

Making the Desert Bloom: Mexicans and Whites in
the Agricultural Development of the Salt River Valley, 1867-1930

by

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ABSTRACT

The Phoenix area had no sizable Mexican presence before the U.S. took over the territory. Some assumed that the region was founded completely by whites from the outset. Whites and Mexicans actually held nearly equal populations throughout the first two decades of settlement. Though they did not hold equal status, their cohabitation was largely characterized by mutual interdependence and respect. Transforming the Salt River Valley's desert terrain into a regional agricultural hub depended on the Sonorans' preindustrial skills. As the town modernized, a new class of resident sought large scale projects to integrate Phoenix into the U.S. economy. Two pivotal projects achieved this. First, railroad spur lines made Phoenix accessible for migrants, as well as allowing farmers to supply commercial markets profitably. Second, the massive Roosevelt Dam secured a stable water supply for valley farmers. While these projects provided the foundation for development, it was cotton that brought commercial success. Throughout World War I, valley cotton growers capitalized on the booming cotton market by expanding their average acreage from 400 acres in 1912 to 130,000 acres in 1920. This rapid escalation to meet wartime demands depended upon a massive seasonal labor force from Mexico. While this boom brought prosperity to valley farmers, it solidified the Mexican's role in the Salt River Valley as little more than a laborer. Valley cotton growers impressively managed all labor issues through a well-organized collective association. Over-recruitment and wage setting kept workers from collective bargaining for better

wages. The cotton growers' hegemony crashed along with cotton prices in 1921. Though the industry recovered fairly quickly, the cotton growers faced a new challenge in the rising national clamor to restrict Mexican immigration to the U.S. Though growers fought restrictions in Congressional hearings throughout the decade, the economic crash of 1929 finally ended widespread Mexican immigration. By the time of the crash, most Mexicans who remained lived in the agricultural peripheries or scattered urban barrios.

To my beloved father and dear friend, Craig Walker, 1945 – 2010, who anxiously awaited my completion of my dissertation. This one's for you.

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INTRODUCTION

Phoenix, 2003.

I moved to the Phoenix area in July of 2003 to begin a PhD program at Arizona State University. I spent the first two months in the pool with my wife, six months pregnant, wondering if the oppressive heat would ever subside. Coming from San Diego, life in the desert seemed odd. It was hot, arid, and seemed to be located in the middle of a wasteland lacking any sort of natural amenities whatsoever. There was no ocean, not even a discernible river. The remnants of the dammed-up Salt River were, by then, called Tempe Town Lake, no different from any of the other fake lakes in the valley.

But there was something I really liked about Phoenix, too. It seemed progressive, clean, affordable, new, and rife with opportunity. Something was fun about being in a relatively new, rapidly growing region. By the end of one of Phoenix's famously sunny, temperate winters, I actually started to enjoy the place. One sunny March day, a friend of mine flew in from San Diego to visit. We drove from the airport north, through the lush, irrigated neighborhoods of Arcadia, to Camelback Mountain. We hiked to the top and took in the beautiful view – golf courses, lawns, and greenery as far as we could see. After our hike, we went to lunch in the posh Biltmore District. As we spoke about our plans for the weekend, I asked my guest if there was anything in particular he wanted to do. He looked up at me and asked, “How far is it to the desert?”

My friend's question stayed with me well after he'd gone. Perhaps no other region has been so drastically altered as the Phoenix area. Golf courses, non-native trees, manmade lakes and swimming pools cover the landscape. By then, around 4 million people lived in the valley, recently surpassing Philadelphia to make it the fifth largest metropolitan area in the U.S. Unlike Philadelphia, I had no idea why the first pioneers bothered to settle here. Wouldn't the summer heat before the advent of air conditioners be intolerable? Did these first settlers pick a random patch of dirt and decide to build a town? How did they even get water before the Central Arizona Project set up a large network of canals to bring it in from the Colorado River?

What I failed to notice in my cursory musings over the origins of Phoenix, was that two rivers ran through the valley. In my defense, they were so thoroughly dammed by the time they reached Phoenix that they were difficult to see. Long before the valley started to rely on the Colorado River for its water, the Salt and Gila rivers flooded the valley floor throughout most winters and springs. These rivers quenched the thirst and watered the crops of early Phoenix settlers.

This paper answers the questions above by focusing on agriculture, labor and community development in the Salt River Valley from 1867 to 1930. In this study, I explore the impetus behind the early settlement of the region, and the fortuitous chain of events that brought the Phoenix area from a dusty agricultural hub to an emerging metropolitan area. This study focuses on the valley's most

prominent economic sector: agriculture. It uses the local agriculture as a driving impetus to explore migration, labor, race, and community development.

This paper takes a narrative, chronological approach in exploring the history of the Salt River Valley. Each chapter falls within an era in valley development, characterized by its own unique themes. I call the years 1867-1887, covered in Chapter 1, the “Preindustrial Era,” because of the lack of modern equipment and amenities. The modernization that occurred from 1887 when the first railroad spur hit Phoenix, through 1912 when the Roosevelt Dam was completed, make up the “Foundation Era.” This ushers in the rise of the cotton industry in the “Integrated Era.” The paper gives particular attention to the cotton boom and bust of the 1910s through 1922, since this short timeframe perfectly embodies the themes of this study. The second half of the Integrated Era was characterized by a rise of the “Mexican Problem” to a national debate.

Chapter 1 explores the first residents who moved into the valley, spanning the first twenty years of town development from 1867 through 1887. Before the rivers were dammed up beyond recognition, the Salt and the Gila, which coursed through the middle of the valley, made the desert terrain surprisingly fertile. The pioneers of the valley settled along the Salt River to farm subsistence crops, and sell what surplus they could produce to mining centers in the region. I call this the “Preindustrial Era” because it was characterized by older modes of transportation, and remained disconnected from any sizable metropolitan area.

The region generally lacked the capital or the means to import modern conveniences.

In this era we also see some of the themes that span through the entire 60 years of this study. First, the valley was settled through manipulation of the Salt River, redirecting its flow to irrigate nearby farms. The first farmers here were fortunate to be able to build their canals over the remnants of the Hohokam – an indigenous nation that thrived in the valley more than a thousand years before the first white Americans arrived. The Hohokam and the first settlers proved that the unique and harsh desert terrain could support a sizable population, but only with foresight, ingenuity and widespread collective organization. Perhaps partially as a result of irrigated agriculture, impressive collectively organized networks remained a paramount reason for the valley's growth.

Secondly, the area thrived because of the contributions of Mexican migrants. These contributions have been obscured or left out of research through much of the historiography of the region. Since the valley had no Spanish or Mexican presence when white Americans moved in, it has too often been presumed that they had no significant role in valley development. Mexicans actually constituted roughly half the valley's population for the first couple of decades. White and Mexican settlers had a relatively harmonious, interdependent relationship. Though many whites undoubtedly held racist ideologies, in a valley that needed all the hands it could get to shape the environment, white settlers could not afford the luxury of putting these prejudices into practice.

Finally, the valley had a deceptively high dependence on government assistance. As Patricia Limerick noted in her classic work, *The Legacy of Conquest*, this was not unique. Western cities often created a dichotomy with regard to government, especially federal. They pronounced a belief in self-reliance and freedom from government's controlling hand. Yet all the while, they depended on its assistance in ways that they probably did not quite comprehend. These rugged, entrepreneurial "do it yourselfers" could not have settled the region before Fort McDowell secured it from the Apache attacks. The first farms in the valley prospered, supplying hay and wheat to soldiers at the fort.¹

Chapter 2 covers, roughly, the years from 1887 to 1912. The first half of the chapter steps back from the previous focus on the personalities of the valley's founders, to the technological development of the region. I call this timeframe the "Foundation Era," since the development during this time allowed for future commercial growth and modernization. This era catalyzed growth through connections to the railroad lines and the construction of the largest masonry dam in the world. Development of these projects relied extensively on boosters and government assistance. The boosters provided the impetus for these projects. They promoted the Salt River Valley as a land of good health and sunshine, abounding in opportunity and prosperity.

¹ Patricia Limerick Nelson, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (W. W. Norton & Company, 1987).

The largest advance at this time came in the massive Roosevelt Dam. Valley residents attending the Roosevelt Dam dedication must have agreed with Theodore Roosevelt's prediction that "great things would happen in this Valley because of the Dam." America's first large scale national irrigation project had come to the valley less than 50 years after it was settled. The population had been steadily increasing as canals extending from the Salt and Gila Rivers made it far more productive. Before the dam's construction, heavy rains would frequently rip the valley, and unusually high spring snow-melt in Northern Arizona could push the rivers to flood stage, ravaging the predominantly small family farms. So, too, would drought years decimate agricultural output. Regional boosters wanted the role of unpredictable Mother Nature minimized in favor of the more dependable and trustworthy works of man.

To remedy this, boosters and ambitious farmers lobbied to pass the National Reclamation Act, which allowed the Department of the Interior to spearhead and construct large scale irrigation projects. After helping pass the laws, and bend the legislation to allow the project to benefit privately held lands, Phoenix boosters became the first project for the Bureau of Reclamation. The Department of the Interior chose the Salt River Valley mainly because of the impressive organization of valley farmers.

As the region attracted capital, white settlers and railroads, the Mexican's role in mainstream Phoenix society began to diminish. Modernizing the region lessened white Phoenicians' dependency upon the Mexican's intimate knowledge

with the preindustrial desert frontier. Increasingly we find Mexicans relegated to the role of manual laborer. New white residents preferred to ignore the Mexican past of Phoenix in favor of a more “progressive,” American orientation. Despite population increases, Hispanic farm and business ownership decreased throughout the course of this study. Salt River Valley growers also had a serendipitous stroke of luck in the 35-year modernization of the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz. This period, known as *the Porfiriato*, developed a railroad infrastructure that would facilitate Mexican emigration to the north. Moreover, the Mexican Revolution that ended Diaz’ reign caused a spike in immigration at a key time for valley farmers.

The timing of the completion of the Roosevelt Dam was impeccable. The valley had been, from the outset, a tremendously productive agricultural location during wet years. The dam, however, guaranteed the farmers an ample water supply. Just two years after the completion of the dam, the demand for long staple cotton increased exponentially. Valley farmers found that they could grow long staple cotton better than anywhere else in the country. As World War I approached, however, the need for cotton eclipsed motivation to grow other crops. This increase in seasonal labor-intensive cotton farming fueled demand for more workers.

The role that Mexicans held in preindustrial Phoenix as essential players in community development began to fade. In the new economy of industrial agriculture, skilled professions turned to new white migrants, as racial prejudices

nearly excluded Mexicans from any social mobility. Instead Mexicans found work almost exclusively as manual laborers. In the Salt River Valley, most of these jobs came in the expanding commercial cotton industry. Confined to camps in the cotton fields, they now had little connection to mainstream American society.

These themes mentioned above came to a crescendo in the rise of the tumultuous cotton industry. The World War I cotton boom played such a dramatic role in the valley that the rise and fall of the industry spans two chapters. These two chapters, along with chapter 5, make up what I call the “Integration Era,” which spans the remaining years of this study from 1915-1930.

Chapter 3 delves into the massive cotton boom. In exploring the development, we find that government agencies aided every facet of the cotton industry. First, government Agricultural Experimental Stations in Yuma and Sacaton (near Chandler) found that the crop could grow in the Arizona desert. Secondly, the Sacaton Experiment Station developed a strand of cotton perfectly tailored to valley conditions. Third, they encouraged farmers to grow cotton commercially through vigorous promotion. Finally, government helped establish and inform the cotton collectives in the valley. These collectives facilitated the massive importation of Mexican immigrant pickers to the valley, set rock bottom wages for workers, and lobbied to extend large scale admission of Mexican immigrants into the U.S. The eager wartime market and ample low cost labor provided the boom that valley boosters had been waiting for.

The impressively organized cotton collectives' main objective became supplying the valley with abundant cheap seasonal labor. Mexicans constituted the vast majority of these laborers. Valley farmers could hardly have imagined a more ideal workforce. They could be recruited in large numbers seasonally and utilized efficiently. More importantly, the grower could keep them peripheralized in the labor camps, out of the view and collective conscious of valley residents. These workers' lack of connections to the mainstream Phoenix society, the language, and knowledge of American ways allowed growers to keep workers' wages low.

Chapter 4 covers the attempts to organize and improve the conditions and wages of Mexican cotton pickers. Though little direct benefit came from organizing and protective efforts, they led to frustration and greater awareness of disenfranchisement. The quest for better wages ended when the cotton boom came to a crashing halt. Cotton dropped to less than a tenth of its boom prices. The crash hit the workers the hardest, leaving them stranded in the valley without work or the opportunity to return home. The Mexican Consul played a large role in returning Mexican expatriates. We also find that the Mexican middle class allied with the lower classes through protective societies and newspapers.

The fifth and final chapter covers the 1920s. Most of this decade was characterized by economic expansion, as Phoenix became a cosmopolitan region. Agriculture bounced back from its decline quickly, and within a year the ACGA had already started to complain of a labor shortage. Recruiting Mexican labor

would not be such an easy endeavor this time. Across the country, anxieties flared over European immigration. Many Americans grew frustrated over the large influx of these immigrants, and their perceived unwillingness to assimilate into mainstream American culture.

Before commercial agriculture took hold in the Southwest, fewer workers crossed the border from Mexico, and their stays markedly shorter. Mexicans could come and go with much more ease than their European counterparts. Thus, Mexicans had high circularity rates. Still, they drew little national attention before the mid-1920s. Ostracized from mainstream white society, their relative ease of immigration made them an anonymous presence, despite their numbers in the Southwest.

Chapter 5 shows that as Phoenicians entered the Integrated Era, they increasingly merged into the national context. This began when proponents of irrigation lobbied for Reclamation, and successfully positioned themselves to become its first benefactors. As commercial cotton boomed, the ACGA frequently sent representatives to testify before Congress. Their strong presence at these hearings shows the area's economic emergence as well as the growers' pronounced dependence on Mexican labor.

The successful restriction of European immigration increased demand for Mexican workers throughout the U.S. The Mexican immigrant population spiked to higher numbers than ever before. Restrictionists began to ponder how Mexican immigration had escaped notice. Throughout the twenties, restrictionists and

labor unions switched their focus from European immigration to limiting Mexican immigration. The ACGA again was forced to defend the right to import workers from Mexico. It was the market crash in 1929 that finally halted Mexican immigration. Across California and Texas, Mexicans were repatriated so that unemployed whites could find work in the cotton fields. Repatriation was not aggressively pursued in the Salt River Valley. Those remaining in the Mexican community had changed. They were no longer *Mexicanos de Afuera*, or Mexicans living outside their country: they were Mexican-Americans.

Theodore Roosevelt's vision of progress undoubtedly rang true, by his own definition. Irrigation, feeding the local forts and mining centers, helped turn this barely habitable valley into a metropolitan center. Of course, Phoenix is now known less for its cotton and citrus fields than its sprawling suburban mega-malls and recently constructed tract homes and gated communities. But this portrait of urban progress has often occluded vital role of agriculture, and the workers who tended local fields.

Sadly, the contribution of Mexicans in the development of the Southwest is often ignored in mainstream American histories. The economic boom in the Southwest, fostered by railroads and mining centers as well as new industries, was manned in large part by a massive influx of Mexican workers. No other industry was more thoroughly Mexican than agricultural labor. The economic boom of the Southwest allowed movement of most native laborers into the more desirable manufacturing and skilled trades, creating a vacuum in the lower rungs of the

labor force to be filled by foreign labor. As urban centers flourished throughout the American West, more agriculture was needed to feed these thriving centers. The influx of railroads in the 1880s, along with the invention of refrigerated railcars, made previously remote places prime real estate for agricultural distribution. In areas like Texas, dry farming techniques allowed for a boom in agriculture.

Contribution within the Established Literature

This study draws from a variety of different works of historical scholarship. Much of this paper is rooted in the works of Mexican American history. This field has taught me how to best understand the culture, values and community dynamics of these early Mexican immigrants. Some of these works covered parallel studies in other communities. The first work, *Chicanos in Changing Society*, became an instant classic in the emerging field of Chicano history. It covers the strikingly similar dynamics which shaped Santa Barbara. Mexicans, once integrated into a fledgling American city, found themselves being ostracized as the town prospered. Other studies have been done in Texas and Southern California, showing similar tales in old Spanish colonial centers as they Americanized. Thomas E. Sheridan offers one of the closest studies in his book *Los Tucsoneses*. Here, Sheridan follows the business, social and cultural life of the Spanish-speaking political and intellectual elites, showing how they had resisted historical forces to prosper in Tucson. These elites took leadership roles

within the community, launching civic and political organizations such as *La Alianza Hispano-Americana* in 1894.

Some of these studies have focused more specifically on Mexican experience in Phoenix. Pete Dimas' dissertation, *A Golden Gate Barrio*, also focused on the Mexican experience in Phoenix, in a particular neighborhood. Arturo Rosales has done substantial research on the local Phoenix Mexican population. David Dean and Jean Reynolds completed a "Hispanic Historic Property Survey" for the City of Phoenix. Scott Solliday et. al. recently wrote an article on Mexican roots early in the valley's American history.

My study also draws from the local histories rooted in urban, environmental and political history. The first major contribution in this regard came in Bradford Luckingham's works *Phoenix*, and *Minorities in Phoenix*. Both provide a thorough and insightful overview of Phoenix development. More recently, Phil VanderMeer's book, *Desert Visions* sets environmental, political and urban lenses to the evolution of Phoenix. These works remain pivotal in understanding the development that has driven Phoenix's growth.

While this work draws extensively from these scholars, it differs in its blend of both Mexican/Chicano and modern American scholarship. First, other studies of Mexicans in early American cities focus on previously Spanish/Mexican cities. These cities already contained an established class of Mexican elites. Early white migrants to those areas needed to reconcile with these preexisting dynamics before they took control. Phoenix is different. It

essentially lacked any population before American annexation of the region. Thus, Mexicans and whites established their society from scratch. Mexicans achieved their early status in the Salt River Valley without any preexisting entrenchment. Ultimately, this paper tells a unique story of how a Mexican community both collaborated and collided with the Americanizing Southwest.

Whenever possible, this study uses biographical sketches or case studies as vehicles to explore the overarching themes and dynamics. For example, little can show American frontier dynamics better than the tale of Phoenix's ambitious and violent town founder, Jack Swilling. Little can show the transition between the Preindustrial Era and Foundation Era better than comparing Swilling to the bespectacled, civic-minded Benjamin Fowler. Both men championed the defining irrigation movements of their era. Yet they could not be any more different. Fowler would never have come to Phoenix had he been born in Swilling's time, and Swilling would not have been accepted by the educated and refined leadership which dominated irrigation by the turn of the century.

As the valley transitioned into the Integrated Era, so too do these sketches show an unfortunate exclusion of Mexicans from the society they had helped create. Henry Garfias provides an example of the ability of Mexicans to succeed in the Preindustrial Era. Garfias was not only the first Mexican elected to public office in Phoenix, but newspapers celebrated his bravery and commendable work ethic. As Phoenix integrated into the national economy, ambitious Mexican men had little chance for true integration into mainstream Phoenix society. With such

limited possibilities, men like Pedro de la Lama made their reputations by organizing mutual aid societies that served as a buffer between the Hispanic and white communities. Educated, ambitious and middle-class, de la Lama was an example and an exception among early twentieth century Phoenix Mexicans. The vast majority of Mexicans lived in ramshackle camps by the cotton fields like two other examples shown here, the Chavarria and Ortiz families.

This is a story of prolific community development, and unfortunate repetitive cycles in Phoenix history. In telling it, we see an emergent city, progressive in its essential nature, seemingly looped into counterproductive cycles. Hopefully, by understanding the contributions that both whites and Mexicans played in this region's development, we can gain a better of understanding of the current climate in Phoenix.

CHAPTER 1:
PREINDUSTRIAL PHOENIX: THE BEGINNINGS OF
A FARMING COMMUNITY, 1867 -1887.

Since the Salt River Valley had no sizable Spanish presence as other Southwestern cities before the U.S annexed the territory, many have assumed that the region was solidly European from the outset. Instead, the fledgling town had a near equal population of both whites and Mexicans during the first two decades of valley development. During this “Preindustrial Era,” whites and Mexicans worked alongside each other, intermarried, and held a mutual respect. Forging a community in the desert required organization, collaboration and a frontier practicality that largely superseded the ability to put any severe racial prejudice into practice.

The Salt River Valley, 1867

Americans undoubtedly felt fortunate after wresting away Mexico’s northern half in 1848, when the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the Mexican War. A year after acquiring the vast Mexican Cession territories, the revenues from the gold mines of California alone made the \$15 million paid to Mexico seem a pittance.² The new Southwestern U.S. offered stunning geological diversity, an inviting climate, and plenty of space.

² Mexico actually received no money for the 529,017 square miles ceded. While Title XII of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo called for annual payments of \$3 million, actually the \$15 million was credited against Mexico’s debt to the

Thousands of Americans left the populous eastern half of the country for the wide open landscape to the west. Expansion into the region came far more rapidly than Mexicans could have imagined. By the 1860s, the Transcontinental Railroad came into the newly acquired western U.S. The California Land Act of 1851, Homestead Act of 1862 and the Desert Land Act of 1877 provided a compelling motivation for massive migration.

The Salt River Valley of Arizona was not a coveted spot for settlement by the first farmers, adventurers and entrepreneurs. It was dry, dusty, and hot. Rather than the greenery which Easterners were accustomed to, travelers found prickly plants and tumbleweed growing in an endless sea of dirt. The moderate winters were followed by hellish summers, with temperatures surpassing 110 degrees. Frequent Apache raids supplemented this natural inhospitality. It is hardly surprising that this terrain had lacked significant human habitation for centuries before the Americans arrived.

Copper and silver found in other parts of the territory provided the impetus for the settlement of the Salt River Valley. In September, 1865 the United States Army established Camp Verde (later called Fort McDowell) in the northeast valley, for protection of the emerging mining centers. This had a twofold result for the territory. First, the standing army finally made the Salt River Valley safe for settlement. Second, the soldiers of Fort McDowell and the growing mining

government of the United States. See Richard Griswold de Castillo, *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, a Legacy of Conflict* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990) and most other texts.

sector of Arizona needed affordable food. The Salt River Valley, blessed with two of less than a dozen perennial rivers in the territory, seemed an obvious choice to feed the small local population. It could ultimately provide cheaper wheat, hay, corn, barley and other agricultural products for mining areas in central Arizona as well as Fort McDowell.³ Once this small standing army secured the region from Yavapai/Apache raiders, a proper survey of the area became possible. William H. Pierce in 1867 and Wilfred F. Ingalls first surveyed the valley for the USGS in 1868.⁴ Neither paid much attention to the remnants of the Hohokam civilization they encountered. Both instead focused on vegetation, slopes and soils. They ultimately agreed that the Salt River Valley could be farmed, given some water. Pierce wrote of his January 1867 expedition:⁵

³ F. Arturo Rosales, “Lost Land. Origins of Mexicans in the Salt River Valley, 1900-1935” (unpublished essay, Arizona State University); Christine Marin, “The First Mexican Americans in Central and Salt River Valleys” (paper presented at the Third Annual Lecture Series of the Arizona Historical Society, Arizona Historical Society Annex, Phoenix, AZ, October 18, 1987); J.W. Crenshaw, *Salt River Valley Arizona; A Land of Sunshine, Health and Prosperity...* (Phoenix: J.W. Crenshaw, Pub., by authority of the Board of Supervisors of Maricopa County, 1907).

⁴ “United States Geological Surveys West of the One Hundredth Meridian (“Wheeler Survey”) 1871- 80,” *Records and History of the United States Geological Survey*, Clifford M. Nelson, Editor, *Records of the Predecessor Surveys 1847-1882*, U.S. Geological Survey Circular 1179, 19-21. (Description and reference only. Original documents are not available online.) <http://pubs.usgs.gov/circ/1179/pdf/CIRC1179.pdf> accessed 1/16/2012.

⁵ Earl Zarbin, *The Swilling Legacy* (version 081606) reconstructed online from the 1978 original. Accessed 1/12/2012.

Salt River is at this season of the year at least a very large stream. Nor do I think it ever entirely dry. It has moreover a very heavy fall of I should think 12 to 15 ft. to the mile which renders it especially valuable for irrigation. I consider this valley from 6 to 10 miles wide and extending from its mouth upward to the mountains about forty miles - as some of the best agricultural land I have yet seen in the Territory and would recommend that it be subdivided at an early day.

Newly arriving white migrants to the Southwestern U.S. navigated a precarious divide. True to their times, we can assume that most came with some prejudice toward non-whites and held ideals of their own superiority. Americans heading west believed in Manifest Destiny - that it was America's God-given right to take over the entire landscape "from sea to shining sea." Mexicans, after all, had done little to bring "progress" to the area. Americans, on other hand, would make proper use of the land by building cities and railroads, extracting minerals, and peopling the sparsely inhabited land. Ultimately, the belief in Manifest Destiny justified taking the lands from Mexico⁶

The concept of Manifest Destiny is commonly told in historical scholarship and held true at a general level. However, subscribing to this concept obscures the relatively interdependent relationships whites and Mexicans held from Spanish and Mexican cities. Despite ideals of white American superiority,

⁶ For a good study on Manifest Destiny, see Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo Saxons* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); For a discussion of American land expansion, see David J. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846: The American Southwest Under Mexico* (University of New Mexico Press, 1982); Also Leonard Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-Speaking Californians, 1846-1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).

early American migrants possessed a certain frontier practicality that allowed for the necessity of intermingling and mutual respect. Scholars such as Albert Camarillo, Leonard Pitt, David Montejano, Arnolde DeLeon demonstrate that in California, Texas and New Mexico, Mexicans were still able to retain some degree of control. In California, for example, Pitt and Camarillo agree that *Californios* held on to much of their land until the 1870s. David Montejano notes that Hispanics had many powerful enclaves, especially in Texas south of the Nueces River that retained Mexican patronage systems and semi-feudalistic economic structures.⁷

Since the Salt River Valley had no entrenched Mexican presence, it has been assumed that the region lacked any significant Mexican contribution in early community development. In researching the first two decades of settlement, this chapter argues that Mexican contributions and status paralleled that of their experience in traditionally Spanish/Mexican regions like Southern California, Southern Arizona and Southern Texas. In a sparsely inhabited preindustrial frontier like the Salt River Valley, whites and Mexicans depended upon each other to grow food and develop the valley.

⁷ David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 98, 176; Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1979); Arnolde De Leon. *The Tejano Community 1836-1900* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1997).

Jack Swilling: Ditches, Drugs, and the Founding of Phoenix.

The first person to provide the energy and initiative to settle the region came from one of the most interesting and unlikable characters. John William (“Jack”) Swilling was born in 1830 to a slave-owning family in South Carolina. He seems an all-too-fitting founding father for the Phoenix area. In his earlier years, he worked as a teamster, Indian fighter, guide, miner, and prospector.⁸

To his friends, Jack Swilling was affable and gregarious, with a genuine affection and loyalty for those close to him. According to Swilling himself, his cantankerous side started with a bullet which could not be removed, and a strike from the butt of a heavy revolver that broke his skull in 1854. He became addicted to the morphine he was prescribed, which he supplemented with binges of heavy drinking. Body counts can be disputed with regard to the several murders attributed to him, but his own writings indicate that he blamed most of his life’s misdeeds on substance abuse.⁹ In a letter written in 1878, shortly before his death in a Yuma jail, he admitted, “I have insulted my best friends, but never when I was Jack Swilling, free from these poisonous influences.”¹⁰

⁸ Earl Zarbin, “Henry Garfias: Phoenix’s First City Marshal,” *Journal of Arizona History*, 46, no.1 (Spring, 2005, Vol 46, no. 1): 55-70; Phoenix City Directory 1892 (Dallas, R.L. Polk & Co.), Arizona Historical Foundation Collection, Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe.

⁹ Mark Shields, “Biography of Jack Swilling,” Hayden Pioneer Biographies file – John William (Jack) Swilling Collection, Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe.

He arrived in Arizona as a Confederate soldier (though he denied sympathy for the Southern cause), and participated in the only skirmish between Union and Confederate forces in Arizona, at El Picacho in Pinal County on April 15, 1862. He then deserted the Confederate Army and embarked on a series of military adventures until becoming guide for a band of Southern sympathizers under the command of Capt. Joseph A. Walker, early in 1863. More military adventures followed, but Swilling stayed with the Walker party as they went from soldiering to prospecting in New Mexico, and finally Arizona.¹¹ In the spring of 1863, they struck gold in the area of what is now Prescott.¹² A second, even richer placer gold strike at nearby Rich Mountain, near Weaver Creek, soon followed. By early 1864, Swilling had done very well in these mining towns.

In April, 1864, Swilling married Sonoran born Trinidad Escalante, 17, in Tucson. For the next several years, he continued his adventures around the territory, but from the time of his big gold strike, they included financial ventures as well.

¹⁰ R. Michael Wilson, *Tragic Jack: The True Story of Arizona Pioneer John William Swilling* (Las Vegas, NV: Stagecoach Books, 2001) 67.

¹¹ Orick Jackson, *The White Conquest of Arizona: History of the Pioneers* (Los Angeles: The West Coast Magazine, Grafton Co, 1908) 9-14, digitized,

¹² *Journal of the Pioneer and Walker Mining Districts, 1863-65*. Phoenix: Arizona Statewide Archival and Records Project (Work Projects Administration), 1941 (note: Swilling is transcribed as Swelling)

Swilling's travels had taken him through the Salt River Valley many times prior to 1867.¹³ In the valley, he saw a potential which the Spaniards and Americans who traveled there before him had not. Hot, dry, and dirty, the valley had been without significant human habitation for 400 years, but its promise was etched in the ruins left behind by people long departed.¹⁴ Until around 1450, the Hohokam civilization had farmed corn, beans, squash, and cotton with well-engineered canals spanning 60 to 130 miles. Hohokam adobe villages dotted the landscape – as did the remains of their canals.¹⁵ Their villages essentially formed the first successful agricultural collective in the valley. Cohesive, well organized, efficient, with impressive engineering qualities, they masterfully diverted water from the local rivers to form a stable, agricultural society.¹⁶

The qualities the Hohokam exhibited to make the valley livable -- foresight, ingenuity, tenacity and organization — Jack Swilling owned in abundance. Swilling realized that the future of the Salt River Valley as an

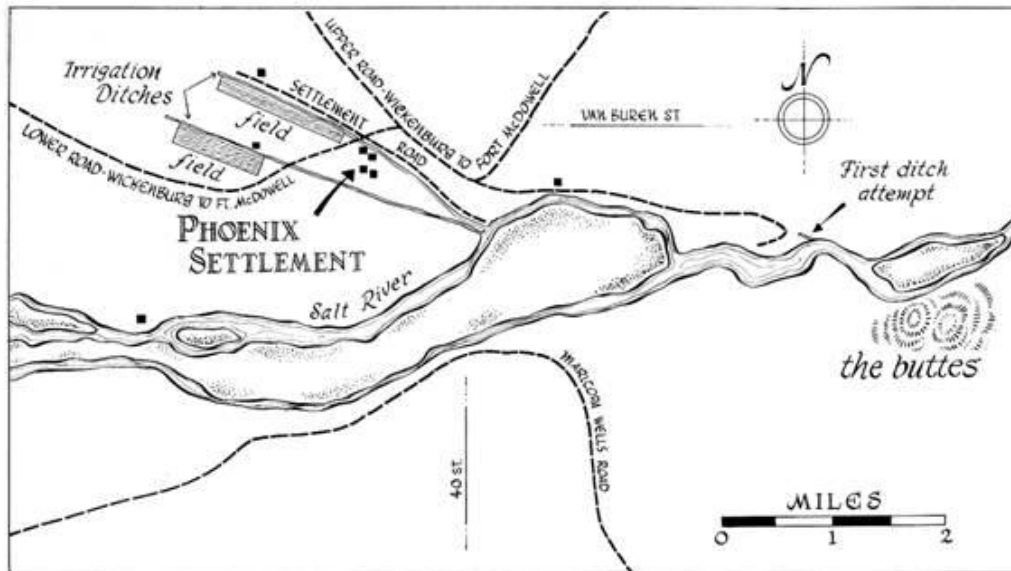
¹³ Neal Du Shane, "John William (Jack) Swilling & Trinidad Escalante Swilling – Timeline, Version 070407," Arizona Pioneers Cemetery Research Project website, <http://www.apcrp.org/> .

¹⁴ "Irrigation in Arizona," *The Los Angeles Times*. Feb 16, 1911.

¹⁵ Mildred Christine Lewis, *A History of Irrigation in the Tempe Area*, (master's thesis, Arizona State University, June 1963); H.L. Meredith, "Reclamation in the Salt River Valley, 1902-1917," *Journal of the West* (1968), 7.

¹⁶ Albert H. Schroeder, "Prehistoric Canals in the Salt River Valley, Arizona," *American Antiquity (Journal of the Society for American Archaeology)* 8, no. 4 (April 1943): 380-386.; Eric Anders-Shapiro. *Cotton in Arizona: A Historical Geography*. University of Arizona, 1989.

agricultural provider relied on transferring water from the rivers to outlying farms.¹⁷ The ancient canals would be his irrigation template. Swilling added the financial template which put the abandoned valley on a new course.



The first ditch started by Jack Swilling and his fellow shareholders in the Swilling Irrigation and Canal Co. arrived in the Valley was opposite the buttes at the later site of Tempe. The map shows the Swilling ditch paralleling the settlement road.

Figure 1 - The First Swilling Ditch¹⁸

In November, 1867, he began a canal company with a group of his friends including Henry Wickenburg, and Swilling’s good friend Darrell Duppa. At first glance, Duppa would appear an odd acquaintance of Swilling. Born in France in 1832, he was known as “Lord” Duppa, since he was rumored to have royal

¹⁷ Albert R. Bates, *Jack Swilling: Arizona’s Most Lied-About Pioneer* (Tucson, AZ: Wheatmark Publishing Co., 2008), 52; Hill, 27-28.

¹⁸ Zarbin, *The Swilling Legacy*, online.

lineage. Though he had none to speak of, Duppa, did come from a well-connected landed English family. Unfortunately, this land was to fall to his eldest brother, and he was left to fend for himself. Fluent in five languages and extremely well read, Duppa curiously left for the American frontier instead of London or New York. He eventually met Swilling in the mining town of Prescott and left with him to try farming.

Despite Duppa's aristocratic background, he and Swilling really had quite a bit in common. Like Swilling, he also binged heavily drank, gambled, and never hesitated to fight. Three bullet wounds from Apache guns attest to his rugged character. His drinking and gambling habits were summed up by his friend, saloon owner John Cady, after several card games and rounds purchased: "It will be seen that in one way or another I managed to secure considerable of old Dupper's [sic] fortune." Duppa was one of the few well-educated pioneers to settle the valley. Many more of similar background would make the trek to Phoenix due to his work. He in turn apparently liked the town. When his older brother died, leaving him the heir to his family's estate, he refused to return to his life among the British aristocracy. He told his younger brother that returning "would require a radical change in my life, and I have lived so many years on the frontiers of civilization that I now have no desire to again assume the life and the attendant responsibilities which would fall to my lot should I return to England."¹⁹

¹⁹ "He was known as Lord Duppa," *Tempe Historical Society Website*, <http://tempehistoricalsociety.org/page21.html> accessed 1/13/12.

In all, 31 names were initially attached to the company,²⁰ which was eventually called the Swilling Irrigation and Canal Company. Swilling Irrigation claimed the rights to "all the waters of Salt River or as much thereof as may be necessary, for milling, mining, farming and irrigating purposes." It acted as a cooperative association, defining the duties and contributions of each member, and tying it to the amount of land he owned along the path of the proposed canal. Issuing 50 shares of stock at \$200 a share, with each share representing a quarter mile of digging, members who were unable to buy in could work at the rate of \$66.66 per month until \$200 was on the company's books. Swilling and twelve investors raised almost \$10,000 to build the Swilling Ditch in 1867.²¹

Digging initially near Tempe Butte, the project ran into difficulties and changed to another location several miles downstream, near Smith's Hay Camp at the east end of what is now the Sky Harbor runways.²² Swilling cultivated 100 acres of irrigated wheat, barley and corn, dabbled in local politics, and began building "Swilling Castle," a very large Sonoran-style house for his growing family in central Phoenix.²³

²⁰ *Phoenix Daily Herald*, July 18, 1883. Chicano Card Catalog. Luhrs Reading Room. Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe.

²¹ Zarbin, *The Swilling Legacy*, online.

²² *Tragic Jack*, *Salt River Herald*, ix; *Evolution of Early Phoenix*, 7.

²³ Arizona -- Territorial Census, *United States Census, 1870*.



Figure 2 - Painting by C. Kemper portrays Jack Swilling digging a canal²⁴

Although founded in 1868, Swilling and partners didn't incorporate the City of Phoenix until 1881, naming it in honor of the ancient civilization that they had built the city upon. Many have debated whether the uneducated Jack Swilling really came up with the name. These critics assert that the name more likely came from his educated friend and partner Phillip Darrell. However, Swilling's wife Trinidad corroborated a *Salt River Herald* assertion that Jack Swilling came up with the name. As the article put it, Swilling "gave Phoenix its name selecting the fabled bird of antiquity whose cognomen he found in an old copy of Webster's

²⁴ Photograph: Painting Depicting Jack Swilling Recognizing the Economic Potential of Using Irrigation in the Salt River Valley in 1867, Artist C. Kemper, Luhrs Family Photograph Collection, Hayden, Arizona Collection, Tempe Arizona, CP LFPC-1904/OV1.

dictionary, the said book still being in Jack's possession and constituting the bulk of his library."²⁵

The humble beginnings of Swilling's canal company proved fruitful quickly. By 1870 the Swilling ditch had reached its capacity. Both Mexican and white residents began building their own canals as well that year. White residents started building the Tempe Canal, which still relied heavily on Mexican labor. Mexicans also built their canal called the San Francisco to irrigate their properties south of the Salt River. The rough, volatile Swilling made for a fitting founder of Phoenix.

Mexicans in the Early Salt River Valley

Listening to the story of Jack Swilling's founding efforts have led to the erroneous assumption that whites founded the town on their own. Phoenix historian Bradford Luckingham provocatively stated in his 1994 book that "Phoenix was a city by Anglos for Anglos."²⁶ This was an easy assumption in an area with no Spanish land grants, significant resident population, or indigenous peoples when Americans first arrived. The perception then is that white Americans have, from the outset, settled and built the region. Those who

²⁵ R. Michael Wilson, *Tragic Jack, the True Story of Arizona Pioneer John William Swilling* (Las Vegas: Stagecoach Books, 2001); *Salt River Herald*, Jan 26, 1878, 1.

²⁶ Bradford Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix: A Profile of Mexican American, Chinese American and African American Communities, 1860-1992*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994).

subscribe to this may be surprised that the 1870 census for Phoenix listed 124 of the 234 or so residents as Mexican.

Most of the first Mexican inhabitants of Phoenix came from the vicinity of Tucson, and had recently moved to the new area in search of land or work.²⁷ Some of these settlers may have predated white arrivals, settling in areas like Florence and Phoenix as early as the 1850s. This northward migration by Mexicans runs simultaneous with the westward migration by Anglos. As white settlers started trickling into the valley later, they learned from Mexican settlers who had arrived in Phoenix ten years prior. Many of these men and women had descended from families that had lived in the Sonoran desert for countless generations.²⁸

A look into the large Sotelo family provides a great window into the lives of the early settlers in the Phoenix area. Tiburcio and Jesus Sotelo came from El Pitiquito, Sonora. The couple had a total 8 girls and 3 boys while still living in Mexico. The Sotelos had a difficult time finding reprieve from the tumultuous conditions in Sonora at that time. The chaotic political situation prompted Tiburcio to take his family to his birthplace, Tubac, in 1867. He found the old

²⁷ Rosales, "Lost Land," no pagination.

²⁸ "The Life of a Pioneer Woman: María Sotelo Miller," typescript, Hayden Arizona Collection, Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe, 1; Archivo Historico de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, IV- 265-36, Manuel Payno to Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, February 24, 1930; United States. XVI Census.

mission in disastrous condition, virtually abandoned since the Gadsen Purchase. The Sotelos lived in Tucson for a while, but never did establish an economic foothold. Tiburcio heard that men were needed for construction of a canal and irrigation system in the Salt River Valley, and left to find work. He and his brother homesteaded the area, and began to work for J.W. Hardy, building canal networks.²⁹

According to Tiburcio's granddaughter, the family was the first to arrive in the area 1871. Though this might not be entirely true, there were certainly not more than just a handful of residents. The family planted vegetables and herbs on the property, and found plenty of work on the canal, but it was still far from an easy life. A son was killed at age 21 by an Indian when as he was delivering mail to Tucson.³⁰ According to a Sotelo descendant, he was said to be still clutching the bag when they found his body. Another son drowned shortly thereafter when he tried to forge a river with his pony while fleeing an Indian attack. When his father and others recovered his body, they "grieved and mourned to think they lost their boys in a world of little civilization and very little opportunities." Tiburcio, too, died early in their stay in Tempe.³¹

²⁹ "Biography of Maria Sotelo Miller," Hayden Arizona Collection, Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe.

³⁰ "Biography of Helen Soza Rodriguez," Hayden Arizona Collection, Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe.

³¹ Ibid, 2.

The small irrigated outpost started to grow, with both Mexican and white settlers. Mexicans lived in tightly knit Sonoran-style clusters near the Tempe Butte, or present day “A” Mountain. Community efforts prevailed, making the desert community more livable. They planted gardens, collected wood and socialized with each other. When neighbors butchered an animal, they shared the meat so all could eat before drying the remainder. As a biographer put it, “Hospitality had to be shared and sociality was the only amusement.” These early residents “developed their social qualities to a higher degree than today” to make life livable.³²

Whites generally moved into larger tracts of land, but true to the time, stayed connected with their Mexican neighbors. The Hayden family moved close by from Tucson in 1871, and hired Tiburcio’s granddaughter’s father-in-law.³³ Stories she heard of Carl Hayden show a man well respected by both whites and Mexicans. Juan Soza helped build the first canal which brought water from the Salt River to operate the mill. According to his daughter-in-law years later, his farm received free water for life for his work with Hayden. Ohio native Winchester Miller also moved to the Tempe area, homesteading the property

³² “Biography of Helen Soza Rodriguez,” 3.

³³ Dorothy F. Robinson, “A History of Early Tempe,” n.d., FM Foundation Small Manuscript, Hayden Arizona Historical Foundation, Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe; Blaine P. Lamb, “Historical Overview of Tempe, Arizona, 1870 – 1930,” 1981, FM Foundation Small Manuscript, Hayden Arizona Historical Foundation, Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe.

immediately to the south of the Sotelos' homestead and becoming the canal Superintendent on for W.H. Hardy. (Miller eventually became Tempe town Sheriff in the late 1870s and into the 1880s.) This is where Tiburcio's wife, Manuela, remained after his death, growing corn and beans with her daughters and last remaining son. The 38 year old Miller took an interest in 21 year old Maria Sotelo and the two married on January 8, 1873.³⁴

The most amusing anecdote of white and Mexican relationships came with the arrival of Tennessee-born Dr. Benjamin B. Moeur.³⁵ As the story was told, Moeur helped Manuela when he first arrived in Tempe, and continued as the family's doctor, as he did for most Tempe residents. When the Depression hit, Arizona had grown so tired of politicians that the gruff-but-kindly physician who had spent less than \$90 on the campaign won the gubernatorial race in 1932. Sometime during Moeur's term, Manuela found herself in poor health and near death. Rather than see anyone else, she insisted instead on seeing her old family physician, Dr. Moeur. Her children pleaded "no mother, he can't come, he's not a doctor anymore, he's the governor!" With Manuela's continued assurance that he would come, they rode to the capitol to inform the governor. He showed up later that day in a beige suit, panama straw hat, and a beautiful white car to see

³⁴ "Biography of Maria Sotelo Miller," 4.

³⁵ "The Cowboy Who Came to Tempe as a Doctor, and Ended Up Being Governor, Benjamin B. Moeur," *Tempe Historical Society website*, <http://tempehistoricalsociety.org/page13.html> accessed on 2/26/12.

Manuela. Nothing could save her, though. When she died, he sent a beautiful wreath with a personal note about what a kind, giving soul Manuela had been.³⁶

These community dynamics provide insight into the early settlement of the valley. Though men like Hayden, Miller, and Hardy all certainly had more opportunities than Mexican residents, they interacted, intermarried, and seemed to hold a genuine affinity for one another. The area needed all the residents they could get to make the land livable. Tiburcio Sotelo's homestead shows that Mexicans could get a nice tract of land and hold important positions within this local economy.

While previous studies have shown that towns such as Santa Barbara and Tucson had relatively cooperative relationships between the two cultures, many perceive Phoenix as so thoroughly Anglo-dominated from its inception that such a period never existed. During the first couple of decades, whites and Mexicans worked with each other so often that pleasant social as well as business interaction seemed standard.³⁷ Newspaper articles consistently mentioned social events with whites and Mexicans attending together, such as the "Phoenix brass band entertaining 150 whites and Mexicans"³⁸ in 1880. The business records of

³⁶ "Biography of Maria Sotelo Miller," Hayden Arizona Collection, Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe.

³⁷ Pete R. Dimas, "Progress and a Mexican American Community's Struggle for Existence : Phoenix's Golden Gate Barrio" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Arizona State University, 1991), 36.

³⁸ *Arizona Daily Citizen*, July 6, 1880, 2.

early Phoenix show that Mexicans owned a large percentage of the stores and businesses in the area. Whites and Mexicans often formed partnerships in an effort to serve both segments of the community more effectively.

With such a formidable amount of work to be done and such a small population, white settlers could hardly afford the luxury of adhering to racist ideologies. Mexicans living in Phoenix were carpenters, *zanjeros* (canal engineers), merchants, bakers, butchers, saloon keepers, jewelers, etc. They occupied a wide variety of jobs as more than just manual laborers. Looking at the chart below, though Mexicans were far more likely to work as laborers, they also dominated the farming in the valley, outnumbering whites by nearly 30% percent.³⁹

³⁹ Ibid.

OCCUPATIONS, MARICOPA COUNTY ⁴⁰

	1870		1880		1900	
	MEXICAN	WHITE	MEXICAN	WHITE	MEXICAN	WHITE
LABORER	49	4	430	330	880	740
SERVICE	14	9	90	80	40	390
AGRI EQUIPMENT	0	0	20	90	0	20
MINING	56	54	30	130	10	220
ARTISAN	0	0	40	50	30	350
FARMER	79	61	70	240	30	1180
MECHANICAL	0	3	20	60	10	240
TRANSPORTATION	0	0	10	50	20	180
WHITE COLLAR	0	0	0	40	0	470
BUILDING TRADES	0	4	0	40	50	330
MERCHANT	0	5	30	50	10	520
HOTEL & SALOONS	0	0	0	60	10	130
PROFESSIONAL	0	0	0	90	0	450
Totals	198	140	740	1310	1090	5220

Cited from Rosales research: SOURCE: 1870, 1880, 1900 CENSUS SCHEDULES -- 1880 & 1900
 COMPUTED FROM 10% SAMPLE. *DOES NOT INCLUDE ASIANS OR INDIANS

Henry Garfias

Enrique “Henry” Garfias provides a noteworthy example of how a Mexican could achieve an integral role in preindustrial Phoenix. Garfias was born in Mexico around 1850 before coming with his father to Southern California as a boy. He moved to Wickenburg around 1870, before eventually moving down to the Salt River Valley around 1874. Ambitious, hardworking, brave and tough,

⁴⁰ Rosales, “*Lost Land*,” Appendix, Table Two.

