 2005), archivist of the San Pedro Cemetery Association, informed me that a “‘group’ had placed very important papers in a glass container inside the base of the cross at the San Pedro Cemetery.” No one knows exactly what the papers are, or when or by whom the container was to be opened. The writing on the cement base of the cross is now illegible, so any instruction it may have given is now lost. John is inclined to believe that vandals removed the glass container and the documents toward the end of the 1960s. At present, the documents’ whereabouts are unknown. The San Pedro Cemetery Association hopes that anyone with information on this matter will come forward.

The mutual society has evolved into the San Pedro Cemetery Association that now manages the cemetery. Together with volunteers, the association oversees cemetery maintenance and care (Carrillo, et al. 2005). Hays County is also involved since it is working on adding new land next to the cemetery for indigent burials. The county provides trash pick-up monthly or once every other month (Torres 2007).

Forms of Discrimination against Mexican Americans

Although Mexican Americans were allowed at San Marcos Cemetery since the late 1800s, they were still discriminated against (Contreras 2007). Steven Ray Tobias (Davis 2000:103) writes that Mexican Americans and Anglos were buried in separate cemeteries because of this segregation. His grandfather, Rosalio Tobias, Sr., played a key role in obtaining land for a Mexican American cemetery near St. John's Catholic Church.

One individual with several family members buried at San Pedro Cemetery recalls that segregation was another prime reason for establishing the cemetery. He explained that:

Prior to the year 1909, Mexican Americans did not have the opportunity to bury their loved ones in the same cemetery, let alone in the same dirt, as those of the Anglo Saxon race. This made the establishment of San Pedro Cemetery a result of discrimination based on race.

The 1909 By-laws of San Pedro Cemetery specifically reject segregation. For instance, the English-translated by-law Article 1, used for Dr. Juarez's (2005) cemetery exhibit,

Remembering/Recordando: Mexican American Cemeteries Fall 2005, states that

Whereas all those who have contributed their grain of sand toward the purchase of this cemetery, have the right to purchase a plot either for themselves or for a member of their family.²⁴

²⁴ Original Spanish text of Article 1: *Todas las personas que han contribuido con su grano de arena para la compra de este Cementerio tienen derecho a abrir sepulcro ya sea para él o alguno de la familia.*

Article 1 implies that *anyone*, as long as he or she contributes dues to the cemetery, is allowed burial at San Pedro Cemetery.

T.L. Torres (2007) and Elena Contreras (2007) were both vehement when speaking about this article of the By-laws. They state that anyone, despite race, color, creed or religion, may be buried at San Pedro Cemetery. Even though the cemetery is comprised of mostly Mexican American graves, anyone is allowed. Torres and Contreras confirmed that there are Anglos and African Americans present in the cemetery, but they are few in number. Torres further explained that in 2006, an African American woman was buried in San Pedro because she did not have the funds for burial elsewhere.

Article 2 in the By-laws of San Pedro Cemetery alludes to religious discrimination against Mexican Americans, but there is no evidence in the literature or from interviews to support this. The English translation of Article 2 states:

Whereas sermons and prayers of both religions are permitted in this Cemetery, as long as there is a yielding to the Roman Catholics the right to pray and honor their dead according to their Catholic traditions.²⁵

T.L. Torres (2007), Johnnie Armstead (2007), and Elena Contreras (2007) agreed that cemeteries were not primarily based on religion in the early 1900s, but were mainly based on ethnicity. Some cemeteries existed that were part of various churches, but that seemed to be the extent of it.

