



ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

CONSULTANT: Hipolita Perez

DATE OF BIRTH: August 1894 GENDER: Female

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: March 27, 1996 & April 18, 1996

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Stella Marquez (great-great niece) home in Albuquerque, N.M.

INTERVIEWER: Jane O'Cain

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM X OTHER _____

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: April 30, 2008

NUMBER OF TAPES: Four

ABTRACTOR: Donna M. Wojcik

DATE ABSTRACTED: May 1, 2008

RECORDING QUALITY (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Perez' life as a child in Durango, Mexico during the time of Pancho Villa. How she came to New Mexico, and her life here in Las Cruces.

DATE RANGE: 1894 - 1994

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

The interview begins with a genealogical background. Her family owned a small ranch/farm in Mexico and grew a variety of vegetables. Since she was one of the youngest children, she did not have to do many chores. As a result, she did not know how to do much when she married. The family bathed in the river, and her mother washed their clothes while they swam. They did not have many clothes. She recalls that her father was the soap maker in the family. Her father had inherited the ranch/farm from his father. Perez did not attend school because there were too many children in the family and could not afford to send them all. Perez taught herself to read and write, with a little help from her nephew José.

TAPE ONE, SIDE B:

She was eleven or twelve years old when she got married, and her husband, Rafael, was older than she was. She lost her first child to measles. Her husband was killed during the Mexican Revolution in 1910, and Perez recalls that the women hid so that they wouldn't be taken. They would go to the hills to pick wild plants and cactus because all of the crops were destroyed. Apparently, Pancho Villa and his men would take the women and kill the men. In the city of Ende, the church and the entire city was burned to the ground. Perez' original baptismal certificate and other important church records were destroyed at that time. Perez came to Las Cruces when she was twenty-two years old.

TAPE TWO, SIDE A:

There is a discussion about Perez' siblings, and other relatives. She recalls that she was already living in Las Cruces when Pancho Villa raided Columbus, New Mexico in 1916. Word about Pancho Villa's execution was passed from neighbor to neighbor.

She recalls the trip from Mexico to Las Cruces via Juarez and El Paso. She traveled by train and on foot. In those days, all the people coming across the border into El Paso had to be bathed. Fortunately for Perez, she was able to bathe at home of her father's cousin. After a bathing, people were given a pass to enter El Paso. She was asked to write a sentence, and was measured and weighed. After all of her personal statistics were recorded, she was given a passport, which cost eight dollars. A bus took her from El Paso to Las Cruces. She did not bring anything with her when she came from Mexico except the clothes on her back. Shortly after her arrival in Las Cruces, she got a job, cleaning house for the Frenger family.

TAPE TWO, SIDE B:

Perez recalls that the Shank family owned a store in Las Cruces. Just before Thanksgiving, they would throw turkeys. If you could catch one, you could keep it. Town folks would have their grain ground at the gristmill located near the police station. Perez discusses her daily routine, and her relationship with the Frengers, even though Mrs. Frenger was seen as some to be very difficult to get along with.

TAPE THREE, SIDE A:

The topic of Pancho Villa is again discussed. As a child, Perez recalls that the nearest church was in the city of Ende, and that they did not attend mass every week because it was too far away. They did attend baptisms, confirmations, and weddings there. Some of the observed holy days are discussed. She

remembers that children always got their hair cut on Saint John's Day (April 24). The ends of the hair were cut so that it would grow faster.

Perez' son Jorge died at age three after contracting measles. The difficulties of leaving behind her parents to come to Las Cruces are discussed. She recalls that she was very lonesome when she first arrived. She attended night school to study for her citizenship exam. She remarried and recalls that she and her husband built an adobe house, one room at a time.

TAPE THREE, SIDE B:

The discussion of the adobe house is continued. The house consisted of four rooms, but a kitchen and bath were added later. She did not like Las Cruces when she first moved her. She recalls that she used to walk along the ditch and cry. She was sad because she had to leave everyone back in Mexico.

Saint Genevieve's was the only church in Las Cruces at that time. She did not want to send her children to public school, but could only afford to send one child. All of the others went to public school. The Loretto Academy is briefly discussed. There was another convent in town, but it was not of the same order as the Loretto nuns.

When asked if she ever went to dances as a young woman, she says that she did attend, but not very often. Sometimes a grandparent would act as a chaperone. Household heating and indoor toilets are discussed.

TAPE FOUR, SIDE A:

In total, Perez worked for the Frenger family for almost thirty years. She remembers when they changed Main Street and pulled down the St. Genevieve's Catholic Church. She recalls that not many people were happy about it, and does not remember that there was ever any vote on the subject. She believes the main reason they tore it down was due to structural defect.