Garfias settled nicely into valley life. He began his career there working many odd jobs for the county such as interpreter, *zanjero* and grave digger, among many others.⁴¹

Garfias could have been a nameless Mexican pioneer in the valley had it not been for a couple of semi-mythic events that changed his life. As legend has it, Garfias broke up bar fight when he served as Constable in 1874. He succeeded at calming the place down except for two “Sonoran bravos” who fired gunshots at Garfias’ feet as he danced to avoid injury. Garfias retorted with two quick shots, killing one man and wounding the other. Though the veracity of this story is uncertain, it brought Garfias a reputation in the valley as a brave man and a quick shot.⁴² Even in 1920, an essayist writing on Garfias called him “one of the quickest men with a revolver,” noting that he was “appreciated by Arizonans as one of the bravest men ever known in this region of brave men.”⁴³

By 1878, Garfias had emerged as a leader in valley development. He began the Sacramento Canal Company with twelve other incorporators, nine of which were Mexican. He was also elected to the position of Constable of Phoenix

⁴¹ Earl Zarbin, “Henry Garfias: Phoenix’s First City Marshal,” 1992, MM Small Manuscripts, Hayden Chicano Research Collection, Hayden Library, Tempe Arizona, MM CHSM-634.

⁴² “A brave officer gone,” *Arizona Republican*, May 9, 1896, 8.

⁴³ Theron T. Widman and James H. McClintock, *Arizona, Prehistoric, Aboriginal, Pioneer, Modern*, Vol. 2 (Chicago: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1916), 467-8. Found in Tempe Historical Society.

that same year. His reputation soared after his successful pursuit of one of the more bizarre criminal acts in valley history. During these times, half the town would watch horse races on Sunday afternoon along Washington Street. Seemingly out of nowhere, a horseman came galloping down the street with a long cavalry saber, slashing right and left, as he yelled “*muerte a los gringos.*” Three men were seriously injured. Again the constable’s reputation gained when he and his deputy Jesus Vazquez tracked down Jesus Romero, the notorious “saber slasher,” in Sonora and brought him back to Phoenix to face charges.⁴⁴

It had been a violent year in the frontier town and Garfias arrived home to find a vigilante/mob mentality growing. A string of stagecoach robberies had not been solved. And a popular local farmer had been ambushed. A man named Keller was caught and jailed for it. With rumors of vigilante action spreading, Garfias planned to move both Keller and Romero to nearby Fort McDowell, but found resistance from the town jailor. Then the mob mentality came to a head. Romero was killed while trying to escape. Another well-known citizen was knifed in a saloon fight, and Garfias arrested the killer.⁴⁵ A lynch mob struck at night, hanging both Keller and the knife murderer in the plaza. In the September 5, 1879 *Territorial Expositor*, Garfias urged that the Grand Jury examine the lynchings and jailor Hiram (“Hi”) MacDonald’s role in them. The Grand Jury would not

⁴⁴ Ibid, 469.

⁴⁵ Jeffrey R. Richardson, “Enrique Garfias’ Pursuit of Frontier Justice,” *Wild West*, Oct 1, 2011, 58-62.

take action, however, as so many respectable citizens had been involved in the incident.

Garfias was easily re-elected the next year with the most votes in a field of five men.⁴⁶ He announced his candidacy for Marshal when Phoenix incorporated in 1881. Then a town of approximately 2,500 people, the *Phoenix Gazette* cited the office of Marshal as the most important position because it combined duties such as ex-officio assessor, tax collector, road commissioner and pound master. “To perform all these duties,” they stated, “requires a man of knowledge, industry and zealously, ever watchful and on the alert.” Handy, hardworking and tough, Garfias fit the job well. He bested two other candidates in Phoenix’s first election on May 3, 1881. Though local papers at times criticized his work, most still lauded his skill and efficiency in handling the multifaceted position. As the *Phoenix Daily Herald* stated, in his first year as Marshal, “Henry Garfias evidently thinks that cleanliness is next to godliness the way he has been keeping these streets clean.”⁴⁷

Garfias’ received acclaim again as Marshal when he and policeman Manual Garcia received word of three cowboys shooting up the town. Garfias rounded up a posse to confront the cowboys. He ordered the lead rider to

⁴⁶ “A brave officer gone,” *Arizona Republican*, May 9, 1896, 8; Zarbin, *Garfias*, 4: 1.

⁴⁷ *Phoenix Daily Herald*, August 6, 1881; Zarbin, *Garfias*; “A brave officer gone,” *Arizona Republican*, May 9, 1896, 8.

surrender. When he refused, gunfire broke out immediately. Garfias fired a bullet that hit the lead cowboy in the hand and eventually killed him, while the other two were later caught.⁴⁸

In 1883, Garfias married into the highest ranks of Arizona's Latino elite. His bride, Elena Redondo of Yuma, was the daughter of the Yuma area's elected territorial legislator, Jose Maria Redondo. (He had died in 1878). Her older sister Luz had married one of the area's largest landowners, cattleman David Balsz. That same year, her brother Jose Luis began publishing the Spanish language newspaper *El Progreso*. Elena gave birth to two healthy children, Maria and Emmanuel, but died in childbirth in 1890.⁴⁹

Garfias was elected Marshal every year until 1886, experiencing his largest margin of victory in 1885. His first loss as a candidate came in 1886 by an extremely narrow margin. Garfias didn't run again until 1894, losing by the worst margin of his political career - placing fourth out of six candidates. The poor showing in this election was more a sign of the times than a slight against Garfias himself. As we will see, Mexicans were far less appreciated in the 1890s than they were in the valley's nascent beginnings.⁵⁰ Despite the changing times, when Henry Garfias died two years later after a fall from his horse, the *Arizona*

⁴⁸ Zarbin, *Garfias*, 7.

⁴⁹ Frank M. Barrios, *Mexicans in Phoenix (Images of America)* (San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing, 2008), 43.

⁵⁰ Zarbin, *Garfias*, 9.

Republican lauded him as the “bravest man who was ever known in this region of brave men.” This article eulogizing Garfias takes boastful liberties with his career as Marshal.

The success and accolades of Henry Garfias’ tenure in Phoenix demonstrate that Hispanics at the time could gain social and economic mobility and genuine respect among white residents. The stories of his exploits by newspapers written and read by whites reflected a type of respect that would soon be reserved solely for whites. Very few Hispanics would make any of the town’s newspapers unless it was for a crime. The article in 1896 lauding Garfias was probably only due to the fact that his career peaked during Phoenix’s first years as a city. Had Enrique “Henry” Garfias first arrived in 1896, might not have made the headlines.⁵¹

“We Built this Town”: Mexican labor in the Salt River Valley

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.⁵²

⁵¹ “A brave officer gone,” *Arizona Republican*, May 9, 1896, 8.

⁵² Dimas, Dr. Pete R., “Joe Torres, Interview,” May 8, 2006, CD recording cited in *Hispanic Historic Property Survey/Final Report* by David R. Dean and Jean A. Reynolds, Athenaeum Public History Group for City of Phoenix Historic Preservation Office, September 30, 2006, 8.

Mexicans still had a pivotal role in mainstream Phoenix life during the 1870s and 1880s, however. Garfias was hardly the only example of social or economic success. This nascent agricultural boomtown was so dependent on Mexican knowledge, skill and labor that many white newcomers adapted to Mexican customs in town life. Take for example, Jack Swilling.

Swilling, a former Confederate soldier, lived a life rooted in many things Mexican. First, he took a young Mexican girl as his wife. Second, he and his wife built a large traditional Sonoran style 59 x 80 foot adobe house, requiring 90,000 adobe bricks. The construction was almost certainly performed by Sonorans. Finally, Swilling's work as a canal building was largely dependent on Sonoran immigrants who had long been constructing canals in their homeland. With his family, home and career all heavily rooted in Mexico, to make it in the Salt River Valley, any prejudice that Swilling might have had toward Mexicans must have been left in South Carolina.⁵³

Intermarriages in the Valley

Jack Swilling married Sonora-born Trinidad Escalante on April 13, 1864 in Tucson. Swilling spoke fondly of her in interviews, and a biographer corroborates he was a loving husband and a devoted father to their children. Trinidad gave birth to five children. Four survived to adulthood. Some accounts report seven children, but may have included two Apache children the Swillings

⁵³ Shields, "Biography of Jack Swilling"; Rosales, "*Lost Land.*"

took in. It seems fitting that this couple and their *mestizo*⁵⁴ children were among the first to settle along the Salt River since the Hohokam. Trinidad Escalante mentioned in a 1923 interview that she “was the first one here but they don’t call Mexicans white. I come from Sonora and they call me Mexican.”⁵⁵ She mentioned that a few white women came to the valley, but only after her. However, Mexican families coming north from Tucson had begun settling on the Salt River during the 1850s, presumably further downstream. With so much Mexican influence in the settlement of the early Salt River Valley, historian Pete Dimas asked “if Jack Swilling is the father of Phoenix, wouldn’t that make Trinidad Escalante the mother?”⁵⁶

The Balsz brothers made for one of the more prolific and fertile intercultural families in the area. The life of the David and Frederick Balsz show well the interconnectivity between whites and Mexicans. Frederick was born in 1824 and David Balsz in 1836 in Hassendamstr of Germany. Their mother died 15 days after David’s birth. Their father brought them to St. Louis, Missouri and trained the children as butchers. David had an adventurous spirit, which led him and five friends to jump on an ox train to Placerville, California. David lived a

⁵⁴ *Mestizo* is a term used in Arizona to describe offspring of Euro-Anglo and Mexican liaisons.

⁵⁵ “Interview with Trinidad Shoemaker,” March 2 1923, Hayden Arizona Pioneer Biographies – Arizona collection.

⁵⁶ Pete Dimas, *A Golden Gate Barrio*, 28.

fairly itinerant life for much of his younger adult years. He generally worked as a butcher for various businesses, as well as trying his own ventures throughout California. He moved to Yuma in August 17, 1864 where he found butcher work as well as freighting between Tucson and Colorado River in 1868. While in Yuma, David began to work for Jose Maria Redondo, a prominent rancher who furnished most of the supplies in the Fortuna Range. Winning Redondo's good graces, the two partnered to purchase the Yuma Exchange, a travelers lodge with billiards, a stable, and a saloon with cheap drinks.⁵⁷

By 1876, Balsz married Redondo's daughter, Luz C. Redondo. David eventually left to start a cattle operation in Maricopa Country. He expanded operations to open a slaughterhouse in 1879. With business going well, David brought his brother Fred from California to manage operation. The business continued to thrive to one of the largest cattle operations in the region. By July of 1880, David had built perhaps the first brick home in the valley. Throughout his time in the valley, he bought and sold quite a few butcher shops with varying degrees of success, but his ranching and farming remained his best operation. Like most operations during the era, Balsz ranch extensively diversified its operations. In a region as disconnected as Phoenix, even larger ranches depended on local markets. In addition to the cattle, David had at least 4000 head of sheep,

⁵⁷ "Biography of David Balsz," Biography Packet of David Balsz, Arizona Pioneers Collection, Arizona and Southwestern Collection, Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona, 2.

1500 fruit trees consisting of peaches, apricots and plums, 3600 grape vines, 50 acres of alfalfa, and 100 acres of barley.⁵⁸

Frederick married a *Chilena* in California, before marrying a Mexican woman in Arizona. As was common for these marriages at the time, they were considerably older than their brides. Frederick for example, was 52 and his second wife was 17. Frederick's teenaged children from the previous marriage continued to live with them in the valley. In total, the Balsz brothers fathered 16 *Mestizo* children.⁵⁹

Like Swilling and Escalante, most intercultural marriages were between an incoming Anglo man and a Hispanic woman. Records from St. Mary's Church, the Mexican Catholic Church of the area show that nearly 5% of Catholic marriages during the late 1800s were of Mexicans with whites. While these marriages may have been, to some degree, prompted by the lack of unmarried Anglo women in the valley, James Officer points out that they were certainly well regarded by the community as a whole:

⁵⁸ Ibid, 6.

⁵⁹ Rosales, "*Lost Land*," no pagination.

Intermarriage between Anglos and Mexicans was common and Anglo men who were parties to these marriages--both formal and common law--were often the social, economic and political leaders of the community. Mexican merchants prospered during the 1870s, sometimes in partnership with Anglos.⁶⁰

In total, less than 200 white women lived in all of Arizona in the 1870s.

Most of the white women who came to the Salt River area in the 1880s were Mormon, and unavailable to non-believers. Marriage selection was much greater if the settler was willing to marry out of his racial group. Prominent Phoenicians such as Charles Priest and David Balsz, among many others, also took Mexican wives. The Balsz brothers' 16 *Mestizo* children would not have seen their multi-ethnic background as unusual. According to historian Arturo Rosales, there were probably 500 *Mestizo* children in the area, a sizable portion of the youth in Salt River Valley.⁶¹

The implications of these unions went far beyond the marriages themselves. These were marriages, not only of men and women, but of Anglo-American and Mexican cultures, thereby provided a foundation for communication. Despite the dearth of options, the community accepted them, given the prominence of the men marrying Mexican women.

⁶⁰ James E. Officer, *Hispanic Arizona, 1536-1858*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989), 5; See also Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 88-93, for a similar but less benign conclusion.

⁶¹ "Biography of David Balsz", 7-8; Rosales, "*Lost Land*," no pagination.

Perhaps more telling, their *Mestizo* children seemed to have acculturated more to their Mexican side than their Anglo side. The *Mestizos* children of these unions nearly always married Mexicans, especially the males. This was probably due to reluctance on the part of white families to consider marrying a daughter to someone who was not 100% white. Marriage decisions for young women at this time were typically made by the parents. However, it may also reflect a genuine affinity or preference on the part of the men for Hispanic customs. The Mexican women were also far more likely to have family in the area than the white males, who most often migrated to Phoenix alone. Thus, the children of mixed marriages may often have had strong influence from Mexican family members living close by, countered by none from their distant white relatives. Regardless of the cultural affinities they adopted, the frequency of these cross-cultural marriages certainly calls into question how Anglocentric these town pioneers actually were.⁶²

Rather than creating Anglo-style communities with houses separated on large pieces of land, Phoenix's Mexicans opted for their traditional, indigenous-style settlement, with a cluster of adobe homes on the south side of the Salt River.⁶³ While white travelogues of the Southwest did not admire what they saw as comparatively primitive-looking Mexican and Spanish style houses, Phoenix

⁶² Rosales. "*Lost Land*," review of St Mary's Church archives, marriage records.

⁶³ Ibid.; Zarbin article; *Phoenix Daily Herald*, August 6, 1881; Marin, "The First Mexican Americans in Central and Salt River Valleys," no pagination.

whites quickly jettisoned these prejudices. Adobe functioned perfectly in the valley. The materials could be found and mixed easily in the desert, and the clay structure kept cool during the brutal summers. The slits instead of windows that served as protection against Indian attacks also kept out heat, while providing some air flow. These homes were usually small, one or two rooms, with a couple of window slits and a door. Even prominent early Phoenicians such as Charles Hayden, presumably capable of affording an Eastern style stone and brick house, chose to live adobe houses.⁶⁴

Most importantly, Whites relied on Mexican knowledge of adobe to build their homes. In a pre-industrial economy, Mexicans' contracting skills with the scant materials available remained an essential component for relatively comfortable settlement of the valley. As Phoenix modernized, exclusion of Mexican workers from operating farm machinery such as threshers, reapers and headers hastened their declining presence in the skilled trades.

⁶⁴ E. D. Tetreau, "Arizona's Farm Laborers," *University of Arizona, Agriculture Experiment Station Bulletin No. 163* (May, 1939), 305; F.A Rosales, "Lost Land."

“Zanjeros” and the Building of the Canals

While it was men like Jack Swilling and W.B. Hardy who founded the original canal companies of Phoenix, their construction largely depended on skilled Mexican labor. When Jack Swilling started the Swilling Irrigation and Canal Company, Mexicans were soon recognized as invaluable to the operation. Most early Phoenix Mexicans had intimate knowledge canal work from the generations of experience in Sonora. The fact that Mexican crews often underbid whites for the position of *zanjero* may also have played a large role in bringing the canal contracts their way.⁶⁵ That this Spanish term for ditch contractor was adopted by the English speaking newspapers is testament to the influence of Mexicans in Salt River Valley canal building. In addition to this official canal building on the north side of the river, Mexicans built their own canals independently, south of the river, commonly known as “Mexican ditches.” Almost immediately after the construction of the Swilling ditch, Mexicans began constructing their own canals which they connected to Swilling’s. Even whites who held racial stereotypes of Mexicans often appreciated the skill of Mexican *zanjeros*. As one resident put it:

The degenerate Mexican referred to is still a natural engineer. He can construct an *acequia* (canal) with unerring exactness, find the right place at which the water may be reached, and whereat sufficient fall may be obtained, without having the slightest

⁶⁵ *Arizona Daily Citizen*, July 13, 1885, 3:2; Chicano Card Catalog Collection, Luhrs Room, Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe.

knowledge of the reasons there of ... succeeding often where better informed and more pretentious persons fail.⁶⁶

With a little more than half of the valley's population during the 1870s, Mexicans also developed a vibrant political culture. By the 1880s three Spanish speaking papers, *El Joven*, *El Observador*, and *El Progreso* circulated through the valley and could often be distributed by white owned businesses. Furthermore, half the registered voters were Mexican as well. Politically then, Mexicans had equal leverage to that of whites. This is not to say that they split political offices with whites. They did, however, use their voting constituency to garner community services from the local government. Early newspaper articles indicate that some white politicians actively courted Mexican votes. The *Arizona Weekly Star* noted in 1898 that, "Mexican Democrats of Phoenix organized a large Democratic club at the courthouse. The club is very strong and will be influential during the coming campaign."⁶⁷ Just two years earlier the *Arizona Daily Citizen* noted that Democrats sang songs in Spanish at one of their political rallies.⁶⁸ Author Samuel Bryans noted the power of Mexican influence in Phoenix politics, writing in California in 1912, he warned Mexicans were "completely undesirable

⁶⁶ Solliday, Scott, *A Journey to the Rio Salado*, Bancroft: 579; Joseph F. Park, "The History of Mexican Labor in Arizona during the Territorial Period," (Master's thesis, Arizona State University, 1961).

⁶⁷ *Arizona Weekly Star*, Sept 15, 1898, 2:6; Chicano Card Catalog.

⁶⁸ *Arizona Daily Citizen*, Sept, 13, 1896, 4:1; Chicano Card Catalog.

and worthless, but watch out for them forming a voting bloc as they did in Phoenix.”⁶⁹

Whites and Mexicans in Early Phoenix.

Gauging everyday life for the Mexican in the valley is difficult before 1900 with the paucity of sources. In Phoenix, like anywhere else, history has a tendency to record only the actions of the elites. The 1870 census schedule indicates the diversity of the Mexican work force in the early Salt River Valley.⁷⁰

Though Mexicans comprised the vast majority of unskilled labor in the valley, they were also skilled and semi-skilled labor, in professions such as mining, farming and the service industry, and overall had more men in the work force than whites at the time. But their main role was laboring to build the town.

While the racist views of the time always involved malevolent discourse on the shortcomings of “inferior races,” for the most part, early valley settlers never denied that the Mexicans in the valley did much of the hard work. Realizing this, whites during this era seldom discouraged Mexicans from coming to work in the valley. Early newspapers supported the Mexican’s role in the valley. Titles like “75-100 Americans, Mexicans and Indians Constantly

⁶⁹ Samuel Bryan "Mexican Immigrants in the United States," *The Survey*, 20, no. 23 September 1912, Found in Gilbert G. Gonzales Collection.

⁷⁰ Rosales, No pagination.

Employed for the Reclamation of the Salt River Valley”⁷¹ can be seen frequently in newspaper articles distributed throughout the area. In a growing town which needed all the skillful hands it could get, Mexican and whites held a feeling of interdependency and connectivity that transcended cultural, linguistic and racial barriers.⁷²

The Mexican parts of the city generally lacked proper sanitation. Rather than acknowledge the city’s inadequate sanitation infrastructure, some writers chose racial stereotypes portraying Mexicans as dirty, and their neighborhoods as “potential disease incubators.”⁷³ The *Phoenix Daily Herald* added a warning that Phoenix was in danger of a “possible endemic from the lack of cleanliness of Mexicans” two months later.⁷⁴ The article further stated that they had no plumbing, and foul stenches coming from the ditches in their barrios.⁷⁵

Still, the newspapers of the time remained more likely to laud “hard working” Mexicans and praise Anglo and Mexican interaction. One article

⁷¹ *Salt River Herald*, July 6, 1878, 4:2. Chicano Card Catalog. Luhrs Reading Room. Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ *Phoenix Daily Herald*, October 23, 1879. Chicano Card Catalog. Luhrs Reading Room. Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe.

⁷⁴ *Phoenix Daily Herald*, August 16, 1879 3:1. Chicano Card Catalog. Luhrs Reading Room. Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe.

⁷⁵ *Phoenix Daily Herald*, February 2, 1888, 3-1; *Phoenix Daily Herald*, August 16, 1879, 3:1; *Phoenix Daily Herald*, October 23, 1879.

praised white and Mexican marriages stating “let the good work go on.”⁷⁶ Many others still noted social events “enjoyed by whites and Mexicans.”⁷⁷ Noting the usurpation of Mexican land grants in California, the *Phoenix Gazette* stated “let no foolishness go on in Arizona as it did in California.”⁷⁸ This was a toothless statement considering there were no land grants in the Phoenix area. Still, this opinion speaks volumes. A general feeling of interdependence and solidarity with Mexicans pervaded the valley, even if whites in the area thought themselves superior. White residents had to respect Mexicans and their culture to a certain extent, because they lived in a world that both borrowed from and depended upon them. The path towards a prosperous city, whites realized, could not be achieved without Mexican help.⁷⁹

By no means can we infer that the relationship between Mexicans and whites lacked racism or antagonism. Despite the mutual dependency and openness, in a violent frontier town like Phoenix, it is no surprise that clashes occurred. For example, local Mexicans became enraged at the vigilante murder of the accused “saber slasher,” and decided to come to town armed, demanding answers. White residents, in the process of hanging two convicts, assured the

⁷⁶ *Arizona Daily Citizen*, October 19, 1886 1. Chicano Card Catalog. Luhrs Reading Room. Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe.

⁷⁸ *Arizona Citizen Weekly*, Oct 9, 1875, 2-3; *Arizona Daily Citizen*, Jul 6, 1875. Chicano Card Catalog. Luhrs Reading Room. Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe.

Mexicans that their fate would be the same. The week before, claimed an early writer, “had been a rather lively one, even for a lively town.” There had been six killings, including “two murders of special atrocity.”⁸⁰

A change loomed in the horizon for this already tenuous relationship between the two cultures in Phoenix. Pre-industrial Phoenix would soon become integrated into the national economy through a series of government and privately funded projects. Theoretically, these changes would bring a larger pool of money and goods from which would benefit all. In practice, however, increased access to larger markets would help only a few, and almost exclusively whites.

Harbingers of Change: From the San Francisco Canal to the “Wormser Ditch”

Michael Wormser’s dealings with Mexican farm owners south of the Salt River was a dreary harbinger of the challenges Mexicans would face as more capital and more whites came. Wormser was a French Jew who came to the United States after witnessing his cousin’s success in California. Poor, unmarried, fat, short, balding, and anti-social, Wormser saw few prospects in France.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Widman, 7.

⁸¹ Ryden, Don W., *South Mountain Agricultural Area Historic Resources Survey*, City of Phoenix Planning Department, 16, 18, 23-24, 52-53; “Michael Wormser,” Biography in American Jewish Archives, November 25, 1973, 161-2. Found in Arizona Pioneers Archive.

Not finding any success in California, he went to Arizona to sell merchandise to miners. He began a store in Prescott but eventually was forced to liquidate at a loss. He opened another in Phoenix, where he offered merchandise in exchange for wheat and grains, which he would sell at a profit. When the prices of these crops plummeted, he was forced out of business yet again. Wormser then tried his hand at farming. He bought land along a badly maintained canal known to Mexicans as the San Francisco, and to whites as the “Mexican Ditch.” Maintaining the canal was a formidable task at which very few had found any degree of success. The costs of canal repairs and maintenance grew while their returns from grain crops dropped due to a depression in market prices.⁸²

By this time, Wormser had a long history dealing with Mexicans. He picked up Spanish easily due to his knowledge of French. Carl Hayden recalls the Mexicans calling him “El Judio Michael.” Armed with this knowledge, Wormser took advantage of the situation along the canal. He hired Mexicans to make much-needed repairs, all the while convincing them that he could safeguard their land at the same time. He provided them with seed grain and supplies on credit,

⁸² Ibid, 172, 175, 18; Dean and Reynolds, *Hispanic American Property Survey*, 28.

and took liens on much of their farm lands when they could not repay what they owed.⁸³

In the meantime, the Mexican farmers turned their underdeveloped tracts of land into prime agricultural acreage. Most still held hopes that they could make a profit from their crops and pay off their debts. Wormser bought the rights to the canal and subsequently cut off their water supply from the San Francisco Canal. These Mexican landowners were forced to sell him their now-unproductive land at his price. Between 1873 and 1896, Wormser acquired at least 9000 acres south of the Salt and the water rights to the San Francisco canal, with a total value of around \$400,000 according to his obituary. The San Francisco, or the “Mexican Ditch,” became known as the Wormser Ditch by the 1880s – a fitting change for the valley’s new Anglocentric direction.⁸⁴

The Preindustrial Frontier.

Despite the solid foundations that valley newcomers had created during this first Preindustrial Era, substantial work remained. The more progressive Phoenicians lamented the walkway supported by overturned beer bottles, potholes filled with horse dung, and the frequent acts of violence. Phoenix remained a small town and, without rail connections, isolated from commercial centers.

⁸³ Biography, Michael Wormser, 173.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 183-186; Hispanic Survey 29; Rosales, “*Lost Land*,” no pagination.

Transportation methods evolved slowly. Before the earliest rail lines, transportation from the Colorado River to Phoenix relied on *carretas*, horse-drawn carts with two wheels, often made in local Tucson or Yuma. As one *Arizona Republic* article noted though, “despite the clumsy look of the *carreta*, it was an efficient carrier when one considers the low first cost, strength, simplicity of construction, and light repair bills and that it was expected to travel over a track that was impassable to a four wheel wagon.” Finished goods might reach Phoenix by an ocean vessel from San Francisco, then steamer up the Colorado to Parker. A mule train could then carry the wares into valley. Not surprisingly, prices for these products ran high.⁸⁵

A Town Emerges: The Foundations of Phoenix.

In the two decades before 1890, Arizona Territory and the young city of Phoenix experienced rapid population growth and a first taste of prosperity, but still retained their frontier character. According to the 1880 Census, Arizona Territory had 40,440 people, an impressive increase from 9,658 in 1870, the first year for which a U.S. Census count is available. A telltale sign of the beginnings of a transition: In the two decades from 1870 to 1890, the female population of the territory increased from 28.7% to 38.6%.⁸⁶ New Arizona arrivals increasingly

⁸⁵ “Railroads Rapidly Solving Arizona’s Transportation Problem,” *Los Angeles Times*, Oct 17 1926, B5.

⁸⁶ 1890 Census, “Relative Proportions of Females to Males, 1870-1890.

came to settle, rather than tame the region. And there were a lot of newcomers. From 1870 to 1880, the territorial population had increased almost 319%, as the American hegemony took hold where Yavapai/Apache dominance had once kept the outside world at bay. Between 1880 and 1890, the population still increased an impressive 47.5%.⁸⁷

Irrigation projects, funded through private entrepreneurial ventures, brought the benefits of canals and small diversion dams to an increasing number of farmers. From 1868 to 1896, 12 canals totaling 224 miles were constructed in the Salt River Valley.⁸⁸

Phoenix's population was around 50 people in 1868, growing to 1708 people in the U.S. Census of 1880 and finally to 3,152 in 1890. The 1890 Census found that, for the first time, that Phoenix had become Arizona's largest city with two more people than Tucson. Maricopa County was created on 5,904,640 acres in Arizona on February 12, 1879, and named for a tribe of Yumans living near and with the Pimas. Maricopa County had a population of 5,689 in 1880, swelling to 10,980 in 1890, which made it Arizona's second largest in population, Pima County being the largest with 12,673 people. In 1890, Indians were not included in the general U.S. Census enumeration, but were the subject of a special appendix. The census counted only 28,623 Indians in Arizona territory as a

⁸⁷ 1890 US Census, vol. 1, "Elements of the Population," Table XVI.

⁸⁸ Pendleton, 186.

whole, offering no breakout as to tribe or location.⁸⁹ Better information may reside with other departments of the federal government.

Despite the rapid growth, it was nevertheless natural, steady and sustainable. This was a pre-industrial society, a roughshod town where farmers, laborers, and business owners all depended on each other to survive. Local farmers remained unaffected by the vacillations of national prices and demands. They also did not concern themselves with large scale recruiting of outside laborers to meet the heavy seasonal demands of harvest season. Family farms with a built-in labor force still predominated in the valley. Any additional laborers labor requirements would probably be met by only a few seasonal hands. Local Indian and Mexican populations supplied the additional labor necessary during the cultivating and harvesting season for the larger farms.

⁸⁹ 1890 Census, Appendix: "Indian Territory and Indian Reservations," 963-4.

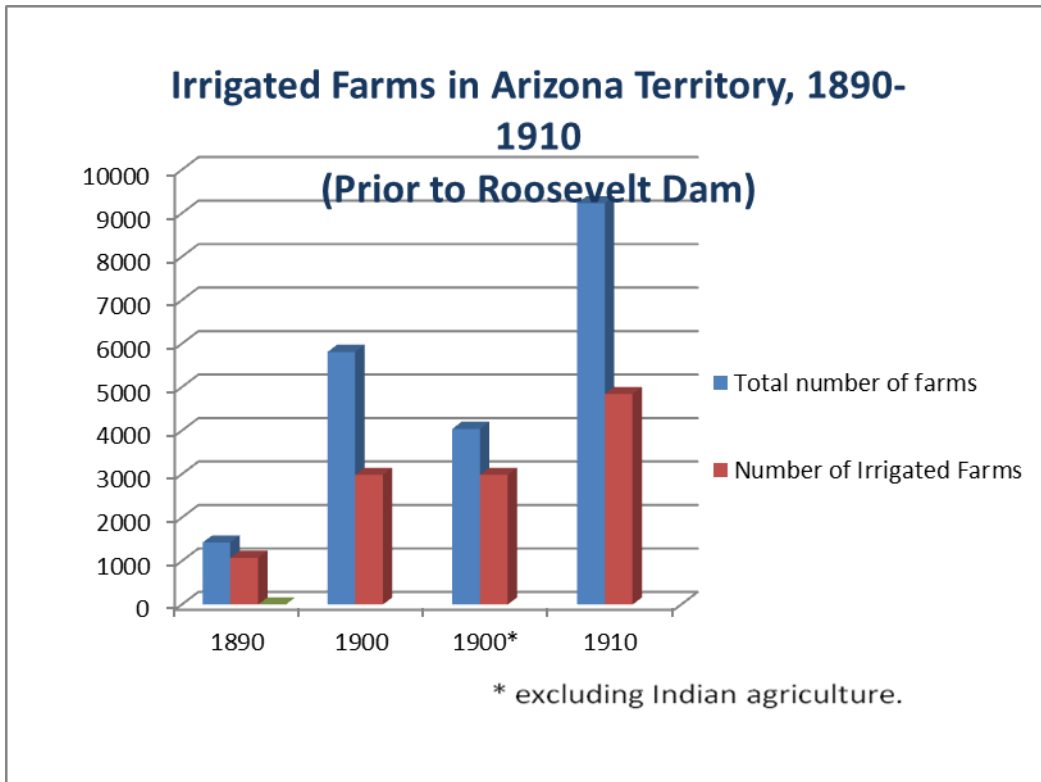


Figure 3 - Irrigated Farms, Arizona Territory, 1890-1910

	Total number of farms	Number of Irrigated Farms	Percentage: Irrigated farms to total farms
1890	1426	1075	75.4%
1900	5809	2981	51.3%
1900*	4040	2981	73.8%
1910	9227	4841	52.5%

Figure 2 - Data for graph above.⁹⁰

Disconnected Phoenix.

Despite the gains, Phoenix remained an isolated, local agricultural economy at this time. There is no irrigation data prior to 1890. However, by

⁹⁰ Pendleton, 196.

1890, 93% of all irrigated farms were under 160 acres, averaging only 43 acres. Only 79 farms, or 7%, were greater than 160 acres, the average being 287 acres.⁹¹ These small family farms fed only small markets like Ft. McDowell, Prescott and Wickenburg. The crops predominantly consisted of forage and cereal crops, along with vegetables and fruits, alfalfa, hay, peaches and tomatoes, almost exclusively for local consumption.⁹²

Scholars of Chicano history have often labeled this first generation of white and Mexican interaction the “Lost Land” era.⁹³ This ideal was rooted in prior history. An imperialistic, expanding U.S. had taken over half of Mexico through the Texas Rebellion (1836), the Mexican American War (1846) and the Gadsden Purchase (1854). The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo remains a core factor in the lost land ideal. As historian Arturo Rosales puts it, “it can safely be said that no document is more important to the Chicano people than this.” The 23 article treaty promised Mexican citizens core rights, that some had claimed would give Mexicans increased freedoms. After being put into practice, however, many

⁹¹ Pendleton, 17. Note: He takes this data in a different direction, pointing out that in 1890, the 7% of large farms (over 160 acres) had 35% of the total acreage.

⁹² Christine Marin, “The First Mexican Americans in Central and Salt River Valleys,” paper presented at the Third Annual Lecture Series of the Arizona Historical Society, Arizona Historical Society Annex, Phoenix, Arizona, Oct 18, 1987. No pagination

⁹³ Also see John R. Chavez, *The Lost Land; the Chicano Image of the Southwest* (Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico Press, 1984); Raul A. Fernandez, *United States-Mexico Border: A Politico-Economic Profile*, (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977).

of the rights promised to Mexicans were not honored. Most important among those not honored was Article X, which dealt with land grants from Mexico. As the expanding American population started to settle around the lands, many of these grants were undermined. Mexican land grant recipients often had to go through extensive legal battles to defend their rights to the land -- which they sometimes paid for with the land. However, Lost Land also involves the changes which started to take place as the Anglos became more entrenched. While they initially incorporated Mexicans, they began to bring in railroads, outside capital and more Americans. For many Mexicans, it wasn't until American technologies and comforts entered their terrain that they truly felt the pangs of Lost Land.⁹⁴

Growth too far beyond this small, inward-facing farm community would have been difficult to imagine for most in the Salt River Valley. Phoenix remained disconnected from the modernizing U.S. Before the railroad came to Casa Grande in 1879, goods and equipment coming to or from Phoenix to California still had to be brought up the Colorado River to Ehrenberg, and carted by mule to the valley. According to an *Arizona Highways* article, camels and camel jockeys were fixtures in Casa Grande, but the railroad was still too far away to ship their crops profitably. The Casa Grande railroad station, 23- 35

⁹⁴ Lawrence Cardoso, *Mexican Immigration to the United States* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980); James D. Cockroft, *Intellectual Precursors of the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1913* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968); Carey McWilliams; Matt S. Meier, *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States*, New Edition, Updated (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990).

miles south of Phoenix, was a long journey to transport goods without trains. It took wagons five days for a round trip, making costs between 25 and 60 cents per hundred pounds of freight just to ship their crops to the railroad.⁹⁵

The creativity of Jack Swilling, the bravado of Henry Garfias and hard work of Maria Sotelo and Juan Soza, provided the initial groundwork to tame the harsh terrain. The hard work and bravery that settled the new town paved the way for a different type of newcomer, however. As the 1880s drew to a close, Phoenix's potential as a regional agricultural settlement became apparent, and the rougher facets of settling the desert had been completed. The new Phoenix immigrants and future headline makers were no longer roughneck Confederate soldiers gun slinging deputies. With a foundation established, Phoenix began attracting educated, bespectacled and tenderfooted easterners instead.

The last years of Garfias', Swilling's and Wormser's lives demonstrate changes in the town's direction. All three men fell into relative obscurity or out of favor with the town. Wormser's water supply was eventually cut off by Charles Hayden's flour mill. Henry Garfias never regained any prominent position after 1886. Jack Swilling's reckless behavior pushed him to fringes of Phoenix society during his last years. After shooting a Mexican man in the

⁹⁵ John Charman, "When the Railroads Came," *Arizona Highways*, September, 1935, XRR – 44, 6, 7, 17; Michael Dean Duchemin, "Introducing the Urban Form: The Arizona Improvement Company in Phoenix, 1887-1890" (Master's thesis, Arizona State University, 1992), 32; VanderMeer, 19.

stomach, he was told that “the next lawless act he would die like a dog without judge or jury.” The townsfolk seemed to agree. As one researcher put it:

Swilling, a product of the frontier, outlived his time. In promoting settlement of the Salt River Valley, he built a Frankenstein that destroyed him. He peopled the Valley with men and women from old, settled communities in the Mid West and South. The settlers were farmers and not frontiersmen. They did not understand him and were afraid of him.⁹⁶

Arrested for a robbery he did not commit, Swilling died tragically of “natural causes” (possibly morphine withdrawal) on August 12, 1878 at the age of 47.

Conclusion.

The early years of the burgeoning agricultural enclave of Phoenix show a promising start to a fledgling town. In 1868, the area that lacked any habitation had developed a substantial population in the first two decades since it was founded. These early Mexican and white Phoenix settlers had done what they had thought was impossible, and what had seemed impossible to the many that trekked through the valley before them.

The Hohokam who lived in that area more than a thousand years earlier clearly showed that a great civilization was possible in the region, but only with the foresight, planning and tremendous organizational skills to make the severe desert terrain work for human habitation. Though little is known about the culture

⁹⁶ Mark Shields, 3.

and lives of these early inhabitants, the canals and structures they left behind lay testament to a large, impressive and cohesive society.

The first Americans to live in the valley saw the achievements of the ancients and the possibilities for production and plenty which they implied. Their initial efforts to extract water from the Gila and the Salt onto their new farms relied on a high level of cooperation and planning as much as they relied on good engineering and construction. Like the ancients, the Salt River Valley's new settlers could see that size and organization mattered.

With a few people, a field could be plowed. With more people, a ditch could supply the field with water. With cooperation, planning and vision, more channels could supply fields farther from the banks of a river known for its whims. Ultimately this was a land which favored the wide view, the inclusive view, the greater imagination and the greatest number of hands. The prejudice and exclusion which the settlers had learned many miles away might not have vanished but the rough terrain rewarded those who learned and punished those who did not.

The Mexicans' skills, based on a tradition established through generations in the Sonoran Desert, were the skills needed to prosper there. The relationship that the whites and Mexicans formed was not equal by any means. However, genuine opportunities for economic mobility and success developed as the two groups worked together and shared the challenges of creating something new. Throughout the first couple of decades in the Salt River Valley, white

relationships with Mexicans hinged on an inclusive interdependence which had obvious benefits. By 1890, however, the first phase of modernization had already begun to dismantle this intercultural cooperation. Other people and other possibilities were on the way.

A series of events loomed that would radically change this pre-industrial dusty, desert frontier town. First, the Desert Land Act of 1877 permitted settlers to gain land in increments of 640 acres, rather than the 160 acres provided by the Homestead Act. Second, the Casa Grande railhead received a spur line reaching Phoenix by 1887. Finally, extensive lobbying by boosters made the Salt River Valley the first recipient of the massive government irrigation project permitted under the National Reclamation Act of 1902. Prosperity would soon be on the way for many Phoenixians, but it would come at a cost for many.

CHAPTER 2:
CIVILIZING THE DESERT:
WATER, RAILROADS AND THE TRANSITION
TO MODERNIZATION, 1887-1912.

Perhaps no era in this study was as pivotal to the transformation of Phoenix than the “Foundation Era,” lasting from 1887-1912. Though this timeframe did not experience tremendous growth in itself, the advancements during this era allowed for Phoenix to grow into both a commercial agricultural hub and an expanding metropolitan city. In 1887, Phoenix received its first spur line, drastically reducing the time and cost of shipping freight and bringing people. The second and most significant event came when Salt River boosters managed to secure the first federally subsidized project of the Bureau of Reclamation. The construction of the Roosevelt Dam controlled floods and tremendously improved the stability of the water supply. Phoenix now had the infrastructure to meet a growing national demand for Southwestern crops.

The new economic opportunities oddly only served to degrade the Mexicans’ status in the Salt River Valley. As the city modernized, whites no longer depended on Sonoran preindustrial knowledge. Moreover, racial prejudices towards Mexicans solidified as whites chose to obscure the Mexican presence from tourists and potential migrants. Outside the Salt River Valley, modernization during the Mexican *Porfiriato* provided the transportation network and the impetus for future mass migration from Mexico.

Phoenix, 1890: First Annual Arizona Agricultural Convention.

Farmers from across the state came to the 1890 Agricultural Convention in Phoenix. The convention was the first of its kind in Arizona and a benchmark for the territory. Arizona had been considered a frontier – one hardly fit for habitation by civilized people. The 1890 agricultural convention made a statement that Arizona agriculture was a viable industry, cultivating the land in a promising region.⁹⁷

The farmers, ranchers, agriculturalists, politicians and businessmen in attendance knew what they were onto. Making the trek to Arizona Territory would prove fruitful. They brimmed with pride at the Phoenix's transformation. Energetic Arizona boosters vigorously worked to bring government and private capital to the region, building railroads, streets, dams and canals. The changes to this point had already been substantial. During the 1870s, supplies took a dizzyingly circuitous route to reach the region. Shipments often came into San Francisco, sailed around the tip of Baja California, then steamed up the dam-free Colorado to Parker. Next, the land journey could begin by traveling via wagon,

⁹⁷ Gulley, F. A. and C.B. Collingwood, "Agricultural Development in Southwestern Arizona: Pumping Water for Irrigation" (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona, 1893); Bulletin, University of Arizona. Arizona Agricultural Experiment Station, 266.

carreta or even mule train to the dusty little town of Phoenix⁹⁸. Twenty years later, railroad spur lines had hit Phoenix, bringing new hotels, stores, and possibilities for new green, irrigated farms along the Salt River. Though most in Boston probably didn't yet know Phoenix from Portland, the venture capitalists knew – there was money to be made in the desert.

The convention topics would have been painfully boring to laymen. Forums and discussion centered on farming logistics – when to cut back your vines, how to maximize crop yields. Keynote speaker Governor L.C. Hughes finally broadened the topic. At the end of the convention, Governor Hughes got to the heart of the matter. The palpable feeling of optimism coursed through the crowd as he waxed prophetic:

It took the Hebrews forty years of struggle and conquest to reach the promised land of Canaan, but it was reached. It took the Arizona pioneer forty years to wrest away this land from Apache Savagery, and at what a sacrifice the thousands of graves bear witness. How much our beloved Arizona is like unto that land of the olive, the pomegranate, and the vine, a real land of milk and honey, and all the delicious fruits and rich breads of the earth. We are now preparing to gather the fruits of that pioneer conquest. The silver hairs of the pioneer fathers and mothers bespeak their trials and the approaching end, but they see in the vision of the future the harvest of their sowing. They hear the tramp of the millions who are coming, the rejoicing of a great and good people who will inhabit this land, and sing songs of their victories. Let us all work diligently whilst we have the opportunity to hasten the consummation of this hope.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ “Railroads Rapidly Solving Arizona’s Transportation Problem,” Los Angeles Times, Oct 17 1926, B5.

⁹⁹ Gulley and Collingwood, 26; Bulletin, University of Arizona. Arizona Agricultural Experiment Station. 266.

A historian looking back 110 years could hardly have captured the crux of this era any better. The “pioneers” to whom the governor referred were men like Jack Swilling, Henry Garfias, and numerous other adventurous spirits who settled this land. They planted the first crops and built the first canals since the Hohokam left a thousand years before. While Arizonans paid homage to these pioneers and waxed nostalgic over their bravery, their time had come and gone. The new class of migrant wanted to bring civilization to the desert.

In 1870, the area counted only 240 people, mostly farmers who had followed Jack Swilling’s lead. By 1890, a healthy growth characterized Phoenix and the Salt River Valley. The time period covered in this chapter, 1890 – 1915 is not entirely different in terms of population growth. While Arizona Territory more than doubled between 1890 and 1910, going from 88,243 to 204,354, Phoenix grew from 3152 to 11,134, a 353% increase.¹⁰⁰

This population growth was not the only indicator of the transformative changes which occurred during these decades. The Salt River Valley experienced key advancements in railroad building and irrigation that provided the foundation for a new, dynamic economy. This chapter takes a step back from social history

¹⁰⁰ “Farming in Arizona,” Address by Territorial Governor L.C. Hughes. AES, 1890; Gulley and Collingwood, 213; “Supplement for Arizona,” U.S. Census 1910, 568. The supplement included earlier census numbers, accessed 1/22/12.

to look at the overarching economic, agricultural and technological history. This is a story of transition -- from trails to paved roads and railroads, from ditches and *acequias* to vast reservoirs, and ultimately, a transformation of people and economies.

Since its inception, Phoenix has been expansion oriented and dynamic. While the “mushroom” growth of Phoenix did not start until after World War II, the changes that took place during this era were the platform that allowed the city to boom.¹⁰¹ Ultimately, Phoenix changed from a small, fixed, insular economy, to a connected, regenerative, dynamic and expanding one.¹⁰² This chapter asks the questions, how did Phoenix make this shift? How did this area get railroads, dams and the money?

The easy answers are geography and history. Phoenix had been a very significant population center to an indigenous civilization long before. The critical facts of nature which the Hohokam civilization had tapped so effectively still remained: Two rivers, the Salt and the Gila, converged in the Salt River Valley, bolstered by the Verde and a few lesser streams. These rivers provided the foundation to build a desert city. In the nearby mountains, emerging mining

¹⁰¹ Philip VanderMeer, *Desert Visions and the Making of Phoenix, 1860-2009* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011), 38.

¹⁰² For a classic study of the change from a fixed local economy to an expanding one, see David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987).

centers became productive. The miners and soldiers needed food, and the Salt River Valley could supply this food cheaper.

While the rivers provided the foundation, building the town required a human factor. A new class of people came into Phoenix to fill this role. They provided the impetus and the exuberance to bring on two vital components: railroads and dams. Though this study focuses on the laborers, proper perspective requires that this chapter switch lenses to cover the ambitious men who created and instigated the change.

The progress that these boosters brought drastically altered the economy. The previous era was characterized by a diverse agricultural economy. Local growth met subsistence needs as well as the needs of small regional markets in the mining centers in the higher elevations to the north. The trains, dams, canals, and roads built in this era connected this region to other expanding Southwestern cities, as well major U.S. markets to the east. This allowed for the free flow of people, products, and capital which ultimately led to a drastic change in agricultural landscape. Markets for the Salt River Valley's agricultural output would go from fixed to nearly endless. It seems almost intuitive that such changes would foster new wealth for all residents who arrived before this boom. Unfortunately for Phoenix Mexicans, they instead found themselves ostracized from social and economic opportunities.

“Farming the Farmer.” Exaggerations and Lies in the Quest for more People.

Boosters made it their mission to grow their city in every way possible. This objective did not differ entirely from that of the early town founders like ex-Confederate soldier Jack Swilling, or Mexican-born sheriff and politician Henry Garfias, and countless other pioneers. Men like Jack Swilling would not have made headlines in post-1890 Phoenix, nor would most men of Hispanic origin, like Garfias. Though uncouth, these men helped pave the streets, dig the canals and build the hotels for the next wave of Arizonans to enjoy, a remarkable piece of civilization in the barren, harsh desert.

The new headline makers came with an entirely different skill set. They were generally educated back East, or the Midwest, coming from somewhat established middle class families. They were men like Boston businessman Benjamin Fowler, Dwight Heard, and Patrick Hamilton. These boosters made no mention of men like Swilling and Garfias in their books, pamphlets and articles promoting their town. Boosters energetically sought to encourage new migrants and tourists from the East and Midwest. These ambitious desert entrepreneurs had an entirely new set of challenges than boosters in other regions. Faced with a harsh, Spartan environment, they made it their mission to create a new paradise in the sunshine, where evidence of the desert was replaced with a landscape more likely to attract people accustomed to greener landscapes.