Economic inequalities between Anglos and Mexican Americans in San Marcos further contributed to the difference in the two cemeteries discussed here. We know that in 1915 the mutual society forum used its dues in part to bury those at San Pedro Cemetery who could not afford burial elsewhere (City of San Marcos 2004). According

²⁵ Original Spanish text of Article 2: *Se permite la predicación en este Cementerio para ambas religiones, cediendo derecho a los Católicos Romanos para que recen y honren sus cuerpos conforme al Reglamento Católico.*

to Elena Contreras (2007), San Pedro Cemetery is a “free” cemetery. This means that anyone may be buried there, regardless of whether they can pay or not. Any contribution paid by the deceased’s family is welcome; there is no set cost²⁶. If a person cannot pay at all, the association’s general funds are used to cover the cost. On the other hand, San Marcos Cemetery does have set costs for burial. A cemetery lot costs \$235, and its continuous care costs \$315 (City of San Marcos 2004b). That is a total of \$550.

Furthermore, comparing headstone materials at the two cemeteries indicates economic differences between the cemeteries. Many headstones at San Pedro Cemetery are homemade from concrete or wood, which deteriorate easily. Some gravesites have no markers at all. T.L. Torres (2005) of the San Pedro Cemetery Association, said some of the families simply cannot afford headstones or upkeep for the graves. Much of the care provided for the cemetery comes from volunteers. Donations are integral for such tasks as mending fences, funding cemetery projects, and preparing for various events, such as the re-consecration ceremony (Torres 2007). At City Cemetery, most of the Hispanic graves are made of granite²⁷, a hard and durable stone, and are in good condition, with the exception of very few homemade concrete and wood grave markers. Care of the San Marcos Cemetery is included in the burial price (City of San Marcos 2004b).

Analysis of the San Pedro Cemetery Database

John Carrillo has put together a preliminary database of the cemetery. After vandalism occurred in 2003, Carrillo used volunteers to create a database that documents burial plots, headstone and grave marker inscriptions, signs of vandalism, and grave

²⁶ Elena Contreras (2007) informed me that average donations today range from \$50 to \$100.

²⁷ Many of these stones at San Marcos Cemetery date from the 1960s and after, when the burials at San Pedro start to decrease.

marker style and condition. Carrillo also used the Hearn and Kerbow (1990) data since many markers (e.g. wooden crosses) had deteriorated since 1990 (Carrillo 2007).

With the help of volunteers from the community and Texas State University—San Marcos, Carrillo is now trying to verify the accuracy of burial plot coordinates and inscriptions.

In the San Pedro Cemetery Database (2005), the cemetery is divided into four quadrants: NE, NW, SE, and SW. With each quadrant designation, a plot is then given a row and plot number (e.g. 05NW29 = row 5, plot 29). I tallied over 1,000 recorded gravesites in the San Pedro Database; an undetermined number of graves are not marked.

Accurate inscription information is not always available due to erosion and breakage of headstones. Several plots consist solely of markers indicating there is a burial there, such as rock borders and pipe crosses (no inscriptions at all). The cemetery association is convinced that some burials are in these plots, and they are hoping friends and relatives of the deceased will help determine which plots are occupied. The association hopes to identify all plots that may be occupied but unidentified.

The next analysis looks at dates of death recorded in the database (San Pedro Cemetery Association 2005). Although there are only 883 dates of death listed, many gravesites contain no inscriptions. Furthermore, this information no longer remains legible on some markers, and some graves have no markers at all. The table below lists known dates of death during the periods of time in which they occurred.

Even though the data for San Marcos Cemetery ends in 1989, San Pedro certainly saw more Mexican American burials in all decades²⁸ (see Table 2). Both cemeteries hit their Mexican American burial peaks between the 1960s and 1980s. Even with the rise of

²⁸ The data pertaining to San Marcos Cemetery ends in 1989.

civil rights discussed in Chapter 3, more Mexican Americans are buried at San Pedro Cemetery during this time.