These boosters hardly pushed these efforts for mere civic pride. In nearly all cases they had a vested economic stake in Phoenix. Most owned large tracts of

land, purchased in the early years of valley development, for cheap prices. The best way to make these lands as profitable as possible was to create demand. The most essential component to increasing land values then would be to draw people. Simply put, the more people, the more economic growth. Bringing massive infrastructure and improvement projects was certainly the most effective way to spike growth. These projects took substantial amounts of energy and only came in fits and spurts. In the meantime, boosters promoted the region by proselytizing a smorgasbord of exaggerations and lies about the virtues and potential rewards of the valley

One of the most noted boosters in this arena was Patrick Hamilton. With the official and enthusiastic encouragement of the Territorial Legislature, Hamilton wrote a nationally distributed book entitled *The Resources of Arizona: It's mineral, farming, grazing and timberlands*, published in 1883. Repeatedly opting for hyperbole over facts, Hamilton wrote of Phoenix: “. . . so dense is the foliage that houses are almost hidden from view and the traveler doesn't notice he is near the heart of town until they are in front of their hotel.”¹⁰³ Some trees might have lined the curb, but dense foliage Phoenix had not. Hamilton's account of the wagon ride into Phoenix sounded more like what one would expect of a Seattle travelogue. His description of the Phoenix terrain demonstrates how

103 Hamilton, Patrick, *The Resources of Arizona, Its mineral, farming, grazing and timber lands...*, 3rd edition, (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft & Company, 1883), 82.

boosters sought to define the desert in ways that appealed to familiar East Coast aesthetics.

One of the most common methods of luring travelers and residents was by advertising the unique climate of the Southwest. Pamphlets bragged continuously of the beautiful winters, continuous sunshine, and surprisingly tolerable summers. As historian Phil VanderMeer aptly put it, they “redefined harsh as healthy.”¹⁰⁴ Boosters lauded the hot dry air as a wonderful cure for ailments like consumption, catarrh and asthma. Promotional material advertising the region spoke of the desert as a magical elixir that could cure what doctors back east could not. According to one promotional pamphlet, this could only occur if the sick can invest enough time in the valley. “While the effects from a short stay are great, and in many instances lasting” boasts one pamphlet “yet to receive the best results one should remain here for some time.” In order for the valley’s healing powers to truly have a full in lasting effect, in fact, the health seeker needed to arrive early in their ailment for the environment to take its effect.

“I would not advise anyone coming in the late stages of consumption with the hope of effecting a cure. . . . Those that came here in time, that is, before they became so emaciated by the disease as to have lost their strength, voice or power of locomotion, have been greatly benefitted. A few months will not affect a cure. It will take a long time, and sometimes a year”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ VanderMeer, *Desert Visions*, 9.

¹⁰⁵ J.W. Crenshaw, *The Salt River Valley, a Place of Wonders*, (Phoenix: J.W. Crenshaw, pub., with the authority of the Board of Supervisors of Maricopa County, endorsed by the Phoenix and Maricopa County Board of Trade, June 1907).

Other boosters focused on the small town charm and the unique desert scenery. One writer lavishly described the scenery “here in the desert color is supreme. Great artists revel in the vivid brilliancy of color richness so lavishly bestowed on this gigantic canvas. Yet it is never the same. Every moment sees some fresh effect beginning, continuing or produced.” Appealing to the urbanites, the same writer also touted the small town, quiet, and relaxing feel that desert could provide. “Does not this calm allurement take full possession of the soul, mind, and body and give in return a corresponding richer life? Who would long for the city with its restless, dissatisfied throng? Ever moving yet discontented in motion; tossed about by every whim they typify eternal unrest.”¹⁰⁶ A move to the desert could set the businessmen of Eastern cities at ease.

Drawing in people provided one crucial element for town development. In the desert, however, the other way to directly increase land value, as well as attract settlers, was to manipulate water to irrigate their lands. Hamilton was one of the earliest champions of irrigation possibilities. He and his ilk knew that the best way to draw in people was through economic opportunity, and land became substantially more productive when the farmer was not dependent upon Nature to provide the desert’s rarest resource. In 1883, writing in *The Resources of Arizona*, Hamilton touted Phoenix:

¹⁰⁶ “The Development of Chandler and Vicinity,” FM Foundation Small Manuscripts, Hayden Arizona Historical Foundation, n.d. FM MSM-61. Also available at Chandler Historical Society.

She has the soil, she has the climate, and she has the water ... to make her agricultural interests scarcely second to her vast mining and grazing interests. Although requiring some additional labor this mode of cultivation commends itself for its certainty and for its large returns. It is estimated Arizona could irrigate five times more than the present 80,000 acres already under cultivation ... ¹⁰⁷

The 400,000 acres Hamilton claims the region's rivers could irrigate was probably an outright lie.¹⁰⁸ However, these words seem almost reticent compared to later statements. In 1889, Hamilton stated to the USDA:

. . . it is thought that a single large dam can be constructed which will hold back enough water to irrigate all the vacant lands in the Salt River Valley, the likes of which has been found on analysis to be richer than that of the Nile. It is ... possible to divert waters at not too great of an expense to irrigate two million acres while Agricultural Experiment Station has estimated more than six million acres.¹⁰⁹

Not surprisingly, the Salt River could not sustain 6,000,000 acres. In fact, this would have been around five times the acreage which the average flow of the Salt could have irrigated.¹¹⁰ That the quotes were now growing beyond the boundaries of reason only underscores the point. Boosters threw out any statistics, and grossly exaggerated benefits as vigorously as possible to attract positive attention.

¹⁰⁷ Hamilton, *op.cit.*, 6.

¹⁰⁸ Shapiro, 108. Shapiro notes how Fowler and Heard continuously touted millions of acres even though they were well aware that this was not possible.

¹⁰⁹ USDA Yearbook, 1889, quoted Hamilton on page 19 in a statement to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Yearbook.

¹¹⁰ Earl A. Zarbin, *Roosevelt Dam: A History to 1911* (Phoenix: Salt River Project, 1984), 37.

Not everyone in the valley supported the deceptive tactics of the boosters. In his personal files, E.W. Hudson of the Sacaton Agricultural Experiment Station lambasted their promotions as directly misleading and counterproductive to the region. In one of his writings, possibly sent to businessmen in the valley, Hudson griped over “carpet baggers... whose principal object seems to be to exploit the natural resources of Arizona for their own selfish benefit.” Hudson pointed the blame most directly at the real estate and commercial organizations. He complained that these industries “... seem to think that it will hinder a very profitable form of farming in Arizona for them in ‘farming the farmer.’ It seems to be quite generally agreed upon that we should not tell the whole truth about local agricultural conditions in any part of Arizona.”¹¹¹

The end result of these businesses misleading migrants into coming into the valley created “knockers,” or settlers who find they have been misled, and then lambaste the region. “How can we blame them?” Hudson began:

New settlers are attracted to this state by lurid publicity which leads them to believe that dollars are growing on mesquite trees and cactus, and that government land may be obtained for the asking and sold for a small fortune, that with the magic touch of irrigating water the soil will yield one of the few places in the world where money may be made without work. You have no idea of the hundreds of disappointed settlers and farmers there are in this state. Is it any wonder that such people coming here with a few dollars in their pockets and soon losing everything by being unable to contend with the strange conditions and the rapacious

¹¹¹ “The Object of the Agricultural Extension Service,” Hudson Cotton Company Collection, Arizona Historical Foundation, Hayden Library Room 412, Tempe Arizona, Box 4, 16.

(shall we say?) carpet baggers, can fail to do anything but knock the country?¹¹²

Hudson later suggested a novel remedy to the problem of drawing in disappointed settlers: telling the truth.

Would it not be better business if the advertising of the state told with great care of the conditions as they actually exist? We have nothing to be ashamed of here and we have many valuable agricultural resources which cannot be duplicated in any other state in the union...Advise them of what they need, how much capital, so that telling of the advantages so that when they come they will find conditions exactly as represented and will not be disappointed, unsuccessful settlers.¹¹³

Since Hudson worked with farmers consistently as part of his job in the valley, his perspective shows a rare insight into the frustration that settlers found after discovering that conditions and opportunities had been grossly exaggerated. Those who promoted the region, unfortunately, only saw the growth.

“Just Add Water”: Rivers, Canals and the Building of the Great Dam.

Though the irrigation system was fairly advanced by 1890, Phoenix boosters knew nothing could do more to attract new settlers and sell lands at higher prices than a massive irrigation project. The Salt River’s unpredictable nature was an important reason. Within 20 years after Swilling and company dug

¹¹² Idem.

¹¹³ “The Object of the Agricultural Extension Service,” Hudson Cotton Company Collection, Arizona Historical Foundation, Hayden Library Room 412, Tempe Arizona, Box 4, 16.

the first ditch in the modern irrigation effort, more land had been cultivated than the Salt River could sustain in low water years.¹¹⁴ During these low water years, crops would rot, and competition over the scarce resource would become volatile. In high water years, the river over-ran its banks, washing out section after section of the carefully carved canals.¹¹⁵

Annual Flow of the Salt and Verde Rivers, 1889 to 1913, in acre-feet.¹¹⁶

Salt River, Maximum (at Roosevelt)	3,226,000 (more than four times mean flow, about 21 times the minimum.)
Salt River, Minimum	154,000 (only 1/5 of the mean flow.)
Salt River, Mean	773,800
Verde River, Maximum (at McDowell)	1,850,000 (more than three times mean flow, almost 16 times the minimum)
Verde River, Minimum	117,000 (just over 1/5 of mean flow.)
Verde River, Mean	561,509

Both the Salt and its tributary ,the Verde River, drain the southern Colorado Plateau in Arizona, funneling the runoff southward into the area just

¹¹⁴ U. S. Reclamation Service, *Sixteenth Annual Report, 1916-1917* (Washington, 1917), 45; Harian H. Barrows, "Roosevelt Dam and the Salt River Valley," *Journal of Geography*, Vol. XI (May, 1913), 278.

¹¹⁵ H.L. Meredith, "Reclamation in the Salt River Valley, 1902-1917," *Journal of the West*, 77.

¹¹⁶ U.S. Reclamation Service. *Thirteenth Annual Report, 1913-1914* (Washington, 1913), 63.

east of the irrigated Salt River Valley. The drop from mountain peaks to the north into the Tonto Basin (where the Roosevelt Dam now sits) can be as much as 9000 feet. Rainfall in these rivers' drainage areas averages over 20 inches per year, and is seasonal as well as cyclical. Every few years, heavy rains would rip the valley itself, adding to the problem of a high spring snow-melt in Northern Arizona. In other years, there wasn't enough water in the river, and farmers farther downstream walked parched fields looking at dry canals.¹¹⁷

The heavy rainfall of the early 1890s obscured the growing need for a massive irrigation project.¹¹⁸ However, as drought struck in the later years of that decade, demands for action increased. Farmers in the valley panicked and sought scapegoats for their problems. Many of the original settlers in established Phoenix areas became convinced that newcomers to the east were taking their water upstream. An armed party rode out to investigate, and found the Mesa farms in no better condition than their own.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Meredith, "Reclamation," 77.

¹¹⁸ Mark Pry, "Arizona and the Politics of Statehood, 1889-1912" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Arizona State University, 1995), 128; Earl Zarbin, *Roosevelt Dam*, 144.

¹¹⁹ Christine Marin, "The First Mexican-Americans in Central and Salt River Valleys" (paper presented at the Third Annual Lecture Series of the Arizona Historical Society, Arizona Historical Society Annex, Phoenix, AZ, October 18, 1987), 7.



Figure 5 Main Gates of Crosscut Canal 1890¹²⁰

Local farmers sought to mitigate against Mother Nature's mood swings. Fortunately there had been promising signs for valley leaders to believe that it might not always be beyond their control. By 1889, the U.S. Senate created a select committee on irrigation and arid lands.¹²¹ This committee traveled and arranged field studies to assess arid areas for possible reclamation efforts.¹²²

¹²⁰ Photograph: Main gates of the Arizona Canal, the Crosscut Canal and Lateral 7, Herb and Dorothy McLaughlin Photographs, Original in the Mrs. Daniel M. Thompson Collection, Hayden Arizona Collection, Tempe, Arizona. CP MCL 98159.A3.

¹²¹ Records of the United States Senate (Record Group 46) 1789-1990. <http://www.archives.gov/legislative/guide/senate/chapter-12-irrigation.html>. The Senate Select Committee on Arid Lands and Irrigation was a predecessor to the Senate committee formed after passage of the Newlands Reclamation Act.

¹²² "To Help the Arid Belt," *Arizona Republican*, Jun 26, 1890, 2.

When the committee announced that they would look into the Salt River Valley's potential, Maricopa County Board of Supervisors sent a group up river to look for a site.

This massive endeavor required a substantial sum for private enterprise – estimated at over two million dollars.¹²³ Though Phoenix had outside interests with access to some capital, this was a risky investment. With the terribly unsuccessful track record of water projects in Arizona, finding someone to fund a project of this magnitude would be difficult. An Arizona Highways writer summarizing early irrigation reported: “Corporations enter the business of supplying water to farms as public utilities but without the regulation they have today. They took over and excavated many small canals; built larger ones at great expense, and in every case went bankrupt.”¹²⁴ Only one company, the Hudson Canal Company, put up a serious attempt to take on the dam. However, the company failed to raise the three million in outside investment they projected they would need to build the dam.

Seeing that private construction for a massive project involving water storage would be difficult, if not futile, locals slowly began looking to government for assistance. The stored water would increase production from their lands and result in further growth of the Salt River Valley. Boosters had

¹²³ Jonathon Laurantzen. “The Saga of Arizona’s Fight for Water: Valley of the Sun.” *Reclamation Era*: Aug, 1946, 17.

¹²⁴ Ernest Douglas, “Arizona’s First Irrigators,” *Arizona Highways*, vol 18, no. 7, July 1942, 25-6.

been successfully garnering large amounts of government monies for the initial canal project, and were now pressuring for something much more elaborate. The Maricopa County Board of Trade named a committee to investigate the feasibility of constructing a dam and a water storage system. On August 31, 1889, committee members meeting in Phoenix's Dorris Opera House recommended a site 80 miles from Phoenix, below where Tonto Creek flowed into the Salt River. It wasn't until 1900, however, that they finally established a committee to look into the possibility of government involvement.¹²⁵

This is where businessman Benjamin A. Fowler, chairman of the Maricopa County Water Storage Committee, came in. Few embodied this new desert entrepreneur better than Benjamin Fowler. Born in Massachusetts in 1843, Fowler received his law degree from Yale. Before coming to the valley, he taught school, practiced law, and worked in the publishing business in Chicago, New York, and Boston. Upon arriving in the valley in 1899, he immediately purchased four hundred acres of land in Glendale. For Fowler, getting federal money to help make his new land more profitable was a priority.¹²⁶ He put his energy, education and social standing to good work in Arizona. He served as a delegate and then

¹²⁵ Bureau of Reclamation. "Project History" *Salt River Project website*, http://www.usbr.gov/projects/Project.jsp?proj_Name=Salt%20River%20Project; The Salt River Project: Keeping the Spirit Alive.

¹²⁶ Larissa Larsen and David Almeddin, "The Evolution of Early Phoenix: Valley Business Elite, Land Speculation and the Emergence of Planning," *Journal of Planning History*, 2007, 6:33-34.

president of the National Irrigation Association; the president of the Arizona Agricultural Association, the Phoenix Board of Trade, the YMCA, and vice-president of the American Forestry Association.¹²⁷

When Fowler arrived in the Salt River Valley in 1899, he found a conglomeration of loosely connected regional water users' associations. Striking an agreement between of these organizations would be difficult. Building a larger water storage dam and reservoir would be expensive. Fowler and the Salt River Water Storage Association garnered \$1500 to pay for an official survey of the area by the USGS.¹²⁸

These early reclamationists had a massive undertaking ahead of them. They needed to change Federal legislation and pave the way for new, massive public programs. With their objectives in site, Fowler's next step was to go to Washington to lobby for government assistance in Reclamation. He asked the federal government to cede to the Territory all public lands within its borders; the sale of these lands would fund the construction of the dam.¹²⁹ Fowler went east to convince Congress to allow Maricopa to bond itself. At this time, it would have been illegal for the territory to assume that much debt. He argued that some such

¹²⁷ Larsen and Almeddin, 35; Bradford Luckingham, *Phoenix: The History of a Southwestern Metropolis* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), 44;

¹²⁸ Karen L. Smith, *The Magnificent Experiment: Building the Salt River Reclamation Project, 1890-1917* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986), 72, 77.

¹²⁹ Jonathon Lurtizen, "Saga of Arizona's Fight for Water: Valley of the Sun by *Reclamation Era*, Aug 1946, 173.

projects had been done in British India with great success, saving 50 million people had been saved from recurrent famine. Congress was skeptical and suggested that it should be funded privately, possibly with the fortunes of mine owners.¹³⁰

At this point, however, the Department of the Interior had restrictions against federal irrigation for private benefit. However, he did meet allies while in Washington. Fowler first met with George H. Maxwell, Head of the National Irrigation Association, United States Geological Survey office Frederick Newell and Rep. Frances G. Newlands of Nevada, himself a firm believer in Reclamation. He eventually gave up the idea of county bonds when talking to these men, in favor instead of Federal Reclamation.¹³¹

For such a massive lobbying effort, the valley farmers needed some help in high places. The first help came locally, from Arizona Republican owner Dwight B. Heard. Heard left Chicago in 1894 and traveled to the Southwest. After he and his wife had a stopover in Phoenix, they decided to make the emerging city their home. Apart from his desire to boost business in the area, Heard also wanted to increase the value of the 7500 acres he purchased just south of the Salt River. With connections and motivation, Heard used his connections

¹³⁰ Ibid, 177.

¹³¹ Karen L. Smith, *The Magnificent Experiment: Building the Salt River Reclamation Project, 1890-1917* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986), 72, 77; Shelly C. Dudley, *The First Five: A Brief History of the Salt River Project*, Salt River Project website, <http://www.waterhistory.org/histories/reclamation/saltriver/t1.html>.

with Theodore Roosevelt, exchanging over 150 letters.¹³² Despite vehement efforts on the part the big players, many valley farmers remained unconvinced they even wanted any government funded irrigation project in the Salt River Valley.

From the early days of the lobbying, most thought of the San Carlos site on the Gila River as the logical first recipient of government funds. He organized Phoenix landowners to go to Washington to lobby *against* an appropriation for a \$1,000,000 dam at the San Carlos Reservation site.¹³³ The Pima-Maricopa Indians there were farmers, impoverished when white farmers upstream diverted so much of the water that the stream was reduced to a trickle. While the Department of the Interior and the white community in the Salt River Valley were outwardly sympathetic, a dam at San Carlos seemed to be primarily intended for their use, not the white farmer's dozens of miles downstream.¹³⁴

Resident reaction to the potential for irrigation seemed oddly quiet to historian Earl Zarbin. Many in Tempe thought that the dam would benefit new farms to the east, and do nothing for current valley residents. Despite the mixed emotions at home, Fowler connected with Frederick Newell, and Gifford Pinchot,

¹³² Larissa Larsen & David Alameddin, "The Evolution of Early Phoenix: Valley Business Elite, Land Speculation, and the Emergence of Planning," *The Journal of Planning History* 6 no.2 (2007): 92.

¹³³ Michael F. Logan, *Desert Cities: The Environmental History of Phoenix and Tucson*, (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), 36.

¹³⁴ "For the Pimas," *The Arizona Republican*, December 21, 1900, 2.

chief of the Department of the Interior's new Forestry Service, and began to lobby for his desert irrigation project. Newell eventually invested in the region along with many other Californians under the Arizona Improvement Company. He found the ally he needed in attorney George H. Maxwell, an agent of the railroads who became key in the passage of the Reclamation Act in 1902.¹³⁵ Fowler then gained the support of Nevada's Rep. Francis Griffith Newlands (who became Senator in 1903), a well-know reclamationist, as well as Forestry's Gifford Pinchot. Both were influential, eventually becoming members of the "tennis cabinet" of then Vice-President Theodore Roosevelt.¹³⁶

President William McKinley was assassinated on September 14, 1901. The tragic assassination had a silver lining for Phoenix supporters of Reclamation. His successor Theodore Roosevelt brought a new approach to the presidency -- an unabashed fascination with the American West. Moreover, Roosevelt view of Conservation as the necessity to save and utilize Nature's resources to their fullest potential led him to fall strongly in favor of Reclamation in the West. Now strongly supported by the president, the National Reclamation Act was passed by Congress just nine months later. With the heavy influence of Fowler, Maxwell and Pinchot, the Salt River dam became a very attractive inaugural dam build to Secretary of the Interior Ethan A. Hitchcock.

135 Donald J. Pisani, "Forests and Reclamation, 1891-1911," *Forest & Conservation History*, Vol.37, no.2 (April 1993), 71.

136 Ibid, 72.

Even with the Reclamation Act established, Salt River dam supporters' work was far from finished. Many in the valley remained skeptical of the federal government, the Reclamation Act, and the possibility of the dam itself. Furthermore, the San Carlos site just south along the Gila River had been an early favorite. Fortunately the \$1500 invested two years paid dividends. Arthur Powell Davis, Chief Engineer for the Reclamation Service (later, Reclamation Service Director), finally finished the survey they had originally set out to accomplish.¹³⁷ The results could hardly have been more beneficial to the Salt River Valley farmers. Davis judged the site as good as he had ever seen for large water storage.

Still, the dam on the Salt River would need more than a solid site for this endeavor. The Reclamation Act required local water users to provide the money. The newly created Reclamation Service saw that working with individual farmers would make the task of finding the money far more difficult. Rather they needed to work with a single, very large unit of farmland, where the various people who owned it spoke with one voice. Fowler knew that such a massive project would require a substantial amount of cooperation and organization. In 1903, Benjamin Fowler provided the impetus for just that. He arranged a merger of all the disparate water users' associations into the Salt River Water Users' Association, a

¹³⁷ "Engineer A. P. Davis Father of the Dam: The Man who Approved the Site and Planned the Construction," *Arizona Republican*, Mar 19, 1911, A5.

unified group encompassing 200,000 – 250,000 acres in the Salt River Valley, with the exception of Tempe.¹³⁸

The privately held Salt River Valley Water Users' Association (SRVWUA) was set up to resemble the organization of state government. The Association was (and is) owned by its shareholders, whose lands were pledged as collateral for the construction of Roosevelt Dam. On June 25, 1904, Benjamin Fowler, president of the SRVWUA and Ethan Hitchcock, Secretary of the Interior, signed an agreement for the dam's construction. It would be built across a steep, narrow gorge below the confluence of the Salt River and Tonto Creek, about 80 miles from Phoenix –the same site originally recommended by the Maricopa County Board of Trade back in 1889.¹³⁹

Construction would be a monumental task. The location was 40 miles from the nearest significant city, Globe, and the nearest railhead.¹⁴⁰ The terrain was isolated, spectacular and formidable. Raising additional funds through municipal bonds in Phoenix, Tempe and Mesa, the 64 mile, still-spectacular Apache Trail was built mostly by Apache labor. Eventually, 112 miles of roads were needed at a cost of \$500,000¹⁴¹ – a staggering sum in an age when a four

¹³⁸ Pendleton, 9,10; Luckingham, *Phoenix*, 47.

¹³⁹ Robert Autobee, Bureau of Reclamation, *Salt River Project*, 6, http://www.usbr.gov/projects/ImageServer?imgName=Doc_1305577664538.pdf accessed on 12/15/11.;

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 3.

bedroom house in central Phoenix would cost \$1500, and a proper gentleman's "outing suit" ran \$10 to \$30.¹⁴² The road funding was never calculated as part of the bill charged to the SRVWUA.

SRVWUA members voted according to their shares: They could buy one share per acre owned in the area served, up to 160 acres per person, 320 acres for a married couple. To pay for the dam, they were assessed \$15.00 per share.¹⁴³ Based on the survey of 1902, that came to \$2,700,000 for the 180,000 acres. In all, up to 250,000 membership shares would be issued. Since the Bureau of Reclamation refused to deal with individuals, each region elected a representative to server on the Board of Governors to deal with Federal Government on behalf of all members. By 1903, 200,000 acres had been pledged by 1903 as collateral against the building of the dam.¹⁴⁴

The water users' association in Tempe remained the last holdouts, since they did not want to give up its preferred water rights by joining the SRVWUA.¹⁴⁵ It wasn't until the water table starting rising and Tempe needed drainage help that they eventually joined the SRVWUA and Reclamation. Even for most of the

¹⁴¹ Karen L. Smith, *The Magnificent Experiment: Building the Salt River Reclamation Project, 1890-1917* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986), 72, 77.

¹⁴² Various ads in *The Arizona Republican*, April 23, 1904, 6.

¹⁴³ H.L. Meredith, "Reclamation in the Salt River Valley, 1902-1917, *Journal of the West*, 78.

¹⁴⁴ Pry, 27.

¹⁴⁵ Pry, 39.

skeptics, the prospect of paying no money until after completion of the dam, and owing nothing for interest, was too appealing to pass up.

It was largely because of the consolidated, well-organized network of farmers under the SRVWUA, the Reclamation Service began looking toward the Tonto Basin as the first site of the Newlands Reclamation Act. As George H. Maxwell put it, “no section of the west extended more loyal cooperation to the national irrigation movement than the Salt River Valley.”¹⁴⁶ The Bureau of Reclamation selected the Salt River Valley to become its maiden project. Actual work did not begin until April 8, 1905. In 1906-7, the federal government purchased the canals which would deliver water downstream, a necessary consolidation of the system.¹⁴⁷

Before construction was to begin though, they had yet another challenge still. The legislation had originally intended for Reclamation projects on entirely public lands. The government then could sell the lands and the power the hydroelectric dams produced to recover cost. This would have excluded the mostly private Salt River Valley from candidacy. Shortly after passing, they were changed the wording of this legislation to be open to benefit privately owned lands. The people of this dusty, frontier town became the main instigators of massive legislation that would profoundly alter the landscape of the Western U.S.

146 Zarbin, *Roosevelt Dam*, 15.

147 Meredith, *Reclamation*, 79-80.

This was in no small part due to the efforts of Benjamin Fowler. As Frederick Newell put it: “I am impressed with the fact that the Salt River project at various times was on the verge of being abandoned and that it was only the almost superhuman persistence of B.A Fowler and some of his colleagues that the project was finally kept alive against what at times seemed a very irritating opposition from the minority...”¹⁴⁸

Even after construction began, some controversy persisted. The still unproven track record of Reclamation left many residents concerned over whether it could truly undertake this massive, unprecedented feat. The costs of the project did little to assuage these worries. Dam construction quickly exceeded the original estimates of 2-4 million dollars. This project involved far more than just a massive dam. Nestled in a small mountain range, it required construction of roads across difficult terrain, a small worker town, lumber mill, and a cement factory before work could even begin. The Bureau of Reclamation also built a sizable diversion dam downstream to distribute water to the north and south sides of the river, and a hydroelectric power facility.

Not only did Reclamation need to own all the land of the projects, but also the entire canal network as well. Reclamation supporters like James H. McClintock, one of the earliest promoters of the project, continued to the good works of the valley in the wake of the turmoil. McClintock optimistically gloated

148 Zarbin, *Roosevelt Dam*, 44.

in a *Los Angeles Times* article “Steamboats will whistle where once resounded the war cries of the Tonto apaches and the tourist will scratch his illustrious name in the prehistoric dwellings up in the nearby cliffs. And the Reclamation Service will have moved on to conquer nature in some other wilderness of the West.”¹⁴⁹

In the end, the project ran substantially over budget. After two separate Boards of Review, and cost estimates as high as \$13,000,000, the final bill to the landowners was \$10,279,191, or \$60 per acre, a distant leap from the \$2,000,000 and \$15 per acre originally estimated.¹⁵⁰

Those that doubted the dam would work need not have worried. The Roosevelt Dam was every bit the success that irrigation boosters predicted. The result stood as an unprecedented technological feat -- 284 feet high, 184 feet thick at the base, and 16 feet wide at the crest.¹⁵¹ The end result was a dam constructed in ways that would be repeated at other dam sites throughout the West in the early years of the 20th Century.

At the dedication ceremony, an overwhelming sense of pride coursed through the large crowd, as speakers waxed on about the miraculous effects the dam would hold for Phoenix. Benjamin Fowler, president of the SRVWUA was

149 James H. McClintock, Special Correspondence of the Times, *Los Angeles Times*, May 6, 1906, 8.

150 Smith, *The Magnificent Experiment*, 137-9.

151 “A Desert Transformed: Water Reclamation Key to Growth,” A History of the Salt River Project, Salt River Project Website.
<http://www.srpnet.com/about/history/water.aspx#top#top>

entitled to as much credit as any of the Washington dignitaries there. He captured the mood of the crowd at the dam's inauguration.

Phoenix is one of the most rapidly growing, most beautiful and cosmopolitan cities in the West. The climate is ideal for rapid growth of fruits, nut, cotton, berries and trees. Given the water, the growth seems miraculous, without it the death will be equally miraculous with the rapid decay of the valley back to desert. There are certain projects that are too large, too stupendous to be taken on without the help of government. Such projects are the Roman Coliseum, the Panama Canal, and so too is the Roosevelt Dam. The Reclamation Service undertook this arduous task and the debt of gratitude we owe them should never be forgotten. Roosevelt Dam is a guarantee for comfort, prosperity and peace in the valley for generations to come.¹⁵²

Oddly, after seeing the fruition of his efforts, Fowler and his wife left the valley in 1916.¹⁵³ Perhaps Fowler like other boosters only wanted to make some money in the emerging new city and retire to a more temperate climate. He died on April 11, 1921, at the age of 77, in Long Beach, California.¹⁵⁴

152 Found at the Arizona Historical Society exhibit, "Agricultural Times," Jan 2004 to the present.

153 "Epic of Irrigation Recited at Farewell Luncheon to Pioneer, the Hon. B. A. Fowler," *Arizona Republican*, Mar 3, 1916, 5.

154 "B.A. Fowler, Organizer of Water Users, Dies on Coast," *Arizona Republican*, Apr 12, 1921, 1.



Figure 6 Theodore Roosevelt dedicates Roosevelt Dam, March 18, 1911¹⁵⁵

Economic benefits could be found immediately following the Reclamation project. Land prices, for one, shot up. Four years after construction, the success of the dam seemed even more apparent. In 1917, the *Los Angeles Times* proclaimed that the valley's \$12,000,000 cotton sales could have paid for the entire project in that year alone.¹⁵⁶ The 30 mile long reservoir had filled successfully filled by 1915 with over a million acre feet. In a ceremony for the occasion, Territorial Judge (and author of the SRPWUA by-laws) Joseph H. Kibbey rejoiced that the "Blighted fields in Salt River are forever saved. There

¹⁵⁵ Photograph from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation website, accessed on 11/23/12, www.usbr.gov/lc/phoenix/projects/rooseveltdam/rdhistory.html

¹⁵⁶ "Arizona Cotton Yields Riches," *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 18, 1917, I-3.

will be no more parched acres where we live.”¹⁵⁷ He later added that “energy and hope have replaced listlessness and despair.” Never known for understatement, Arizona Senator Henry Fountain Ashurst, the final speaker of the event, compared the dam construction to biblical events: “... the mighty prophet was thinking of irrigation and God’s goodness to man when he said, ‘He turneth the wilderness into standing water, and dry ground into water springs.’”¹⁵⁸ Reclamation made good on its promises to bring a multi-functional dam to the valley. The water users were even granted an extension on the loan to pay the contract within 20 years.¹⁵⁹ The model established in the Salt River Valley became the gold standard for Reclamation’s future projects.

The success set the valley on a new course which would never have been possible otherwise. It also launched the Reclamation Service on a course which, in time, transformed the American West. Perfectly situated and functional, the dam provided the valley with abundant water, electric power and flood control. Perhaps best of all, it overcame the destructive, irregular drought/flood cycle which had always plagued those who tried to make a living near the unpredictable

¹⁵⁷ Joseph Kibbey, address at the opening of Roosevelt Dam, April 15, 1915 quoted in *Arizona Gazette, April 15, 1915*; He is also quoted in Zarbin, *Roosevelt Dam*, 14.

¹⁵⁸ Senator Henry Fountain Ashurst address at the opening of Roosevelt Dam, April 15, 1915 quoted in *Arizona Gazette, April 15, 1915*; He is also quoted in Zarbin, *Roosevelt Dam*, 15.

¹⁵⁹ “Water Users Unqualified Endorsement of Cost Plan,” *Arizona Republican*, Dec 8 1914, 5; “Water Users Ratify Contract with U. S.; Split on By-Laws,” *Arizona Republican*, July 3 1917, 3.

Salt River. Reclamation's success would not have been possible without a cooperative population, strong grassroots leadership, and a roster of local organizations that desperately desired to make the project work. But the talent and leadership of the fledgling Reclamation Service, working toward goals unlike anything ever attempted before, was an unprecedented success. In a region where suspicion of government was, and is, almost universal, this governmental agency did what private interests could never have accomplished.

Reclamation still fell short of its lofty ambitions in one category. One of the goals behind the Reclamation Service was to preserve farming in the Jeffersonian tradition. Thomas Jefferson wrote eloquently of the importance of the yeoman farmer and his hard-working family. For instance, in an August 23, 1785 letter to John Jay, Jefferson wrote: "'Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bands."¹⁶⁰ Striving for this ideal, and trying to avoid creating American *latifundia*, all functions of the Department of the Interior kept the maximum acreage to 160 acres per person. Even this amount was actually fairly high for a family farm.

¹⁶⁰ Julian P. Boyd, Charles T. Cullen, John Catanzariti, Barbara B. Oberg, et al, eds., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950) 33 vols., 8:426.

There were, however, plenty of loopholes. Under the original limitations, farmers in the Salt River Valley could deed over 160 acre sections to their spouse plus each of their children - in a time known for large families. The SRVWUA claimed that that only 1% of their members' total acreage exceeded the 160 acre limit. However, in his 1950 dissertation, Edwin Pendleton found that the numbers actually far exceed this. More than half the acreage came in excess of the mandatory maximum.¹⁶¹ The loopholes in Reclamation combined with legislation enacted long before to opened the door for larger scale, commercial agriculture.

Growth of Irrigated Farms in Arizona				
	Total Number of Farms	Number of Irrigated Farms	Number of Acres Irrigated	Percentage Irrigated Farms to Total Farms
1890	1,426	1,075	65,821	75.4%
1900	5,809	2,981	185,396	51.3%
1910	9,227	4,841	320,051	52.5%
1920	9,997	6,605	467,565	66.1%
1930	14,173	8,523	575,590	60.1%

Source: U.S. Census, 1890-1900.¹⁶²

Figure 7 – Growth of Irrigated Farms in Arizona (chart)

¹⁶¹ Pendleton, 37.

¹⁶² Data from Pendleton, 569.

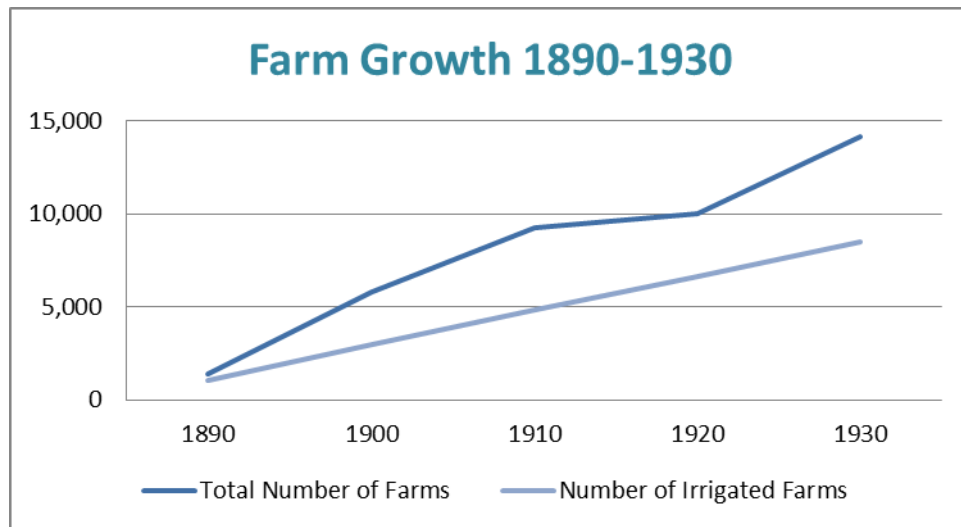


Figure 8 – Farm Growth, 1890-1930

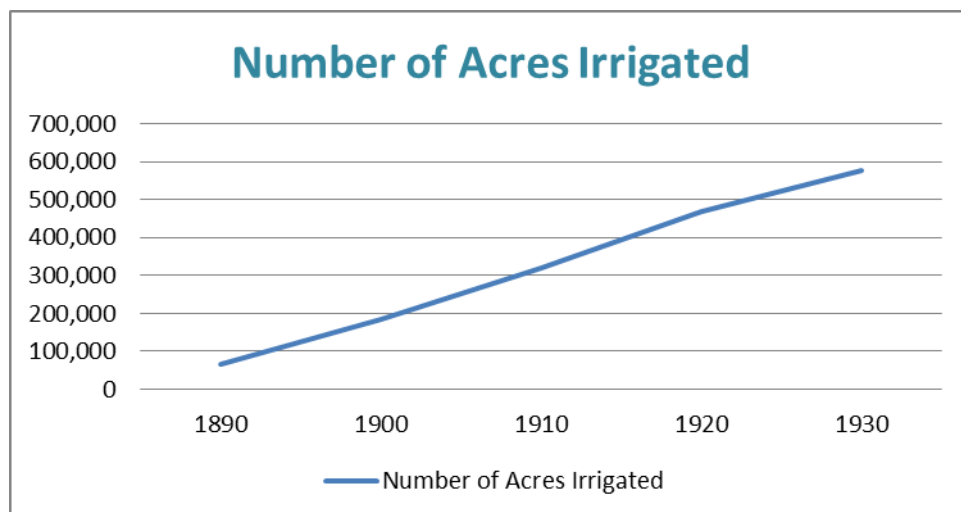


Figure 3 – Number of Irrigated Acres (graph)

Ultimately, the Reclamation Act, combined with the Arid Lands Act of 1888, became a classic invocation of the law of unintended consequences. Far from promoting the Jeffersonian concept of the yeoman family farmer, it drowned that possibility in a gush of fast-moving money. Farming irrigated lots became so profitable that owners increasingly sought to lease out their lands to corporations.

The years following the dam's construction saw the number of managed farms rise to 4%, four times the national average. Despite all its best intentions, the Reclamation Act made big corporate farming in the Salt River Valley easier and more profitable than ever before. The Mom and Pop operations Reclamation had intended to support had actually opened the doors to a migratory, seasonal labor force.¹⁶³

Connecting Phoenix: Canals and the "Iron Wheels of Progress"

The expansion of canals and irrigation networks through the Preindustrial Era brought on the need for access to better markets. Though it was Swilling and eleven other miners who began digging the canals, it was California businessmen who helped make a science out of it. As Keith Duchemin pointed out, most of the monied class passed Phoenix for the spacious, hilly, moderate temperatures of Los Angeles. Yet, this did not stop them from sinking money into Arizona.¹⁶⁴ As Los Angeles rose in status and hype throughout the country, so too did its land prices. Citrus in the Los Angeles area lost profitability as land prices continued to increase. Moreover, pest problems made that coastal area an increasingly difficult place for profitable agriculture. Its agribusiness men began selling their orchards to developers at tremendous profits, and looking toward Phoenix to become their new garden. Californians partnered with Arizona businessmen to form the Arizona Improvement Company. Their plan was to buy land cheaply and increase

¹⁶³ Pendleton, 36.

¹⁶⁴ Duchemin, 26-28.

its value through a combination of agricultural output, improved transportation and water.

Three Phoenix boosters, William J. Murphy, Clark Churchill and William Christy brought California money from men such as Francis G. Newlands. There were still plenty of problems. Though the Southern Pacific railroad line connected to the fringes of the Salt River Valley in 1884, it was still 23-35 miles south of Phoenix. Crops shipped by wagon took freight 16 hours each way or five days round trip to complete. In total, it cost 25¢ and 60¢ per 100 lbs. for shipping to the line from Phoenix alone!¹⁶⁵ These Phoenix boosters cited the surplus agriculture in the region as a reason that Phoenix needed the line. Even the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* ran blurbs that the “The Arizona Camels Sold” when the original line was created.¹⁶⁶

Completion of the spur into Phoenix in 1887 meant that Phoenix was now fully integrated into the booming Western economy. As Keith Duchemin points out, Phoenix now became the hinterlands to L.A.’s *entrepot*. Crops were grown in Arizona and shipped out to Los Angeles for processing or consumption. The California investors were savvy about Arizona law, which was strikingly similar to that of California. As they bought more canals, they gained *de facto* ownership

165 Duchemin, 32; VanderMeer, 19.

166 “The Arizona Camels Sold,” *New York Times*, Jan 8, 1884, 4:4.

of water and created a water monopoly. This monopoly allowed the company to create land value -- that is, to deprive or invest land with an essential asset.¹⁶⁷

Arizona became an increasingly profitable center for rail lines. Between the vast mining resources and emerging agricultural production, lines were becoming so profitable railroad lines became ran closer together. The Southern Pacific even began highly competitive plans for gaining control of the territory, building routes nearly side by side in many areas. While the city could not secure a mainline connection, another rail spur was built to join Phoenix with the Santa Fe railroad to the north in 1895. Still, turning Phoenix into a railroad transportation hub would be a major challenge. Only in 1926 did Phoenix become a stop on a mainline railroad as opposed to a spur location.¹⁶⁸

The spur provided tremendous opportunities nonetheless. In 1895, Los Angeles could be reached with a \$27.95 ticket, and the journey on the Maricopa and Phoenix Railway would take 8 hours less on the new route than it had when the route ran through Ash Fork.¹⁶⁹ Though the new line did not hold an instant

¹⁶⁷ Duchemin, 68.

¹⁶⁸ "A New Era," *Arizona Republican*, Jan 24, 1894, 1; "An Important Matter," *Arizona Republican*, Jun 14, 1894, 2; "The Road is Here: North and South Track is in the City," *Arizona Republican*, Feb.27, 1895, 4; "Changes on the Rail: New Time Cards on Both Roads: Getting Ready for Winter Business on the Great Trunk Lines," *Arizona Republican*, Oct 02, 1895, 8; "Seeking Tide Water: More Railroads for Arizona," *Arizona Republican*, May 23, 1896, 1; "Big Railroad Fight for Arizona Trade: Southern Pacific Making a Dash for the Gila River," *Arizona Republican*, May 12, 1904, A5.

¹⁶⁹ "Los Angeles Fiesta," *Arizona Republican*, Apr 13, 1895, 5.

dramatic impact on the economy, it would allow for future commercial crops to reach the markets that would have been tedious or impossible before.¹⁷⁰ A 1910 article recalled that “only a few short years ago, this then far-off, inaccessible, almost isolated region was considered a desert waste, a fitting habitation only for tarantulas, snakes and other reptiles.”¹⁷¹ However, now “Through its aid, capital and labor have been introduced and grappling bravely, in causing nature to yield her hidden treasures. These waste and desert lands have in many cases been transformed into fruitful and luxuriant Valleys.”

A.J. Chandler: Land Speculator and Town Developer

A.J. (Alexander John) Chandler, one of the better known historical figures in the valley today, provides an interesting look into the dynamics of this era. Using access to finances, Chandler altered a sizable tract of the valley through water development, land speculation, sheer luck, and the just-opened rail lines which brought people to his property.¹⁷²

Chandler, a veterinary surgeon by trade, came to Phoenix by way of New York. From the outset, Chandler was interested in agriculture, irrigation and land

¹⁷⁰ “Southern Pacific Project Shortens Routes between LA, Omaha, Denver, Chicago,” *Los Angeles Times*, Feb 21 1882, 3.

¹⁷¹ “The Way from Colorado to the Western Sea: Details of the Rail Line Project that will Make Phoenix a Main Line Point,” *Arizona Republican*, Feb 17, 1910, 4.

¹⁷² Earl Zarbin, “Dr. A.J. Chandler, Practioner in Land Fraud,” *Journal of Arizona History* (Summer, 1995), 173-188.

speculation, eventually extending his holdings to 18,000 acres by the turn of the century. Making money in this terrain would be difficult, however. He learned from the outset that irrigation enterprises generally ended in financial ruin.

Making money where most others failed is always difficult. However, Chandler had a mix of traits that others did not: ambition, access to capital, entrepreneurial energy, and most importantly, a scheme.¹⁷³

This scheme rested on the Desert Land Act (DLA) of 1877. While the standard homestead was 160 acres of land, the DLA was predicated on the idea that desert lands were less valuable, and needed irrigation to prosper. A married couple who chose to settle on these less desirable lands could claim 320 acres each, 640 acres total, at \$1.25 per acre if they promised to irrigate the land within three years. The applicant, who did not have to live in the state or even promise to raise a crop, paid 25 cents per acre when the claim was filed and \$1.00 per acre balance in three years when they filed their proof of irrigation.¹⁷⁴ In actual practice,” Keith Duchemin points out, “the only real benefit that the landless and moneyless man the mechanic or the immigrant farm boy, could derive from the public land laws was the chance for a little graft.”¹⁷⁵ Men like Chandler realized how easy it could be to make fraudulent claims.

173 Zarbin, *Practitioner*, 181.

174 Wilfred Austin, “The Development of Chandler, 1920,” FM Foundation Small Manuscripts, Hayden Arizona Historical Foundation, 1920. FM MSM-60. Also available at Chandler Historical Society.

With financing from an old employer in Detroit, Chandler amassed dummy applicants to apply for government parcels under the DLA. Chandler convinced these applicants that he could meet the DLA's requirement to improve lands within three years, and then would deed them 40 acres for their involvement. The claimants could then mortgage the rest to him for \$25 an acre. As one historian put it, "the Act could hardly have been better devised to aid these venture capitalists if it had been written for that purpose."¹⁷⁶

Chandler took over management of Mesa Canal in January, 1891¹⁷⁷ and later constructed a hydroelectric plant at the convergence of the Tempe Canal and the Mesa Canal.¹⁷⁸ He completed the digging of the canal in 1893, but still found that it was not enough to irrigate the properties. Land owners along the canal became enraged. They accused him of failing to provide the water he was contracted to provide as manager of the canal company, in favor of diverting it to improve his own desert properties.

Dummy entrants started to file for land patents, repeatedly signing off for land they almost certainly had never seen. By 1895, he amassed 10,000 acres and

¹⁷⁵ Duchemin, 91-92.

¹⁷⁶ Zarbin, *Practitioner*, 175; Duchemin, 147.

¹⁷⁷ "Will Enlarge the Canal: Improvements to be Made by Dr. Chandler on the Mesa Ditch," *Arizona Republican*, Jan 12, 1891, 3.

¹⁷⁸ "The Consolidated Canal Company," *The Arizona Republican*, Mar 31, 1899, 18.

counting, and had illegally diverted water downstream to improve these lands. The dummies conveyed lands to Chandler before and after filing for patents. By 1901 he had acquired nearly 28,760 acres of near worthless land. The Salt River's entire normal flow, in fact, was already appropriated to other lands.¹⁷⁹ Rather than deed the acreage over, Chandler was able to keep the seemingly worthless land as it would cost the dummies \$15,000 to pay off their contract.¹⁸⁰

By all accounts, the scheme should have failed miserably. Chandler, however, shows that perhaps nothing can help a business venture more than being in the right place at the right time. His first saving grace came from Reclamation's decision in 1906 to purchase the canal to distribute the high dam's water. Working with Chandler's nearly-defunct Consolidated Canal Company was easier than building a new canal. The project bought his canals at a sweetheart price. More importantly, in so doing, it actually began to deliver water to the dummy-deeded properties that Chandler was supposedly watering all along. The second saving grace came from the cotton boom of World War I. The Goodyear Tire Company, in need of vast tracts of land, leased over 10,000 acres from Chandler. Like Reclamation, the Goodyear subsidiary made certain that the dummy lands that had never truly been irrigated received water.

179 Zarbin, *Practioner*, 182.

180 *The Development of Chandler and Vicinity*; Zarbin, *Practioner*, 176.

The end result was still the same however; Phoenix, now emerging as the center for commerce in Arizona, became a stop along freight and passenger routes. Arizona indeed came into the national spotlight during this time period. Free of Apache attacks, with a fading Mexican influence and eternal sunshine, Arizona attracted an ambitious new class of citizens. In all, the population doubled from 1890-1900, as irrigated acres grew by 10,000.

More impressively, Arizona lobbying efforts brought a new direction in legislation. The government was able fund large scale projects to irrigate privately held farms. Dr. Chandler sought the help of planners and architects in subdividing his ranch and drawing up a town site map. He then advertised nationally the sale of Chandler Ranch sites. On May 17, 1912, Dr. Chandler opened the townsite office. Excursion trains on the newly completed Arizona & Eastern Railroad brought 300 speculators who spent \$50,000 for land that day.¹⁸¹

Oddly, despite failing at almost every intention in his scheme, the plan was a complete success. Though not from his efforts, his vast acreage had been watered. His nearly valueless lands had made him and his investors' substantial money. Moreover, by selling the land, Chandler created a new city seemingly overnight, largely based on the town planning efforts of the Goodyear Corporation. Schools and businesses sprouted up right away. Chandler used

¹⁸¹ “The Story of Chandler,” www.chandleraz.gov accessed 11/14/11. The website also portrays him as an irrigation expert, a very dubious claim. His irrigation credentials rest solidly on his exceptional luck.

much of his money to build the San Carlos, a \$200,000 luxury hotel appealing to new high end tourists to the region.

Though unscrupulous in his rise to local prominence, his reputation seemed to suffer not at all. He was voted the town's first mayor in 1920 and continued to dominate town politics. Chandler's clumsy stumble into success reflected a unique time in the valley's history. One newspaper article said of Chandler "Dr. Chandler is modern kind of a pioneer. A man who promises to do these things, and then turns around and does them."¹⁸² Despite a poorly planned and unethical (if not completely illegal) scheme, he nevertheless succeeded in all his endeavors. In leaner times, entrepreneurs with far more foresight would fail in better planned ventures.

A City in Transition

Though this timeframe is not necessarily the largest in terms of growth, it can be considered pivotal in Phoenix history. In order to grow, Phoenix needed a method to transport goods and people, and the ability to store and direct water. Businessmen with a direct stake in the result lobbied and politicked from coast to coast. In the end, they brought Phoenix exactly what it needed through an impressive, aggressive, occasionally unethical exercise in boosterism. By 1911, Phoenix had the largest dam in the U.S. bringing electrical power, a consistent water supply, and a railroad line to export their agricultural output. Regardless,

¹⁸² "'Come and See for Yourselves' Says Wizard of Chandler Town, *Arizona Republican*, Nov 17, 1913, 6.

the fields of alfalfa and citrus were comparatively menial. The railroads and dam did not bring an instant boom to Phoenix, as some had hoped. However, with the railroads and the Roosevelt Dam came the foundation for commercial agriculture.

The great irrigation projects that brought an abundant water supply and unabated optimism to the desert town had far-reaching implications. This relentless quest for progress came with a short-sighted cockiness that these massive projects somehow gave man the upper hand on nature. The writings of the time seemingly took offense at every drop of water that flowed its natural course through the desert to the ocean, as if it were somehow an affront to civilization. As loquacious Arizona Senator Henry Fountain Ashworth put it, “that great future toward which we are now struggling with even greater faith than in the old days is the time when every drop of water that now runs to waste in the west will be saved and stored and used to bring forth the fruits of the earth for humanity’s use and benefit.”¹⁸³

The Salt River Valley now had the agricultural and transportation infrastructure to truly become an agricultural viable commercial center. With access to markets outside Arizona, subsistence crops such as alfalfa, grains and vegetables took a back seat to more profitable crops, particularly citrus. The flow of money into a more robust and dynamic economic infrastructure changed the cultural landscape as well. Migrants into Phoenix could now arrive by train from the Santa Fe to the North or the Southern Pacific to the South. These new

183 Zarbin, *Roosevelt Dam*, 15.

migrants often had no intention of running a small family farm. They instead sought to profit by improving and selling land to other settlers. With the newly created economic opportunities and access to the region, however, attracting these settlers became an increasingly easy endeavor.¹⁸⁴

Progress and Mexicans of the Salt River Valley.

Before the introduction of irrigation in the valley, a couple of seasonal hands added on to a small staff of full time employees or the farm owner's family met the labor needs of most farms. The expanding agricultural economy of the Salt River Valley needed a larger labor market. Fortunately, railroads and trains could be mutually reinforcing. Agricultural output brought the railroads to Phoenix and allowed workers to enter the valley far easier. Furthermore, these trains were built predominantly by Mexican labor as well. Once a line was completed, Mexican often looked to the mines and fields for work. For example, when the line to Casa Grande was completed, over 1000 Mexicans working on construction of the line remained in the area to find work in the prospering valley.¹⁸⁵ Though farmers had larger, more productive farms they now paid more money for water, had higher land prices, and owed money to the federal government for its investment in the canal system. Accordingly, they needed the cheapest labor possible to keep their farms economically sound. The result of

184 Duchemin, 46.

185 Rosales, "*Lost Land.*"

irrigation then, brought on severe dependency on Mexican laborers. Fortunately for this growing agricultural sector, the Foundation Era held numerous events that led both to a “push” from Mexico. However, this massive influx of immigrants came at a time of diplomatic blunders between the U.S and Mexico and increased borderlands violence. Though this era would lead to a surge in the Mexican population in the Southwest, the harmonious dynamics of the previous era were quickly fading.

Establishing a Border: Immigration, Animosity and Competition.

These tensions between the growing American population and job hungry Mexicans had lasting effects on the borderlands. The Gila River previously set the border as initially set by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Though not a particularly large river, the Gila at least offered an easily visible natural barrier. The 1854 Gadsden Purchase gave the U.S. a southern railroad route, a connection between the American South and the Pacific.¹⁸⁶ The Treaty of Mesilla also reset the location of the Mexican border, conferred citizenship on tens of thousands of area residents, and gave Arizona its biggest cities – Tucson and Yuma.¹⁸⁷ The new border offered nothing: mostly-flat land dotted with bare, brown mountain ranges such as the Dragoon, Swisshelm, and what is now Chiricahua National

¹⁸⁶ Mexicans called the Gadsen Purchase *Venta de la Mesilla*, referring to the Mesilla Valley.

¹⁸⁷ Technically, at this time, Arizona Territory meant only the lands south of the Gila. Most of what would soon be called Arizona was part of New Mexico Territory.

Monument and Wilderness. This land, sometimes called Apacheria, was completely unsuitable for an international border, culturally as well as topographically.¹⁸⁸

Nonetheless, Article XI of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo required the United States to adequately patrol this long, indefensible border, to protect Mexican communities from marauding Apaches. The U.S. spent a substantial \$12 million over a period of five years and wasn't able to deliver effective border control. Raids by the Comanches of New Mexico and Arizona's Chiricahua Apaches continued on both sides of the border. General Winfield Scott told Congress that policing the border effectively would cost five times that much. There was, however, no chance that the U.S. would pay more to protect Mexico's citizens than it would to protect its own.¹⁸⁹

The natural porosity of the poorly situated border gained even more importance in the mid-to-later 1800s. While Arizona and the Salt River Valley were growing, prospering, and becoming more secure, Mexico was not. In the two decades prior to 1876, Mexico saw a new constitution, rebellion, open warfare, European intervention, an imposed foreign government, more rebellion and more

¹⁸⁸ For a provocative discussion of the Sonoran border, see Samuel Truett, *Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

¹⁸⁹ Richard Kluger, *Seizing Destiny: How America Grew From Sea to Shining Sea* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 2007), 492-494; Rosales, 272-273.

open warfare. Years which saw the coming of railroads and transformative changes in the U.S. and Europe brought none of that to Mexico.

The year 1877 marked a great sea change in Mexico in the rise of *caudillo* Porfirio Diaz. Diaz was an Oaxacan who ruled from 1876-1910, either from the Presidency, or as a puppeteer of other presidents. The previous political era, *La Reforma* under Benito Juarez, had attempted to bring European ideals on capitalism, expropriation of church and Indian lands, and foreign investment into the region. The *Porfiriato* continued this neoliberal philosophy with even more fervor. Most importantly, the Constitution of 1857 abolished the *ejido* system, or Indian lands, allowing Diaz to open up the formerly-protected common areas for economic development.¹⁹⁰

The modernization, heavy foreign investment, mining, finance, railroad construction, and industrialization tore apart peasant communities. By 1892, about one fifth of Mexico's land area had passed into the hands of private companies and by 1910 companies had acquired 27% of public lands.¹⁹¹ When a recession ravaged the country in 1907-8, unemployment and widespread poverty bred a level of anger and desperation which repression could no longer quell. In 1910, the 35 year *Porfiriato* ended in the chaotic Mexican Revolution.

¹⁹⁰ Cardoso, Lawrence, *Mexican Immigration to the United States.* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980), 125; James D. Cockroft, *Intellectual Precursors of the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1913* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), 314; Carey McWilliams; Matt S. Meier, *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States*, New Ed., Updated, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990).

¹⁹¹ Cardoso, 9.

The year 1907 marked peak immigration in the United States. However, a faltering national economy and struggle in Europe led to a 50% drop in overseas immigration. As the Mexican economy began to falter by 1906-7, the economy of the Southwestern United States began to boom.¹⁹² In Arizona, there were three mines in 1869. By 1909, there were 180. Railroad construction, a behemoth of employment for the Mexican immigrant, peaked around 1910-12. Agricultural growth too, kept pace with railroad and mining industries. As the U.S. population of the east coast urbanized and settled into smaller suburban lots, the backyard gardens started to disappear. Furthermore, new canning processes and the introduction of refrigerated cars made it possible to ship perishables across the country providing a far larger market for their fruits and vegetables.¹⁹³

This expanding local economy and decreasing labor supply created a vacuum for Mexican immigration. Fortunately for agribusiness, with such disparate economies, American businesses had “little trouble attracting poor workers with gold wage.”¹⁹⁴ Especially in the war-torn northern states, little

¹⁹² Myron P. Gutmann, Robert McCaa, Rudolfo Gutiérrez-Montes and Brian J. Gratton, "The Demographic Impact of the Mexican Revolution in the United States," Texas Population Research Center Papers, 1999-2000, 4, 6. Also in *Situazioni d'Assedio*, L. Carle and A. Fauve-Chamoux, eds. (Firenze: Pagnini e Martinelli, 2002).

¹⁹³ McWilliams, 174; VanderMeer, 32.

¹⁹⁴ Quote from Clark in Arthur Corwin, “Mexican Emigration History, 1900-1970: Literature and Research,” *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 8, no.

economic opportunity existed. In Mexico, workers made 45 cents per day, versus \$3 per day in the United States.¹⁹⁵ Furthermore, the prices of goods and services in Mexico were much less competitive. According to Charles Cumberland, in 1910, the average Mexican laborer in Mexico worked 15 times as many hours as a comparable Mexican worker in the U.S. to buy a sack of wheat flour; he worked 12 times as many hours for corn, and 19 times as many for textiles.¹⁹⁶ From 1907 to 1908, Mexican immigration is thought to have expanded by 50%. By 1909, Mexican immigration grew by 1500% *more* than just two years prior. The opportunity for these peasants, living in dire straits and desperate to feed their families, to reach a place of relative safety and economic security seemed worth the trek to foreign terrain. Some studies have estimated that about 10% of the population left the country during this time.¹⁹⁷

Contentious Borderlands: Growing Mistrust between the U.S. and Mexico.

2. (Summer, 1973), 3-24; Victor S. Clark, "Mexican Labor in the United States," *Bulletin of the Bureau of Labor*, September 1908, 478-479.

¹⁹⁵ Pete R. Dimas, *Progress and an Mexican American Community's Struggle for Existence: Phoenix's Golden Gate Barrio*, (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 38.

¹⁹⁶ Camille Guerin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 45, 57.

¹⁹⁷ Dimas, *Golden Gate*, 42; the number of 10% emigration to the U.S. from Mexico has been used frequently. Gratton, Guttman *et. al.* have, in a more recent study, estimated that closer than 1% actually left Mexico for the U.S.

Unfortunately for Mexican immigrants to the Southwest, this era of increased immigration came accompanied by increasingly hostile diplomacy between the U.S. and Mexico. The first half of the 1910s was so laden with skirmishes and diplomatic blunders that the U.S. and Mexico seemed to teeter on the verge of war yet again.

In Mexico, the Yaqui had been in open revolt against the government for decades. Yaqui communities in Nogales, Tucson and Tempe strongly supported their Mexican kinsmen. Tribal members went back and forth between tribal lands in Mexico and the U.S., as they always had, even if it meant an occasional skirmish with U.S. Cavalry.¹⁹⁸

Diplomatic relations with Mexico were continually marred by mistakes and miscommunications. The bloody Mexican revolution that began in 1910 made American interests in Mexico uneasy. In 1913, an American ambassador held a key role in Victoriano Huerta's rise to power in a murderous *coup d'état*. President Woodrow Wilson recalled the ambassador, declared Huerta a usurper and supported his opposition with an embargo on weapons sales. In April of 1914, a skirmish involving a few U.S. Navy seamen at Tampico, plus an erroneous belief that the Germans were sending arms to Huerta, led to a massive U.S. Naval invasion at Veracruz. Spanish language newspapers in the valley covered all the ugly details.

¹⁹⁸ E.H. Spicer, *The Yaquis: A Cultural History*, 1980, (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press) 217; Evelyn Hu-DeHart, *Yaqui Resistance and Survival: the Struggle for Land and Autonomy 1820-1910*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 67.

The growing borderlands violence reached a crescendo when Villa raided a small New Mexican town, killing 18 Americans in 1917. Spanish language newspapers also covered the American “Punitive Expedition” against Villa, which really only succeeded in irritating Mexican citizens and politicians as they sent a large army through Chihuahua, Mexico. Growing American perceptions of Mexicans as banditos brought vigilante violence and abuse of the justice system disproportionately against Mexicans.

In Phoenix, whites often used politics to control the region. In August, 1913, the Phoenix city government changed from a ward system with party affiliations identified on the ballot, to “non-partisan,” city-wide election of councilmen.¹⁹⁹ Fueled by tales of the evils of machine politics, particularly Democratic Party machines in Chicago and New York, *The Arizona Republican* praised the wisdom of “non-partisan” elections. No such machine had ever existed in Phoenix and Democrats were in no position to institute one. But starting with the next election, political parties were not to be identified on the ballot in Phoenix City Council elections. Poorer and minority voters in the Third and Fourth Wards south of the river were less likely to read newspapers, and therefore much less likely to know which candidates were Republicans and which were Democrats. Most importantly, under the new system, minority sections of the city would no longer be guaranteed representation, and could be treated as *barrios*,

¹⁹⁹ “The Country is Watching Phoenix,” *Arizona Republican*, Apr 04, 1915, 4.

separate and unequal. Thus an election procedure change which outwardly aimed to get rid of the ugly side of partisan politics actually embodied what it pretended to correct, and immediately caused much more political mudslinging and open sniping between the *Arizona Republican* and its left-leaning rival, the *Phoenix Daily Herald*.²⁰⁰

Further legal encroachments on Mexicans came in an initiative called “The 80% Bill” was approved by the voters in November, 1914. It required businesses with more than five workers to employ at least 80% “qualified electors or native born citizens of the United States.”²⁰¹ The majority of terminated workers were sure to be Mexicans, but reaction against the measure was much broader, drawing protests from the British and Italian ambassadors.²⁰² In December of 1914, an Austrian cook at a restaurant in Bisbee sued in federal court, claiming denial of equal protection under the Fourteen Amendment. Less than a year later, the Supreme Court ruled in his favor, overturning the law. Still, the message was clear; immigrant workers would find no champion in the Arizona voters.

Many Mexicans across the Southwest looked to violence in response to increasing American domination. The most noteworthy plan for violence came in

²⁰⁰ “Campaign of Misrepresentation,” *Arizona Republican*, Feb 09, 1914, 4.

²⁰¹ “Arizona Now has Nine New Enactments,” *Arizona Republican*, Dec 15, 1914, 9.

²⁰² “Hunt Will Not Delay New Law,” *Arizona Republican*, Dec 08, 1914, 2.

spurious document known as the “Plan de San Diego was intercepted at a Texas border crossing, supposedly revealed a secret plan for a rebellion to restore the Mexican Cession territories to Mexico.²⁰³ This document spurred countless newspaper reports in the coming years, flogging the specter of racial violence planned against whites.²⁰⁴ Earlier restrictions on Mexican celebrations and, that same year, the segregation of Mexican students in Tempe,²⁰⁵ added to the bad feelings between whites and Mexicans.

The Boiling Point: Mexicans and Indians Plan an Uprising.

Frustrated by the emerging hold of white Phoenicians, Mexicans and Indians of their area. The most dramatic demonstration of the changed social infrastructure Mexicans began to encounter came in a in a planned insurrection by Mexicans, Yaquis and various Indian groups, including a group on the Sacaton

²⁰³ Bradford Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix: A Profile of Mexican American, Chinese American and African American Communities, 1860-1992* (Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 1994), 28-9; F. Arturo Rosales; *Testimonio: A Documentary History of the Mexican American Struggle for Civil Rights* (Houston: University of Houston Arte Publico Press, 2000), 272-273.

²⁰⁴ A search for evidence of racial turmoil and disharmony uncovers many, many newspaper articles from 1914 on. A few are: “Demonstration of Mexicans out of Work,” *Arizona Republican*, Jul 30, 1914, 8; “Rouse Indians Against Whites Plot Charged,” *Arizona Republican*, May 01, 1919, 3.; F. Peredo, “Patrol City as Vague Threats Promise Riots,” *Arizona Republican*, Sep 24, 1918, 10;

²⁰⁵ Rosales, “*Lost Land*,” 33.

reservation.²⁰⁶ The increased domination of the Southwest by whites brought the tolerance of Southern and Central Arizona Mexicans and Indians to an end. Intercultural relations were at a new low, and about to go lower.

The Phoenix police got wind of a conspiracy in their own town, and started to investigate. In order to thwart the plan, police enacted a sophisticated two-month undercover investigation. The *Arizona Republican* reported:

The meat of the conspiracy was to obtain sufficient arms and ammunition and dynamite to make such force as the conspirators could gather together formidable and with this to raid all the food stores of the city, following this with a raid on the banks, and after this to go after such of the stores and business houses of the city as the conspirators might then think would give them anything that could be used in further and more extensive operations.²⁰⁷

The conspiracy was discovered “entirely by chance.” But since the conspirators initially met in the I.W.W. hall and exchanged lengthy letters with many potential participants, the investigation was able to track the complete plan.

As the Republican describes it:

. . . a line of dispatch carriers [of instruction letters] was established from Phoenix all the way to Bisbee. Juntas in every little village of importance between here and that city looked after passing the word along. In addition to the large number of men who were expected to rally in this city as soon as the standard of the “red flaggers” was raised, almost the entire Yaqui village of Guadalupe was promised for assistance and one of the ringleaders

²⁰⁶ “Conspiracy Preliminary: Five Witnesses Tell Partial Story of Conspiracy to Blow Up Phoenix,” *Arizona Republican*, Aug 23, 1914, 8.

²⁰⁷ “Red Flaggers Would Loot Phoenix – Kill, and Divide Spoils: Nine Conspirators Now in Jail,” *Arizona Republican*, Aug 8, 1914, 1.

went so far as to promise five hundred Sacaton Indians for the cause.²⁰⁸

Ultimately, of the city law enforcement officers on the case, it was one Latino deputy who was able to bring down the plot. The *Republican* had to give officer Lopez credit:

Too much cannot be said in the commendation of the fine work of Officer Alberto Lopez in this case. As a special policeman, as a regular member of the force and as a deputy sheriff he has worked faithfully and well and intelligently upon the case for two months. He has shadowed the conspirators at all times, oftentimes in disguise attending their meetings, he has worked at times for as many as seventy two hours at a stretch in order that no phase of the conspiracy might escape him.²⁰⁹

Almost two weeks later, police pursued the last of the group to a hideout in Devil's Canyon, near Ray, Arizona. After a chase and a shoot-out, they discovered a cache of weapons and explosives. "That the three pitched battles between Mexican bandits and officers of three counties, resulting in the deaths of seven men, have a definite connection with the Mexican conspiracy, unearthed by Maricopa county officers, is practically established by the discovery of letters to Pete Smith . . ." Smith was identified in a list entitled "Mexican Dead" as "half breed leader of gang."²¹⁰ Although officers watched the armory around the clock

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 5.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ "Woodcutter Bandits are Divided and Both Gangs Overpowered by Posses: Ray Man Hunt Discloses Possible Connection Between Wood Haulers

during the time when the rebellion was supposed to occur, nothing happened. In the end, the 16 Mexicans and Indians on trial in Phoenix had not actually committed any serious crimes, and conspiracy charges had to suffice.

The foiled violent insurrection of Mexican and Indians makes for an extreme example of Mexican reaction to disenfranchisement in the Southwest. Most simply came to the US with a changed perception than that of their predecessors. While the previous generation has been called the “Lost Land,” the generation coming after the turn of the century has been referred to as “Mexico Lindo.” Mexico Lindo, or “beautiful Mexico.” This shift represents a new nostalgic or romanticized view of their homeland in the face of exclusion in their host society. Though they remained in the states, they did so probably for economic reasons. They considered themselves “*Mexicanos de Afuera*,” or Mexicans that simply did not live in Mexico.²¹¹ The majority of these men and women desired to spend a short time in the U.S. to make money and then return to Mexico. In subscribing to this ideal, high remigration rates characterized this era.²¹²

and Mexican Conspiracy. Special to The Republican,” *Arizona Republican*, Aug 21, 1914, 1.

²¹¹ F. Arturo Rosales, *Pobre Raza! Violence, Justice and Mobilization Among Mexico Lindo Immigrants, 1900-1936* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999).

²¹² By the 1960s, scholars like Herbert Gutman and Rudolf Vecoli began to re-envision the process of assimilation. Leaping from E.P. Thompson’s “moral economy” theory, these “New Left” historians focused on the lives and cultures of immigrants, rather than their institutional history. They discovered that immigrants clung to their “premodern” values and preserved their culture in the

The Decline

Even early land owning Mexicans felt the pressure of American domination. Chris Marin noted a decline from 79 Hispanic- owned farms in 1870, to 70 in 1890, to 30 in 1900! This decline in ownership of 62% occurred while the Mexican population as a whole increased twelve fold.²¹³ Meanwhile, white farmers increased from 61 to 1180, on nearly 19 fold. Rather than become farm owners, Mexicans seemed to have found little other opportunities other than as laborers. In 1870, Mexican laborers accounted for 49 out of 198 laborers, or 25% total Mexicans employed in 1870. By 1900, this number had increased to 880 out of 1090, or 81%! Lucrative, prestigious and decision-making jobs were going to whites while Mexicans generally did the work.²¹⁴

Finding similar dynamics in California, Albert Camarillo offers his suggestions as to why Mexicans lost land. Camarillo argues that “the spirit of progress” took over, and *Californios* lost much of their land due to booming real estate prices and chicanery. The railroads, moreover, allowed a switch from ranching, which the *Californios* specialized in, to commercial agriculture. As these regions became connected to distant markets, white residents had better access to negotiate outside American markets. While Santa Barbara residents

face of protestant work values. Rather than assimilation, a transculturation, or a cultural exchange took place. Scholars like Gutmann opened up the field to ethnic, race and gender studies for the "New Labor History."

²¹³ Census Bureau stats found in Rosales, *Lost Land...*, 272-274.

²¹⁴ Pendleton, 314.

worked a fairly wide array of positions before, by 1880, 86% of the agricultural workforce would be Mexican. By 1900, 95% percent of *Californios* were working unskilled jobs.²¹⁵

Profile of an Immigrant Worker: Margarito Vasquez.

Despite the planned uprisings, growing border tensions, diplomatic blunders and social disenfranchisement, many immigrants certainly had continued good experiences in Phoenix. Windows into the lives of these early Mexican settlers are difficult to find. The scant historical record taken at the time did not usually extend to laborers. The Manuel Gamio interview is rare sociological look into the one life. In an interview in 1916, Gamio spoke to Margarito Vazquez of his life during the preceding decades. Vasquez was a fairly typical Mexican immigrant, except that he was born in Zacatecas, not Sonora. He lived in 'Finica' from around 1880 until the time of his interview in 1916. Immigration increased from areas outside of Sonora through train lines built through Mexico to El Paso.²¹⁶

²¹⁵ Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: from Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 44.

²¹⁶ Manuel Gamio, "Vidas, Margarito Vazquez," material gathered for *Mexican Immigration to the United States, 1926-28*. BANC MSS Z-R 5, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, box 1, folder 2.

Looking back at his time in early Phoenix, Margarito had little bad to say. He found good jobs immediately in the mines before coming to Phoenix as a street cleaner, among many other jobs. In Mexico, he complained, “one has to work with nothing but their muscle. Here the machines are clean and work well.” Moreover, he noted that the work was always plentiful. When he suffered an injury, his employers made sure he still had work. If he “had worked in Mexico for one of those ungrateful bosses I’m sure I wouldn’t have work or anything.”²¹⁷

Margarito claimed his white bosses tried to give him injury compensation, but he refused because he said he could still work. Mexicans, he stated, were treated fairly as long they didn’t “get mixed up in the wrong thing.” Like many other “Mexico Lindo” immigrants of his time he never obtained American citizenship nor did he desire it despite his favorable experience. He still clung to his Mexican customs and longed to return one day. Still, he had to acknowledge, it was nice to “live in peace without so many revolutions as Mexico.”²¹⁸

Margarito’s experience was probably better than most. He was likely a hard worker and lived in Phoenix as a stable, non-migratory laborer. A more expansive survey of Phoenix Mexicans would have revealed a much wider cross section of responses. Vigilante justice and antipathy toward Mexicans still

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

characterized the time. His story told by Gamio shows us that not everyone was affected by the changing political environment.

Conclusion.

The timeframe from 1890 to 1915 brought on some of the more remarkable progressions in the region's history. As Phoenix agriculture took off in the late 19th century, the region too big for itself. Local water flow proved insufficient to add acreage as valley boosters had wanted. Access to commercial markets proved burdensome, distant and expensive. Some would be compelled to believe that the region had reached its natural capacity. Phoenix residents wanted to hear nothing of natural. Instead, they looked at massive projects to mitigate the less desirable components of Mother Nature as an endeavor biblical in both magnitude and munificence.

This is not to say that these men had the means to accomplish massive projects on their own. Water projects lost money almost as a rule in the valley, and businessmen certainly did not want to encumber the financial burden. Instead the Phoenix boosters looked to government to subsidize the endless need for more water. The stars lined up perfectly for this faction, as an administration friendly to Reclamation came into power. This paternal role the U.S. government took, in bringing a stable water supply, should not obscure the role that town boosters played. This fledgling, disconnected region lobbied extensively to get Reclamation legislation through Congress, and then make their dam site the first selected by the Bureau of Reclamation. The impressive ability to organize

themselves and adapt their structure into one that fit the Bureau of Reclamation's model was the prime attraction for working valley farmers. By 1915, residents felt a pride in mastering the desert's most elusive element.²¹⁹

The forces of nature were not so easily sequestered, however. Many more dams were needed building to truly control the desert rivers. Ultimately, Phoenix' growth outpaced the available water supply. An even more massive irrigation project would be necessary to sustain the city's growth.²²⁰ The changes made a prominent and lasting change on the area as well. The railroad enabled connections to the Midwest, Louisiana, and most importantly, Los Angeles, as never before.²²¹ Earlier patterns linking the valley southward to mining centers in Mexico took a back seat to the new pattern of influence now from East to West. In encouraging this influx of capital, local businessmen also ceded some of the control and influence of the territory to outside interests.

The *Porfiriato* also had profound effects, both for Mexican immigrants and for Americans. The rapid buildup of the Southwest, due largely to trains in the region, created a boom of jobs for the growing proletariat in the north. For Mexican Americans, this further deteriorated their already tenuous status within Phoenix society. The rapid investment of capital in the Southwest favored the Anglo, who had access and knowledge of the new system. This brought created a

²¹⁹ VanderMeer, 33.

²²⁰ Zarbin, *Roosevelt Dam*.

²²¹ Luckingham, *Phoenix*, 44.

new prosperity in the Salt River Valley for those with access. As we will see, the years following would bring a flood of people and money into the region, the likes of which Phoenix had not seen before.

CHAPTER 3:
STRIKING“WHITE GOLD” IN THE SONORAN DESERT:
THE RISE OF THE COTTON INDUSTRY.

The changes in the previous “Foundation Era” provided a platform for the Salt River Valley to connect to markets across the country. Valley farmers found their first large scale agricultural export in the rising demand for long staple cotton. With the continuous aid and supervision of government agencies, acreage expanded explosively to meet the needs of the national market. In so doing, growers needed to import tens of thousands seasonal laborers to the valley to pick the crop. “Pushed” by modernization and Revolution, Mexicans came across the border to meet these demands. They found, however, that conditions were not quite as promised. The Arizona Cotton Growers Association (ACGA) evolved into a well-organized, labor recruiting, wage setting machine. The ACGA became an agricultural powerhouse in the Southwest, participating frequently in Congressional hearings for exempting Mexicans from immigration restrictions. By 1920, valley farmers made profits they could have never imagined five years earlier. Mexicans, on the other hand, increasingly became laborers for large irrigated farms.

Then and Now.

When Tiburcio Sotelo first arrived in Tempe in early 1870s he found a harsh environment. He died young, watching his children grown, and did not live to see two of his sons die in Indian attacks. Nevertheless, in his short time in

Tempe, he was able to secure 160 acres near the river where his wife would continue to raise their remaining children. His future son in law worked closely with Carl Hayden, dredging a canal to bring water to his mill next to the large adobe house where the senator was raised. Another future son in law, Winchester Miller, helped manage the canals of the Salt River.²²²

By 1912, around 40 years after Tiburcio first arrived, *El Salado* had gone through a complete metamorphosis. New migrants - often bespectacled and wearing business suits - arrived by one of the two railroad lines that came into Phoenix, rather than by stagecoach. These new residents lived in homes with brick and glass, as they had back east, rather than the adobe homes the original residents lived. They would have no need to scramble up the buttes to escape the floods as Tiburcio's widow, Maria, had done with her family. Nor would farmers need to worry about their crops rotting from lack of rain. Just a year before, the largest masonry dam in the world had been constructed 30 miles upstream, saving water from surplus years for drier years.

The valley now essentially had an infrastructure that could support a truly commercialized export economy. At this point however, the valley could still grow enough food to feed much of the territory's 122,931 people with a small amount for export.²²³ Local farmers grew beets, corn, squash, citrus, alfalfa,

²²² The Life of a Pioneer Woman: María Sotelo Miller"; "Biography of Maria Sotelo Miller."

melons, wheat and barley, among many other crops, to feed the people and livestock of the region. But in the fields, a new king was about to emerge from the ashes of the civilization that had long ago vanished, bringing the valley its first important commercial export.

The increased output, new markets, and technological efficiencies had contrasting effects on Mexicans and whites. White residents no longer depended on Mexican for their skills, or for socialization. New Mexican immigrants arriving in the 1910s would not have the benefit of homesteading, as Tiburcio had. Nor would they have much of an opportunity to climb the social ladder. Despite the new brick-and-glass buildings and paved roads, Mexicans would predominantly find themselves working in agricultural labor camps, oddly further away from the American dream than ever before. In the rise of commercial agriculture in the valley, the Mexican would be relegated to a role of laborer.

Phoenix, 1912.

If there was a king of the fields in the first years of the 20th century, it would have been alfalfa.²²⁴ The crop seemed to fit the landscape better than any

²²³ *U.S. Census*, 1900 and 1910. The Phoenix population in 1910 was 11,314, an increase of 104% over the decade. Significant and growing populations in Mesa, Tempe, Chandler, Glendale and other nearby cities are not included.

²²⁴ Steven H. Hastings, "Irrigation and related cultural practices with cotton in the Salt River Valley," *Circular No. 200*, United States Department of Agriculture, January, 1932, 12.

other. It could provide near year round continuous cuttings with limited water. The first cutting fattened cattle. The second was best for horses and mules, which remained essential transportation in a pre-automotive world. What was left offered forage for cattle, sheep, pigs, almost anything, until replanting the following year.²²⁵ A nitrogen-fixer, it was ideal for farmers who rotated fields. And it paid well, once there was a nearby rail line to ship the cattle.²²⁶ But the cattle business was highly competitive, and other sources were closer to the big Eastern markets and the smaller-but-growing Western markets as well.

Though healthy, possibilities for substantial growth remained limited during the first decade of incorporation. The Maricopa and Phoenix Railroad and the Maricopa and Phoenix and Salt River Valley Railroad first connected the region to commercial markets. After the Reclamation Act passed in 1902, the Salt River Valley became the first site to receive massive federal subsidies to irrigate valley agriculture. While these endeavors integrated the region and brought in new wealth, the growth they caused remained sustainable.

²²⁵ Robert Waitman Clothier, *A System of Pasturing Alfalfa in Salt River Valley, Ariz.*, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Office of the Secretary, 1915,

²²⁶ *Alfalfa: Bulletin No. 35*, State Agricultural College of Colorado, Agricultural Experimental Station, Ft. Collins, Colorado, 1896; “Risks involved in Growing Cotton Varied,” *Arizona Republican*, Jan 23, 1920; E.W.Hudson, “Growing Egyptian Cotton in the Salt River Valley, Arizona,” USDA Farmers Bulletin 577, Bureau of Plant Industry, Wm. A. Taylor, Chief, Mar 14, 1914; “Alfalfa is King of All That the Land Produces in This Valley,” *Arizona Republican*, Jan 1, 1922, F7; Robert Autobee, “Salt River Project History,” rev. May 16, 2011, *U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Website*, http://www.usbr.gov/projects/ImageServer?imgName=Doc_1305577664538.pdf

Despite the economic growth, many in the valley still expected more. As dams and railroads brought new opportunities, some residents pined for something that would bring them “greatness.” Oddly, the devastation of overseas warfare eventually incited the boom for which these residents had been waiting. Wartime demands did not end at food and weapons. The recent invention of the pneumatic tire required a tough, resilient fiber that could, provide better durability than rubber alone. Unfortunately for the South, these tires required ELS (extra-long staple) rather than the short staple that had grown in that region for years. Through a fortuitous chain of events, when the U.S. entered World War I, the desert town had established itself as a leader in the ELS cotton industry, producing a superior cotton that the traditional U.S. cotton belt couldn’t grow.

The cotton boom was only possible because of the achievements of the Foundation Era:

1. Large-scale cotton culture could only occur with abundant water, which the federal government’s massive Roosevelt Dam project supplied.
2. The cotton needed to reach factories in the Midwest through a reliable mode of transportation. This finally became a reality when the spur lines hit Phoenix in 1887 and 1895.
3. The cotton industry would never have been established had it not been for the USDA’s experiments with cotton in the Southwest, and particularly the Salt River Valley. Even after the Sacaton Experimental Station found

the crop suitable to the desert environment, it helped form and manage the first cotton collectives that provided communication to rapidly increase the cotton crop to meet wartime needs.

4. The ELS cotton industry could never have succeeded without a sizable supply of Mexican labor, willing to travel to the valley to work in some of the most severe conditions in the country. Even if the impetus for collective management came initially from government, it was the growers who turned it into an art. The growers ratcheted up cotton output at feverish rates through a multifaceted network of organization and collaboration.

Only five years after the completion of the Roosevelt Dam, the Salt River Valley had finally found a crop that would push the region into commercial prominence.

“Rising out of the Ashes”: The Rebirth of Cotton in the Salt River Valley.

What Phoenix farmers did not know was that cotton had ancient roots in the valley long before European settlement. Uncertain in its origins, but probably indigenous to the New World²²⁷, cotton was cultivated as early as 4400 BCE on

²²⁷ Lisa W. Huckell, "Plant Remains from the Pinaleno Cotton Cache, Arizona," *Kiva, The Journal of Southwest Anthropology and History*, 59 (2), (Winter, 1993), 148–149.

the Ecuadorian coast. It eventually spread throughout most of the warmer portions of South America and North America and somehow spreading to Asia (India) long before people regularly traversed either great ocean. Modern ELS cotton, *Gossypium barbadense*,²²⁸ arises from Sea Island cotton, first brought to the U.S. from Bermuda.²²⁹

Archaeological evidence shows that the Hohokam raised cotton in the Valley of the Sun around 500 CE. By 800 CE, the construction of larger irrigation dams suggests that the Hohokam had expanded cotton growing. However, cotton cultivation, along with any significant human habitation, disappeared from the valley with Hohokam's exodus, probably in the middle of the 15th century CE.²³⁰

The Pimas (Akimel O'Odham, "River People" in the O'odham tongue) moved into the valley and raised the indigenous cotton,²³¹ among other crops,

²²⁸ Waldo Berry Christy, "American Egyptian Long Staple Cotton in Arizona," (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1920), 6.

²²⁹ History - Supima: World's Finest Cotton. Official website of Supima Cotton: <http://www.supima.com/whats-supima/history/> accessed on 12/15/11.

²³⁰ Nancy Hill, "The Imprint of Cotton Production on Arizona Landscapes," (PhD diss., Arizona State University, May, 2007), 6; Autobee, Salt River Project History, 14;

²³¹ Frank Russell, *The Pima Indians*, excerpt from the twenty-sixth annual report of the Bureau of American Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1904-5, 24. From internet archive: <http://www.archive.org/details/annualreportofbu26smit> accessed on 12/6/11.

long after the disappearance of their Hohokam ancestors.²³² The type of cotton seems to have been what we now call *gossypium hopi*, or something very similar. European settlers in the Caribbean also raised ELS Sea Island cotton on plantations. Southern Plantation owners in the U.S. followed suit. But the demands of climate, soil and that formidable Southern nemesis, the boll weevil (*Anthonomus grandis*), led to cultivation of short staple Upland cotton (*gossypium hirsutum*), even in Georgia and Florida, where ELS Sea Island cotton could otherwise grow well. The Southern cotton industry flourished while Arizona's cotton remained a forgotten relic.

Though a few farmers raised cotton sporadically through the late 19th century, by 1900, hay, forage, winter wheat dominated the region. Unlike these crops, cotton wasn't useful for the subsistence farmer. In addition to heat and a long growing season, cotton also required complex processing consisting of ginning, spinning and weaving. All of these required tremendous labor hours and expensive equipment to make to make a commercially viable end product. Early Phoenix held only a tenuous connection to the greater markets of the region. More importantly, it lacked a necessary, steady water supply, precluding commercial cotton production. Only after the completion of the spur railroad in 1887, the Roosevelt Dam in 1911, and the introduction of some ELS cotton varieties did some experimental small scale production begin.

²³² Carl Waldman, *Encyclopedia of Native American Tribes*, 3rd Edition, New York: Infobase Publishing, 2006), 124.

E.W. Hudson and the Government Origins of Cotton.

As construction began on the Roosevelt Dam, few could have imagined that cotton would be a viable crop. However, Phoenix received a serendipitous stroke of luck from the US government. In 1907, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) decided to establish an Agricultural Experiment Station on the Sacaton Indian Reservation to explore the possibility of growing long staple cotton in the desert. E.W. Hudson and his wife arrived from Iowa to begin developing a strand of ELS cotton suited to the climate and soil of the region. The standout experimental strand emerged in 1910 from a mutation in a row of *Gossypium hopi* seeds that he had planted in an effort to keep the native variety from extinction, and which he crossed with an Egyptian ELS.²³³ As he experimented with the cotton he found it grew nicely and blossomed fast. He named this strand “Pima” after the land it was grown on, and the people who had the original seeds.²³⁴ In Boston, experts judged the cotton to be better than the Egyptian cotton, and some claimed it was the finest the world had ever seen.²³⁵

²³³ “Story of Arizona Cotton Told to 2000 Delegates at the World Conference: Address of Dwight B. Heard . . .,” *Arizona Republican*, Feb.20, 1920, B6.; Erik-Anders Shapiro, *Cotton in Arizona: a Historical Geography* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989), 59; “The Object of the Agricultural Extension Service,” Hudson Cotton Company Collection, Arizona Historical Foundation, Hayden Library Room 412, Tempe Arizona, Box 4, 16.

²³⁴ Nancy Hill, “The Imprint of Cotton Production on Arizona Landscapes,” (PhD Diss., Arizona State University, May, 2007), 58-9.

²³⁵ Washington Irving Bullard, *The Quest of the Long Staple Cotton*. (Boston: The Merchants National Bank, 1917), 8.

Even then, Pima would not be used in widespread commercial environment until 1917. Until this time, a Yuma variety dominated the early years of valley cotton development.²³⁶



Figure 10 -- Pima Cotton in the field, 1920²³⁷

Pima cotton, like other ELS varieties, is a “tree cotton,” nominally perennial but never grown as such. Upland cotton would be knee high at this stage – and ready to pick a month sooner.

²³⁶ Thomas H Kearney, “Test of Pima Egyptian Cotton in the Salt River Valley, Arizona,” USDA Bureau of Plant Industry, Alkali and Drought Resistant Plant Investigations, Washington DC, Dec 6, 1916.

²³⁷ Photograph: a Cotton Field; Parker, Arizona, c.1920, Herb and Dorothy McLaughlin Photographs, Hayden Arizona Collection, Tempe, Arizona. CP MCLMB A835.

Even with a new, promising strand of customized cotton, connections to outside markets, and a massive irrigation project, the industry still faced many obstacles. Arizona cotton boosters needed access to a ready, open market in order to convince a substantial number of growers to switch their farms to cotton production. Conversely, they needed a steady stream of cotton growers in order to produce enough cotton to catch the buyers' attention.

The federal government again helped bridge this precarious divide. Lead Botanist of the Department of Agriculture, W.T. Swingle, working with E.W. Hudson, not only customized a lead seed, but helped convinced growers to adapt the plant, form collectives, secure labor, encourage purity of seed, and even establish markets. By 1913, Swingle held talks in the valley where he urged every Egyptian cotton grower in the valley to join a cotton growers' association. He mentioned plans to send a representative to England to promote valley cotton. "In no other way," said Swingle, "can the grower in the valley hope to benefit from the trip than to join these organizations. It is manifestly impossible for the department to cooperate with individuals."²³⁸

In many ways, encouraging cotton farming was easy. While some farmers felt more comfortable growing traditional American short staple cotton as growers

²³⁸ "Cotton Talk at Luncheon," *Chandler Arizonan*, April 16, 1914, 5; "Sacaton, AZ's Cotton Explained by John H. Whyte," *St. Louis Republic*, July 28, 1914, 8, reprinted in *Chandler Arizonan*, August 18, 1914; "The Object of the Agricultural Extension Service," Hudson Cotton Company Collection, Arizona Historical Foundation, Hayden Library Room 412, Tempe Arizona, Box 4, 16.

had done in the South, long staple cotton drew about twice the money. Furthermore, no other region could effectively grow this variety of cotton. As W.T. Swingle put it in a talk with local farmers in 1914, “The growers of the long staple cotton here are without competition. They can never have any competition. There are few places in the world where the climate and soil are favorable to long staple cotton. The market for it is worldwide.”²³⁹ Herbert Atha, president of the Arizona Egyptian Cotton Company added “the demand is not only good. It is constant.”²⁴⁰

Comparing Arizona’s cotton to Egypt’s, in a letter to Swingle, Hudson added unexpected adjective to this list of advantages - “intelligence:”

Their natural advantages are much the same as ours, but we have the advantages over them in the superior intelligence of our farmers and the lack of serious insect pests. The low intelligence of the Egyptian farmer makes it impossible for them to organize and develop to the fullest extent of their cotton, but rather their varieties deteriorate rapidly from mixing with weed. If we do not compete with Egypt we must compete with the cotton producers in the U.S., who in many instances have natural advantages superior to ours and where the average intelligence is on a par with our own.²⁴¹

²³⁹ “Cotton Talk at Luncheon,” *Chandler Arizonan*, April 16, 1914, 5; “Cotton must be Undefined: Advise by Walter T. Swingle,” *Arizona Republican*, Nov 25, 1914.

²⁴⁰ “Cotton Placed Beyond Stage of Experiment.” *Arizona Republican*, Dec 07, 1912.

²⁴¹ “Correspondence with W.T. Swingle, 1913-15,” E.W. Hudson Papers, Arizona Historical Foundation, Hudson Cotton Company Collection, box 2, folder 5, Tempe, Arizona.

Despite the racist tone in this statement, there are other factors at play. The “intelligence” to which Hudson refers, in this context, seems to be the organization within the nascent valley cotton growing community. The impetus and management of this organization rested solidly on Hudson’s own government-sponsored work.

Word slowly spread about the potential for profit in relatively cheap desert lands. An exposition written in 1914 in the *St. Louis Republic* heralded the new industry in Arizona “One of the extraordinary and highly profitable industries recently established in the United States is in the growing of Egyptian cotton in the Salt River Valley of this state, made possible by the completion of the famous Roosevelt Dam”²⁴²

Moreover, the new cotton had higher production rates per acre than Southern cotton, and brought higher prices. Observers claimed that Salt River Valley could produce .75 bales an acre from desert land and 1 to 1.5 bales from fertile land, if nitrogen-fixing alfalfa was grown in rotation with cotton. Sea Island cotton, on other hand, yielded about half a bale per acre, even with fertilizer, in the states where it was grown.²⁴³ As land prices began to slowly rise, cotton became an obvious choice since they had higher costs due to their

²⁴² John Louis Henry Whyte, “Sacaton, Arizona’s Cotton Explained by John H. Whyte, *St. Louis Republic*, July 28, 1914, 8, reprinted in the *Arizona Republican*.

²⁴³ “Thousand of Valley Fertile Acres in Snow White Bloom: Cotton Yields Abundantly under the Sunny Skies of the Southwest,” *Arizona Republican*, May 23, 1915, E8.

Reclamation fees.²⁴⁴ Though the numbers sound good, looking at the chart below, they might be a little ambitious when compared to the “average” cotton farmer. Historical averages during the cotton boom on the whole average a little over half a bale per acre.

Adaptation came slowly at first. A few farmers received seed for 20 bales of Pima cotton from the Salt River Valley under the direction of the Department of Agriculture. By 1912, 32 valley farmers went to the Sacaton Experiment Station and organized an association designed for the encouragement of the industry under the guidance of EW Hudson. The next season, they planted 350 acres and were able to gin 250 bales, which sold for an average of 21 cents per pound.²⁴⁵ By 1913, headlines had already begun for local cotton’s international appeal. A newspaper article boasted that the “USDA announces that 2100 bales of the 1913 crop of mesa sold in London for 23.5 cents per pound.”²⁴⁶ Cotton had already begun making waves in Phoenix within its first year.

The opening of the war in Europe originally hindered cotton development in the valley. The price of cotton dropped from around 20 cents per pound to 15 cents, as Europe began to spend its money on arms and food. Despite the setback, cotton still had a promising outlook. Articles in the *Arizona Republican* noted

²⁴⁴ Whyte, “Sacaton, Arizona’s Cotton,” 8;

²⁴⁵ E.W. Hudson Papers, Arizona Historical Foundation, Hudson Cotton Company Collection, box 2, folder 5; *Arizona Republican* 3/14/14

²⁴⁶ “USDA Announces that 2100 Bales of the 1913 Crop of Mesa Sold in London for 23.5 Cents,” *Arizona Republican*, Mar 4, 1914.

that Egyptian cotton would be in short supply the following year, and that demand was going to increase.²⁴⁷

Under the guidance of Hudson, cotton growers decided to forge a better market for their region. They funded a trip to England in 1914 to help valley growers negotiate better prices. W.A. Dorman represented the valley cotton growers on that trip with a bale of the valley's finest cotton. He visited spinners across the country, marketing the new product as some of the finest that could be obtained in the world.²⁴⁸ The investment paid off. By 1915, following his trip, 1000 bales, grown from 3000 acres were ginned, garnering a price of 21 cents per pound. As word caught on to the new profitable crop, the industry finally gathered a foothold. In 1916, 6300 acres were planted from which 3200 bales were marketed at an average price of 28 cents per pound. By closing at the end of March, bidders were offering 62 cents per pound. By the onset of the 1917 season, cotton had gained recognition by many as the future of Valley farming.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ J. Martin, "Salt River Cotton may Bring High Rate," *Arizona Republican*, Apr 06, 1914; "Valley Cotton Bigger Price," *Arizona Republican*, Jun 01, 1914; "Cotton Price Thirty Cents," *Arizona Republican*, Aug 22, 1914.