Table 3: Numbers and Dates of Burials in San Pedro Cemetery

Dates of Burials	Number of Burials	Number of Burials with Spanish Inscriptions²⁹ (For Dates not Expanding the Entire Decade))	Compare Number of Spanish Surname Burials in San Marcos Cemetery (Based on Hearn and Kerbow 1990)
1810-1899	2	1 (1867)	1
1900-1909	5	2 (1909)	0
1910-1919	15	8 (1911-1918)	1
1920-1929	61	28	3
1930-1939	54	24	8
1940-1949	101	46	4
1950-1959	132	37	6
1960-1969	132	51	45
1970-1979	152	60	43
1980-1989	126	42	61
1990-1999	69	16	N/A
2000-2005	34	3	N/A

In addition, I documented 343 Spanish-language inscriptions at San Pedro (Table 3). This number greatly surpasses the eleven Spanish inscriptions found at San Marcos Cemetery (see Table 2). In other words, 34.3% of the 1,000 documented graves at San Pedro have Spanish-language inscriptions; only 6.25% of the Spanish surname population at San Marcos Cemetery has Spanish-language inscriptions. In another

²⁹ Twenty-five burials using the Spanish language do not show dates.

comparison, 18 veterans rest at San Pedro while 19 rest at San Marcos Cemetery (see Appendix A). These numbers are very close, but in relation to the numbers of Mexican Americans buried at these cemeteries, San Marcos Cemetery has the greater ratio of veteran burials. This suggests that military veterans are of an “elite” status (see Chapter 3, page 33). Finally, almost all of the surnames listed on the database are of Spanish origin. Until the database is verified, these results are preliminary.

San Pedro Cemetery Association

The San Pedro Cemetery Association manages the cemetery on several levels. I attended three meetings and two functions that the association held.

The board includes seven members and oversees the management and planning of the cemetery. They decide on things such as methods on how to clear brush (chemicals vs. machinery) and double burials. They also sponsor the database project. A future project is to make a memorial wall with placards containing the names and dates of individuals who are known to be buried at San Pedro Cemetery but who do not have grave markers.

At one meeting, at a local Catholic church, the public was invited to learn about the association’s efforts to document the grave markers and burials. A draft of the database was on display, and attendees were asked to verify burial information. One woman found a misspelling of her relative’s name, and another noted that a relative was in an unmarked plot. People from as far away as Wisconsin have called regarding family and friends buried at the cemetery (Contreras 2007). Community assistance will be essential for this project to succeed.

Most of the association members have generations of family members at San Pedro, and they feel a strong bond to the cemetery.

Conclusion

The combination of ethnic discrimination and economic inequality contributed to making San Pedro Cemetery what it is today. San Pedro Cemetery still has an almost all-Mexican American population, and much work needs to be done to understand its history.

CONCLUSION

The evidence of racial discrimination in San Marcos, Texas during the early part of the twentieth century provides an answer as to why Mexican Americans created their own cemetery in 1909. Segregation in the schools and discrimination in politics and occupation were factors that moved the Mexican American community to establish a place where their dead could indeed rest in peace.

In addition, San Pedro Cemetery opened its gates to any individual who needed burial. The cemetery held no discriminatory attitudes. Furthermore, unlike San Marcos Cemetery, San Pedro is a “free” cemetery. Due to economic inequalities between Hispanics and Anglos, San Pedro operates by donations to maintain the grounds and bury the dead.

Though at one time San Marcos Cemetery only accommodated the Mexican American “elite”, it now shows a significant increase of Hispanic burials beginning with the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. Furthermore, as Mexican Americans began to demand equality in all realms of life (with help from institutions such as the American GI Forum), discriminatory attitudes against them began to dissipate. In spite of the continued discrimination and inequalities of present times, Mexican Americans actively participate in all realms of life in San Marcos.