²⁴⁸ W.S. Dorman, "Mr. Dorman's Report on Cotton Situation," *Arizona Republican*, Sep.15, 1914, 5.

²⁴⁹ William H. Knox. "The Cotton Industry of Arizona in Arizona collection." Arizona Cotton Growers Association. 1916

The Cotton Boom Begins.

This nascent but stable establishment of the cotton industry came just in time. Modern warfare demanded more than soldiers, weapons and food. The invention of the pneumatic tire required five pounds of cotton per tire.²⁵⁰ No cotton was better suited for this product than ELS. Prices instantly skyrocketed in the growing industry. The Goodyear Corporation became so dependent on ELS cotton that it decided to create its own ranch lands. The corporation purchased 8000 acres in Chandler and 16,000 at Litchfield, converting this acquired acreage from virgin desert to “improved” watered lands. By 1916, the Goodyear subsidiary, Southwest Cotton Company, had 6000 acres already irrigated and under cultivation and began rapidly installing canal networks, pumps and watering systems for the two large ranches they had purchased. By 1918, the company boasted 2500 employees, 1000 mules, two labor camps, and was expanding operations into Agua Fria and Yuma as well.²⁵¹ Unlike some of their counterparts, Southwest Cotton Company believed in diversified farming. By the peak of their operations in 1920, they owned 10,000 head of sheep and 4,000 head of cattle.²⁵²

²⁵⁰ Hill, 77.

²⁵¹ Shapiro, 59; “Mr. Dorman’s Report on Cotton Situation,” 1914.

²⁵² Christy, 56.

Despite their efforts, Goodyear could not secure enough cotton to fuel its tire production on its own. Even the addition of valley farms already cultivating ELS cotton did not meet their demands. In order to encourage more cotton growing, they began guaranteeing large contracts to growers. “The rumors floating around that large corporations are going to buy/lease farmlands and give a bunch of money for doing nothing are true” stated the *Republican* in 1916. Goodyear began offering guaranteed, high priced purchase contracts and low interest loans to long staple cotton growers. They bought all eight Salt River Valley cotton gins. In January, 1917, Goodyear announced purchase of 6000 acres near Marinette, putting its cotton acreage around 24,000 acres.²⁵³ By 1917, the Goodyear Corporation purchased 50% of Salt River Valley cotton and planted up to 20% of the total cotton crop in Arizona.²⁵⁴

²⁵³ “Goodyear Co. Buys Tract for Cotton,” *Arizona Republican*, Jan 12, 1917, 7.

²⁵⁴ Christy, 52.



Figure 11 - Southwest Cotton Company, Litchfield, Arizona. c. 1920 ²⁵⁵

As the industry boomed, Arizona cotton gained the attention of many across the country. Arizona Cotton Growers President, W.H. Knox reported at one meeting that he had received letters from widows who wanted to “marry handsome cotton growers.”²⁵⁶ Unlike the health seekers, these ladies weren’t looking for sunshine. The profits reported by the ACGA and cotton promoters looked tempting. One writer claimed “at 43 cents per pound in 1916, growers

²⁵⁵ Photograph: Workers Processing Bales of Cotton to Ship Back East, Southwest Cotton Company, Litchfield, Arizona, c.1920, Jose Vilella Photograph Collection, MP Photographs Collection, Hayden Chicano Research Collection, Tempe, Arizona. MP SPC 313.1:85

²⁵⁶ “Cotton Men will Secure Enough Labor,” *Chandler Arizonan*, Aug 3, 1917.

made a profit of 20 cents.” By early in 1917, bales of Pima cotton sold for an all-time record bid of 58.6¢ per pound, 5¢ above the previous record price.²⁵⁷

Stories of how profitable could vary significantly depending upon the source, however. Not surprisingly, promotional literature and newspaper articles reported profits that ranged from incredibly impressive to downright unbelievable. An editorialist in for the *Arizona Republican*, for example, cited maximum costs of replanting an acre of land should cost the farmer no more than \$87. Each acre generally yielded half a bale a more, farmers could further expect to pay \$45 per bail for picking costs and \$10 for bailing. The writer claimed that at a market rate \$1.10 per pound, they would get \$550 per bale. With total costs so low, proceeds from one acre could reach \$133. Other writers claimed even more incredible stories. Newspaper articles talked of more farmers making \$187 per acre. One particularly incredulous source claimed that a farmer “recently made \$175,000 from 400 acres of land,” which works out to an unbelievable \$437.50 per acre.²⁵⁸

A Glendale farmer offered a far more believable account. In 1918 he estimated \$80.25 in expenses and added \$30 for rent bringing total expenses per acre to \$110.25. A state entomologist, W.A. Morill, for a counter example, cited growing costs at \$170 per acre with land rent and picking. Despite these high prices for operating an irrigated, labor intensive industry, payoff could be high.

²⁵⁷ “Arizona Cotton Brings Top Price,” *Los Angeles Times*, Mar 26, 1917, I-4.

²⁵⁸ “Many Inquiries as to Cotton.” *Arizona Republican (1890-1922)*, Dec 10, 1916, A1.

Cotton Magazine figured Arizona cotton at 41.7¢ per pound, while the national average remained at only 11.28¢ per pound! Moreover, this average includes short staple cotton, which brought a lower price than long staple. Stories of exorbitant profits probably did not include land prices, or rent which newcomers to the Valley would certainly have to pay. Cotton scholar Waldo Christy estimated in 1919-20 to a total of \$165 per acre, or a total cost per pound of 61¢.²⁵⁹ Anything after this price would presumably be profit.

Despite the varying accounts on cotton economics, papers and boosters voraciously promoted the industry. Articles such as “More Than \$100 an Acre is Paid for Desert Land: Lure of Long Staple Cotton Leads Men to Contest with Wealth for Land on Which to Raise ‘white gold’” lauded the “Midas touch” of the long staple industry. Many newcomers to the Valley probably saw the guaranteed high prices and a stable supply of water as a failsafe investment.

The hype surrounding the cotton industry drove up land prices, riding on an already-buoyant optimism. In 1910, the *Republican* proclaimed “Nor does the farmer need to fear that prices will ever return to the low level of former years. ... It was during the depression of the 1880s when farmers generally were discouraged that Mr. Blaine said ‘There are middle aged men who will live to see the time when a good farm will be more valuable than a gold mine.’ That time is

²⁵⁹ Christy, 37.

already here.”²⁶⁰ In 1911, before cotton was introduced, the best land could be bought for \$125 to \$200 per acre. By 1914, prices increased to \$300 per acre and by 1920, that price doubled again to \$600 per acre.²⁶¹ By 1920, cotton prices had brought land values to a fever pitch. One article noted that one tract of non-irrigated desert drew an unprecedented \$70,000 for 640 acres despite a \$32,000 appraisal, with bidding jumping by \$10,000 at one point.²⁶²

As acreage and production rose, cotton brought in substantial sums of money into the Valley. By 1917, the value of cotton doubled from the previous season’s holdings to a reported \$12 million. Depending upon whose numbers you used, that could total anywhere from an impressive 28% of the value of the valley’s agricultural production, to a stunning 2/3 of it.²⁶³ Even the respected *Los Angeles Times* touted that the year’s Egyptian cotton totals, which directly resulted from Reclamation, could have paid the entire project cost of \$11 million

²⁶⁰ "The Fortunate Farmer," *Arizona Republican*, Dec 16, 1910, 2. Their "Mr. Blaine" was Sen. James. G. Blaine, Republican presidential candidate in 1884.

²⁶¹ Whyte claims between \$500 - \$1000 an acre in 1914; "Prices for Land Keep Climbing," *Chandler Arizonan*, August 11, 1916; "Pays Record Price for Farm at Mesa." *Arizona Republican*, Sep 25, 1919.

²⁶² "More Than \$100 an Acre is Paid for Desert Land, Lure of LS Cotton Leads Men to Contest with Wealth for Land on which to Raise 'White Gold' " *Arizona Republican*, Jun 29, 1920, 10.

²⁶³ Sources vary considerable. The ACGA statements of total production continually run higher than those printed in newspaper articles.

in that year alone.²⁶⁴ With total cotton revenue again doubling to 25 million in 1920, it wasn't difficult to see why.²⁶⁵ That kind of enthusiastic claim, while printable in respectable newspapers, may have rested more on euphoria than information. The *Los Angeles Times* pegged the Arizona ELS crop at \$12,000,000 on August 18, 1917, a day before the *Arizona Republican* quoted it at \$6,000,375.²⁶⁶ Though this was a far cry from the dominant copper industry's \$252 million produced in the state, the Salt River Valley now had its first commercially viable cash crop.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ "Arizona Cotton Yields Riches," *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 18, 1917, I-3.

²⁶⁵: "Mesa Opens Arms to King Cotton: Hundreds Flock to Worship at Shrine of Crop," *Arizona Republican*, Oct 24 1919, 10.

²⁶⁶ "Royalty in Salt River Valley: Alfalfa King, Cotton Queen and Every Day Cow a Princess," *Arizona Republican*, Aug 19, 1917, 3.

²⁶⁷ Dwight Heard, "Making Millions from the Desert Acres," *Arizona Republican*, Feb 20, 1919, A1.

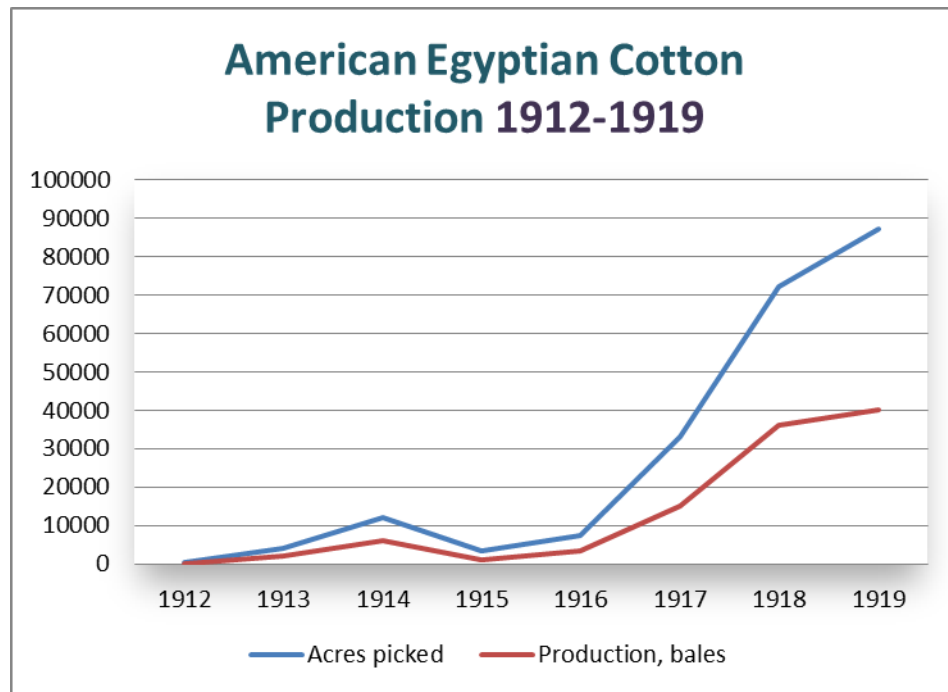


Figure 12 -- American Egyptian Cotton Production 1912-1919 (chart below)

	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919
Acres picked	400	4000	12000	3500	7300	33000	72000	87000
Production, bales	240	2200	6200	1150	3300	15200	36000	40000

Based on figures submitted by L.M. Harrison, Bureau of Crop Estimates, for American Egyptian Cotton grown in the Southwest, as used in Waldo Berry Christie's 1920 Ph.D. Dissertation, 48²⁶⁸

²⁶⁸ Herbert Atha, "Thousands of Valley Fertile Acres in Snow White Bloom: cotton yields abundantly under the sunny skies of the Southwest," *Arizona Republican*, May 23, 1915, E8

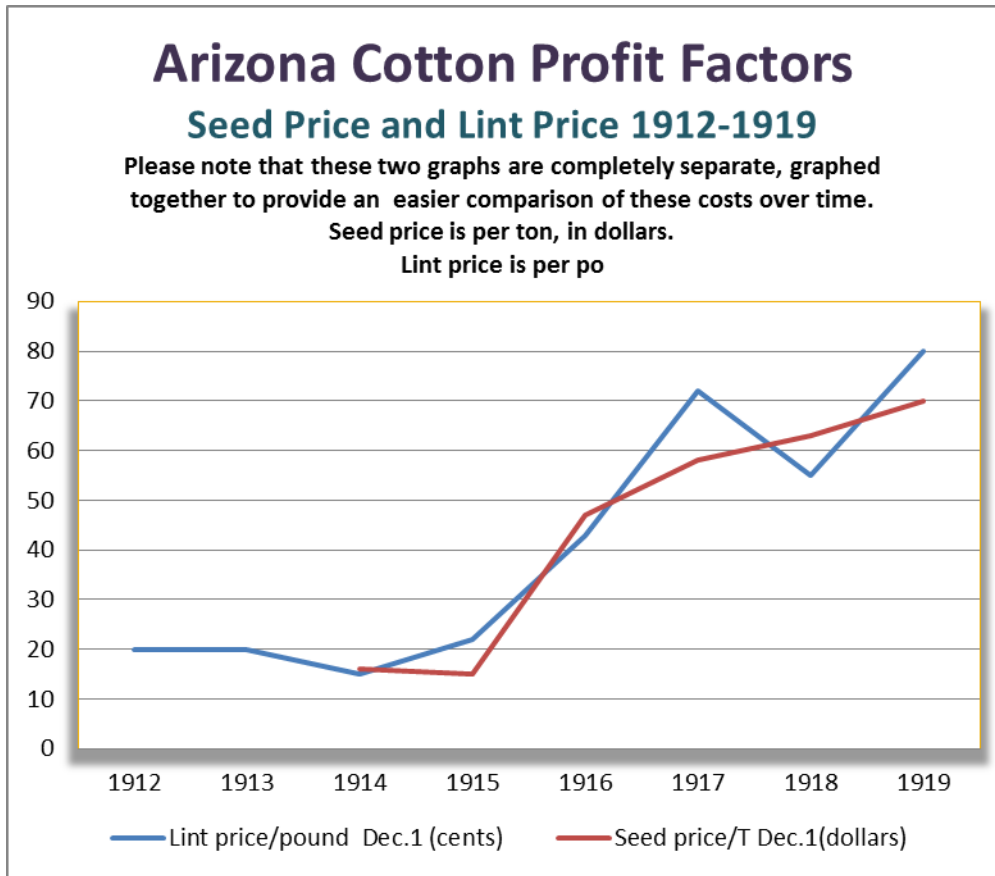


Figure 13 - Based on figures submitted by L.M. Harrison, Bureau of Crop Estimates, for American Egyptian Cotton grown in the Southwest, used in Waldo Berry Christy's 1920 Ph.D. Dissertation, 48. (See table below)

Cotton Profit Factors – graph above, data below²⁶⁹

	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919
Lint price/pound Dec.1 (cents)	20	20	15	22	43	72	55	80
Seed price/T Dec.1 (dollars)			16	15	47	58	63	70

Farmers across the valley tore out fields of alfalfa, barley, wheat, and corn to capitalize on the boom. The change in appearance across the valley was stark.

²⁶⁹ Based on figures submitted by L.M. Harrison, Bureau of Crop Estimates, for American Egyptian Cotton grown in the Southwest, used in Waldo Berry Christie 1920 Ph.D. Dissertation, 48.

Census data shows nearly every other crop decreasing as owners capitalized on the demand for cotton. One early valley writer noted “in just two years hundreds of acres of growing alfalfa were plowed up and put into cotton, as a consequence the dairymen gradually moved out with their herds, which forced the creameries to close their doors.”²⁷⁰ Cotton was now visible “as far as the eye could see.” Not everyone in the valley joined the cotton craze. Some more cautious residents began to complain of the feverish boom and the dangers of the “the menace of the one crop economy”²⁷¹ The raucous sounds of celebration over easy money trumpeted over these quiet warnings.

Organizing a Collective Labor System.

With eager buyers abound, the missing ingredient remained labor. From the beginning of cotton planting in the valley, experts knew that labor would be a pressing problem. Cotton picking required an intensive supply of labor during a very short seasonal window. Government agencies like the USDA warned valley farmers to keep farms small and manageable. The entire concept of the Roosevelt Dam project was predicated on the ideal that Phoenix could be the Jeffersonian ideal transplanted in the arid desert. The USDA seemed have shared in this idea

²⁷⁰ “Alfalfa is King of all that the Land Produces in this Valley,” *Arizona Republican*, Jan 1, 1922.

²⁷¹ “Phoenix Republican Tries, with News Stories to Stop One crop Economy in the Salt River Valley,” *Arizona Republican*, Jan 22, 1919.

that acreage could be limited. In a 1916 letter to Hudson, Swingle pleaded: “Do all in your power to hold down the acreage and to increase the number of small farmers who can pick their own crop themselves!”²⁷²

Government sources like the USDA, testimonies from congressmen, labor unions and critics of the expanding cotton industry held to naïve notions that farmer would both hold acreage down to keep labor minimal, and keep their labor force local, white or Indian to accommodate their manageable labor peaks. Part of this was predicated on the idea that white Americans would choose to work the cotton fields if conditions were pleasant enough. The Immigration Review Committee echoed this the following year during the ACGA’s testimony before Congress. The USDA claimed that Panama Canal construction would increase European labor in the region by 1913.²⁷³ However, no evidence exists that anything like that actually occurred in Arizona. In the early years, it seems many local growers did truly intend to keep to a local white labor supply. In a 1913 meeting in Chandler, growers concluded that they should hire only whites. They argued that alien laborers should be barred, since Mexicans were not desirable settlers, and “Japs were tricky with their employers.” The attendees even agreed

²⁷² 1916 Letter from Swingle to Hudson. EW Hudson Papers, Arizona Historical Foundation, Hudson Cotton Company Collection, box 2, folder 5, “Correspondence with W.T. Swingle, 1916.”; ACGA Testimony to Congress also echoes this plea to keep acreage down.

²⁷³ “Completion of Panama Canal and Building of San Diego-Arizona Railroad of Mutual Benefit,” *Arizona Republican*, Jun 22, 1913, A1.

to allocate acreage which workers could farm on their own, to encourage permanent settlement.²⁷⁴ Additional laborers during peak seasons could be recruited from local Indian populations and mining camps.

Growers abandoned any such sentiment fairly quickly. When presented with the option to keep operations small and less profitable, or expand and seek foreign labor, growers predictably chose the latter. Even E.W Hudson eventually took a job with commercial agricultural behemoth, the Southwest Cotton Company. Farm owners looked to the government instigated collectives to recruit, bargain, and lobby to keep labor plentiful. Securing labor could require as much organization as securing the world's largest dam. The Salt River Valley, lying in the sparsely populated Sonoran Desert, made this a formidable task.

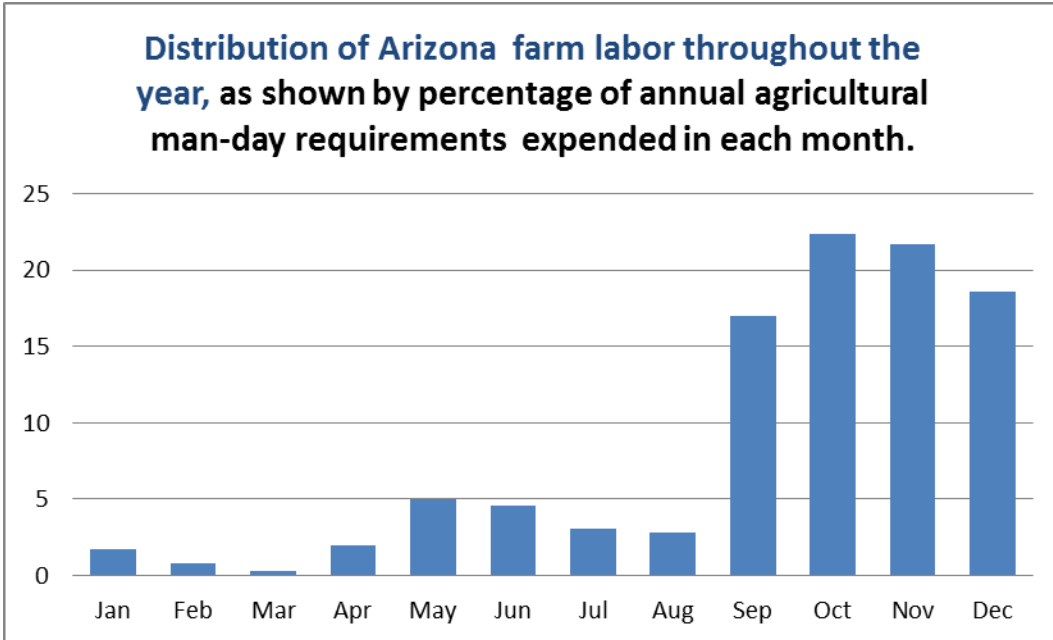
Compounding the problem for growers, cotton required an altogether different kind of labor than the citrus and the other crops that grew in the valley. Rather than the relatively small, somewhat steady supply of labor needed before, the valley labor now required around eight times more workers in Fall than Spring.²⁷⁵ A study in 1935 showed that irrigated farms in 1935 required 75 times as much labor in October than March. The penalties for failing to secure a ready labor supply during the brief window could be severe. Weathering, insects and

²⁷⁴ "Chandler Now has Cotton Association," *Arizona Republican*, August 10, 1913, 18.

²⁷⁵ E.D Teatreau. "Hired Labor Requirements on Arizona's Irrigated Farms," University of Arizona. Agricultural Experiment Station, Works Progress Administration. 1945.

disease threatened the quality of the cotton. Growers needed a significant labor force ready to pick as soon as cotton began to bloom.

Monthly Hired Labor Requirements on Arizona Irrigated Farms, 1935 ²⁷⁶



Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
%	1.7	0.8	0.3	2	5	4.6	3.1	2.8	17	22.4	21.7	18.6

Figure 14 – Monthly Hired Labor Requirements on Arizona Irrigate Farms 1935

ELS cotton was also particularly difficult to pick. Care and skill were essential to production of a quality product. In 1917, a pamphlet on cotton published by the Merchants Bank of Boston noted:

The boll of the Egyptian cotton is three lock and somewhat smaller than the average boll of the short staple cotton grown in the Southern States. Its small size, with the sharp-pointed burr, causes greater difficulty in clean picking than is the case with ordinary

²⁷⁶ Pendleton, 221.

Upland cotton. Since these fibres are used in the manufacture of combed and mercerized yarns, in making goods that resemble silk, it is necessary to have the fibre picked free from hulls and leaf. Furthermore, the type of roller gin used does not clean the foreign matter from the seed cotton as the saw gins do, hence clean hand picking is necessary, at a labor cost as high as two cents per pound for picking. With but a few exceptions the cotton is now picked carefully and the seed cotton taken to the gins is clean and free from trash, thus making it possible to turn out a high grade lint.²⁷⁷

Bringing Mexican Workers to the Valley.

This is where the cotton collectives came in. The first collectives started with the guidance of Hudson and Swingle operating under the auspices of the USDA. By 1914, this formed into even larger Salt River Egyptian Cotton Growers Association, which eventually formed into the still larger Arizona Cotton Growers Association (ACGA). At the onset of the 1919 season, the ACGA claimed that picking needs would increase to a record breaking 35,000 workers by the 1919 season.²⁷⁸ As late as December, 1918, the cotton growers were still facing a ban on further importation of Mexican labor after January 15, 1919. Knox grimly warned the growers "We find ourselves looking over some very serious problems."²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ Washington Irving Bullard. *The Quest of the Long Staple Cotton.* Boston: The Merchants National Bank, 1917, 16.

²⁷⁸ "Cotton Labor Hearing Brings Important Facs [sic] to Committee," *Arizona Republican*, Mar 16, 1918, 10.

The ACGA claimed that they looked first to the American South to meet their picking needs. As Knox put it, "We try to get, as much as possible, men that we believe will remain permanently in the state." Apparently, black families did not make for attractive settlers. "We do not encourage negroes to come, not that we are drawing the color line in the sense it is known in the South, but because of certain policies set after conferences with leading citizens of the growing sections, looking to harmony among employers and employees."²⁸⁰ The second choice was to draw from local Indian reservations, which farmers apparently preferred. Only after these avenues had been exhausted, claimed the ACGA, did they look to foreign laborers.²⁸¹

Casting such a wide net required a tremendous amount of recruiting, transporting and collective bargaining. These in turn necessitated massive coordination and organization across the valley. The cotton industry in Arizona did not lack in these areas. To recruit workers, the ACGA sent *enganchistas*, or "hookers" into Mexico. These men, generally Mexican in origin, convinced thousands of laborers with exaggerated stories of life in cotton camps and riches they would have upon their return to Mexico. Though these workers originally came from the north of Mexico, trains allowed recruiters further penetration into

²⁷⁹ "Plan to Join in the Marketing of Cotton Crop," *Arizona Republican*, Dec 27, 1918, 10.

²⁸⁰ "33,000 Men Will be Needed to Harvest Cotton Crop in all Districts of Arizona," *Arizona Republican*, Feb 12, 1918, A4.

²⁸¹ "Cotton Facts in Striking Figures Given by Experts," *Arizona Republican*, Dec 08, 1917.

the interior, and even into the south of Mexico. The rapid expansion of the economy of the Southwestern U.S. pulled heavily on the war-torn nation to the south. According to a Salt River Valley cotton scholar at the time, northern Mexico's labor supply had already been "near exhaustion."²⁸² In the wake of the Mexican Revolution, attracting men and women to the valley could be an easy endeavor.

The recruited workers generally assembled at central labor camps in El Paso and Nogales.²⁸³ Once they reached the border their picture and information were taken, "along with their disposition." The ACGA then paid for transportation to the valley for all these workers. These immigrants arrived at the camps with a few scant belongings, poor bedding, and according to one early scholar, "often a parrot." Once at the camps, they stayed in tents provided by the Association. The same observer added that the ACGA sees "that the laborers are housed, attend to their living and sanitary provisions, and some provision is made for the education of children, but not much."²⁸⁴ Orders for pickers were placed with the camp in Tempe, ideally a couple days in advance.²⁸⁵ The ACGA charged

²⁸² Christy, 38.

²⁸³ Ibid, 39.

²⁸⁴ Ibid, 32-33.

²⁸⁵ "Timely Talk to Cotton Growers," *Chandler Arizonan*, Sep 6 1923.

growers a tax of \$1.50 per bale for securing labor. By 1920, this had grown to a \$4-per-bale tax paid to the ACGA for every bale ginned.²⁸⁶

The pickers were responsible for furnishing their own sacks, while the growers provided the workers with water and housing accommodations. Anything beyond these provisions would be determined by the grower and picker. The ACGA formed local grievance committees to listen to complaints. Most local cotton bureaus held meetings on a monthly basis to discuss standards and payments for pickers. At these meetings, growers voted on how much to pay workers and asked members not to pay any more under any circumstance. The ACGA even furnished cotton pickers with bound checkbooks to help them keep a permanent record of costs.²⁸⁷ Once the cotton pickers had fulfilled their seasonal labor obligations, the growers were responsible for bringing workers back to the camps so the ACGA could transport them back to Mexico.

Facilitating such a massive endeavor would have been impossible before the network of railroads was established. Though Salt River farmers had always used Mexican seasonal labor to some extent, their population basis for workers had originally been much smaller. During the developing years of the valley, nearly 95% of Mexicans came from Sonora, slowly migrating their way to *El Salado* (the Salt River Valley) by working temporarily in towns such as Tucson.

²⁸⁶ “Mesa Ranchers ask Bale Tax Account,” *Arizona Republican*, Oct 7, 1920, A9.

²⁸⁷ “Navajos May Pick Cotton,” *Chandler Arizonan*, Aug 31, 1920.

The new migrant, however, “could enter the U.S. through El Paso, via the network of trains extending all the way down to Mexico City, and could span a distance which would have taken weeks before in just a few days.”²⁸⁸ These numbers dropped significantly in later years. In looking at records at St. Mary’s Catholic Church, Arturo Rosales found that by the time that cotton dominated the valley, 30% of Mexican immigrants came from outside Sonora.²⁸⁹

	1892-1900	1913-1920	1920-1926
TOTALS	249	172	282
SONORA	94	70	47
SINALOA	2	5	14
JALISCO	2		10
CHIHUAHUA	2	8	14
ZACATECAS		11	1
DURANGO		6	6
GUANAJUATO			5
BAJA CAL.			3
OTHER			

Figure 15 – Chart: Mexican Immigrants Married at St. Mary’s Catholic Church

By 1920, the ACGA beamed with pride over the system it had created. With World War I drawing to an end, however, the ACGA would face its largest obstacle to unfettered recruitment – restrictionist legislation.

²⁸⁸ Rosales, no pagination.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

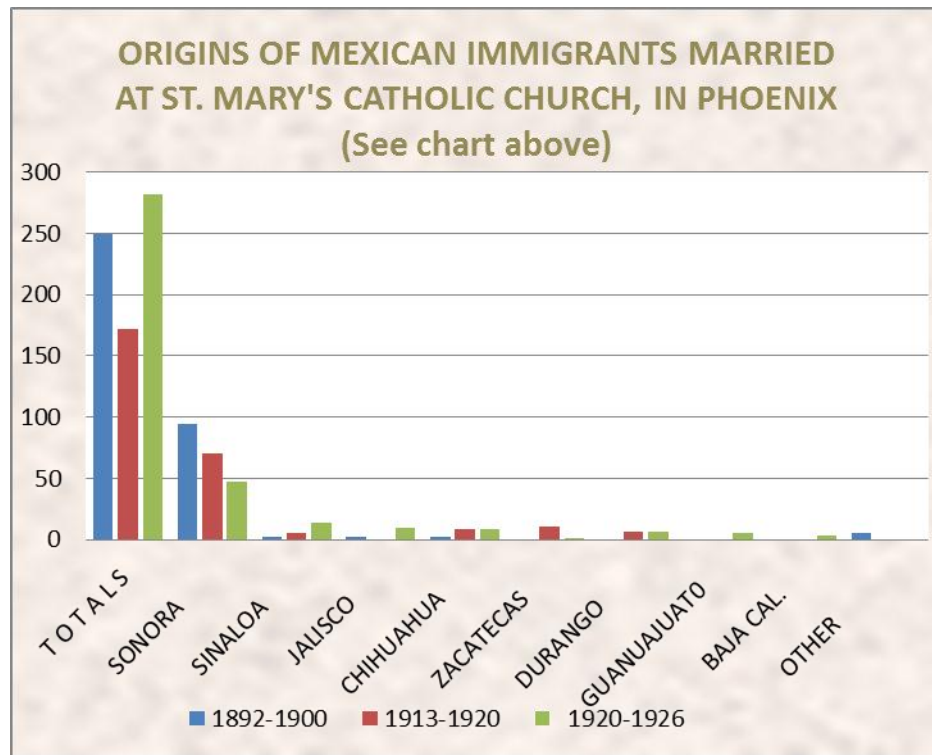


Figure 16 – Graph: Mexican Immigrants Married at St. Mary’s Catholic Church
Immigration, the Federal Government and Arizona Cotton Growers Association.

By 1920, the Salt River Valley used more contract labor than any other irrigated area.²⁹⁰ With the pronounced need of Mexican labor, the cotton collectives increasingly became a vehicle to secure labor and drive down costs. Though the ACGA had devised a masterful system to recruit and transport laborers, it now faced legal hurdles. The Alien Contract Labor Act of 1885 and Section 3 of the Immigration Act of 1917 enacted legal barriers against the importation of contract labor from outside the United States. Though overridden

²⁹⁰ Pendleton, 26.

at the beginning of the war, the arrival of peace came with a clamor to revert back to native labor in all industries.

The restrictions gave the ACGA a chance to showcase its might at a national level. W.H. Knox of the ACGA testified before Congress to argue in favor of allowing Mexicans temporary admission to the U.S. Knox and the ACGA supported the admission of temporary Mexican workers to the U.S. for the sole purpose of picking crops and promptly leaving. The crux of its argument rested on simple necessity. Despite all of its best efforts, the ACGA could not gather anywhere near enough labor locally. After seven years of working with Indian tribes, Knox claimed, they had only secured one Hopi and seven Navajo Indians. Though they had employed around 700 Papago Indians before, he noted that this number had dropped to around 350, as the tribe had become cotton competitors themselves. “Without the Mexican,” claimed Knox, “the cotton growth would be cut down 90%.”²⁹¹

The dialogue between the committee and Knox provided an interesting look into national sentiment on immigration at the time. The committee haggled endlessly over the new ideals of immigration placed before them. They seemed to agree that the U.S. should offer the “American dream” to newcomers. This view however, contrasted with their racist and nativist ideals. They wrestled with the

²⁹¹ United States Congress, House, Temporary Admissions of Illiterate Mexican Laborers, Hearings before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, House of Representatives, Sixty Sixth Congress, Second Session on H.J Resolution 271, Jan 26, 27, 30 and Feb 2, 1920, 189.

idea that these immigrants would be welcome only as laborers to feed the emerging agribusiness industry in the Southwest. Ironically, those who defended Mexican immigration and those who opposed it ultimately agreed upon strikingly similar characterizations of the Mexican. Both factions deemed these immigrants pliable, indolent, backward and accustomed to strenuous work with very little social mobility. The inherent difference came in the outcome. Employers argued that only Mexican immigrants armed with these characteristics could remain in such an arduous line of work.²⁹²

To the committee, these characteristics lacked the criteria for American citizenship. To reconcile this, they fixated on the long term results of allowing such a concentrated force of immigrants from one sending country. One committee member, Mr. Baker, asked, “But if a man changed his mind and said ‘... I am going into Phoenix and live there and work my garden, or milk some cows,’ he would be violating the bond and agreement.” When Knox agreed, Baker responded “... would not the result be that we would be raising American citizens who are absolute slaves, and who would be treated as slaves?” Surprisingly Knox didn’t respond to the accusations that their labor system resembled the abhorred and illegal model used over 50 years prior in the South. Rather, he responded honestly and directly that “You can theorize about the return

²⁹² Mark Reisler, “Always the Laborer, Never the Citizen: Anglo Perceptions of the Mexican Immigrant During the 1920s,” *Pacific Historical Review: University of California Press*, vol. 45, no. 2 (May, 1976), 236.

of the white man to the farm all you want to. We are face to face with the fact that he is not going back to the farm to do that work.”²⁹³

Ultimately, the ACGA argued that allowing temporary Mexican workers would be far better for white settlers in the region, and for the prosperity of the country overall. Knox concluded his case with a rousing speech about the miracle that cotton enabled in the desert:

“The result of this industry is building up a city. It is building up a district. Thousands and thousands of acres that have been desert are being watered by pumping plants and put under irrigation, making thousands of homes for white people.”²⁹⁴ ...

Now what are you going to do? Will you shut off our labor, so that we cannot harvest our crops, and put those white people there back to the state in which the South has been for years, where it had to put its white people out to pick cotton, not from choice, but because it was necessary to do that or starve? ... In the next three to five years this can be put under cultivation, where it will be productive and make homes for white people, for good American citizens. If we do not get this labor, this country is going to stay in the desert.²⁹⁵

The lobbying proved successful. The committee attached the 9th Proviso to Section 3 of the 1917 Immigration Act, which made an exception for hiring foreign contract laborers in the event of a labor shortage.²⁹⁶ W.H. Knox and the cotton growers had successfully convinced the U.S. government to allow

²⁹³ Ibid, 185.

²⁹⁴ Ibid, 189.

²⁹⁵ Ibid, 190.

²⁹⁶ Hispanic Historical Property Survey, 78.

Mexicans where they had restricted Europeans, an amazing endeavor considering racial preferences in the country at the time. The Immigration Committee was forced to accept that immigration in the Southwest would have an entirely different outlook than the American Dream at Ellis Island. By legislative design, these immigrants came to make money and go back to their homes once the picking season ended.

If the ACGA recruits could not stay long, it would not be that bad, Knox argued. “The women could come down and pick as well as the men. They wanted a little outing. They came and camped under along the trees and along the ditches.”²⁹⁷

A Look at the Life of Mexican Cotton Pickers in the Salt River Valley.

“*Picking cotton was awful. It was awful. It was awful picking cotton!*” exclaimed Judy Chavarria in her 1994 interview.²⁹⁸ Cotton was certainly a difficult crop to pick. Making matters worse, local long staple cotton was much more difficult to pick than the traditional short staple. While the short, stumpy cotton could be easily picked from bushes with your entire hand, you could use

²⁹⁷ United States Congress, House, Temporary Admissions of Illiterate Mexican Laborers, Hearings before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, House of Representatives, Sixty Sixth Congress, Second Session on H.J Resolution 271, Jan 26, 27, 30 and Feb 2, 1920, 192.

²⁹⁸ “Judy Chavarria,” Interview, 1994, Cotton Cultures Oral History Project, Tempe History Museum, City of Tempe, Arizona.

only two fingers to pick the thinner long staple cotton. Therefore much less cotton could be picked in any given amount of time, and at higher strain to the worker. As Ray Ortiz and his wife recalled “it was scratchy, and fine, and when you’d get your fingers around it, it would cut your cuticles.”²⁹⁹

Cotton picking was infamous, particularly in Phoenix, which could be a punishing place for workers laboring in the open sun. Workers actually refused to pick one of the first crops planted in the valley, and the field went unpicked. Planting began in March and cotton required 150 – 180 days to mature, putting start of the harvest during some of the valley’s famously hot weather.³⁰⁰

Cotton picking was considered the bottom tier of a bottom tier trade. Cotton pickers generally made less money than other migratory jobs. Not only was the pay low, but agricultural workers across the country considered cotton picking to be the least desirable of all migratory agricultural work.³⁰¹ That cotton picking was tedious cannot be denied. However, the idea that cotton picking lacked skill was not entirely true. Certainly, anyone could pick cotton without significant training. However, being good at picking cotton was entirely different story. Cotton picking was so strenuous and labor intensive that not all who did it could make sufficient money. “Cotton picking requires considerable skill and

²⁹⁹ “Ray Ortiz,” Interview, 1994, Cotton Cultures Oral History Project, Tempe History Museum, City of Tempe, Arizona.

³⁰⁰ National Cotton Council of America website:
www.cotton.org/pubs/cottoncount/fieldtofabric/harvest.cfm

³⁰¹ Malcolm Brown and Orin Cassmore, *Migratory Cotton Pickers in Arizona*, (Washington, Works Progress Administration, 1939), 46.

experience in spite of its low wage scale,” noted the same cotton study, “beginners cannot approach the daily output as experienced cotton pickers. Unemployed miners, for example, could often pick only 50-100 pounds a day.”³⁰²

Workers generally picked by walking in between two rows, picking cotton from both sides with both hands. They tied long bags around their waists, throwing the cotton in as it dragged behind them. Manuel Gomez recalls, “oh man, you got be good at picking cotton. You gotta go like hell! You gotta have hand-eye coordination. I could pick 150 pounds of cotton a day... and that wasn’t enough. There were girls that could pick 350 pounds a day.”³⁰³ Rancher Bob Thornton recalled his attempt to pick cotton on his parents’ farm as a kid, “when I was about 5 or 6 years of age my sister and I decide we wanted to make some money. We got our little bags. But it was back breaking, very tedious work. It took us about a half a day to figure out that we were not cotton pickers! But the Hispanic workers were very good at it, very dexterous, very fast.”³⁰⁴

³⁰² Ibid, 49.

³⁰³ “Manuel Gomez,” Interview, 1994, Cotton Cultures Oral History Project, Tempe History Museum, City of Tempe, Arizona.

³⁰⁴ “Bob Thornton, Interview, 1994, Cotton Cultures Oral History Project, Tempe History Museum, City of Tempe, Arizona.



Figure 17 -- Hudson Cotton Camp near Southern and Rural, c.1919.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁵ Photo, "Hudson Cotton Camp near Southern and Rural," Tempe History Museum, City of Tempe, Arizona., Catalog Number: 1987.1.13.



Figure 18 -- Mexican Laborers Picking Pima Cotton. Although not taken until 1940, this photograph shows the height of the cotton and the long, heavy bags used.³⁰⁶

Faced with such hardships, the workers did what they could to cope with the conditions. The women of the camps often had many children to support and needed to work the rugged fields, as well as raise children. Thornton remembers the women with their babies at the weigh scale.³⁰⁷ Ray Chavarria and his wife recalled, “You put them on the bag. It was soft so it was no problem. The kids would be having a ball.”³⁰⁸ With such horrible working conditions, workers

³⁰⁶ Photograph: Mexican Farm Laborers Brought in from Mexico . . . , Jose Villela Photograph Collection, c. 1940, M.P. Photographs, Hayden Chicano Research Collection, MP SPC 313.1:86.

³⁰⁷ “Bob Thornton,” Interview.

would attempt to make the situation as tolerable as possible. Recalled Ray Chavarria, “We would sing while we picked cotton. We would sing anything.”³⁰⁹ “You learn to work and have fun at the same time,” added Manuel Ortiz, “that is the secret to not feeling the pain.”³¹⁰

The living conditions of the workers hardly offered sanctuary from the tedious work. Cotton pickers who flooded into the valley resided in farm camps rather than the barrios of the urban workers. By all accounts, these dormitories were worse than the more permanent barrio residences.

The Phoenix-based Mexican Consulate, one of the only groups who cared enough to check on the conditions of the camps, reported in 1917, “They live in flimsy tents that barely shade them from the sun ... with the high prices at the store, they could hardly afford to eat.”³¹¹ Thornton recalled the living conditions for workers on his family’s ranch: “Most of the farmers furnished them with housing. They were by no means lavish. They were basically shacks. But they were shelter.”³¹² These housing structures were, apparently, at least wooden,

³⁰⁸ “Ray Chavarria,” Interview, 1993, Barrios Oral History Project, Tempe History Museum, City of Tempe, Arizona.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ “Manuel Ortiz,” Interview.

³¹¹ Petersen, 52.

³¹² “Bob Thornton,” Interview.

relatively permanent residences, better than the canvas tents many of the ranchers provided.

Cotton pickers of the Salt River Valley strove to make inadequate conditions livable. With substandard pay and high prices for goods from the store, making their living conditions better took hard work, creativity and community. They were very sparsely furnished generally with wood stoves and cots with thin mattresses at best. Noted one ex cotton worker, though, “They were very clean though. They would sprinkle water on the floor and they could make it as smooth and hard as concrete. It was amazing.”³¹³

Daria Chavarria’s family had a total of thirteen kids living in their tent. They had a tarp on the floor with a thin mattress for all the kids to sleep on because her mom “. . . always had a little one to keep in the bed.” There was frequent flooding of the fields, and when that happened, the tents also flooded – including the beds. Nonetheless, Daria had many fond memories of how their mother handled the living conditions. “She would make quilts, pillows, drapes . . . anything you could make from the cotton in the field, she would make it.” “She was immaculate,” added her husband Ray.³¹⁴

These families lived and labored together formed profound community bonds. To avoid the hardships of everyday life, families sought strength from

³¹³ “Ray Chavarria,” Interview.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

each other. “They had a couple of guitars and they would dance, of all places, in the horse corral” remembered Bob Thornton. “A horse corral could be swept out very clean, sprinkle it down with water. They would have their own little fiesta, you know, just five or six families.”³¹⁵ Daria Chavarria summed up her living situation “those were hard times, but happy. I think they were so happy because there were so many of us. I still think to this day, how we ever survived. It was severe... It would really get cold, especially at one o’clock at night.”³¹⁶

Valley farmers justified these deplorable conditions, claiming that these seasonal migrants were remunerated well for their efforts. One writer at the time commented“... the Mexican peon can make quite a bit of money in a week, because everyone works either chopping cotton or picking it, even padre.”³¹⁷ Reports by the cotton industry and its supporters corroborated this. In a report composed by Knox of the cotton industry, he argued that workers could pick 200 pounds a day, placing their total wages at four dollars.³¹⁸ Another article claimed that a Mexican could make as much as \$100 a week.³¹⁹ A 1914 Farmer’s

³¹⁵ “Bob Thornton,” Interview.

³¹⁶ “Ray Chavarria,” Interview.

³¹⁷ “The Development of Chandler and Vicinity,” FM Foundation Small Manuscripts, Hayden Arizona Historical Foundation, n.d. FM MSM-61. Also available at Chandler Historical Society.

³¹⁸ WH Knox, “The cotton industry of Arizona notes.” 3.

³¹⁹ “Treaty will affect Arizona Cotton Men: Free Importation of Labor from N. Mexico stops with Peace,” *Chandler Arizona*, Nov 10, 1919.

Bulleting boasted that workers could make a far better living than workers picking upland cotton in the South. “The record so far is 270 pounds per day for six days straight; they can make a maximum of \$6 a day.” Oddly, despite assertions of high pay, the ACGA still had trouble recruiting from the Southern States.³²⁰ However, studies have shown that the average worker picked 80 to 100 pounds, and at that rate, made only two dollars a day. “Good pickers,” the study concluded, “are extremely rare.”³²¹

Whether the workers used this money wisely or not was not the fault of the farmer of course. As one article stated “Sometimes, though rarely, he saves enough to return home in a comparative state of affluence, though as a general rule he simply spends more while making pay he never dreamed before.”³²² Regardless, the pay was better than they were accustomed, which justified any poor treatment. Later that article stated “Cotton pickers in nearly every case are of the peon class, and are as poor as humanity ever gets. The work here has been a godsend to him.”³²³ Regardless of the angle taken, the underlying message

³²⁰ E.W.Hudson, “Growing Egyptian Cotton in the Salt River Valley, Arizona,” USDA Farmers Bulletin 577, Bureau of Plant Industry, Wm. A. Taylor, Chief, Mar 14, 1914.

³²¹ Brown and Cassmore, 62.

³²² “Treaty will affect Arizona Cotton Men: Free Importation of Labor from N. Mexico stops with Peace,” *Chandler Arizona*, Nov 10, 1919.

³²³ Ibid

remained the same: life in the valley might not be ideal for the Mexican worker, but it couldn't be any worse than the life they had become accustomed to in their homeland.

ACGA: Making Organization an Art.

There remains some debate in the literature about how much of a shortage Valley farmers truly held. A scholar in 1950 noted in his dissertation that for the ACGA, this really meant a “shortage of the number that growers deemed necessary to harvest their crops at the wages and under the conditions they were willing and able to provide. There was no evidence that crops were not harvested in their entirety.”³²⁴ Other reports corroborate this. Agricultural Experiment Station stated in the harvest season of 1918, “it appears that despite the absence of men in governmental service, the crops were harvested with normal success. Here and there, there were losses caused by weather conditions. Some of these cases, they tried to save money by not hiring more outside labor, and lost.”³²⁵

Looking at the national context, labor difficulties plagued the country at the time. A 1917 Agricultural Experiment Station report noted that a labor

³²⁴ Pendleton , 416.

³²⁵ Cooperative Demonstration Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, University of Arizona College of Agriculture and USDA Cooperating Fifth Annual Report for the year ending Nov 30 1919 Agricultural Experimental Station, E.P. Taylor, Director, Tucson, AZ.

shortage existed across the board in Mexico and Arizona. Arizona agribusiness had even more pronounced obstacles to overcome. Irrigated agriculture had heavy seasonal demands in every case, but probably none as severe as the Salt River Valley. Other irrigated areas like the San Joaquin had larger population basins for labor recruitment. The Salt River Valley lay in a desert, in a state with less than 350,000 people by 1920. At the peak of the cotton boom, the need for labor surpassed the entire population of the Salt River Valley. In other words, Valley cotton growers had a perfect storm of obstacles to drawing sufficient labor to the valley. As Knox put it, “no part of the U.S. suffered as little during the war period from a shortage of labor as the Salt River Valley.” According to W.H. Knox, even border agricultural counties like Imperial and Yuma, paid higher labor prices that forced acreage reduction.³²⁶ As an ACGA representative later boasted:

“In the face of the greatest demand for labor the world has ever seen, with the country at the highest point of prosperity it has ever known, the cotton growers of the Salt River Valley maintained as perfectly elastic supply of labor as the world as ever seen and maintained an even low level of prices for wages through its territory. *Outsiders looked, studied and went away amazed at the accomplishment of such an organization.*”³²⁷

The ability to collectively organize doubtlessly remained a prime factor for their success. Though the ACGA was comprised mainly of farms averaging

³²⁶ “Cotton Labor Situation in the Valley and Problems Confronted: This is a comprehensive digest composed by WH Knox,” *Arizona Republican*, Feb 20, 1919, A9.

³²⁷ Pendleton, 226; Dimas, 43.

around 70 acres, they nonetheless coalesced to form a unified organizational structure that behaved like a large corporation. Wages in Arizona were higher than their cotton growing counterparts in the South, yet they remained lower than their counterpart wages in other states in the Southwest.³²⁸ When immigration restrictions threatened to drastically reduce acreage planted, the ACGA lobbied and testified to successfully circumnavigate the law.

In 1920 Waldo Christy argued that this cooperation extended along four lines, all “assisted by government.” He categorized these cooperative networks as follows:³²⁹

1. Among investigators for knowledge, training and tactics. “Judgment has been turned over for matters of the general good.”
2. This has maintained effective growth. Personal contact of departmental field agents has maintained this cooperation.
3. Officers and agents of local organizations have worked cordially with these agents.
4. They have worked with the cotton manufacturing – also assisted by the government through the U.S. Bureau of Markets located in Tempe, which had been in increasing cotton markets, but also the cotton grown.

These four points show a highly communicative industry, cooperative in nearly all fronts. Logistical matters were held to a vote, and growers religiously adhered to the results. The four points also demonstrate a strong governmental presence in nearly all steps from cooperation with investigators, to train, to establishment of markets.

³²⁸ Brown and Cassmore, 78.

³²⁹ Christy, 87-88.

Times of emergencies could catalyze and extend the cooperative network. For example, when cotton markets became difficult to find in 1916, the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce reached out to the growers to form a special committee. Both organizations contributed funds to send a representative to Washington DC. As usual, they enlisted help for Uncle Sam as well. The Bureau of Markets had established of Tempe worked with the USDA, ACGA and the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce to create a special report to be mailed to spinners across the country. The report included the recommendation of the USDA and Bureau of Markets to the quality of the new crop.

All agencies also worked to try to limit the amount of cotton purchased from Egypt. Their efforts garnered a small victory when The War Trade Board enacted a quota of 40,000 bales from Egypt in recognition of the needed markets for Arizona cotton growers. As Christy put it, “This gives an example of the cooperative efforts that have taken place in Arizona, and how government has helped to foster the cotton industry there.”³³⁰ A 1930s report later summed up the collective organization stating, “The principle crop of the Salt River Valley is cotton and cotton growers of the Salt River Valley are well organized and during the labor shortage benefitted greatly by their years of cooperative experience.”³³¹

³³⁰ Christy, 89,90.

³³¹ Brown and Cassmore,. 33

The Return on Investment.

The first season of substantial labor challenges in 1917 presents a unique insight into ACGA tactics. That year's wet season in the South meant the Salt River Valley had little interest from Southern pickers to migrate to Arizona. With prices acreage booming, shortages seemed imminent. In the wake of this extreme shortage, ACGA finally voted to increase rates to 2.5 cents per pound. Even this came with a lot of opposition. One grower at the meeting fought the raise, arguing: "You pay the average Mexican 3 cents a pound and he works for a few hours a day for one or two days a week. But pay him 2 cents a pound and he will work for ten hours per day and for the whole week."³³² Despite their bickering over the increase, the region was still the lowest paying in the Southwest. A 1917 report noted that, "Arizona, where there is little other competition, the average appears to be \$2.50 per day with board or \$3 per day without." This was the lowest daily average mentioned in the study of Southwestern farms.³³³

As they approached the 1920-1921 season, growers prepared to put this system to a stress test. Knox estimated that they would need to hire 35,000 Mexican pickers to harvest cotton -- more than the total population of the City of

³³² "Cotton pickers will be paid 2.5c per pound," *Chandler Arizonan*, Jul 8, 1917, 12.

³³³ "Cooperative Demonstration Work in Agriculture and Home Economics," *University of Arizona College of Agriculture and USDA Cooperating Third Annual Report*, for the year ending Dec 1, 1917, Agricultural Experimental Station, E.P. Taylor, Director, Tucson.

Phoenix in 1920!³³⁴ The ACGA, rather miraculously managed to meet all labor requirements throughout the boom, even the record breaking 1920 season.

Such a complex, expansive system was costly, of course. Without a native workforce like the South, labor would come at a premium. The ACGA navigated this about as well as could be imagined. Knox claimed that the ACGA had spent \$325,000 in recruiting Mexicans. However, from this investment he estimated a savings to farmers of \$28 million.³³⁵ “If we didn’t have these collectives,” wrote Hudson, “then growers would be trying to outbid each other for labor.”³³⁶ Knox claimed in his 1920 testimony that “Probably no part of the U.S. suffered as little during the war period from a shortage of labor as the Salt River Valley.” He argued that those who lacked that the organizational structure of Phoenix farmers had been crippled by labor shortage. Meanwhile, agricultural centers closer to borders like Yuma “have paid high prices that have made it prohibitive and acreage planted will be greatly reduced.”³³⁷

³³⁴ Dimas, 56; Hispanic Historical Property Survey, 56.

³³⁵ United States Congress, House, *Temporary Admissions of Illiterate Mexican Laborers. Hearings Before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization*. House of Representatives, Sixty Sixth Congress, Second Session on H.J. Resolution 271, January 26, 27, 30 and February 2, 1920, 182, 262, 269, 275-76.

³³⁶ “Arizona Cotton Growers’ Association Correspondence,” E.W. Hudson Papers, Arizona Historical Foundation, Hudson Cotton Company Collection, box 3, folder 14.

³³⁷ Cooperative Demonstration Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, University of Arizona College of Agriculture and USDA Cooperating Fifth Annual Report for the year ending Nov 30 1919 Agricultural Experimental Station, E.P. Taylor, Director, Tucson, AZ., 191.

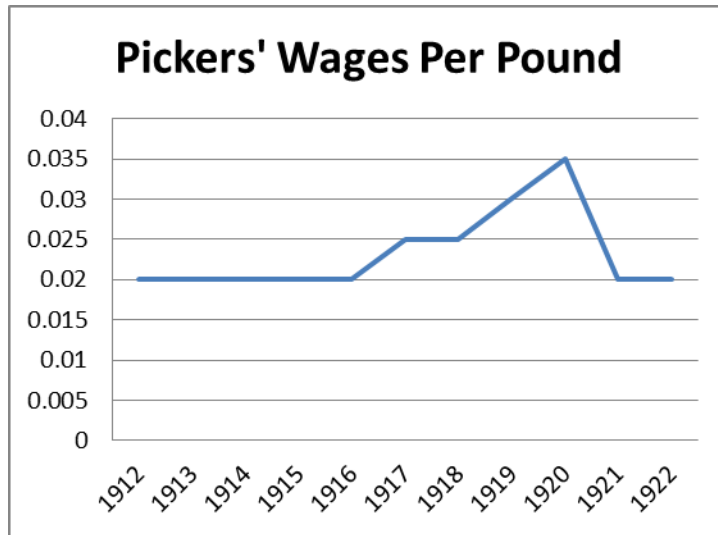


Figure 19 -- Arizona Cotton Pickers Wages, 1912 – 1922³³⁸ (graph above, chart below)

Year	Acreage	Price/lb	Picking/lb (cents)
1912	350	\$0.23	2¢
1913	1,000	\$0.21	2¢
1914	2,000	\$0.15	2¢
1915	3,000	\$0.21	2¢
1916	7,300	\$0.28	2¢
1917	33,000	\$0.60	2.5¢
1918	72,000	\$0.70	2.5¢
1919	85,000	\$0.90	3¢
1920	186,000	\$1.35	3.5¢
1921	230,000	\$0.17	2¢
1922	78,000	\$0.35	2¢

³³⁸ Data assembled from Newspaper articles, and reports from W.H Knox of the ACGA. .

Looking at picking rates for the years in this study, Knox's claim seems plausible. During the earliest days of commercial cotton picking in the valley, labor started at two cents per pound. The market value averaged around 21 cents per pound, and even went as low as 14 cents in one season.³³⁹ In 1916, one paper noted that with picking prices remaining at 2 cents per pound, "growers would clean up a nice bunch of money."³⁴⁰ As the price per pound increased nine fold during the cotton boom years from 1914 - 1920, wages increased by about 75%. While a 75% increase seems impressive during the short time frame, this involved a period of pronounced worker demand and prolific industry profits. During the early years when the rates were first established, labor could be recruited locally and from local Indian reservations. Labor rates are bound to increase sizably when recruiting becomes necessary.³⁴¹

Conclusion

By 1920, growers in the Salt River Valley could hardly have asked for a better scenario. Cotton farmers started with a scant 400 collective acres in 1912 had skyrocketed to 180,000 acres less than a decade in eight years. Farmers tore out food crops to cash in on the demand for the scratchy fiber. To leverage their

³³⁹ "The cotton industry of Arizona Notes," 2 1916 & 1917 CM MSM-8. Arizona and Southwestern Collection. Arizona State University. Tempe, Arizona.

³⁴⁰ *Arizona Republican*, 9 1 1916

³⁴¹ Picking rates have been collected through research of the *Chandler Arizonan* and the *Arizona Republican*.

acreage, however, they needed a large, seasonal labor force. Mexican fulfilled their labor demands perfectly. Through the ACGA, cotton growers concocted an elaborate, well organized recruiting machine. The Association lured thousands of immigrants by tantalizing advertising and aggressive *enganchistas*, the ACGA held to a philosophy of over recruitment to maintain their leverage and protect their crops. In a review of newspapers, Knox continually quotes labor needs higher than the actual requirements. As a Works Progress Administration study later put it, “when the ACGA orders 150 pickers you would be right to send them 50.”³⁴²

The trend away from the small family farm only increased due to the cotton boom. In Maricopa County, between 1910 and 1920, the total number of farms increased 76%. During that time, farms which were not owner-operated more than doubled while owner-operated farms fell from 79% to 71%.³⁴³ Farms reporting labor expenditures increased from 35.8% in 1909 to 56.5% in 1919.³⁴⁴ The massive influx from Mexico allowed commercialized agriculture to expand.

The growth of commercial agriculture and the corresponding massive recruitment of laborers brought the Salt River Valley growers into the national spotlight. The ACGA’s testimony demonstrates some inherent problems in their

³⁴² Brown and Cassmore, 86.

³⁴³ Geostat Center: Collections. www.fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/ One suspects that the numbers and percentages would be much greater if computed against 1900 data. However, 1910 is the first year available for Arizona.

³⁴⁴ Pendleton, 215.

labor system. Relying on a massive foreign labor force might suffice during a wartime economy, but with peace would come more intense scrutiny. The ACGA and Southwestern agribusiness were successful in extending exemptions from restriction for Mexican workers in 1920. However, they probably were able to do so only because national sentiment was focused so thoroughly on European immigrants. This would not be the last time the ACGA would find themselves in the national political spotlight, however. Nor would the results always be so thoroughly in their favor.

Though Valley farmers would have loved to take the credit, none of this would have been possible without the constant force of government and Mexican workers. Federal dollars built the Roosevelt Dam and allowed the storage needed to irrigate the cotton crop. Furthermore, the USDA 's Agricultural Experiment Stations provided the impetus, foundation and management of cotton development in the Valley. E.W. Hudson's government work in Sacaton not only developed the Pima Cotton, but also established the management and organization necessary to recruit cheap laborers.

The relationship between whites and Mexicans changed. Certainly, with the growing domination of Anglos in the valley, Mexicans felt their influence diminish, even before the completion of Roosevelt Dam. With the mass influx of poor Mexicans into the area, the growing attitudes of superiority of the Anglo only solidified. This left Mexican worker boxed into the role of laborer more than ever. In so doing, they had also become more dependent on the Mexican

immigrant than ever before. This over recruitment and heavy dependency had little negative effect on the growers at this time. While growers flouted the stereotype of the tractable Mexican worker, we will see that Mexicans did resist, even in the face of tremendous obstacles.

CHAPTER FOUR:
BOOM, BUST AND MEXICAN RESISTANCE

The ACGA and the Mexican Cotton Pickers

Americans during the early 20th century often held stereotypes of Mexicans as tractable, docile and disinterested in organizing. Mexican cotton workers actually held far more obstacles to organizing than workers in any other industry. Yet, when given an opportunity, these workers did organize. Strikes sprinkled throughout 1917-1920 demonstrate the Mexican workers' frustration with their conditions and treatment by the ACGA. The cotton growers' impressive collective organization made any worker advancement nearly impossible, however. Ultimately a crash in cotton prices undermined any union gains that workers had made. After the crash, workers were left stranded and starving in Phoenix with no way of returning to Mexico. The complete disregard on the part of the ACGA for transporting their recruits back to Mexico moved the Mexican government, and a Mexican Mutual Aid Society to help their destitute countrymen. Their reactions demonstrate the formation of a community-minded culture in the face of exclusion and racism.

As difficult as the ACGA found recruiting workers to the valley, workers had an even more difficult time negotiating in the valley. The ACGA enticed Mexicans with exaggerated promises regarding their conditions and wages. They generously paid for these workers' transportation to valley, but insisted that

workers pay their own way back. To do this, employers withheld a portion of their wages, which workers could collect later to meet transportation costs back to Mexico.

The vast majority of these workers did not speak English, had no knowledge of the area, and ultimately had no easy way to look for other work. The ACGA, then, essentially had a hostage workforce. Any chance for negotiating successfully depended upon support from outside help in the valley – whether business, labor, or the community in general. Unfortunately, for most of this era, none of the above groups chose to support farm worker causes. Given their disconnection from American society, any resistance would be difficult. The system worked brilliantly for the growers. With a captive labor force, they effectively set wages through their cotton collectives and strictly adhered to the wages, even in the face of heavy worker resistance. Workers were rendered nearly powerless to negotiate.

Host Society and the Mexican Cotton Picker in the Salt River Valley

Odd as it may seem, it was a farmer named Thomas Bell who summed up the trouble of organizing Mexicans in the Valley with rare perception. In his letter to the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations in November of 1920, he pointed out that not all farmers agreed with the tactics of the ACGA. Nor did they necessarily agree with the treatment that Mexicans received in the U.S. In the letter, Bell warned the Mexican government of the despicable treatment he witnessed towards Mexicans. As he put it:

Most of our farmers here are pretty decent people. Brutality is not as common here as in Texas. . . . but there are always plenty of rascals and brutes in any community; and the Mexicans as the humblest worker, unable to speak the language, ignorant of the customs, often without friends, was constantly victimized.”³⁴⁵

Despite this poor treatment, he claimed Mexicans had it far worse in Texas, for example. In the letter, Bell notes that since he had learned to speak Spanish while living for a brief time in Mexico, many Mexicans came to him to seek out help for mistreatments. The most egregious mistreatment came when a farmer shot and killed a worker who was peaceably crossing his property, unarmed with a bucket of water. Making matters worse, the farmer later claimed self-defense in courts and won, largely due to racial arguments. Most of the complaints Bell received, however, were of general racism and mistreatment. Workers generally came to him when their employers refused to pay them earned wages. Despite his role as a sympathetic insider, Bell admitted, “It was seldom I could help them.”

They had other options of course. The Mexican Consulate and *La Liga Protectora*, a local mutual aid society, both made protecting Mexican rights a priority. The latter, Bell noted, sometimes tried, but “the interests of this group is much more geared towards the businessmen.” The only real option these workers had for self-defense, he argued, was forming a union. Finally, he claims that

³⁴⁵ “Bell, Thomas H. – Norteamericano, Solicita de Mexico la Union de Trabajadores para elevar al Trabajador Mexicano,” Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, Archivo General, Año de 1920, Expediente No. 78, Mexico City. (Letter from Thomas Bell, November, 1920)

cotton workers appealed to Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labor. Bell noted that business perennially persecuted American unions. This, however, was made worse Mexicans ran the unions. The prime example of this came in organizer called he called "Sanchez" who was being detained both for being an alien and also for deserting the army. Bell quickly pointed out that the two were incongruous. "He was really arrested for being Secretary of the Mexican Workers Union. Even fellow members of the union have been seized while visiting and thrown in jail." Bell noted that both he and the Arizona State Federation of Labor believed the authorities were acting on the behest of the ACGA.

Bell went on to claim that "it is the opinion of most farmers that the ACGA is fake and represents the Southwest Cotton Company and other ginners." In their place, he recommended that Mexican authorities deal with the Arizona American Cotton Growers Association, which formed two years earlier and had done an "outstanding job" getting great prices for cotton. The ACGA (Arizona Cotton Growers Association) on the other hand, "never did anything but try to keep down the price of labor and bring in Mexican contract laborers." The American Association, he added, were better suited to deal with their representatives because "the Mexican workers were so often ignorant and difficult to handle." Conditions had become so bad, he claimed, he now feared sabotage on the part of the workers. Bell urged that the ACGA be refused permission to recruit in Mexico. If Mexican authorities did not want to deal with his

association, he urged that the negotiating be put in the hands of the Mexican workers.

The bias in this letter is not difficult to discern. Bell undoubtedly had the interests of his association of “American” cotton farmers in mind. Though he claims to be a grower, Bell probably also held some strong union ties. Still, the claims in the letter cannot be discredited. Bell wrote the letter because of the ACGA’s poor reputation with the workers they recruited. While perhaps exaggerating the claims regarding the ACGA as well as aggrandizing his own Association, these claims fit quite believably into the context of Salt River Valley cotton farming at the time. Bell’s letter ultimately provides a rare sympathetic look into the cotton workers’ struggle at the time. His views seem especially odd coming from a grower, but his observations show tremendous insight into cotton worker dynamics.

The Cotton Pickers and the Labor Movement

The U.S. did hold a strong, growing labor union movement at the time. These unions sought the goal of unionizing all trades in the U.S. Undoubtedly a fully unionized agricultural labor force could have improved not only the lives of agricultural workers, but those of other trades in the area. Despite the benefits of unionizing agricultural workers, unions relentlessly haggled over the idea of organizing Mexican fieldworkers. The largest union in the U.S., the American

Federation of Labor (AFL), generally opted to organize skilled, white labor.³⁴⁶

Migratory Mexican cotton workers fell far from this mark.

In the low end industry of agricultural labor, cotton took the bottom rung. The top order of the food industry labor force came in the packing and cannery workers, or as Edwin Pendleton refers to them, “The aristocracy” of the industry.³⁴⁷ Stable agricultural industries like citrus and beet workers occupied to the next lowest tier. Gil Gonzales and Damian Fernandez looked at the citrus camps of Orange County California, noting the stability of citrus camps, in comparison with other agricultural labor. Citrus camps, or “villages” as they called them, had a vibrant year-round culture. González shows in great detail that, despite their poverty, workers lived rich, active social lives.³⁴⁸ These more stable industries were far more likely to draw the attention of labor organizers. Ultimately, cotton pickers generally fell far outside their ideals of potential union candidates.

³⁴⁶ For a look into the AFL’s organizing philosophy, see David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 25, 29-51, 461; Montgomery criticized the AFL for their lack of willing to work with anyone other than skilled, white workers. Montgomery was also among the first to look outside the institutional history of unions when exploring the lives of these workers.

³⁴⁷ Pendleton, 84-87.

³⁴⁸ For a look into the citrus workers and their camps, see Gilbert G. González, *Labor and Community: Mexican Citrus Worker Villages in a Southern California County, 1900-1950* (Urbana : University of Illinois Press, 1994).

Given these conditions, it is little wonder that many Americans at the time held a persisting stereotype that Mexican workers had no interest in unionization. The transient nature of their work as well as the heightened xenophobia they encountered in American society led to reduced organizational capabilities. Moreover, Mexicans' relatively close commute home provided another barrier to unionization. Mark Wyman's study *Round Trip to America* shows that European immigrants also had a high circularity rate. He argued that these workers were much less likely to organize and fully acclimate themselves to their new environment, since their stay in host society was only temporary. Wyman's portrayal of remigrants' interests in the homeland can partially explain why Mexicans, who had the highest circularity rates, would organize less than other immigrant groups.³⁴⁹

The Arizona State Federation of Labor generally believed these perceptions. In theory, they supported Mexican workers organizing in Mexico. This supportive role flipped when it came to organizing these men and women in the fields of the U.S, however. Rather than focus on the advantages of complete unionization, they focused on the racist stereotypes of the Mexican worker. One editorialist in the *Arizona Labor of Journal* griped "Officers of the Arizona State Federation of Labor realized that American labor must either lift the Mexican laborer somewhere close to its own standards or it would be dragged down to the

³⁴⁹ Mark Wyman, *Round-trip to America: the Immigrants Return to Europe, 1880-1930* (Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press, 1993).

level which the cotton companies have attempted to establish for this farm labor, which is an unthinkable condition.”³⁵⁰ A writer for the *Arizona Labor Journal* warned that Mexican immigration had grown out of control. “The foreign horde is pouring into Arizona like a plague of seven year locusts.”³⁵¹

The AFL’s goal then became to restrict Mexicans from entering the U.S. legally so that they could negotiate higher wages for American citizens. Though their lobbying proved fruitful in drastically limiting Southern and Eastern immigration, they fell short of shutting down the southern border. Lacking curtailment of any kind against immigration, and opting not to try to organize workers, the fields remained a glaring shortfall throughout the war years.

The IWW and Cotton Pickers in the Valley

The shunning by mainstream unionism in the US, left only one union, the International Workers of the World (IWW) interested in organizing workers in the Salt River Valley. By 1917, the IWW had reached their zenith nationally, organizing over 1,000,000 workers in the US. Their racial openness and unique fondness for unskilled workers made them the only union not to shudder, or even debate the need to organize Mexican immigrants. Unfortunately, they also held

³⁵⁰ Eric V. Meeks, *Border Citizens: The Making of Indians, Mexicans and Anglos in Arizona* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2007) 43.

³⁵¹ Pendleton, 116.

the reputation for being violent, revolution seeking communists aimed at the overthrow of the capitalist system. These qualities came in stark contrast with the Salt River Valley entrepreneurial agrarian mindset, and made them easy targets.³⁵²

The IWW became famous, or infamous, for their role in mine strikes of Arizona that ultimately led to widespread deportation. However, as Governor Thomas Campbell put it in his notes, “Strange as it may occur to those of today the first IWW strike in Arizona pulled was not in the Copper camps but against the Goodyear Company, then spending millions of dollars reclaiming thousands of acres of desert land in Maricopa County in order to produce famous long stable.” Though the IWW had strong mining ties, they viewed the massive standing labor force, essential to wartime cotton demands, as a wonderful opportunity.³⁵³

The IWW did lead one particularly noteworthy strike in 1917. IWW organizer Grover H. Perry arranged for 600 workers at the Shattuck and Mimmo Company south of Chandler to walk off the fields one day in early February. Despite the ideologies behind the union, their demands generally revolved around a very reasonable central component: wages. The workers asked for an increase from \$2.50 to \$3.00 a day, and better food and sleeping accommodations. As

³⁵² Dubofsky, Melvyn. *We Shall Be All: A History of The Industrial Workers of The World*, 2nd ed., Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988.

³⁵³ Thomas E. Campbell, “The IWW in Arizona: True Copy of the Notes of Honorable Thomas E. Campbell written between 34 and 39,” CM Small Manuscripts, Hayden Arizona Collection, CM MSM-141.

Perry put it to the Chandler newspaper, “Why should not these men receive as much of the benefits as your merchants, the bankers, the businessmen who are here doing the pioneering work and who will profit as a result of this development.”³⁵⁴

Governor Campbell wrote an extensive memoir of his accounts with the IWW, and recalled his introduction to the IWW vividly. The radical new union “quietly” set up their headquarters in Phoenix. After organizing an apparently sizable number of workers on their large operation, they prepared for a “closed shop” strike, meaning they demanded that only members of the IWW be allowed employment. At 12:30 one day in early February, over 600 workers walked off the field. According to the governor, their demands were far more extensive than those listed in papers at the time. Campbell claims that they demanded higher wages, an eight hour day, the “check off system” collecting membership, the elimination of the company store, the commissary and employee debits removed from the company payroll.³⁵⁵

Of course, Shattuck and Mimmo refused, and the picketers walked off the following day, blocking the roads to the farming operation. Fortunately for the

³⁵⁴ “Work on Cotton Lands is Tied Up by Strike: IWW Causes Peaceable Walkout ,” *Chandler Arizonan*, Feb 16, 1917; “Board of 17 Will Handle Cotton Labor,” *Chandler Arizonian*, July 15, 1917.

³⁵⁵ Thomas E. Campbell, “The IWW in Arizona: True Copy of the Notes of Honorable Thomas E. Campbell written between 34 and 39,” CM Small Manuscripts, Hayden Arizona Collection CM MSM-141, copied from files of the Arizona Historical Society, c.1917.

company, the law was on their side. Allegedly unable to operate, the company appealed to sheriff's office and asked for the protection of those workers willing to work. The sheriff, "an old time cowman," assured them that "the workers would be protected." The *Chandler Arizonan* added that deputies came to control the strike without pay, and successfully cleared the roads of the picketers.³⁵⁶

Grover H. Perry, a Chicago lawyer turned IWW organizer, appealed to meet with Campbell to argue for the legal right to peacefully picket. The governor, who had never heard of nor encountered the IWW before, consented to the meeting. He was in for quite a surprise. Campbell assumed that only Perry would be at the meeting, but he instead brought six others as well. Perry argued that all members of the "Grievance Committee" needed to be present, which Campbell found to be true for all subsequent meetings. The Governor also found interesting "the nationalist composition of the Committee which consisted of Perry, a Jew, Robert Culver an "American Virginian," as well as an Irishman, Mexican, Spanish, Austrian and Italian."³⁵⁷

The meeting began pleasantly enough. Perry extended his gratitude for the meeting, "being the first time that any IWW grievance committee had been

³⁵⁶ "Work on Cotton Lands is Tied Up by Strike." *Chandler Arizonan*, Feb 16, 1917.

³⁵⁷ Thomas E. Campbell, "The IWW in Arizona: True Copy of the Notes of Honorable Thomas E. Campbell written between 34 and 39," CM Small Manuscripts, Hayden Arizona Collection CM MSM-141, copied from files of the Arizona Historical Society, c.1917, 6-7.

received by the chief executive of any state. After the introductions, “Perry, in “lawyer like” fashion, presented the cause of action. Shortly thereafter, Campbell apparently realized that this would be an exceptional meeting and called a stenographer to create a verbatim report of the conference. True to form, the IWW representatives wasted no time stating their idealistic mission. They aimed to stop war production by any means necessary and to overthrow the capitalist entrenchment in the U.S. Campbell also claims that they “happily admitted they used all measures at their command to keep workers from returning to their jobs.” As Campbell recalls, “they were so eager to discuss the ideology of the IWW, they had lost sight of their purpose for being there.” The meeting lasted over two hours and “was more than a liberal education for Campbell, on the plans purposes ... of the organization.”³⁵⁸

At the conclusion of the meeting, Perry pressed for the Governor for a decision. Campbell responded claims he responded immediately, “I cannot subscribe to the aims and purposes of your organization and will while Governor of Arizona, do all in my power to thwart your efforts to confiscate and destroy property of any kinds in state of Arizona. I consider yours an outlaw labor organization and will act accordingly.”

Without any control of the worksite, or legal support for the strike, the IWW abandoned the cause, and agricultural organizing in the Salt River Valley,

³⁵⁸ Ibid, 7, 8.

opting instead to focus on the copper industry. Later, Perry and 113 others were tried and convicted in Chicago. Campbell's transcript of this testimony became damaging evidence against the defense. Culver, Perry's chairman, turned out to be a Federal Secret Service operative. Governor Campbell beamed with pride over his participation in the decision.³⁵⁹

Local papers too found garnering community sentiment against the openly socialist union fairly simple. "The sentiment among the men is that they desire to work but that many of them say they were forced to strike owing to threats of violence by the IWW," a Chandler paper stated in a later strike.³⁶⁰ Ultimately, with the help of the police, the Governor, and community sentiment, grower resolve held strong. Workers went back with no concessions by owners after only a few days. Shattuck and Mimmo held to their prices which were preset by the Goodyear Corporation that contracted their cotton.

The IWW kept a presence in the valley for the remainder of the year. The cotton industry, predictably, made removing the radical "wobblies" its main objective. In one instance, they spread rumors about the socialist union that organized the strike. Disparaging their efforts as communist and violent was all too easy given the union's reputation. W.H. Knox rallied cotton growers against the union by appealing to their basic instincts to protect their family. He reported

³⁵⁹ Ibid, 9.

³⁶⁰ "IWW Says Cannot Pick Cotton Crop," *Chandler Arizonian*, " Aug 3, 1917.

that the IWW had made threats that the cotton crop of the Salt River Valley would not be picked. However, he added the threat of impending violence to his speech:

. . . a prominent cotton worker received a threatening letter warning him that if he did not take a less active interest in trying to import labor in the valley, he would be treated like the Keats family in Illinois, where the baby was kidnapped and the body found later in an abandoned well We are living here in peace and harmony and I believe it is time for all law abiding citizens to organize for mutual protection. When a man's wife and children are threatened the period has arrived to afford them the best protection we have at our hand. This cotton crop must be picked and we intend that it shall be picked.³⁶¹

While there is no way for certain to say whether Knox was elaborating to heighten fears, his reaction falls into a pattern repeated across the country. The “Red Scare” that came with World War I incited fear across the country. Newspapers across the country reported that the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia might be repeated anywhere, even in the U.S. Business leaders exploited these fears. Although the IWW was not affiliated with the Russian communists or, for that matter, with the American Socialist Party, it made no secret of its socialist ideals. Even Hudson seemed fearful of communism, especially outside of Arizona. In a letter to a colleague in New York, he stated:

I am glad you think that we Arizonan's may have sufficient constitution to stand the hot winds of the “Bolsheviki” and when the test comes I certainly hope that we will not disappoint you. However, it does seem to me that this is the greatest menace to civilization and it must, sooner or later, be met in the most

³⁶¹ Ibid.

practical firm manner. Although I am much afraid of the “Bolsheviki” yet I am not inclined to compromise on this point.³⁶²

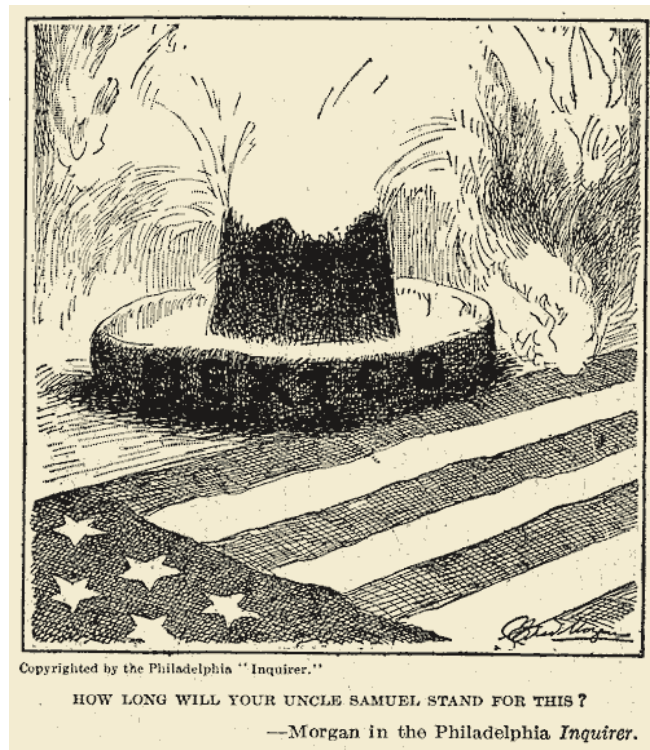


Figure 20 – Cartoon: At the Red Scare's height, an exploding sombrero took aim at socialist popularity in Mexico

The bravado of the cotton men was hardly necessary. Hudson and the cotton growers compromised nothing. All strikes were quelled very quickly, and workers made few, if any, gains. As the national red scare hysteria escalated throughout the war years, the IWW saw its membership and effectiveness fade. It never again reached the same level of popularity, in the Salt River, or the U.S.

³⁶² “Letter to Mr. Theo Wood, R.J. Caldwell Co., New York,” March 16, 1919, Box 2, Folder 12, Hudson Cotton Company Collection, 1908-1920, FM MS 120, Arizona Historical Foundation, Hayden Library, Room 412, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.

The Arizona State Federation of Labor takes to the Fields

By 1920, the ASFL remained ineffective at barring Mexican immigrants from working in the fields. With the numbers of workers recruited from Mexico now topping 30,000, they were forced to reconsider their stance on organizing farm labor. By late Spring, Lester Doane, a former union organizer in Mexican mines, set out for the fields. After six weeks he claimed to have organized 7,000 men that would be ready to strike at a moment's notice. Doane's ASFL was a much more moderate labor union than their radical predecessors in the fields. Doane appealed to the owners' line of capitalist reason, asking only for a living wage and decent living conditions for these workers. If the growers did not voluntary do this, the ACGA would call a strike.³⁶³

Despite the far more moderate demands of the ASFL, the reaction differed only in degrees. Knox was still a master of creating drama and fear in his fellow growers. He asserted that the American Federation of Labor had secured 7000 members in the valley, and would demand a minimum wage of \$4 per day for cotton field hands, "Unless strike propaganda could be overcome, or sufficient Mexicans imported, a heavy loss might be entailed," he warned growers.³⁶⁴ At this point, Knox claimed that they still needed 20,000 additional workers in the fields, and losing workers already here would be devastating.

³⁶³ Petersen, 32.

³⁶⁴ "Says Cotton Pickers Have Formed Union: To Demand More Pay," *Arizona Republican*, Aug 8, 1920, 7.

Sensing a growing tide of union activity, Knox and the ACGA had already begun preparation for encounters with the ASFL. In a March meeting earlier that year, Knox and the cotton growers unanimously decided for an “open shop” program. In the meeting Knox underscored the need for unity.

There are no greater movements in their importance in the country than the cooperative movements to the farmer...Since 1917 the labor unions have succeeded passing laws enacting a head tax and literacy test ... the only way we got by it again this year is your representatives stood for the desires and necessities of thousands of us, all working together.³⁶⁵

“Working together” in this case, meant allying their extensive network in the Valley against the unions. Newspapers generally supported the growers’ position and could directly sway community sentiment. One article covering the growing unionism began by saying “The ACGA, the organization that raised over 20 million in the Valley last year.” During the Shattuck and Mimmo Strike earlier, the *Arizona Republican* headlined that “Conference on Cotton Strike Takes up Time”, apparently upset that the governor, and the president of Goodyear Tire Company had to waste time discussing the issue. In this environment of communist hysteria and biased newspapers, the ASFL lost any hope at community support.³⁶⁶

³⁶⁵ “‘Open Shop’ is Voted Approval of Cotton Men: Meeting Adopts Resolution -- Speaker Tells of Labor Problem in Cotton Growing -- Other Addresses Deal with other problems.” *Arizona Republican*, Mar 14, 1920, 8.

³⁶⁶ “Conference on Cotton Strike Takes Up Time,” *Arizona Republican*, Feb 20, 1917, 9.

Perhaps even more damaging, the growers had the backing of the local police force. Mexican workers stood in a particularly vulnerable position in that they didn't speak the language, weren't American citizens, and generally lived outside the view of white society. Growers capitalized on these advantages to their fullest. According to the ASFL, and other observers like Thomas Bell, the ACGA commonly arrested and deported Mexican labor organizers under trumped up charges.³⁶⁷ The *Arizona Labor Journal* cited a case where seven Mexican workers were picked up and hauled to Tempe for deportation by the ACGA. Though the police assured the irate ASFL members that the ACGA men were not deputized, they did nothing stop them,³⁶⁸

The starkest case of utilizing police can be seen in the case of Rodolfo Sanchez. Sanchez was President of local Federal Union 1753, affiliated with Lester Doane, who had been working with Sanchez to solicit workers for the union. Sanchez was also a Mexican citizen, which growers effectively used to their advantage. In an *Arizona Republican* article, Sanchez claims to have been educated with high ranking Mexican officials and to have held high government posts.³⁶⁹ Sanchez and fellow organizer Eduardo Flores apparently advised de la Huerta that of the substandard living conditions and overall poor treatment in a meeting in Mexico City. De la Huerta responded by ordering that emigration be

³⁶⁸ “Bell, Thomas H. – Norteamericano”; Petersen, 46; Meeks, 45-46.

³⁶⁹ “Sanchez, Mexican Labor Organizer, Held by U.S. Here,” *Arizona Republican*, Nov 14, 1920, 7.

stopped until they could set up a protective station in Nogales. Later, five *enganchistas* were arrested that year for violating Mexican labor laws.³⁷⁰

Upon his return back to the U.S, Sanchez was arrested at a “Mexican dance.” Government officials admitted they had been watching at the border for Sanchez to return before they finally arrested him on bonds under charges of “being an illegal alien, an undesirable citizen, and an army deserter.”³⁷¹ When the *Arizona Republican* pressed the Department of Justice for an answer, the Republican wrote “he was an undesirable alien because he is classed by Department of Justice as being a radical.” But when officials of the Department of Justice asked about his radical activities he refused to answer except to say “He was a deserter because he was in Mexico at the time when he was drafted in Calexico.”³⁷² Rancher Thomas Bell, perceptively pointed out that one could not be an alien and a deserter of the Army at the same time in his letter to the Mexican Foreign Ministry.³⁷³ Despite numerous attempts to get Sanchez out of jail, the authorities held him, coincidentally, through the end of the picking season.

The case of Rodolfo Sanchez provides a noteworthy example of the difficulties Mexican Americans encountered in organizing. Organizers like Sanchez held few rights in the U.S. Contrastingly, the powerful cotton growers

³⁷⁰ Petersen, 47.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷³ “Bell, Thomas H. – Norteamericano.”

had solid connections and support from local newspapers and police. The police, apparently sympathetic to the growers cause, had a far easier time offering fake charges against a Mexican citizen than an American.

Whether the growers truly believed that unionization was a communist threat, or whether this was merely an excuse for repression - it worked. At no time did growers ever face any realistic threat of a strike sizable enough to cause any sort of labor shortage. As Waldo Christy put it in 1920, "The labor problem is a different one in the Salt River Valley and formerly gave the growers much anxiety," adding later that "the ACGA has solved this problem."³⁷⁴

E.W. Hudson best summed up the resolve of the cotton collectives when workers demanded 3 cents a pound in 1916. As Hudson mused "Certain elements in the Valley [are] refusing to pick cotton for less than 3 cents per pound. This occurs annually, and when people test the organized farmers along this line there is never any further development. ... [T]he effect on our cotton growers is rather to our advantage, since it seems to draw them closer together"³⁷⁵ This ability of growers to coalesce during times of emergency further demonstrates their impressive organization.

³⁷⁴ Christy, 34.

³⁷⁵ "Letter to W.T. Swingle," August 17, 1916, Box 2, Folder 8, Hudson Cotton Company Collection, 1908-1920, FM MS 120, Arizona Historical Foundation, Hayden Library, Room 412, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.

The unions may not have failed completely, however. By 1920, the ACGA promised to raise rates for pickers to 4¢ per pound – a tremendous achievement from the famously tight-fisted association. As they agreed, the ACGA did so with a statement that they were raising these wages at the behest of the Mexican Consul, and not the agitation of the labor unions. The fact that the unions warranted mention during this agreement only underscores their efforts in swaying the ACGA. Moreover, unions accomplished a more subtle victory in bringing attention to the deplorable conditions of these workers. In 1920, Knox warned cotton growers to fix up their camps so that they would be outside the reach of criticism. A review of many of his talks yielded no mention of camp conditions prior the ASFL organizing campaign. The unions never retreated in the face of this repression either. It would take a disastrous market turn to completely eradicate unionization in the fields.³⁷⁶

The ASFL undoubtedly overestimated the possibility that a native labor force could fit the Southwest. This era, in which the Southwest became an economic empire, saw a great increase in living standards for the American working class brought about by the use of more efficient machines in many industries. This was not the case for agriculture, particularly fruit, cotton and sugar beets. Thus, as Carey McWilliams put it, “the use of Mexican labor fitted

³⁷⁶ "Growers Agree to Pay 4 Cts. to Cotton Pickers," *Arizona Republican*, Aug 26, 1920; Pickers Get Big Raise in Pay, *Chandler Arizonan*, August 27, 1920.

into the economic cogs of the Southwest in perfect fashion.” McWilliams doubted that during these times of rapidly improved working conditions, the heat of the Southwest could have drawn a large portion of the native workforce. As he put it, “under these circumstances the use of Mexican labor was largely non-competitive and nearly indispensable.”³⁷⁷

Every Party Must Come to an End.

By all accounts, 1921 was going to be another record breaking year for Arizona cotton growers. Even Waldo Christy, a scholar researching and publishing at the cusp of the boom failed to foresee a collapse. In his paper, published in 1920, he cited ten reasons the cotton industry would continue to thrive. Among his top points was that all research indicated cotton’s continued growth and greater profits. Growers echoed this sentiment. Local experts thought prices would hit \$1.50 per pound that harvest. Given these predictions, valley farmers continued to increase acreage at a near exponential pace. According to Knox, long staple acreage in the valley now totaled 230,000 acres estimated at \$50 million.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁷ McWilliams, 178.

³⁷⁸ “Says Cotton Pickers Have Formed Union: To Demand More Pay,” *Arizona Republican*, Aug 8, 1920, 7.

Despite these promises of even greater wealth, some had been heeding the warning signs. Knox himself noted in 1919 that a downturn would eventually hit. However, he did qualify this, stating “I do expect the drop to be gradual. For this reason I do want to urge all cotton growers to be careful operating your farms.” Unfortunately his recommendation for taking caution was not to save money or diversify crops, but rather, not to “waste your resources and don’t be extravagant paying fancy prices for labor.”³⁷⁹

While few cautioned against the profitable switch to cotton, observers began to feel some of the pains of nearing monoculture. Since the valley was founded, it had always produced enough to feed its own residents, as well as market a significant supply of food to local mining centers. When tracks reached through Phoenix, acreage expanded to meet demands of more distant markets. Now armed with more acreage, water, labor, and near nationwide markets, the Salt River Valley found itself in the ironic status of being shorted on food. In 1919, representatives of all industries met to discuss halting the decline of the dairy industry caused by increasing cotton acreage. The State Dairy Commissioner reported that production of milk and butter that season would not meet local demand.³⁸⁰ A year later, the Chamber of Commerce warned that

³⁷⁹ "Valley Cotton Crop Status 96 Per Cent is Official Report," *Chandler Arizonan*, Aug 6, 1918, 7; "Cotton Labor Situation in the Salt River Valley and Problems Confronted," *Arizona Republican*, Feb 20, 1919.

³⁸⁰ "Dairy Industry Faces Ruin by Bad Farm Policy," *Arizona Republican*, Oct 04, 1919, 7.

vegetables and small fruits in valley would decrease by 40% from 1919, which was already down from the year prior. Seed sales for that year had declined 30% in total, excluding cotton. To remedy this shortage, they urged the need to return to the large War Gardens, which had already dropped off precipitously from the prior year.³⁸¹

Cotton in Arizona, 1912 – 1922

Year	Acreage	Price/lb	Picking/lb (cents)
1912	350	\$0.23	2¢
1913	1,000	\$0.21	2¢
1914	2,000	\$0.15	2¢
1915	3,000	\$0.21	2¢
1916	7,300	\$0.28	2¢
1917	33,000	\$0.60	2.5¢
1918	72,000	\$0.70	2.5¢
1919	85,000	\$0.90	3¢
1920	186,000	\$1.35	3.5¢
1921	230,000	\$0.17	2¢
1922	78,000	\$0.35	2¢

Figure 21 -- Cotton in Arizona, 1912-1922 – Acreage, price, pickers

Unfortunately for cotton growers, the drop was anything but gradual. The end of World War I and changing manufacturing techniques for tires caused the bottom to drop out of the ELS cotton market.³⁸² Well before the 1921 harvest was complete, the price of long staple cotton dropped to as low as 17 cents per

³⁸¹ “Truck Gardens Too Few Here to Supply Demand,” *Arizona Republican (1890-1922)*; Mar 20, 1920, 5.

³⁸² Hispanic Historical Property Survey, 102.

pound.³⁸³ While the 1920 season produced 29 million pounds of cotton valued at \$20.3 million,³⁸⁴ during the crash of the 1921 season, 52.6 million pounds was valued at 17.4 million dollars. Many growers simply walked away from their fields, leaving the unpicked cotton to rot on them. Promises from the ACGA to an investigative committee that they increase the wages from three cents to four cents never did materialize. Those pickers who managed to stay employed had to settle for only two cents a pound. The valiant efforts to give workers adequate wages for their work ended with the cotton bust. As *Sunset Magazine's* top writer Walker Woehlke put it, cotton was "the plant that led the Salt River Valley up the easy grade to the very top then kicked it over the edge on the steep side."³⁸⁵

With cotton prices suddenly decimated, a new dilemma had arisen. Mexican pickers had been recruited in record numbers - nearly 35,000 according to some sources. With the sudden crash of the market and lack of jobs, workers needed to get back to Mexico. The ACGA placed responsibility upon individual farmers to send their workers back after the harvest through withheld wages. The

³⁸³ "May Cut Price of Cotton Picking to 3 Cts. Pound: Three Hundred Growers Meet to Discuss Present Demoralization in Industry and to Seek Remedy," *Arizona Republican*, Nov 21, 1920, 12.; VanderMeer, *Desert Visions*, 32.

³⁸⁴ "Record price of \$1.10 a Pound is Paid for Cotton," *Arizona Republican*, Apr 09, 1920, 8; "High price of \$1.25 a Pound Paid on Cotton," *Arizona Republican*, Apr 20, 1920, 2.

³⁸⁵ Walter V. Woehlke, "What Cotton Did For Arizona." *Sunset Magazine*, July 1921, Vol. 47:1. 22. Note: Woehlke later became managing editor of *Sunset*.)

suddenly unprofitable cotton industry still had thousands of Mexican workers without employment or money to return to Mexico. The Mexican Consulate in Phoenix estimated that as many as 15,000 to 20,000 migrant workers were stranded in the valley with no pay and no way to get home.³⁸⁶ Vociferous appeals by the ASFL and the Mexican Consulate asking the ACGA to react went unheeded. The association argued that responsibility for returning these workers to Mexico rested upon the growers. Officials of the Mexican Consulate in Phoenix found migrant workers and their families living in terrible conditions. Large numbers of Mexican laborers and their families were literally starving and suffering from exposure in fields around the valley.³⁸⁷ Farmers claimed that the workers had not withheld their wages, and that they had now gone bankrupt.

The Mexican Government and its Emigrants in the U.S.

With workers stranded in Phoenix, lacking work or a way home, the post-Revolutionary Mexican government now had an opportunity to assist the expatriates. Mexican emigration to the U.S. had always been a sore subject. Though they recognized the benefits of remittances and jobs, the increasingly high emigration rates for low end jobs in the U.S. remained a source of embarrassment. One study indicates that Mexicans sent home a yearly average of

³⁸⁶ Hispanic Historical Property Survey, 103; “Informes Politico-Economico del Consulado de Mexico en Phoenix, Arizona. Redondidos por dicho Consulado durante el citado ano,” Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, Archivo General, Ano de 1921, Expediente III/510/(199-256)/921-1, Mexico City.

³⁸⁷ “Plan to Send Cotton Pickers Back to Mexico: Mexican Consuls and Local Committee Meet with Governor to Seek Action in Situation,” *Arizona Republican*, Feb 6, 1921, A12.

\$10,173,719 between 1917 and 1920.³⁸⁸ By the beginning of the twentieth century, measures were put in order to restrict the flow of immigrants. By 1906, however, rising social unrest rendered the Mexican government ineffective at restricting emigration. Though the government could not feed its own people and land issues were exacerbated by laws which dislodged small farmers, they nonetheless worried about a population loss, according to Lawrence Cardoso.³⁸⁹ By the end of the Revolution, anti-emigration sentiment was strong. Throughout the early twentieth century, the Mexican government had done what it could to put preventative measures in place. Any widespread diasporas from Mexico to its northern neighbor would be “an open admission to the world that Mexico reborn could not yet take care her own people.”³⁹⁰

The first President following the Revolution, Francisco Madero tried to implement a mandatory remittance tax on workers abroad. However, requiring workers to pay money to return to their homeland proved foolhardy. Recognizing their limitations, the Madero regime adopted a two part strategy: advising potential immigrants of the pitfalls of emigration and protecting the ones who had already left. Mexican Consulates sprang up across the Southwestern cities where

³⁸⁸ Lawrence A. Cardoso, *Mexican Immigration to the United States, 1897-1931*, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980), 52.