APPENDIX A: Spanish Surname Veterans Buried at San Marcos Cemetery

Name	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Section	Branch/Theater
Arias, Ramon A.	1 Oct. 1908	1 June 1982	I	SGT US Army
Arias, Sabino	31 Dec. 1903	29 Sept. 1968	I	TX PVT US Army WWII
Castillo, Adan R.	11 Sept. 1920	12 April 1980	D	PFC US Army
Contreras, Alfonso M.	28 Feb. 1916	28 Sept. 1981	B	PVT US Army WWII
Contreras, Henry M.	31 Oct. 1922	6 Aug. 1984	B	PFC US Army WWII
Flores, Gilbert G.	10 Feb. 1951	4 May 1975	D	SP4 US Army
Garza, Peter A. Jr.	10 May 1924	7 Oct. 1944	B	CPL
Gonzalez, Vicente R.	11 April 1946	9 Jan. 1968	D	SP4 CO B Vietnam ARCOM
Lopez, Richard	18 June 1949	27 March 1968	D	TEX L CPL CO K Vietnam PH
Lucio, Pablo	28 June 1918	9 Jan. 1967	D	TEX TEC5 864 AAA AW BN WWII
Mendez, Phillip B.	7 May 1910	10 Aug. 1985	D	TEC5 US Army WWII
Picasio, Guadalupe	3 Dec. 1943	5 Oct. 1987	I	Lt.
Pinales, Isaac	11 Dec. 1919	4 Oct. 1988	T	PFC US Army WWII
Rodriguez, Edward	16 March 1911	22 May 1963	D	PFC CO C 333 INF WWII
Rodriguez, Geronimo	30 Sept. 1920	11 Feb. 1965	T	PVT US Army
Rodriguez, Joe D.	4 Dec. 1948	9 May 1970	D	SGT HQ CO 4 th , 3 rd DIV Marines Sniper Vietnam
Vasquez, Joe Valdez Jr	21 July 1917	20 June 1986	B	US Army WWII
Ybarra, Alfredo C.	18 April 1915	4 June 1984	D	PVT US Army WWII
Zaragoza, David	6 Feb. 1950	5 Oct. 1981	T	SGT USMC Vietnam

APPENDIX B: List of Interviews

Armstead, Johnnie. Phone interview. March 2, 2007.

Carrillo, John. Personal interview. October 12, 2005.

Contreras, Elena. Personal interview. March 6, 2007.

Gonzales Family. Personal interview. September 16, 2006.

Torres, T.L. Personal interview. October 21 2005, and March 1, 2007.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

American GI Forum

2007 The American GI Forum of the United States. Electronic document.
<http://www.agif.us/aboutUs.htm> retrieved January 3, 2007.

Carrillo, John, Elena Carrillo Contreras and Ofelia Vasquez-Philo

2005 San Pedro Cemetery, Hays County. From application for Texas Historical Commission.

Davis, Steve, ed.

2000 Sueños y recuerdos del pasado/Dreams and Memories of the Past: A Community History of Mexican Americans in San Marcos, Texas. Hays County Historical Commission.

de la Teja, Jesús, Paula Marks and Ron Tyler

2004 Texas: Crossroads of North America. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

De León, Arnolando and Robert A. Calvert

2001 Civil-Rights Movement. Electronic document.
<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/CC/pkcf1.html> retrieved April 8, 2007.

Espinoza, Dr. Yolanda Fuentes

2001 Seeds of Learning: The Education of Mexican Americans in San Marcos. Prepared for the San Marcos sesquicentennial publication, *Celebrate 150*, March 1. San Marcos Daily Record and Free Press.

Feagin, Joe R. and Clairece Booher Feagin

1993 Chapter 9: Mexican Americans. In *Racial and Ethnic Relations*. Pp. 258-295. Prentice Hall.

Flores, Luciano

1978 Summary Index: Luciano Flores 3/9/1978. Interviewer: WM Millsapp. Transcriber: Jonathan Peters, Texas State University-San Marcos 5/31/2006.

Foley, Neil

1997 *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles.

Friends of the San Marcos Cemetery

2006 Friends of the San Marcos Cemetery. Fundraising brochure.

Hearn, Jo Ann E. and Dorothy W. Kerbow

1990 *Hays County, Texas Cemetery Inscriptions, Vol. II*. Hays County Historical Commission.

Jordan, Terry G.

1982 *Texas Graveyards: A Cultural Legacy*. University of Texas Press.