³⁸⁹ Cardoso, 55.

³⁹⁰ Cardoso, 19.

sizable Mexican populations existed. Attempts by Madero, and later by Obregon, lacked the funding and the cooperation from the U.S. to draw any sort of success.

The impetus behind the government's emigration restriction came from Mexico's middle class. The majority of literate Mexicans were heavily opposed to immigration. Moreover, the Revolution brought on a heightened sense of nationalism among the Mexican intellegensia. To them, fleeing Mexicans were traitors to their country. Literature written during the time period portrayed emigrants as *pochos*, or Americanized Mexicans. The elite believed these men and women would lose their culture to American ways. By the time Venustiano Carranza came to office in 1917, action needed to be taken to appease public opposition. Despite his public disapproval, he apparently realized the benefits. Carranza, for example, privately told an official that he was only too happy to see underfed Mexicans seek work in the U.S. Administrators knew that Mexico was in a tumultuous state, both economically and socially. The availability of the American job market so close served as a safety valve for potentially dangerous rebels. Mexican anthropologist Manuel Gamio even argued that emigrants came back to Mexico with some "American" characteristics that benefitted Mexican culture and society.³⁹¹ According to him, men often learned how to dress better,

³⁹¹ Manuel Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States; A Study of Human Migration and Adjustment*, reprint of the 1930 ed. (New York, Arno Press, 1969).

eat properly and employ new farming techniques.³⁹² Interestingly, Gamio's argument predates a similar argument by Mark Wyman, who asserted that remigrants from the classic wave benefitted their home country with their strict attitudes toward work, housing standards, etc.³⁹³

Unable to keep its workers within its own borders, the Mexican government could at least try to make them safe within their new country. The Mexican Consuls began to keep tabs on Mexican workers in the U.S. However, with the chaos of the Revolution, the Mexican government was not in a position to stop the abuse of its wayward citizens. In 1920-21, with the peak of the Revolutionary turmoil subsiding, and a more stable government settling into power in Mexico City, the government was in a better position for action. They received hundreds of letters across the Southwest complaining of joblessness, hunger and conditions far worse than they had ever encountered in Mexico. Telegrams back to the Mexican capitol from Phoenix spoke of "200 families stuck, without food, shelter or jobs."³⁹⁴ These men and women looked to their

³⁹² George C Kiser and Marta Woody, eds., *Mexican Workers in the United State: Historical and Political perspectives*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979), 19.

³⁹³ Mark Wyman, *Round Trip to America: The Immigrants' Return to Europe, 1880-1930*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993).

³⁹⁴ "Informes Politico-Economico del Consulado de Mexico en Phoenix, Arizona. Redondidos por dicho Consulado durante el citado ano," Secretaria de

government for help. Perhaps the Mexican government felt a twinge of pride at the irony that they could now save their citizens from destitution in the U.S.

Mexican President Alvaro Obregon reacted quickly upon receiving letters of the situation, ordering Consul Eduardo Ruiz of Los Angeles to Phoenix immediately.³⁹⁵ Upon reaching Phoenix, Ruiz and local consuls visited the labor camps. He reported back to President Obregon, describing the horrible conditions and the “indifference” which Mexicans encountered in Phoenix.³⁹⁶ To Ruiz, the main culprits in the ACGA were Rafael Estrada, *enganchista*, and A.J. Milliken, Treasurer of the ACGA. Ruiz called the sandy-haired Estrada *Guero Christo*, a “blonde Christ” who “embodied a cacique.”³⁹⁷ He went on to call him “a renegade Mexican who is in charge of choosing who shall be repatriated, preferring those who have paid money, and collected valuables to allow them to board the train.” Reports from those who knew Estrada also claimed he would take money and possessions from workers before they were sent home.³⁹⁸

Relaciones Exteriores, Archivo General, Año de 1921, Expediente III/510/(199-256)/921-1, Mexico City.

³⁹⁵ “What to do with Cotton Pickers is Growing Problem,” *Arizona Republican*, Feb 04, 1921, A7.

³⁹⁶ “Informes Politico-Economico del Consulado de Mexico en Phoenix, Arizona. Redondidos por dicho Consulado durante el citado ano,” Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, Archivo General, Año de 1921, Expediente III/510/(199-256)/921-1, Mexico City.

³⁹⁷ Pendleton, 63. Note: A cacique is a local political boss who exercises excessive power.

³⁹⁸ Petersen, 62.

Ed Ruiz, Gonsalvo Cordova of the Consulate and Greg Garcia, a local Phoenix attorney, met with Governor Campbell and the ACGA to rectify the situation. Negotiations went poorly at first. In a letter to the President, Ruiz noted that Knox was trying his best not to reach a deal since the vague wording of the contract protected them from having to pay anything. The ACGA claimed that “The charges made by representatives of the Mexican government to the effect that thousands of cotton pickers were destitute because they had received worthless checks is strenuously denied by local growers.”³⁹⁹ The main disagreement centered over giving the head of each family \$15, based on withheld wages. Unfortunately, claimed the ACGA, many of the growers failed to withhold wages.

The Mexican Labor Association.

The Mexican officials could do little but threaten to withhold Mexican emigration to the U.S. After several meetings the ACGA, they finally agreed to take responsibility for repatriating the workers on February 8. In a February 1921 letter to Governor Thomas E. Campbell, the Mexican Consul in Phoenix reported that the ACGA had promised to pay for the repatriation of Mexican workers, as well as full payment of all moneys owed to them.⁴⁰⁰ The letter took a grateful

³⁹⁹ “Knox Roasts Farm Bureau for Criticism,” *Chandler Arizonian*, Feb 11, 1921.

tone, lauding the munificence of the ACGA in response. The letter further chastised the Mexican Labor Association (MLA) as the real culprits of the embarrassing fiasco. The MLA appears to have been a labor brokerage that began operating that year for the first time. According to Herbert Petersen, the MLA had erroneously promised Mexican recruits far more than 6 months. Despite their promises, they brought in pickers in far greater numbers than they could possibly use during low points in the season when very little labor was needed. Moreover, they allegedly took bribes from the workers about \$7 which they were contractually not able to accomplish.⁴⁰¹

The Consulate did win \$437.50 in suit against the MLA, showing that some legal justification for their claims existed.⁴⁰² In a letter to President Obregon, Attorney Gregg Garcia claimed that the Mexican government would have won around \$1500 more had he received the proper paperwork from a bureaucrat within the Consul. The money they did win, he noted, “belonged to the cotton workers.” However, “being that the cotton workers had left, it is

⁴⁰⁰ “Problem of Cotton Pickers Solved by Action of Growers,” *Arizona Republican*, Feb 10, 1921, 10. Note: The *Republican* differed on the figures, saying only 7,000 or 8,000 migrants were stranded.

⁴⁰¹ Herbert B. Petersen, *A Twentieth Century Journey to Cibola: The Tragedy of the Bracero in Maricopa County, Arizona, 1917-1921*, (Masters Thesis, Arizona State University, 1975), 63.

⁴⁰² “Informes Politico-Economico del Consulado de Mexico en Phoenix, Arizona. Redondidos por dicho Consulado durante el citado ano,” Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, Archivo General, Ano de 1921, Expediente III/510/(199-256)/921-1, Mexico City.

perfectly fair that this money go to the government, since they had incurred large expenditures for the repatriation of Mexican nationals.”⁴⁰³

Though Cordova, Garcia and Ruiz claimed that the MLA was “almost entirely responsible for the existing situation,” there remained plenty of reasons to believe that the MLA was probably the easiest scapegoat for the ACGA to blame. No party suggested that the MLA was responsible for repatriating destitute workers. Ultimately, the Consuls note that even the ACGA “was not legally bound to do this.”

The resolution called for an “unbiased” participant to work with the ACGA in repatriating the workers. The *Arizona Republican* announced that President Obregon had offered Adolfo T. Pecina this position, earlier a key player in Pedro de la Lama’s *La Liga Protectora Latino* (Latin American Protective League), and identified as “Supreme President” of that organization in the article.⁴⁰⁴ (He had been elected to that position in the LPL’s Tucson convention in September, 1920, with Pedro de la Lama as Secretary.⁴⁰⁵ In the article, Pecina

⁴⁰³ “Law Office of Greg Garcia, Phoenix, Arizona to Sr. Manuel Esperza, Consulado de Mexico en Phoenix, 21 Nov 1921,” Informes Politico-Economico del Consulado de Mexico en Phoenix, Arizona. Redondidos por dicho Consulado durante el citado ano, Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, Archivo General, Ano de 1921, Expediente III/510/(199-256)/921-4, Mexico City.

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⁴⁰⁴ “Adolfo Pecina to Represent Mexico,” *Arizona Republican*, Feb 19, 1921, 3.

⁴⁰⁵ “Protective League Chief is Visitor,” *Arizona Republican*, Sep 26, 1920, A6.

waxed eloquent about the bridging the gap between the “two great republics and making his position a real asset to the city of Phoenix.”

Pecina set up an office at the ACGA headquarters to make certain all those due repatriation to the border received it. Pecina wrote a letter to the Mexican President, praising the ACGA for sending back to Mexico all those who desired to leave. President Obregon sent letters to both Pecina and Governor Campbell thanking them for their help.⁴⁰⁶ The effectiveness of this campaign still remains contested.⁴⁰⁷ Even after the ACGA sought out refugees to repatriate, letters continued to pour in from the Salt River Valley to Mexican authorities through July. Some of these letters complained about 200 families, broke and hungry, in need of repatriation. Others came from individuals such as a young man who wrote of wanting to return back to his “young wife.”⁴⁰⁸ A June newspaper article mentioned that “2100 people in the city are suffering from hunger. Most of them are Mexican workers. Associated charities pass out free food daily but supply is inadequate.”⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁶ Petersen, 62.

⁴⁰⁷ “General Exodus of Mexicans to Native Country Predicted,” *Arizona Republican*, Apr 28, 1921, A8; Christianna Gilchrist, “How Unemployed Mexican Problem was Solved here.” *Arizona Republican*, Sep 04, 1921.

⁴⁰⁸ Informes Politico-Economico del Consulado de Mexico en Phoenix, Arizona. Redondidos por dicho Consulado durante el citado ano, Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, Archivo General, Ano de 1921, Expediente III/510/(199-256)/921-1, Mexico City.

⁴⁰⁹ “Relief of Alien Cotton Pickers Not Left to Charity.” *Arizona Republican*, Jun 28, 1921.

Despite his thanks to those who participated, Obregon continued to authorize funds to be released to continue the repatriation, long after the ACGA agreed to take responsibility. Scholars who have looked at the subject have continually seen the ACGA as deliberately ignoring its agreement. Assigning blame directly to the ACGA is difficult though. The ACGA undoubtedly participated to some degree. In 1926, Manager E.J. Walker claimed, the ACGA had paid \$111,600.86 to repatriate 33,460 workers.⁴¹⁰ Though biased in the matter, *Arizona Republican* articles defended the ACGA, stating that they had done all in their power to get workers back to Mexico.⁴¹¹ The truth of the matter was probably more nuanced. Perhaps some workers didn't become unemployed until summer.

The Mexican Middle Class and Latin American Civil Rights.

Even after the expanding Southwestern economy paradoxically pushed Mexicans further from economic mobility, not all Mexicans were laborers. Phoenix held a smaller subset population of highly literate, well-educated and ambitious Mexican nationals. These Mexican “elites” walked a precarious divide

⁴¹⁰ Pendleton, 112.

⁴¹¹ “Mesa Mexicans to be sent to border.” *Arizona Republican* May 14, 1921. 9; “Problem of cotton pickers solved by actions of the growers” Ed Ruiz and Gonzalvo Cordova and Greg Garcia. *Arizona Republican*. February 10, 1921

in the U.S., which extended from class divisions within their native country.⁴¹² Mexico and the rest of Latin America held their own racial hierarchy which paralleled that of the U.S., in that the lighter skinned, European stock generally held higher economic and social positions. However, the Mexican caste system came from the Spanish Colonial era, and generally held more explicit and rigid boundaries. Under this caste system, those of predominantly European descent held higher status than *Mestizos*, and *Mestizos* held a higher status than the indigenous.⁴¹³

Racial dynamics had started to change in Mexico by the onset of the 20th century, however. As Mexicans wrestled with their own unique perspective of nationalism, the need to emerge past the colonial caste system became clear. Previous generations had approached Latin American heterogeneity with a bit of embarrassment. The Mexican Revolution came with new concepts that embraced *mestizaje*, and *indigenismo*. Rather than try to occlude their indigenous heritage and relegate Indians to a subordinate status, they embraced these roots and

⁴¹² The terms “elites” and “middle class” are used synonymously here. The term elite relates to their status in the caste system and in relation to the cotton workers. The term middle class pertains more toward their actual class status within the U.S.

⁴¹³ Tomas Almaguer demonstrated in his book *Racial Faultlines*, that *Chicanos* were not the lowest ranking ethnicity as perceived by Anglo society. Almaguer argues that Mexicans were actually more acceptable to Anglos in 19th century California than blacks, Indians and Asians. However, other white European migrants from Southern and Eastern Europe held a higher racial status than Mexicans.

romanticized the past. Middle class intellectuals like Jose Vasconcelos and artists such as Jose Clemente Orozco extolled the beauties, purity and contributions of indigenous society. Regardless, this new philosophy didn't result in a truly open society. Despite the new enlightened rhetoric, Mexicans of European descent still guarded their privilege, and held to views of racial superiority.⁴¹⁴

The Phoenix Mexican elite were not only caught in the midst of this transformation, but also faced the challenge of dealing with a new racial hierarchy. David Montejano and Eric Meeks, among many others, note that light skinned European-stock Mexicans could more easily navigate toward “whiteness” than the lower class, predominantly indigenous. Still, as Mexicans made the trek north, their racial hierarchy, though parallel, did not fit neatly into their host society. Emigrants from the Mexican middle class no longer enjoyed a privileged position on top of the racialized social structure. White Americans instead often categorized them with their Indian and *Mestizo* countrymen. All of them were Mexicans, whether literate or not.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁴ For a look into the changed views of race in during the Mexican Revolution, see Evelyn Hu-DeHart, *Yaqui Resistance and Survival*: 1984); Florencia E. Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* Gilbert Joseph and Daniel Nugent, eds., *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 1994); Marjorie Becker, *Setting the Virgin on Fire: Lazaro Cardenas, Michoacan Peasants, and the Redemption of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995);

⁴¹⁵ Tom Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2004.)

The Phoenix middle class Mexican population then held a new, awkward alliance with their working class expatriates. Advancing their role in American society now partially depended on protecting not only themselves, but all their countrymen. To do this, they created mutual aid societies, or *mutualistas*. These clubs promoted Mexican patriotism, community kinship, and civil rights. The Mexican middle class felt a new common bond with the *campesinos*, fighting a mutual battle for legal entrenchment and respect in their new land. Thomas E. Sheridan shows these dynamics in his study of Tucson, *Los Tucsoneses*. Sheridan shows how elites resisted historical forces to become achievers. These elites took leadership roles within the community, launching civic and political organizations like *La Alianza Hispano-Americana* in 1894. He notes that the middle class often aligned with the working poor.⁴¹⁶

The cross racial/class alliance still held some problems however. Middle class Mexicans protective language still quite often came mired in paternalistic and condescending views of the lower classes. We can see numerous examples in Mexican Consulates, established in the U.S. on behalf of Mexico to protect emigrants. Though placed in Phoenix by their government, they navigated the same uneasy task of protecting lower classes. Consul Gonsalvo Cordova complained that “Because of the low culture of these Mexicans, they are exploited; they are put in jails for long sentences.”⁴¹⁷ As Mexicans lay stranded

⁴¹⁶ Sheridan, 26.

⁴¹⁷ Petersen, 42.

and hungry in Phoenix, President Obregon wrote to Eduardo Ruiz on January 8, 1921, “these Mexicans are of such naiveté and ignorance that if they are not protected like children they expose themselves to punishment.”⁴¹⁸ Later, when Consuls were considering spending more on repatriating Mexicans, Consul Eduardo Ruiz recommended later that they should not spend money on workers “to reward their lack of foresight.”⁴¹⁹

Pedro de la Lama and La Liga Protectora Latina.

The most notable protector of Mexican rights in the Phoenix area was *La Liga Protectora Latina*, or the Latin American Protective League (LPL), which in 1915 claimed 700 members in Phoenix alone, 850 at lodges in other Arizona cities.⁴²⁰ The LPL had a brief but brilliant start in 1914, under the direction of Spanish-born Mexican citizen Pedro G. de la Lama. Attracting serious support in the Mexican-American community and considerable concern in the Anglo mainstream, the volatile journalist and publisher won supporters and detractors with his contentious style and unflinching swagger. By 1915, de la Lama’s LPL had found its first rallying point fighting the Kinney-Claypool Bill which would have kept Mexicans and others not fluent in English from working in “dangerous

⁴¹⁸ Ibid, 43.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid, 81- 82.

⁴²⁰ “Growing Institution Latin Protective League, *Arizona Republican*, Mar 24, 1915, 10.

occupations.”⁴²¹ To Mexicans in the early twentieth century, these “dangerous occupations” such as mining or operating farm equipment, often were the best paying. Though the bill passed, it was overturned by the Arizona Supreme Court.⁴²² During this same period, the LPL also fought “The 80% Rule,” a referendum that would have made it illegal to employ non-citizens as more than 20% of any workforce of six or more people. Although Mexicans stood to lose most, it was an Austrian cook who sued to have the law overturned, and won.⁴²³

The LPL incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1916, with the intent to unite all “persons of the Latin race” and to “give educational, moral, social, material aid and protection to its members,” including health care, funeral expenses, and “moral aid to its members in distress.”⁴²⁴ The message found a widening audience. Perhaps the most impressive thing about the LPL was its

⁴²¹ “Kinney-Claypool Bill Cause of First Split in the Lower House,” *Arizona Republican*, Feb 7, 1915, 1; “Mass Meeting Protests Bill: Six Hundred Signatures to Protest Against Kinney-Claypool Bill Secured Last Night in Meeting of Spanish Americans,” *Arizona Republican*, Feb 11, 1915, 3; “Powers Prohibition Bill Beaten; Mine Tax Measure Gains Strength: Kinney-Claypool and Mine Tax Measures on Opposite Side of Combat in House . . .,” *Arizona Republican*, Feb 17, 1915, 1.

⁴²² James McBride, “The Liga Protectora Latina” *Journal of the West*, Vol. 14, no 4, October 1975, 82-83; “Federal Court Declares Unconstitutional the New Arizona Law,” *Phoenix Gazette*, Jan 7, 1915.

⁴²³ “To Test Eighty Per Cent Law,” *Arizona Republican*, Dec 16, 1914, 1.

⁴²⁴ “Migration, Marginalization, And Community Development: 1900-1939,” *Phoenix Hispanic Historic Property Survey*, http://phoenix.gov/webcms/groups/internet/@inter/@dept/@dspd/documents/web_content/pdd_hp_pdf_00045.pdf accessed 3/14/12.

growth. Chapters spread from Arizona into California, New Mexico, and even to Pennsylvania. By 1920, the LPL reached its zenith, climbing to 5000 members nationwide, half of them U.S. citizens. No further mention of the league came after September of that year, when it announced its convention in Tucson.⁴²⁵

One of the most interesting personalities in Hispanic Phoenix came in the charismatic founder of the LPL, Pedro Garcia de la Lama. De la Lama was blessed with ambition, motivation, as well as endless organizational and oratorical abilities. On one occasion, the *Arizona Republican* mentioned that the “fiery and eloquent” speaker “fractured the Sabbath” when the enthusiasm of his audience broke up religious worship for blocks around.⁴²⁶ De la Lama “led his audience to believe that Democratic success was unavoidable, and all the offices in its grasp.” Even the Consuls, who despised de la Lama, admitted in correspondence that he was “the brains behind *La Liga Protectora Latina*.”⁴²⁷

Born, raised and educated in Cadiz, Spain, he left for Mexico to attend a Naval College in Vera Cruz. Apparently agitating against the Diaz regime, de la

⁴²⁵ “Liga Protectora Latina Convention at Tucson Sept. 11,” *Arizona Republican*, Sep 07, 1920, 8.

⁴²⁶ “De La Lama Causes Sunday Disturbance,” *Arizona Republican*, Aug 12, 1920.

⁴²⁷ “Alleged Insults to Acting Consul Figure in Hearing,” *Arizona Republican*, 6. “Informes Politico-Economico del Consulado de Mexico en Phoenix, Arizona. Redondidos por dicho Consulado durante el citado ano,” Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, Archivo General, Ano de 1921, Expediente III/510/(199-256)/921-1, March 8, 1921, Mexico City.

Lama feared for his life and left for Arizona in 1886 at the age of 23, becoming a teacher in Solomonville before going on to Phoenix.⁴²⁸ A prolific writer, de la Lama's primary work revolved around the many Spanish language papers he launched while in the U.S., in addition to the countless Spanish-speaking organizations he founded or helped administer. His first endeavor in his new country was an anti-Diaz newspaper which he ran from Graham County. Following this vein, his career in Arizona, as in Mexico, was marked both by colorful productivity and incorrigible squabbling. His career remains well documented in local Phoenix papers, not only for his cultural and civil rights efforts, but also his continuous feuds.

De la Lama started his first paper, *El Democrata* in 1898, and started making headlines shortly thereafter. The first such case came in one of his first of many squabbles with the Phoenix Mexican Consulate. De la Lama, in his role as leader of *La Junta Patriotica*, had tried to enlist the support of the Consulate for a Mexican Independence Day celebration. The Consulate, already holding disdain for the upstart journalist, declined to participate. De la Lama reacted in a manner that would characterize his career in Phoenix; vengeful and relentless. He and colleague Asuncion Sanchez fired off a slew of attacks in his paper, particularly calling out Consul Leon Navarro, sarcastically the "Valiant Leon" and the "Brave

⁴²⁸ Phoenix Hispanic Property Survey, City of Phoenix, http://www.phoenix.gov/webcms/groups/internet/.../pdd_hp_pdf_00044.pdf; "Death Takes Publisher," *Arizona Republic*, February 20, 1945.

Navarro.” To further entice him, they accused him of being unfit for his position, and ultimately guilty of crimes they intended to prove. Seeking out the opinion of the Mexican government, the Consul brought a case of libel against de la Lama, who was put under a \$250 bond. Despite the commotion put up by the Consul, the case was dropped when he never showed up for court.⁴²⁹

Not all of the incidents involving de la Lama were kept to insulting words. Frequent skirmishes involved violence, or threats of violence. By 1902, his relationship with Sanchez had soured as well. De la Lama again used his newspaper as a vehicle to incite drama, chastising Sanchez’ shoemaking business. When Sanchez replied with insults to de la Lama’s journalism, the feud escalated quickly. De la Lama publicly challenged Sanchez to a duel, and he agreed. However, when they finally encountered each other, Sanchez did not fight back as de la Lama attacked him, claiming that de la Lama had a gun.⁴³⁰

A year later, de la Lama was arrested for threatening a “boy” named “Duarte.” Apparently the two had begun the dispute when de la Lama was collecting funds for a celebration, and complained that some merchants in the “Boston Store” had not contributed enough. The young man, Duarte, had called

⁴²⁹ “The Haunts of Justice: The Libel Suits Fall to the Ground,” *Arizona Republican*, Dec 1, 1900; A Mexican Affair: Out of Which Libel Cases Have Grown,” *Arizona Republican*, Oct 23, 1900.

⁴³⁰ “Fight for Leadership: Between Pedro G. de La Lama and A. Sanchez,” *Arizona Republican*, Mar 21, 1902, 3.

de la Lama “a bad name.” De la Lama left but returned the next day with a gun, calling Duarte out for a fight. Later, when arrested by police, de la Lama claimed it was a bicycle pump.⁴³¹

After 18 years as an expatriate, numerous skirmishes in Arizona with the law, numerous Hispanic organizations, and countless others, de la Lama returned to Mexico in 1913 after the Madero government, of which he had been highly critical, had been toppled. The first news sent back to Arizona looked favorable. The Arizona Republican noted that he had a “good job” working for Customs. Despite calling this a “good job” the newspaper noted that “Friends here were surprised that he would take such a lowly position. They expected to hear that he had issued a proclamation as provisional president as everybody else was doing it.”⁴³² The good news did not last. By April 28, 1914, de la Lama had “incurred the disfavor of the federals among whom he had been living.” The article noted that this was the third time he had been arrested since his return to Mexico.⁴³³

⁴³¹ “De La Lama Does Business: With Two Courts, Two Lawyers, Sheriff’s Office and the Boston Store,” *Arizona Republican*, Sep 26, 1903.

⁴³² “Senor de la Lama Secures Good Job: Former Phoenician in Customs Service at Mexico, *Arizona Republican*,” Apr 4, 1913, 9.

⁴³³ “Mexican Jail Holds Pedro G.: Former Phoenix Citizen Writes Friends That He Has Been Having More Trouble with the Federal Government,” *Arizona Republican*, Apr 28, 1914, 3.

Not finding peace within the new political climate of Mexico, de la Lama returned to Arizona, arriving in Tucson prior to July 19, 1914.⁴³⁴ His time in Mexican jails did little to mellow the upstart journalist. By 1921, as LPL had all but vanished, de la Lama had entered his most vociferous battles with the Mexican Consuls yet. One meeting with the Consulate ended with de la Lama threatening to “blow out the brains” of a consul who refused to give up information in their archives. De la Lama lived until 1943 in the Phoenix area, though he never did get the level of attention he held in the 1930s.⁴³⁵ He died in 1945 at the age of 91, leaving three children from two marriages.

The life of Pedro de la Lama speaks volumes of Mexican middle class presence in Phoenix. Literate and solidly fluent in English, this group often provided the buffer between the white and Mexican populations. They often made awkward protectors though. De la Lama’s oratorical gifts, political ambitions, and boundless energy certainly instigated many benefits and community events that strengthened their position and culture in the Salt River valley. Even the conservative *Arizona Republican*, after de la Lama had left for Mexico, noted that “on his arrival in Phoenix, Senor de la Lama threw himself into the whirlpool of politics with all the zest of a native American. He was

⁴³⁴ “Out of Prison,” *Arizona Republican*, Jul 19,1914, 6.

⁴³⁵ “Alleged Insults to Acting Consul Figure in Hearing,” *Arizona Republican*, Mar 31, 1921, 6.

generally but not always fighting on the Democratic side, but he was always open to reason.”

Because of his antics, de la Lama makes for one of the best-documented personalities in Hispanic Phoenix. How much of his work was really for Mexican-Americans’ benefit and how much was to bolster his own success and wealth could be debated. Articles in the *Arizona Republican* note a certain amount of disdain for him within the Mexican community. His papers, some have accused, did little more than berate his enemies with misanthropic zeal and promote candidates he favored. The *Arizona Republican* noted that one of his short lived papers, *La Dinamita*, dealt with one of his enemies “so harshly that the much of the mellifluous and musical effect of the Spanish language is lost.” On other occasions he had been outright accused of graft and political machine politics. One article noted “he has been on all sides at one time or another, and is well known among the Mexicans of the city as an opportunist.” A Mexican delegation that spoke with the *Republican* said: “we know him so well we do not care to know him anymore. He only insults our people and he only does that when he is protected by his fellow Democrats.” To some of his harshest critics, de la Lama essentially sold his followers to the candidates who could pay him, whether Republican or Democrat.⁴³⁶ Even farmer Thomas Bell perceptively pointed out that LPL’s views “often aligned with the business class.”⁴³⁷

⁴³⁶ “An Imported Case of Assault and Battery: It Started in Glendale and Ended in Justice Barnett’s Court,” *Arizona Republican*, Mar 17, 1906, 7.

In some situations his outrageous behavior can seem empowering. When the Consuls brought de la Lama to court for a second time in 1921, Governor Campbell took it upon himself to investigate the case. The indomitable de la Lama called to question the governor's right to participate. Instead, de la Lama insisted, the case belonged in the hands of the Attorney General. De la Lama remained silent and defiant throughout the trial, refusing to participate in what he deemed a sham. When asked to make a concluding remark, he only said "this is not the proper place to make a statement." An understandably enraged Campbell chided "if your attitude does not change, I'll show you what authority I have." The attitude de la Lama exhibits, even to high level white American politicians, shows a certain prideful resistance to attempts to keep Mexicans disenfranchised and relegated to the role of laborer.⁴³⁸ Regardless of the skirmishes and his short fuse, he left behind a legacy in his many friends, followers and especially civil rights and community organizations. The protective league he founded became the most successful in the U.S. – a testament to the energy and skill de la Lama could enlist.

Regardless of the dubious motivations behind middle class Mexicans in Phoenix, or the paternalistic tone the Consulate took toward working countrymen, it remained one of the few protective voices for cotton pickers in the valley.

⁴³⁷ "Bell, Thomas H. – Norteamericano."

⁴³⁸ "Alleged Insults To Acting Consul Figure In Hearing," *Arizona Republican*, Mar 31, 1921, 6.

When Mexicans sat stranded and starving in Phoenix in 1921, the Consulate's actions were pivotal in returning these destitute men and women to their country. De la Lama's LPL also participated in civil rights advocacy, but further served as organizer of community events and celebrations. This group served as the buffer between disconnected Mexican laborers and an unwelcoming host society. Regardless of some suspicious motivations, the LPL was among the few that tried to make Phoenix a home to Mexican laborers.

Conclusion.

The wartime demand pushed the cotton growers of Salt River Valley into the agricultural spotlight. Though short lived, the boom was still impressive in many ways. Valley farmers completely overhauled the landscape and the economy to meet feverish national demands. This feat is made no less impressive given the landscape and terrain. This region, which lacked a natural water supply or local labor force, increased its cotton production exponentially to meet national wartime needs. In the short time this boom persisted, production seemed to have had no limits. Only when demand plummeted did cotton production finally slump. Labor presented the main bottleneck throughout the boom period. Despite the challenges, the ACGA attracted workers from Mexico to its low end temporary jobs -- by the tens of thousands.

The ACGA accomplished this feat not only through a remarkable display of organization, but also a reckless -- near criminal -- disregard for the immigrants

it recruited. Cotton growers met once month, voted on a “fair” wage, and strictly adhered to the vote. Even if some operations could afford to pay more, growers apparently honored the established rates. For example, as his workers walked off the field, the *Chandler Arizonan* reported that “Mr. Shattuck declined to comment on the situation,” stating that he was “powerless to grant any concessions, since he was doing the work on a percentage basis with Goodyear.”⁴³⁹

With the grudging help of white unionists, Mexicans responded in some attempts to bargain collectively. Growers effectively combated collective bargaining by publicly labeling union attempts as communist. Ironically, growers used collective organizing themselves to set the wages. Unfortunately, the xenophobic and communist paranoia undermined workers’ calls for collectivism after World War I. The subsequent cotton bust compelled the Mexican Consulate to take its most active, supportive stance ever for expatriates. Facing heightened racism, middle class Mexicans, through the Latin American Protective League, helped form a sense of community and fight anti-Mexican legislation.

The cotton crash of 1921 made headlines around the country. Land values plummeted even faster than they had shot up during the boom. Many farmers let their depressed lands go fallow, foreclosed, and left the valley. Despite the hype concerning the natural profitability of cotton in the desert, it became painfully clear that this only held true during a market aberration. A Works Progress Administration report later noted “Irrigated cotton producing areas of the

⁴³⁹ “Work on Cotton Lands is Tied Up by Strike: IWW Causes Peaceable Walkout ,” *Chandler Arizonan*, Feb 16, 1917.

Southwest do not have, on average, any economic advantage over the cotton producing regions of the Deep South. The gains... are counterbalanced by the cost of water, transportation to the cotton market, and a higher cost of harvesting to the present wage scale.”⁴⁴⁰ “White gold” as it turned out, was simply a crop that had an extremely fortuitous price in the marketplace for a short time.

⁴⁴⁰ Brown and Cassmore, xx.

CHAPTER 5

ENTERING THE MODERN AGE: NATIONAL DEBATES AND MARGINALIZATION

They Called it Normalcy.

As the 1920 cotton planting season began, the Salt River Valley was a booming one-crop agricultural economy. A year later, though the U.S. economy was doing well, the economy of Phoenix was in a state of collapse, cut down by the sudden and catastrophic crash of the cotton market. Arizona learned a harsh lesson in depending on tremendously high war time prices.

Despite the devastating effects of the crash, they were mercifully brief. A booming, more diverse Southwestern economy soon began to attract workers by the tens of thousands to the Salt River Valley. As their populations grew, Mexican immigrants became a national news story for the first time, and remained so throughout the 1920s. The ACGA again was left to testify against limiting Mexican immigration, becoming a champion of the people they exploited. By the end of the roaring 20s, Mexican immigration had ceased. What racism and xenophobia couldn't stop, the Depression could. The U.S. and worldwide market collapse led to the subsequent decline of the Mexican immigrant population in the valley, bringing a fitting end to the study.

The cotton boom and bust of 1912 - 1922 resonated deeply with local residents and the Southwest. In retrospect, the errors seemed glaringly obvious to most observers. Critics wagged their fingers at the short sighted, greedy investor-

farmers, out to strike it rich on White Gold. As recent arrivals to the valley closed their farms and walked away, some felt that the cotton crash had left an indelible mark on the region. *Sunset Magazine* writer Walter Woehlke argued that the heightened immigration during the boom had left the Salt River Valley degraded, culturally and racially.

During the last three years it has been a curse to the irrigated valleys of the Southwest. What we need and want is 40 acre farms tilled by owners. Cotton brought Hindus, Negroes and Mexicans by the thousands; it brought the illiterate Southern poor whites with their large families of children kept out of school and worked from dawn to dark picking cotton. It lowered the high standards of the model communities we were building. Let us hope a lesson has been learned.⁴⁴¹

Despite the pessimism, the Southwest staggered only briefly. The Return to Normalcy promised in 1920 by then-candidate Warren G. Harding began shortly. The devastation of the cotton boom and demands for agricultural products returned. America had now hit recovery mode.

The Recovery.

Valley farmers understandably hesitated to grow cotton after the crash. By 1922, the cotton fields were cut by half, to 90,000 acres.⁴⁴² However, the valley had shown before that with enough water, it could grow almost any crop

⁴⁴¹ Walter V. Woehlke, "Food First: How One Western State is Staking the Farmers," *Sunset Magazine*, October, 1920, 25.

⁴⁴² Petersen, 82.

profitably. One article claimed that the Salt River Valley yielded more per acre than any other region in the country, though the yields did come with the cost of water.⁴⁴³ Agricultural industries such as cattle fattening and dairy farming, citrus and lettuce and melons came roaring back, rushing to again reclaim the irrigated croplands that cotton had left behind.

As soon as the crash hit in March 1921, the dairy industry found an opportunity to reinvigorate its fading presence. That month, an *Arizona Republican* article ran the bombastic headline “Dairy Cow – the Salvation of the Valley: Value of the Dairy Cow in the Salt River Valley Demonstrated.” The article claimed that valley residents had been “fooled on a couple occasions” as to what the “real deal” would be in terms of crops. “Despite the natural and manmade advantages the Salt River Valley lacks that degree of prosperity which we so much desire. In other words, the valley is sick.” The elixir for this sickness came in the expansion of the dairy industry.⁴⁴⁴

The dairy industry was not the only one eyeing a comeback. An article printed on New Year’s Day in 1922 headlined “Alfalfa is King of all that the Land Produces in this Valley.”⁴⁴⁵ This article noted that no other crop was better suited to the valley, with year round cuttings on a very small flow of water. The

⁴⁴³ Brown and Cassmore, 43.

⁴⁴⁴ “Dairy Cow – the Salvation of the Valley: Value of the Dairy Cow in the Salt River Valley Demonstrated,” *Arizona Republican*, Mar 20, 1921.

⁴⁴⁵ “Alfalfa is King of all that the Land Produces in this Valley,” *Arizona Republican*, Jan 1, 1922, F7.

writer gloated, “When cotton dropped Maricopa County farmers turned to alfalfa just as a sailor turns to a port in the storm.”⁴⁴⁶ By 1921, alfalfa had already more than doubled the acreage of the year before to 75,000 total acres. By 1923, the industry reported an impressive \$3,600,000 in total production according to the University of Arizona Agricultural Experiment Station.⁴⁴⁷ By 1924, the Salt River Valley had its greatest cantaloupe crop ever, sending 2,200 carloads to market.⁴⁴⁸ The following year, growers again broke records with \$2,800,000 in total production, and lettuce reaching \$1,968,000.⁴⁴⁹ Even cotton had rebounded to 158,000 acres by 1925, not far off its peak production during the boom. Still wary of long staple, however, about half the growers had switched to short staple.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ *Arizona Republican*, Feb 2, 1924. *Arizona Republican* Card Catalog, Arizona Room. Hayden Arizona Collection, Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe.

⁴⁴⁸ *Arizona Republican*, Aug 17, 1924. *Arizona Republican* Card Catalog, Arizona Room. Hayden Arizona Collection, Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe.

⁴⁴⁹ *Arizona Republican*, July 1, 1925. *Arizona Republican* Card Catalog, Arizona Room. Hayden Arizona Collection, Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe.

⁴⁵⁰ Petersen, 83.

The Roaring Twenties: The Train Stops at Phoenix.

As the agricultural economy boomed, so too did the City of Phoenix. The area continued to experience healthy population growth throughout the 1920s. By the end of the decade Phoenix had grown to more than 48,000 residents, the seventh largest city in the Southwest.⁴⁵¹ In the mid-1920s, the work of mastering the intrinsically unpredictable Salt River continued with the building of the Mormon Flat Dam and the Horse Mesa Dam in 1925 and 1927 respectively, downstream from the massive Roosevelt Dam, along with hydroelectric facilities for pumping.

Phoenix's most impressive gain came in the long-awaited mainline connection to the Southern Pacific Railroad, which connected El Paso to Los Angeles by way of Phoenix. Of course, this bolstered the local tourist industry with the four transcontinental trains that came through every day. Now with an elevated status, a mainline connection, and a more modern urban infrastructure, Phoenix appealed to more affluent tourists seeking a reprieve from the brutal winters of their homelands.⁴⁵² Agriculture, industry and migration continued to expand in the Salt River Valley. With this economic resurgence, the need for more agricultural workers increased.

⁴⁵¹ VanderMeer, *Desert Visions*, 39.

⁴⁵² Bradford Luckingham, *Phoenix, The History of a Southwestern Metropolis* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), 78, 83, 100.

Moreover, restrictionist legislation of the 1920s changed immigration dynamics. The Emergency Immigration Act of 1921 marked a turning point for immigration in the Southwest. For the first time, European immigrants faced a quota system which limited the number of immigrants the U.S. would receive from each country. European immigration immediately dropped by 38.5%,⁴⁵³ but the new law set no limits for Latin America. These restrictions had little effect on Mexican immigration, however. Although the Immigration Act of 1917 had established a literacy test, Labor Secretary William B. Wilson specifically exempted Mexicans. As restrictionist legislation targeted European labor exclusively, a vacuum was created for Mexican labor.

Given these conditions, it's not surprising that meeting labor needs again became difficult. By 1923, the ACGA had already begun legally recruiting in Mexico again. The climate for recruiting Mexican labor, however, had become much more precarious. By 1924, a head tax and the inception of the U.S. Border Patrol caused some alarm among growers. As the national clamor increased for more restrictive immigration measures, the ACGA and other valley growers started thinking about the possible labor supply alternatives. Perhaps they could find a more viable source which might be less vulnerable to the political tides of immigration policy.

⁴⁵³ Computed from data in Michael Lemay and Elliott Robert Barkan, eds. *U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Laws and Issues: A Documentary History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 421.

The Puerto Rican Debacle.

Realizing that they held American citizenship, the ACGA thought that Puerto Ricans could weather the restrictionist tide. Recruiting and transporting these workers would require a lot of capital, however. ACGA Manager E.J. Walker went to Puerto Rico to investigate and found that the unemployment rate was high enough and the wages were low enough to make this recruitment effort worthwhile. On July 29, 1926, having gained the approval of the Bureau of Insular Affairs of the Department of the Interior, and the Puerto Rican government, the ACGA held a meeting and approved the recruiting of 1500 Puerto Ricans.⁴⁵⁴ The ACGA sent agents into Puerto Rico to recruit, and then chartered ships to transport the laborers. In total, the costs came to \$58 for each worker. Before they left the shore, problems had already begun. Far more people had shown up than they could transport, and riots ensued.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵⁴ Pendleton, 172. Actually, only 1200 workers were brought in.

⁴⁵⁵ Pendleton, 161-2.



Figure 22 -- Baled Cotton, Location [in Arizona] Unknown, c. 1925⁴⁵⁶.
By the mid 1920s, cotton production had reestablished itself,
nearly equaling its 1920 acreage.

Their story upon arriving in the U.S. was a telling look into the ACGA's tactics. Within days of their arrival, nearly 100 fled to downtown Phoenix to escape the cotton camps. Some, captured by State Police, were housed at the State Fairgrounds.⁴⁵⁷ Others, finding refuge at the Phoenix Central Labor Council, told their stories to sympathetic ears, though labor organizations had all opposed

⁴⁵⁶ Photograph: Baled Cotton, Location Unknown, c.1925. Photography by McCulloch Brothers. Herb and Dorothy McLaughlin Photographs, c.1925, Hayden Arizona Collection, Tempe, Arizona. CP MCLMB A838.

⁴⁵⁷ "Union Activity Menaces Farms," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct 6, 1926, 7.

their importation. According to these distraught workers, agents had told them they would get \$2 each day, and a house for each family, with electricity. Furthermore, some claimed that the recruiters made no mention that they would be picking cotton. Instead of houses with electricity, they found dirty barns, communal tents with no electricity, and strenuous piecework picking cotton. At 1.25 cents per pound, none of the workers interviewed reported making more than \$1.37 for a day's work.

Eventually, some of these workers settled into agricultural life in Arizona, but most either went back to Puerto Rico or over to California. Later, an agent from the ACGA summed up their experience stating, "we shipped two boatloads of the Porto Ricans and they were so entirely worthless as farm hands that we paid the fares of the third boatload which we had contracted for and let them stay home."⁴⁵⁸

The Puerto Rican recruitment debacle provides a rare inside look into the ACGA's tactics. Earlier migrant workers were not so thoroughly documented. This group came during a time when the cotton industry and its labor practices were garnering increasing unwanted attention. Perhaps more importantly, the presence of the tropical islanders in the desert seems to have sparked much curiosity and interest. In reports, we find that the ACGA recruiters embellished working conditions and lied outright to the potential recruits. Beyond that,

⁴⁵⁸ Pendleton, 617, 618, 568.

picking cotton in the brutal Arizona sun was hard, even painful, work. Since Mexicans seemed to make such ideal laborers, the ACGA made the assumption that other Latinos, also coming from economically depressed conditions, would similarly be acclimated to grueling conditions. The few Puerto Ricans who remained in Arizona moved on to other agricultural industries, such as picking vegetables.⁴⁵⁹

The Puerto Rican debacle also shows the growing sense of anxiety on the part of Southwestern growers that their bottomless supply of Mexican workers would soon come to an end. Before the 1920s, the presence of Southern, Eastern and Jewish Europeans in the tenements of Eastern cities drew the onus of the restrictionist debate. Meanwhile, the Mexican immigrant fulfilled labor needs in the Southwest in a very inconspicuous fashion.⁴⁶⁰ Working in the camps outside mainstream culture, they remained essential, yet hidden, components of the economy – like a cog inside a large, profitable machine.

The passage of the 1921 Immigration Act and the 1924 National Origins Act were legislative triumphs for the restrictionist factions. An unexpected and unwelcomed component resulted from this, however. The American economy continued to grow after the initial pangs of economic downturn after World War I, leaving a more pronounced need for labor than ever. The way that the

⁴⁵⁹ Pendleton, 618.

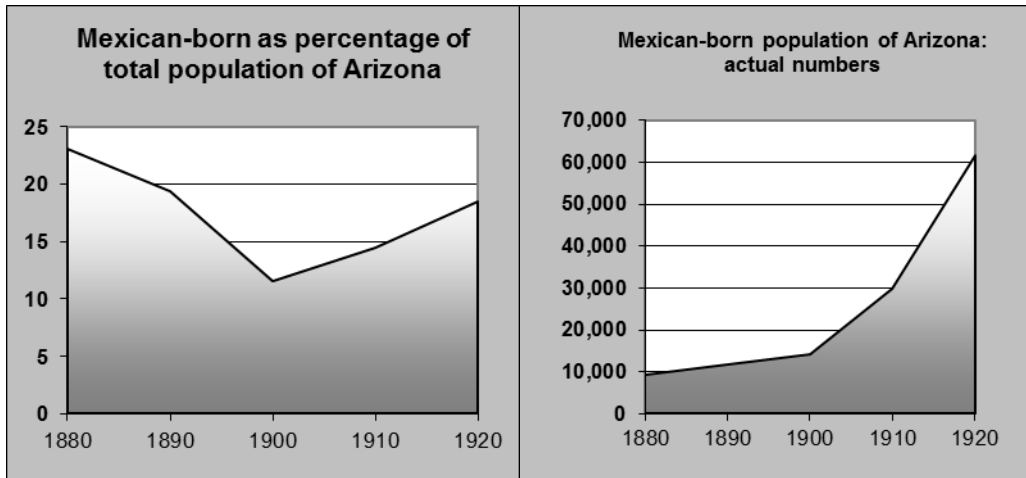
⁴⁶⁰ Mark Reisler, “Always the Laborer, Never the Citizen: Anglo Perceptions of the Mexican Immigrant During the 1920s,” *Pacific Historical Review: University of California Press*, vol. 45, no. 2 (May, 1976), 236.

restrictionist legislation was written, the only outside labor available in any in any substantial numbers had to come from Latin America. The number of Mexicans lawfully admitted during fiscal year 1924 -- some 87,648 -- equaled about 45% of the year's entrants from eastern and southern Europe, and 12.4% of the total number of newcomers.⁴⁶¹ substantial numbers had to come from Latin America.

As early writer on Mexicans, Samuel Bryan noted in 1912, the arrival of Mexicans came “. . . very quietly. Of all the non-Anglo-Saxon groups entering the United States in large numbers, Mexicans were probably the most inconspicuous.”⁴⁶² This inauspicious entry into the U.S. happened for a couple of reasons. First, most Americans focused on the far larger tide of immigration pouring into Ellis Island and East Coast ports. Secondly, Mexican population growth from 66,312 in 1880 to 99,969 in 1900, though impressive, did not keep pace with white expansion into the thriving new region.

⁴⁶¹ Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States*, 41.

⁴⁶² Bryans, 13.



Year	Mexican-born	Percentage of total
1880	9,330	23.06
1890	11,534	19.35
1900	14,172	11.53
1910	29,650	14.50
1920	61,580	18.43

Figure 23 – Mexican-born as a percentage of total Arizona population.

Garnering little notice, Mexican immigration had weathered the restrictionist debate relatively unscathed. Under the 1924 Act, the Border Patrol was installed to curb undocumented border crossing. Yet they were relatively ineffective, and ultimately uninterested in keeping laborers from crossing the border. A provision of the 1924 law barred migrants with more than 50% Indian blood. Yet the issue of how to quantify In

dian blood could never be fully resolved. Lobbyists for immigration skirted the issue by categorizing Mexicans as “whites.”

As Mexican immigrants began to make headlines, Americans wondered who these immigrants were. Undoubtedly, the majority in the U.S. supported immigration restriction. However, in the emerging age of science, Americans needed proof of their superiority in order to justify excluding other races. Immigrants were the subject of intense scholarly scrutiny, in a search for ways to dismiss them as unequal. Nativists concocted biological theories to argue the superiority of whites, particularly northern “Anglo” Europeans, and the inferiority of other ethnic groups. Mexican immigrants, now making up a sizable portion of migration flow, entered the national spotlight for the first time. Given the climate, the results were unsurprisingly negative. Social scientists clamored for action to combat the rising “Mexican Problem.”

The Commissioner of General Education reported that Mexican entries went from 0.1% of all immigrants, to around 12% in 1923.⁴⁶³ This played out before a domestic backdrop of increasing xenophobia, nativism and racism. Abroad, with the sacrifices of the Great War still fresh, Americans again saw European belligerence increase. Now, more than ever, Americans wanted to isolate themselves from all things foreign.

The “Mexican problem” was nothing new. According to these sociologists, Mexicans made undesirable citizens. They lacked personal hygiene, entrepreneurial ambition, and brought down the wages of American workers.

⁴⁶³ Gwin, J.B., “Social Problems of our Mexican Population,” *Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work, May 13 – June 2, 1926*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926), 535.

Criminality, disease, and virtual serfdom were endemic to these immigrants. Ironically, when Mexicans did find better work, their success only signaled other warnings. Labor unions and sociologists warned of competition for skilled, well-paying jobs when Mexicans began to form sizable enclaves in the Midwest to work in the mills. Sociological studies from the period backed up these arguments with numbers. Over 90% of the Mexican workers who came to the U.S. were unskilled.⁴⁶⁴ Worse yet, the 1.3 million Mexicans who, they estimated, lived within the U.S. would doubtlessly grow quickly. Mexicans not only procreated faster than whites, they also had little intention of leaving. Sociological reports and surveys reported that if Mexicans ever held a “homing pigeon instinct,” it had gone. The vast majority of those surveyed said that they would not return to Mexico.

In Defense of Mexican Immigrants.

Mexican immigrants were not without their defenders, and not all of their defenders were agricultural, or employers dependent upon Mexican labor. Even during these times of xenophobia and scientific racism, many scholars pointed out the factors that led to the questionable statistics used to promote this viewpoint. Mexican defenders pointed out the marginalization that Mexicans experienced in the U.S. Edwin Bamford pointed out the structural factors in 1926:

⁴⁶⁴ Edwin F. Bamford, “The Mexican Casual Problem in the United States,” *Sociology and Social Research* 8, no. 6 (July –Aug 1924), 362.

1. Industrialization in the Southwest had stimulated the process of social conflict.
2. In so far as accommodation is taking place, it is entirely one sided, since the Mexican is doing practically all the accommodating or adjusting.
3. There has been no attempt to facilitate social assimilation of Mexicans.⁴⁶⁵

J.B. Gwin pointed out the inequalities that caused the migratory, less healthy, bottom tiered life that Mexican encountered. Speaking to the transient nature of the Mexican workforce, he pointed out that, “The Mexican’s habits are not migratory, but the industries that furnish his livelihood certainly are.” Of 1021 individuals interviewed, 833 had been in the country for 5 years or more and 982 said it was their plan to remain permanently in the U.S.⁴⁶⁶ Bamford asked, “why should it be any different?” Though Mexican immigrants were far more likely to be unskilled, many had worked skilled trades in Mexico and entered unskilled trades upon arrival in the U.S., because employers were reluctant to accept their skills. However, he noted “substantial evidence that shows that Mexicans could be just as efficient in most trades as other nationalities.⁴⁶⁷ Bamford concluded that Mexican immigrants in the Southwest tended to represent “community liabilities” because of the economic and social economic cost of Mexican

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid, 368.

⁴⁶⁶ Gwin, J.B., 535.

⁴⁶⁷ Bamford, 366.

contributions to the community problems. To remedy this, he recommended community centers, health clinics, education (night schools), etc.⁴⁶⁸

Business journalist Karl De Laittre, writing as President of the Bovey-De Laittre Lumber Company, pointed out that by 1928 in his essay that the Southwestern states supplied 40% of the nation's fruit, truck crops and veggies. Because of this, "Industrialized agriculture has made it possible for the average American wage earner ... to have fresh vegetables and fruits on their plates, no matter where they live. The humble Mexican immigrant has had an important part."⁴⁶⁹ De Laittre showed that not only has the Southwest's progress been made possible by Mexicans, but "a large agricultural industry has developed adding appreciably to the wealth of the nation as a whole."

One of the most vocal supporters accompanying agribusiness in the defense of Mexican Immigration was the Presbyterian Church. They were among the few groups to argue that Mexicans held redeeming qualities that white native-born Americans could learn from.⁴⁷⁰ This faction largely argued that Mexicans brought with them a love of the aesthetic, spiritual and artistic that white

⁴⁶⁸ Bamford, 371.

⁴⁶⁹ Karl de Laittre, "The Mexican Laborer and You," *Nations Business* 18, no. 12 (1930): 44.

⁴⁷⁰ Robert McLean, Director of Spanish Speaking Work, Board of the National Missions, Presbyterian Church of Los Angeles, reported in *Mexican Workers in the U.S.; The 1929 Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work, June 26 – July 3 1929*; Reisler 234

Americans lacked. The religious supporters of Mexican immigration believed that something could be learned from these immigrants.

These defenders of Mexican immigration make a marked change to the previous national debate. Sociologists like Samuel Bryan argued much of the same points that restrictionists had been arguing against Mexican immigration for years. Defenders like Edwin Bamford and Robert McLean are some of the first to argue in favor of Mexican immigration that did not directly employ Mexicans. These arguments were instead based off of a true fondness for Mexican American culture, or at least an understanding and empathy for treatment they received by host society.

The ACGA against the Increasing Restrictionist Tide.

This new national interest in Mexican immigration resulted in some of the most volatile hearings on immigration yet. The new sociological conversation regarding Mexicans added to the contentious political discourse throughout the twenties. A new breed of nativist legislators stood more determined than ever to extend their restrictions of European immigrants to those arriving from America's southern neighbors. A new leader in the fight against Mexican immigration came in Texas Congressman John Box. Box became the center for the growing fear of a Mexicanized Southwest -- and even Midwest. Box became intimately acquainted with the arguments against Mexican immigrants and used them to lambaste them vehemently in speeches. In the late 1920s, statements from

restrictionists often took a more racist tone than previously. A 1928 speech epitomized Box's argument on behalf of the restrictionists:

Every reason which calls for the exclusion of the most wretched, ignorant, dirty, diseased, and degraded people of Europe or Asia demands that the illiterate, unclean, peonized masses moving this way from Mexico be stopped at the border ...

This blend of low-grade Spaniard, peonized Indian, and Negro slave mixes with Negroes, mulattoes, and other mongrels, and some sorry whites, already here. The prevention of such mongrelization and the degradation it causes is one of the purposes of our laws which the admission of these people will tend to defeat....

The protection of American society against the importation of crime and pauperism is yet another object of these laws. Few, if any, other immigrants have brought us so large a proportion of criminals and paupers as have the Mexican peons.⁴⁷¹

By the mid-twenties, restrictionists like Box and Congressman Albert Johnson of Washington shifted the debate from restricting Europeans to restricting Mexicans in the courts. The ACGA was now faced with its most difficult legislative debate to date. Throughout the twentieth century, national and state legislative hearings continued the debate carried over from the 1917 Congressional Hearings. The topics remained largely the same. Growers and Congressmen debated the conditions, remigration, alleged docility and the disposition of these new immigrants. There was, however, a distinct difference in

⁴⁷¹ United States Congress, Senate, Testimony of Congressman John C. Box before the Senate Committee on Immigration, Hearings on Emergency Immigration Legislation, 66 Cong., 3rd sess. (1921), 231.

the way that the argument was framed. Growers needed to take an entirely separate tact than they did before.

One of the pivotal arguments made in 1920 when the ACGA first had to take the national stage in the immigration debate, was that Mexicans had a “homing pigeon” instinct. This argument rested on the idea that the Mexican, unlike the European immigrant, could head south to Mexico with ease. This negated the arguments as to whether Mexicans could assimilate into American culture. Under these pretenses, arguments about what sort of citizens they would make were rendered moot. Either way, they would head home. Agribusiness lobbyists were telling the truth, too. At that time, evidence shows that most immigrants before the turn of the century returned home if they could. This began to change in the twenties. Scholars have called the subsequent generation, beginning in the 1930s, the “Mexican-American” Generation.⁴⁷² Mexicans of the 1920s operated on the cusp of the “Mexico Lindo” generation that romanticized their homeland, and the Mexican Americans of the 1930s who took root in the U.S and began to embrace American culture. Moreover, a report from the Phoenix Mexican Consulate in 1930 cited a difference in the kind of workers that had come now came to Arizona. The Sonorans who dominated early immigration to the region in the early years of the Salt River Valley could return frequently.

⁴⁷² Gutierrez, David. *Walls and Mirrors: Mexicans Americans, Mexicans Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity*. Los Angeles. University of California Press. 1995; Foley, Neil. *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture*. Los Angeles. University of California Press. 1997

Newer immigrants came from the interior of Mexico. Many of these immigrants came alone and remained in the U.S. longer.⁴⁷³ Now more than ever, Mexicans did not intend to return to their homeland. Entire cities like El Paso, Texas and Imperial Valley, California held majority Mexican populations. These restrictionists were sending a message: If the U.S. failed to enact immigration restrictions, it could happen in your town, too.

Testimony by Arizona Representatives at 1930 the “Western Hemisphere Immigration Hearing” demonstrates the changing national debate on Mexican immigration. The cotton growers had no other option than to admit that after these immigrants came to the valley to pick cotton, they went on, either to other agricultural sectors or other trades. D.B. Wiley, representing several agricultural organizations in the Salt River Valley, admitted that many recruits went on to the Imperial Valley to cut lettuce, then on to other California agricultural sectors.⁴⁷⁴ The committee pointed out that they essentially brought in new immigrants, rather than following the circular cycle, as they had argued before.⁴⁷⁵

Wiley took a sly tactic, pointing to the government as the real culprit behind the problem. “Our farming industry is built upon the creative effort of

⁴⁷³ Archivo Historico de la Secretria de Relaciones Exteriores, IV- 265-36, Manuel Payno to Secretria de Relaciones Exteriores, February 24, 1930; United States. XVI Census.

⁴⁷⁴ The Arizona Farm Bureau took the place of the Arizona Cotton Growers Association in 1924 as the main labor contractors for cotton growers.

⁴⁷⁵ Pendleton, 618.

Mexican labor. Practically all of our farming in Arizona is done on irrigation projects built by the Federal Government.” Wiley continued that the repayment costs for the Roosevelt Dam came out to nearly \$68 per acre.⁴⁷⁶ This payment schedule added up to far more money than the actual construction costs, which he erroneously pegged at \$4,000,000. Ultimately, the cotton farmers of the Salt River Valley needed an affordable, efficient and durable labor force to pay down the inflated government debt.⁴⁷⁷

The cotton growers’ argument now rested on only one inescapable point – the pure necessity of their labor. If the Mexican was tractable, indolent, and docile – then that was what was required for cotton work. Taking away Mexican labor without offering a substitute, “will simply stop our operations, it will stop our development.” Wiley pointed out that that even Puerto Ricans presumably acclimated to heat and hard work, failed miserably at picking cotton. Everything about cotton picking in the Salt River Valley, he argued, required the Mexican worker. To prove this point, the cotton growers continuously referred more than ever to the infamously hot weather: “We have been unable to find any people who can withstand the field heat and do the manual labor in our state, except Mexicans.” The tents that white Americans found so abhorrent were not only acceptable to Mexicans but “suited to the climate in the Salt River Valley.” The

⁴⁷⁶ This was actually about \$13 high. By the time the ACGA paid off their debt in 1955 the total cost came to \$55 per acre.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid, 618.

tall Pima cotton they grew did not allow for movement of air, resulting in a stagnant, hard heat. Despite the increased heat, McMicken argued two years later, “Mexicans prefer to pick Pima Cotton while whites prefer short staple.”⁴⁷⁸

Conceding that these immigrants would not return to Mexico, the ACGA was forced to fight on new ground. Throughout the twenties then, testimonies show a continuous debate over the type of American citizens the Mexican immigrants would make. Those in favor of restrictions flouted stereotypes that the Mexican was a born “hacienda minded” peasant.⁴⁷⁹ Though undeniably adept at farm labor, the results of allowing such a worker permanent access to the U.S. would be disastrous. Texas Representative John Box stated in his 1928 testimony that Mexicans were racially destined to be serfs and thus could never really be full citizens.

Their occupation and cultivation by serfs should not be encouraged. Another purpose of the immigration laws is the protection of American racial stock from further degradation or change through mongrelization. The Mexican peon is a mixture of Mediterranean-blooded Spanish peasant with low-grade Indians who did not fight to extinction but submitted and multiplied as serfs. Into that was fused much Negro slave blood.

I don't believe it is good to have thousands or millions of people among us who can have no part or parcel with us except as our menial servants.... If we do have great numbers of such people with us, we will have a condition such as some of the older nations had when there were millions of slaves and few citizens. I think it

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid, 620.

⁴⁷⁹ Emory Bogardus, quoted in Mark Reisler, 234.

tends to destroy democracy. I think it tends to make our own people helpless.⁴⁸⁰

Faced with this argument, growers had to change the spectrum of their discourse, and in so doing stopped just short of calling them good citizens. Committee members pressed Wiley in 1926 as to what would happen if generations worked on the farm. Could Mexicans take ownership of the land as previous white migrants had? This was a difficult question to answer. Committee members probably didn't know what answer they would prefer to hear. Progressing from laborer to land owner stood central to the American dream. However, committee members were still uncertain of whether this dream should be applied to Mexicans. Wiley's response skirted the issue a bit, stating "They have had the chance I suppose, but I do not know of any of them that are doing it."

Wiley's main retort against questions of citizenship rested on the history of working with Mexicans in the Southwest. "We have had them ever since this country was settled" he muttered on a couple of occasions, and the citizens of the Salt River Valley still maintained the "highest order of citizenship in the country." As the committee pressed repeatedly on the issue, Wiley grew frustrated, and snapped back at the Chairman:

⁴⁸⁰ United States Congress, Senate, Testimony of Congressman John C. Box before the Senate Committee on Immigration, Hearings on Emergency Immigration Legislation, 66 Cong., 3rd sess. (1921), 231; Chester H. Rowell, "Why Make Mexico an Exception?" *Survey*, LXVI (May 1, 1931), 180.

You have made several insinuations ... About lowering the citizenship in that country, and I cannot help but resent that a little bit. I live out there, and I challenge anybody to show me a place in the United States that has a higher type of citizenship than we have there. We have had Mexicans with us ever since our state has been settled. In fact, they were there when we came.

Throughout the testimony, despite repeated attempts, Wiley cleverly avoided answering whether Mexicans made good citizens. Instead he repeated that Mexicans did not denigrate American citizenship. W.M. Bond of Gilbert Arizona, representing the Farmers of Southern Arizona, could not avoid giving some sort of answer. “I do not know that they make good citizens, but they make passable citizens”⁴⁸¹

While Wiley would not argue that Mexicans would make good citizens of the U.S., he did argue that Mexicans helped the local economy, particularly skilled laborers.

...You must remember that you will throw more skilled labor out of employment than the number of Mexicans we employ if we cannot get them and found that it was not worth picking it. In those times It affected the bricklayer and the carpenter and the other skilled laborers, and they were leaving that district in bunches, hunting work.⁴⁸²

Even the national economy, he argued, benefitted since Mexicans bought consumer products like sewing machines and even cars. “If you go out to the fields, you will see cars parked all the way around it. It looks like a big picnic.”

⁴⁸¹ Pendleton, Appendix, 629.

⁴⁸² Pendleton, Appendix, 621.

There was a candidness not seen in previous testimonies. Most of this was done out necessity. Growers could no longer argue that Mexicans were seasonal or even temporary. The nation's eyes had turned toward the Mexican immigrant, studied him, and found that he was here to stay if he chose. Growers had to take the position that these workers' permanent presence would have a positive effect on the Southwest and the white citizen. The idea that the modern U.S. would maintain a white, Jeffersonian rural democracy was perhaps naïve. In a changing economy, the new urban wonderlands eclipsed the lure of the farm. As E.J. Walker put it "they could not raise wages high enough to return whites to the farm. It's not possible to secure enough labor within the U.S."⁴⁸³ When pressed by the committee whether large farms in the Southwest with a Mexican workforce would create an agriculture peasantry, C.S. Brown, representing the Arizona State Farm Bureau, the Salt River Valley Water Users Association and Phoenix Chamber of Commerce, candidly agreed. "Farmers, the tillers of the soil" he stated, "have never been in a position to make farming pay."

No one spoke more candidly than W.M. Bond. Bond freely admitted he could care less if workers were Mexican, Chinese or white. As he put it, he would accept "anything to do the work satisfactorily." He casually shirked queries about whether more Mexicans would outnumber whites the region, stating that he

⁴⁸³ Walker testified in 1924. He represented the ACGA and the Central Chamber Agriculture and Commerce which was a commission composed of interests across the Southwest. Pendleton, 264

saw no danger in the growing Hispanic population. The Chairman grew frustrated, asking, “The country is not good for anything but a few whites and a lot of Mexicans?”

Bond responded, “No sir, it is not good for anything you want to work on it”⁴⁸⁴

Mexicans in Phoenix during the 1920s.

As Phoenix was growing to a modern city in the 1920s, so too was the Hispanic population increasing rapidly. To whites in the area, the presence of Mexicans in the city deterred from their goal of appearing to be a modern cosmopolitan city. As the Mexican population in Phoenix increased, whites maintained dominance of urban areas by keeping Mexicans isolated in camps and urban barrios. Mexicans too, probably had a preference for being among their own countrymen, especially in the face of the hostility in the Phoenix area. Though Mexicans had small urban enclaves, they nonetheless dominated the rural areas of the valley.

In reviewing the Phoenix city directories in 1930 by Census Precincts, areas with substantial rural population had a direct correlation with a high Mexican population. For example, Mexicans made up 49% percent of population the Northeast side where 45% of the workers were rural. The north side of

⁴⁸⁴ Pendleton, Appendix, 634.

Phoenix on the other hand, with only 14% identified as rural, had the smallest proportion of Mexicans with 5.5%. In reviewing all precincts, Mexicans generally constituted a percentage slightly less than the percentage of the rural population. Central Phoenix provided the main exception to this. Though it held no rural population, the sporadic barrios made up 18% of the total urban population in that precinct. Even with the tremendous populations gains, whites and Mexicans generally stayed among their own populations. Despite a sizable Hispanic population then, most whites had limited interaction with Mexican residents (see chart below).

**TABLE ONE: ETHNICITY IN MARICOPA COUNTY
1930 BY CENSUS PRECINCTS**

Community	Total	White	Negro	Mexicans	Rural
Maricopa Co.	150,976	71	3	25	24
Central Phx	44,545	77	5	18	
North Side	17,668	94	1	6	14
Northwest	17,896	66	0	34	35
Northeast	3,273	51	0	49	46
West Side	15,539	63	2	35	53
Southeast	17,108	66	8	26	10
South Mountain	8,168	57	3	40	55
Tempe Environs	8,691	58	-	42	43

Figure 24 -- Ethnicity in Maricopa County - 1930⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸⁵ Fifteenth Census of the United States. United States Government Print Office. 1931

Americanization in Arizona: The Friendly House.

Not all Phoenix whites wanted to ostracize Mexicans. Though Americans had developed firmly nativist ideals by the twenties, a strong progressive movement still existed within the country. Some of those subscribing to these progressive ideals believed that rather than restrict, deport or ostracize new immigrants, they could be “Americanized.”⁴⁸⁶ This form of nativism came based on a fear of foreign values. Assimilating foreigners to American values could make them productive citizens. Phoenix Americanizationists supported the idea that Mexicans could assimilate if only they had the opportunity to learn English, American civic values, and “the educational process of unifying both native born and foreign born Americans in perfect support of the principles of liberty, union democracy and brotherhood.”⁴⁸⁷ Though this movement began and stayed centralized on the East Coast, the idea of an Americanization house in Phoenix began to take a stronger foothold during World War I.

Local white native-born Americans provided the impetus for starting Americanization in Phoenix. Funding came predominantly from white organizations. Governor Thomas Campbell even declared October 5, 1919 to be

⁴⁸⁶ Mary Ruth Titcomb, “Americanization and Mexicans in the Southwest: A History of Phoenix's Friendly House, 1920-1983,” (Masters Thesis, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1984), 2.

⁴⁸⁷ Emory Bogardus quoted in Titcomb, 23.

Americanization Day in Arizona.⁴⁸⁸ Mexicans supported and became involved in Americanization from the outset. Pedro de la Lama started a local Council for Defense for the Spanish Speaking Community in 1918, the first in the region of any, Spanish speaking or not. From these councils came the first ideas for starting a settlement house of sorts, modeled after East Coast immigrant homes, in the valley. Once the Phoenix Americanization Committee decided to build a home, *La Alianza Hispano Americana*, one of the original Arizona Mutual Aid societies for Hispanics, volunteered to pay the first month's rent.⁴⁸⁹ Apparently the Mexican community -- which up to this point had nothing in the way of social services, charities and welfare -- welcomed the idea of white Phoenicians awarding the Hispanic community some comparatively positive attention.

The founder, Carrie Greene, at first a full time volunteer, started the Friendly House near Darrell Duppa's home south of downtown Phoenix. The Friendly House's original design of forcing English language and American values never came to full fruition. Greene allowed celebrations of Mexican holidays, Mexican songs, and generally seemed to embrace a fairly pluralistic atmosphere. When she became too ill to continue in her role, Placida Garcia Smith, a college graduate from Colorado who had done graduate work in Sociology, assumed leadership of the house in 1931. The solid reputation of the Friendly House

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid, 31.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid, 40.

improved as the new director assumed the role of feeding and housing many destitute Mexicans during the Great Depression.

The Friendly House's presence in Phoenix shows that even in some of the most xenophobic eras of American history, champions of progressive values could still be found. Most of the contributors the Friendly House were white businesses and charity organizations. The Friendly House was unique compared to most other settlement houses. While Eastern settlement houses saw a significant drop-off in European immigrants, Arizona continued to assume large scale Mexican migration toward the end of the twenties. This perhaps accounts for some of the fading zeal for ardent enforcement of Americanization.

By the end of the 1920s, despite population gains, Phoenix whites and Mexicans lived largely isolated from one another. Much of the Mexican population gain during this decade was on the outskirts, while whites tended to move into growing urban Phoenix. The need for more Mexican workers appeared to be increasing as well. From 1920-1930 Maricopa County increased agricultural acreage by more 36%. Irrigated farms had further increased by 29% to make up 95.5% of all agriculture in Maricopa County.⁴⁹⁰ Throughout the twenties, Mexican population growth had no signs of slowing down.

⁴⁹⁰ Pendleton, Appendix, 623.

Restrictions and the Great Depression

Two forces came to a crescendo by the 1930s halting the accelerated immigration that began shortly after the turn of the century. The first force came in the growing cry for restriction. The haggling over Mexican immigration restrictions continued for 13 years between 1917 and 1930. The first victory for restrictionists came in the Arizona State Legislature, where labor unions and restrictionists had been lobbying for local controls. Arizona passed state legislation in 1929 in support of the Box Bill. Looking at excerpts from the decree, the voice of organized labor's contribution is easy to discern:

Whereas the restrictions by law of immigration have operated materially reduce the menace of the American workingmen of competition by a large volume of cheap labor.

Whereas ... It is estimated there are more than three million Mexican peons in direct competition with the American workingmen, thus making beggars and tramps of many of our native born citizens because of an oversupply of labor ...

It is imperative in order to adequately protect our own people and institutions that we have added restrictions, to our immigration laws, especially applying to Mexican peons of the Republic of Mexico stronger deportation ...

RESOLVED: The Senate of the 9th State Legislature of the State of Arizona favors the maintenance of the basic provisions of the immigration act of 1924, and urges upon the Congress of the U.S. the enactment into law of ... the Box Bill, making the quota provisions thereof applicable to Mexico.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁹¹ Pendleton, 198-199.

Even with their victory, organized labor doubted that any state legislation could be effective in deterring cotton growers from scouring Mexico. By the following year, the ACGA complained that Salt River growers were still bringing in workers from Mexico.⁴⁹²

The National Immigration Hearings in 1930 that the Salt River Valley growers participated in so actively did finally bring a qualified victory for restrictionist. This time, the Salt River Growers were unable to convince Congress that Mexican immigrant labor was necessary in the Southwest. The Senate passed a bill signaling Mexican immigration for restriction. A similar bill had enjoyed strong support in the House, but was killed by Republican leaders at the behest of Herbert Hoover. The U.S. was attempting to improve relations with Mexico at the time, and the bill might well have undermined progress toward better relations between the two countries. Congress only allowed its bill to be dropped, because administrative measures had already significantly reduced Mexican immigration by 1928. Because the administration hoped to forestall further legislation, the State Department instructed American Consuls to actually enforce regulations including public charge, literacy requirements and contract labor clauses of the 1917 Immigration Act, and adhere strictly to existing

⁴⁹² Pendleton, 200-201.

immigration regulations in issuing visas.⁴⁹³ The flood tide of immigration that began the twentieth century had ended.

Repatriation and the Great Depression

The second force that finally halted Mexican immigration came in the onset of the Great Depression. The stock market crashed throughout October 1929. As the economy continued to spiral for roughly the next decade, fierce competition ensued over all jobs, even menial, low paying work. Ironically, this depressed economic scenario would bring the restrictionist dream of the white man's return to farm labor to fruition. Poor whites, predominantly from the drought-stricken plains states, filled the Salt River Valley agricultural labor force in numbers nobody could have predicted. In a survey of 518 pickers, only 3 pickers were out-of-state "Spanish Americans" and less 5% were black.⁴⁹⁴

Occupying the lowest rungs of the racial hierarchy of Phoenix, no one had it worse than the Mexicans. As in the 1921 cotton crash, Mexicans again began to head south across the border in tremendous numbers. More importantly, this time government agencies across the Southwest, but especially in Los Angeles,

⁴⁹³ Mark Reisler, "Always the Laborer, Never the Citizen: Anglo Perceptions of the Mexican Immigrant During the 1920s," *Pacific Historical Review*: University of California Press, vol. 45, no. 2 (May, 1976), 523.

⁴⁹⁴ Migratory Cotton Workers, 65.

actively participated in the “repatriation” campaigns to send Mexican immigrants back to their homeland. On the surface, the program was designed to offer government assistance to jobless Mexicans who needed to go home. The 1921 cotton bust fiasco had demonstrated the need for such a program in harsh economic times. However, repatriation campaigns have often been accused of making little distinction between Spanish speaking citizens and non-citizens, and even using coercive tactics to “encourage” Mexicans to repatriate.

Ironically, in 1921 the Arizona Legislature appealed to the Federal Government to help deport stranded workers. Washington denied the appeal, stating that it did not want to establish a precedent for government involvement in employer affairs. Ten years later, across many areas of the Southwest, the government seemed all too eager to repatriate Mexican workers on its own dime. Through the work of nativist Congressman John R. Box, Secretary of Labor Doak, and Charles P. Vissel in Los Angeles, drives began to repatriate “unneeded” workers to their home country. The drives peaked in 1931, under Hoover’s PECE (President’s Emergency Committee on Employment). The numbers of workers repatriated during these campaigns remains a matter of contention. Numbers vary significantly based on the source. Francisco Balderrama placed the total number repatriated at 1.2 million. Abraham Hoffman argued that only a third that amount had been repatriated.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹⁵ The main authors on the Great Depression are Abraham Hoffman, Francisco Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez.. The main contention between

Actual numbers found can be tricky Paul Schuster Taylor notes that the American figures have been “totally inadequate.” By his count, American figures only show 68,455 Mexican departures from the country between 1940-1932. Mexican sources during this time show 291,033 departures from the U.S. to Mexico during the same time. Taylor concludes that the remigration figures, even by Mexican standards, are only about 50% more than they were between 1926 - 1929.⁴⁹⁶ The National Department of Statistics shows that remigration began quietly in 1930. Though these statistics did not catch all the repatriates, they nonetheless show the magnitude of remigration. In 1930, only 28,218 migrants repatriated back across the border. The largest year for remigration came in 1930, with 124, 991 total counted repatriates. Following these two years remigration decreased steadily in 50% increments through 1933.

The Depression in the U.S. brought great pressure to get rid of all who were not U.S. citizens. For the Mexican-Americans who remained after the Great Depression, their society and culture changed. As Mario T. Garcia points out, the mass repatriation of immigrants and the high birthrates of Mexican-Americans made this a “Mexican-American” generation. By contrast, the previous generation (1900-1930) was predominantly immigrant, and most considered

Hoffman and Balderrama is the number of immigrants who were repatriated. Hoffman’s study, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression* is a depth look at the repatriation process, particularly in California.

⁴⁹⁶ Paul Schuster Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1934), 50.

themselves “*Mexicanos de Afuera.*” This new generation concerned itself less with Mexico and more advancing their status in the U.S.

The Great Depression in Phoenix

In Phoenix, the same conditions that existed during that infamous 1921 cotton bust reappeared. Like the original bust, cotton prices dropped down to nearly a third of their previous levels. Nearly every industry was hit hard. Despite the region’s checkered past treatment of Mexicans, this crash is most notable for its lack of evidence of any significant forced repatriation. In his Thesis, Leonardo Macias, Jr. claims that “In Phoenix, thousands of Mexicans were rounded up as part of the federal deportation effort between 1930 -1932. They were either deported or voluntarily repatriated to Mexico.”⁴⁹⁷ He later adds that 6400 Mexicans were repatriated. Little can actually be found of a concentrated repatriation campaign in the Phoenix area, however. Eric Meeks criticizes Friendly House Director Placida Smith, for “boasting” that her charity helped repatriate 130 Mexican families.⁴⁹⁸ However, Titcomb notes that Placida Smith publicly stated she stood against repatriation. While Meeks notes the hypocrisy between her later statement and her assistance in Repatriation, Smith probably considered her efforts charity for families who wanted to go home. Meeks also noted that a Consul report indicated that 7000 Mexicans were “being

⁴⁹⁷ Macias, Leonardo. "Mexican Immigration and Repatriation during the Great Depression," (Masters Thesis, Arizona State University, 1992), 35, 38, 64.

⁴⁹⁸ Titcomb, 45.

processed” for deportation. Meeks, however, offers little insight as to whether these deportations were coerced in any way.⁴⁹⁹

While repatriation campaigns at the onset of the Great Depression were checkered operations in some other parts of the country, Arizona remained uncharacteristically quiet. Taylor points out that only 8% of Mexicans in Arizona repatriated, compared to 48.1% in Texas and 25.9% in California.⁵⁰⁰ Government assisted massive repatriations campaigns especially focused on California. Though previous scholars have noted that immigrants were deported, no evidence can be found that these deportations forced or unwelcome in any way.

Though the repatriation campaigns of the 1930s might have been forced or coerced elsewhere, there remains no strong evidence of any coercion in the Salt River Valley. Ultimately much of the scholarship that considers repatriation a betrayal ignores that in these times of joblessness and prolonged destitution, many of the repatriates wanted to go home. For example, both F.A. Rosales and Hoffman note that Mexicans sought the Red Cross and the Mexican Consuls for help repatriating in desperate times as early as the 1920s. The 1921 cotton crash provides a sterling example of this. The stranded unemployed Mexican immigrants in 1921 would have loved a free ride back to Mexico.

⁴⁹⁹ Eric Meeks, *Border Citizens: The Making of Indians, Mexicans, and Anglos in Arizona* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 118.

⁵⁰⁰ Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States*, 7.

Conclusion

The year 1930 makes a fitting end to this study. For the second time in one decade, Phoenix rode a booming economy into precipitous decline. However, this time, the economic downfall occurred for the entire country. More importantly, during this decade, the growers' practice of recruiting massive numbers of immigrants for low-end labor gained the national spotlight. By the end of the war, the Southwest, including Phoenix, had become economically integrated and populous enough to garner national attention. As restrictionists limited European immigration, their oversight of Mexicans became painfully clear. The issue became a national debate in Congressional Hearings and Salt River Valley cotton growers showed up in force. This time, the results would not fall in their favor.

Still, it was not the legislation which truly shut down northward migration across the U.S.-Mexican border, but the Great Depression. The economic devastation that began in 1929 brought an unexpectedly large internal migration of American-born workers willing to pick cotton. Only economic catastrophe and a dearth of economic opportunities kept the Salt River Valley labor requirements fulfilled throughout the following the decade. With a negative migration rate from Mexico for the first time in Phoenix history, an era had truly ended. By 1930, after more than 60 years of vital contribution to community development, Mexicans in the Salt River Valley remained segregated and disenfranchised.

CONCLUSION

Looking back at the first 60 years from 1867 to 1930, the Salt River Valley had come a long way. In 1867, Jack Swilling and company first began carving canals using the templates left behind by an ancient civilization. Only Fort McDowell kept the region relatively safe from Indian attacks. Meanwhile, tough guys like Henry Garfias and Winchester Miller helped not only to keep the dusty town safe as lawmen, but also helped dig and manage canals. In order to prosper in a frontier society, men and women needed a diverse array of skills. Perhaps most of these settlers did not think that Phoenix would be more than a local agricultural hub. Why would they? The small desert town probably seemed good for little else other than feeding local mining centers. Few of these men and women had ambitions beyond farming a cheap tract of land or starting a little business.

The transition came in the following generation. Toward the end of 1880s Phoenix began to show signs of turning into an emerging city. More migrants came to Phoenix because they saw the potential to grow the city along with their own net worth. We can fault boosters for their chicanery and deceit, but not for their ambitions and energies. Boosters successfully drew people, capital - both private and government - as well as irrigation projects and railroads. The masterpiece of these boosters during the "Foundation Era" came in the great Roosevelt Dam. The dam and two spur lines that hit the Phoenix area had provided a platform for future growth and prosperity.

This prosperity came sooner than most would have imagined after the completion of the dam. By 1917, just five years after the construction of the dam, cotton made for the first commercially pervasive crop on the market. For the first time, Phoenix began making headlines across the country. With a commercially viable crop, connections to other cities Phoenix entered the “Integrated Era” from 1912 - 1930. The news of profits attracted migrants to the new desert city in increasing numbers. Over the next 20 years, farmers found that the economic prosperity they sought came at a higher price than they expected, however. While boosters bragged to potential migrants of the fecundity of Arizona land and sunshine, they omitted that irrigation costs rendered the land no more profitable than any other section of the country. Furthermore, dependence on national market prices could attract problems as quickly as profits. The Salt River Valley growers hit two substantial crashes in the last ten years of this study. The first crash in 1921 proved only a temporary setback. The second crash, at the end of this study, lasted throughout most of the following decade.

As Phoenix residents became connected, boosters found themselves impacting national policy with surprising frequency. Proponents of irrigation lobbied for Reclamation, and successfully positioned themselves to become the first benefactor of the Reclamation Act. As commercial cotton ebbed and flowed throughout the “Integrated Era,” the ACGA often sent representatives to testify before Congress. Their strong presence at these trials demonstrates the emerging

presence of the desert and city, as well as their pronounced dependency on Mexican labor.

Agriculture in the valley grew impressively throughout the period of this study. The chart below shows that the agriculture in Arizona -- of which Maricopa County comprised more than half -- increased from a total of 172 farms in 1870 to 14,173, or more than 82 times that number in 60 years. As the number of farms increased, so too did acreage. While farms in 1870 averaged only 127 acres, this number grew more than 5 fold over 60 years, to an average of 743. The rise in average acreage demonstrates that by the end of this study, the family farm had a strong trend downwards. Despite the Jeffersonian intentions of the Bureau of Reclamation and the USDA, irrigated agriculture seemed to gravitate to the sphere of corporate agriculture by design.

Year	Number of Farms	Improved Acres of Land in Farms	Average Size of Farms	Number of Persons Engaged in Agriculture	Number of Farm Laborers	Agricultural Wages Paid
1870	172	14,585	127	1,285	585	104,620
1880	767	56,071	177	3,435	596	
1890	1,426	104,128	910	10,528	1,516	
1900	5,089	252,521	468	16,174	3,393	1,152,670
1910	9,227	350,173	135	22,416	7,908	2,504,984
1920	9,997	712,803	582	36,199	15,293	8,442,276
1930	14,173	478,411	743	38,423	20,715	10,388,821

1900 - Number of farms and average size includes Indian agriculture.

1900 - Number of laborers includes farm and plantation laborers.⁵⁰¹

Figure 25 – Arizona Farm Data 1870-1930

⁵⁰¹ Compiled from US Census 1870-1945, in Pendleton, 568.

The gains in agriculture provided a platform for metropolitan Phoenix to grow as well. As residents moved into the region for farming, so too did building trades, service sector, real estate and professional jobs increase. This steady growth in agriculture and urban development is reflected by the population growth. Census statistics show the total population grew by a little over 5000, or 23 fold, in Phoenix's first 30 years. The town increased nine-fold over the next 30 years, but by a far more impressive 43,000 total residents. Mexicans slightly outnumbered whites in 1870, but then slipped to about 14.5% of the total population by the turn of the century. While the census does not adequately reflect the number of Mexicans living in Phoenix, the next 30 years saw Hispanics outgain their white counterparts in terms of percentage of the population. By this time, much of the Mexican population resided in camps and distant *colonias* not often counted in the Census. By the end of this study, Phoenix had developed a modern urban infrastructure, secured a mainline railroad and touted the second largest population in the Southwest.⁵⁰²

⁵⁰² In a review of city directories, for example, Keith Blakeman estimated in a graduate seminar paper that the Phoenix Mexican population was double the 10% estimated in the Census. This trend of not including Mexicans in the census count probably only increased as commercial agriculture grew in the Phoenix area.

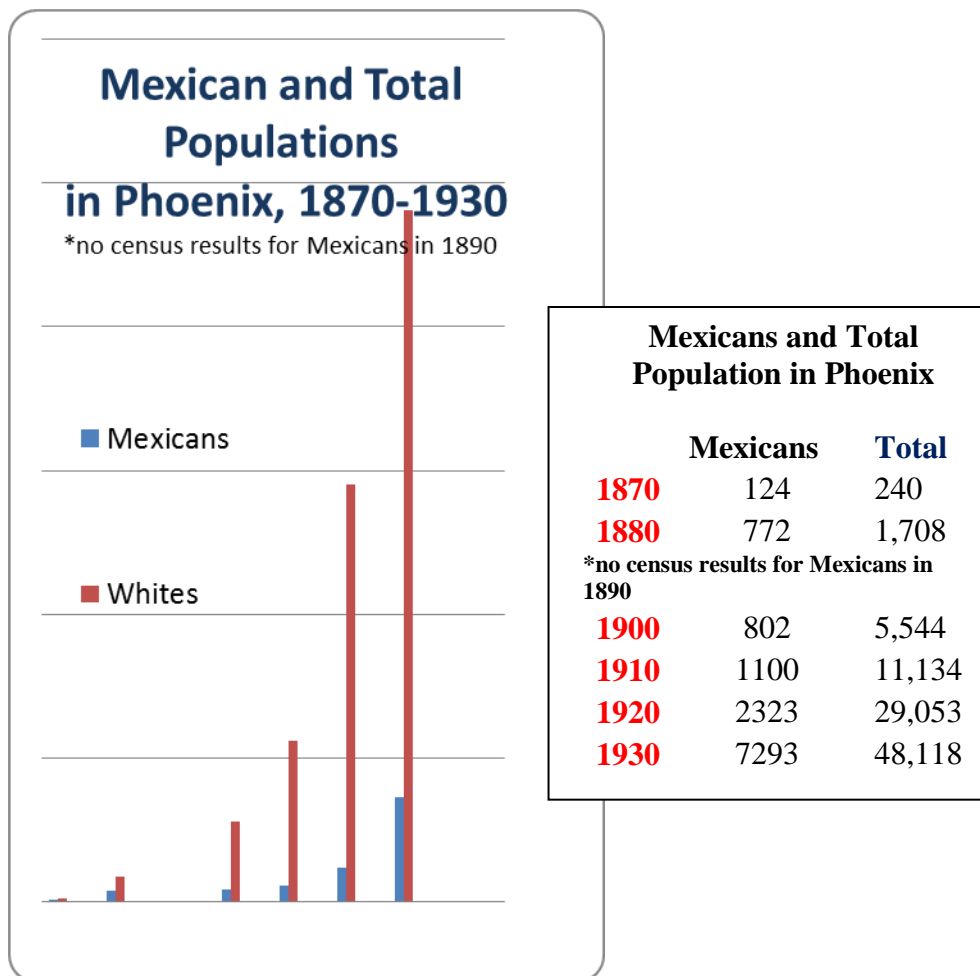


Figure 26 -- Mexican and Total Populations in Phoenix 1870-1930

For Mexicans, the story starts in a similar fashion to that of whites, but unfolds quite differently. Mexican settlers actually predated whites along the Salt River. However, most came from other parts of the Sonoran Desert to farm and find canal work. During the first 20 years of their stay, Mexicans and whites worked alongside one another, constantly interacting to make the desert terrain livable. In this Preindustrial Era, whites depended on the Sonoran's skill to navigate the unfamiliar desert. If whites came to the region with any prejudices,

they were generally eclipsed by an interdependence brought on by the demands of a desert frontier.

As the city grew, Mexicans had fewer opportunities for mobility than whites. The only work most could find came in the expanding commercial agriculture industry. Irrigated acreage required brawn more than it did foresight or experience. A solidifying sense of racial prejudice among whites pushed Mexicans increasingly into this role. It was the emerging cotton industry, however, that truly solidified the Mexican as little more than a laborer.

As demand for cotton skyrocketed, Mexicans poured into the valley at the behest of growers. The ACGA, composed of a cohesive network of growers, impressively met their exorbitant labor needs every year of the boom through a highly structured labor recruitment and management system. The cooperation exhibited by the growers has been a tradition in Salt River Valley industry from the first years of settlement. The cooperative networks that manipulated the rivers to irrigate their lands eventually evolved into a cohesive network of farmers who attracted the first Reclamation project in the U.S. to the Salt River Valley. Cotton growers, consisting of the same cadre of water users, parlayed their collective efforts to form the ACGA. Like the Salt River Valley Water Users Association, the cotton industry in Arizona too owed its existence to government assistance, knowledge and planning.

When the boom ended in precipitous collapse, thousands of Mexicans were left destitute. Despite the contribution they had made to the industry and

American wartime demand, thousands were left stranded in Phoenix with no way to return to Mexico. Though the ACGA grudgingly participated in transporting them back to the border, the Mexican government still took most of the repatriation costs.

The 1920s played out in eerily similar fashion. Despite the setbacks from the first collapse, Mexicans came to Phoenix again to meet the growing region's needs. The restriction of European immigrants from the U.S., and subsequent increase of Mexicans, made the presence of Mexicans more apparent than ever before. Not surprising given the xenophobia of the 1920s, the national spotlight brought negative attention and widespread calls for restrictions on Mexicans for the first time. Throughout the 1920s the ACGA was forced to defend their need to bring Mexicans across the border. Despite a public strongly in favor of restricting Mexicans, the border remained relatively open until 1929. What stopped widespread immigration was not necessarily restriction, but the onset of the Great Depression. Like the 1921 crash, joblessness pervaded in agricultural industries. Unlike 1921, however, government and others seemed eager to send these workers back to Mexico. Despite insinuations otherwise, the Salt River Valley seems to have participated only in voluntary repatriation.

Despite their contributions, Mexicans generally lacked an effective defender. Labor unions chose to lobby against Mexican immigration, much as they had against European. Sociologists largely fed American stereotypes in the 1920s with scientific explanations which worked against Mexican immigration.

Part of the disdain that Mexicans received seems to have come from the idea that they took jobs from native-born Americans or reduced their pay. However, it would have been difficult to imagine Americans choosing to work as hired field hands in a thriving economy. Carey McWilliams pointed out that Americans have often overlooked the fact that this rapid expansion of the Southwest was premised on a large supply of low cost labor. Though unions complained about the wage degradation, they failed to note that the cotton fields of the Imperial Valley and San Joaquin Valley, for example, were a major factor in the location of large automobile tire factories which stimulated higher paying jobs for native-born workers.⁵⁰³

So too did Mexicans in the Salt River Valley feed the local economy, and enable upward mobility for skilled laborers. D.B. Wiley insisted in his 1930 testimony that “You will throw more skilled labor out of employment than the number of Mexicans we employ if we cannot get them”⁵⁰⁴ Carl Hayden echoed this in his 1920 testimony before Congress, reading a wire from Herbert Atha simply stating “By giving work to the Mexican picker it is also giving work to the American workingman.”⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰³ McWilliams, 174.

⁵⁰⁴ Wiley, 621.

⁵⁰⁵ Pete Dimas, 42; *Temporary Admissions of Illiterate Mexican Laborers. Hearings Before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization.* 275-76.

The biases in these testimonies are undeniable. All these men were testifying before Congress for exempting Mexican immigrants from restrictions. Herbert Atha and D.B. Wiley were both cotton growers, with a direct stake in continued Mexican immigration. Wiley was almost certainly exaggerating when he insisted that more skilled laborers would be out of work than Mexicans. Their points are salient nonetheless. The tumultuous cotton boom attracted the Goodyear Corporation, stimulated local businesses, and led to substantial capital investments from outside companies. Carey McWilliams noted that across the Southwest “This fabulous increase in production, which set the Southwest on its feet financially, could never have taken place so rapidly without the use of Mexican labor.”⁵⁰⁶

As the ACGA experienced record profits during the cotton boom, they nonetheless kept their wages among the lowest in the Southwest. Workers, organizers and community supporters did attempt to collectively bargain with the ACGA for better wages, hours and living conditions. Ultimately the ACGA’s collective wage fixing system was impenetrable. Without widespread community support, negotiating with the ACGA remained impossible. In addition to low wages, camp conditions among most growers in the valley were infamous. Cotton camps largely consisted of self-made shacks and tents without clean water. Though the growers maintained that they could not afford higher wages or more

⁵⁰⁶ McWilliams, 177.

expensive accommodations, the stories they told potential cotton farmers and independent studies strongly suggest otherwise.⁵⁰⁷

Perhaps the ACGA would have benefitted from a change in philosophy. Goodyear subsidiary, the Southwestern Cotton Company, was known for its progressive treatment of workers and comparatively pristine camps. As their Superintendent put it:

Entirely aside from the humanitarian aspects of the situation, it's plain good business for us to keep these people just as healthy as we can, the less interruption there is in our field work the more smoothly things will run, and the lower our net cost of producing a bale of cotton will be.⁵⁰⁸

The ACGA had plenty of reasons to pay their workers better. By the ACGA's admission, workers generally stayed for only one season. Many who remained in the country went to pick lettuce in the Imperial Valley before looking for work in more profitable regions of California. In order to keep their wages low, the ACGA spent tens of thousands of dollars each year to recruit an entirely new crop of pickers. Looking back at the cotton boom, one wonders if such an expenditure would have been necessary if the ACGA had paid the workers better wages.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁷ Brown and Cassmore, 65; Christy, 57-58.

⁵⁰⁸ Pendleton, 232.

⁵⁰⁹ EP Taylor. "Cooperative Demonstration Work in Agriculture and Home Economics." University of Arizona College of Agriculture and USDA Cooperating. Third Annual Report for the Year Ending Dec 1, 1917, Agricultural Experiment Station, Tucson AZ

Despite their tradition in the region and their contribution to the Southwestern economy, we see a repeated pattern of permitting Mexicans to stay in the region to work during good economic times, and encouraging them to leave when times were bad. Oddly, even in years of a strong, healthy economy Mexican workers were pushed farther away from mainstream society and economic mobility. By the 1930s, this trend pushed Mexicans into their own homogenous colonias, generally located in the agricultural outskirts of town. Despite the more pronounced Mexican presence, whites could stay largely within their neighborhoods, limiting their interaction with Mexicans.

Economic distress aside, one wonders whether the restrictionists would have been truly content with the results. The new “Okies” were assigned social stereotypes and stigmas much akin to what the earlier Mexican field workers had endured. Local Phoenix society shunned these workers much as they had the Mexicans.⁵¹⁰ The farm owners lost their best workers when the supply of Mexican labor was curtailed. Moreover, the white workers of the dust bowl years only remained in the fields until the economy improved. When World War II pulled the economy out of the Depression, the United States again contracted temporary immigrants for seasonal agricultural work.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid; Meeks, 116.

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