Juarez, Ana

2006 San Marcos Cemetery Database. Mexican American Cultures, Spring Semester. Texas State University—San Marcos, Texas.

Lucio, Augustine

1985 *A San Marcos Success Story: An interview with Augustine Lucio*. October 31, 1985. Interviewer and transcriber: Scott Hubbart.

Mendez, Celestino

ND Celestino Mendez Memoir: Civil Rights as seen by Celestino Mendez (1960-1980). In the San Marcos and Hays County Collection, San Marcos Public Library.

Meyer, Richard E., ed.

1993 *Ethnicity and the American Cemetery*. Bowling Green State University Popular Press.

Montejano, David

1987 *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986*. University of Texas Press, Austin.

Preuss, Isabel Fuentez

ND Interview with Isabel Fuentez Preuss. Transcriber and interviewer unknown.

Reda, Vincent

2001 Hispanic population grows - and grows more separate - in Texas.
Electronic document.

<http://www.albany.edu/news/releases/2001/CensusTex.html> retrieved April 7, 2007.

San Marcos, City of

2004a Ses-qui-cen-ten-ni-al (Our 150th Birthday in 2001). Electronic document.

<http://www.ci.san-marcos.tx.us/news/Events/Sesquicentennial.htm> retrieved October 26, 2005.

2004b Parks and Recreation: San Marcos Cemetery.

Electronic document. [http://www.ci.san-](http://www.ci.san-marcos.tx.us/departments/Parks/Cemetery.htm?rn2=no)

[marcos.tx.us/departments/Parks/Cemetery.htm?rn2=no](http://www.ci.san-marcos.tx.us/departments/Parks/Cemetery.htm?rn2=no) retrieved March 16, 2007.

San Pedro Cemetery Association

1909 By-Laws Governing the San Pedro Cemetery. Translated by Leticia Garza-Falcon. From the personal collection of Dr. Ana M. Juarez, Texas State University-San Marcos.

San Pedro Cemetery Association

2005 San Pedro Cemetery Database. Compiled by John Carrillo.

Sloane, David Charles

1991 The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.

U.S. Census Bureau

2002 United States Census 2000. Electronic document.

<http://www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html> retrieved March 11, 2007.

2004 Census '90. Electronic document.

<http://www.census.gov/main/www/cen1990.html> retrieved April 16, 2007.

2006a Census of Population and Housing: 1910 Census. Electronic document.

<http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1910.html> retrieved April 6, 2007.

2006b Census of Population and Housing: 1920 Census. Electronic document. <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1920.html> retrieved April 16, 2007.

2006c Census of Population and Housing: 1940 Census. Electronic document. <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1940.html> retrieved April 16, 2007.

2006d Census of Population and Housing: 1960 Census. Electronic document. <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1960.html> retrieved April 16, 2007.

2006e Census of Population and Housing: 1970 Census. Electronic document. <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1970.html> retrieved April 16, 2007.

2006f Census of Population and Housing: 1980 Census. Electronic document. <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1980.html> retrieved April 16, 2007.

2007a Census of Population and Housing: 1930 Census. Electronic document. <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1930.html> retrieved April 16, 2007.

2007b Census of Population and Housing: 1950 Census. Electronic document. <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1950.html> retrieved April 16, 2007.

VITA

Jennifer Roth was born in Corpus Christi, Texas on September 18, 1981. She graduated from Alamo Heights High School in San Antonio, Texas in 2000. Jennifer received her B.A. degree in sociology (minoring in international relations) from St. Mary's University of San Antonio in 2004, graduating *summa cum laude*. As a senior at St. Mary's, her graduation project was a study for St. George Maronite Catholic Church in San Antonio. The church built a multi-purpose facility on its property and wanted to know what new programs the congregation wanted offered to them. After surveying the majority of the congregation, Jennifer analyzed the data according to the church's wishes and sent the pastor a detailed report. After graduating from Texas State University-San Marcos, Jennifer plans on pursuing a Ph.D. in demography at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Permanent Address: 162 Pilgrim

San Antonio, Texas 78213

This thesis was typed by Jennifer O. Roth.

