

TRANSCRIPT OF AN ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

MR. AND MRS. ANGEL GARCÍA

INTERVIEWER: JOHN A. SÁNCHEZ

This interview was conducted as part of a series on the Mexican American in Minnesota.

Mr. Angel Garcia, was born in Houston, Texas in 1921. Mrs. Garcia, was born in Chicago, Illinois. They moved to Winona, Minnesota in 1951. They have raised three children there.

The Garcias own a tavern in Stockton, Minnesota, a trucking business, a farm, and other real estate in Minnesota. The Garcias discuss their employment and educational histories and how the Mexican heritage has affected their lives.

This is a transcript of a tape-recorded interview edited to aid in clarity and ease of comprehension for the reader. The original tape recording is available in the Audio-Visual Library of the Minnesota Historical Society.

INTERVIEW WITH MR. AND MRS. ANGEL GARCIA

August 6, 1976

Sanchez: Minnesota Historical Society recording; Mexican American History Project; August 6, 1976, Winona. We are in the living room of the Angel Garcia family. I will proceed to the biographical interview, with Mr. Angel Garcia, Mrs. Mary Garcia, and John Sanchez as interviewer. for the Minnesota Historical Society. Christopher, the grandson, is also present, who you'll hear at times. Mr. Angel Garcia is a prominent businessman here in Winona. He has been here for many years. He will, of course, describe some of these details. Mr. Angel Garcia and his family run three types of businesses: 1) A tavern in Stockton, Minnesota, just west of Winona. 2) A trucking business that he runs himself. 3) He also does some farming on his property. He raises conventional crops on the farm. Could you tell us where you were born?

Mr. Garcia: Houston, Texas.

Mrs. Garcia: Chicago, Illinois.

Sanchez: What year?

Mr. Garcia: 1921.

Sanchez: How many children do you have?

Mr. Garcia: We have three children.

Mrs. Garcia: They are 20, 21 and 22 years old.

Sanchez: What are their names?

Mr. Garcia: The oldest girl's name is Amparo; then Christina; and Adam.

Sanchez: Do you recall where your parents came from, Angel?

Mr. Garcia: From the Houston, Texas area.

Sanchez: And your parents, Mrs. Garcia?

Mrs. Garcia: I don't know, I couldn't tell you.

Sanchez: Could you describe how you came to Winona from Houston, Angel?

Mr. Garcia: I was a truck driver and I also was operating heavy machinery under a con-

Mr. Garcia: tract. I had to move from county to county, or state to state. Finally, we settled here.

Sanchez: Why Minnesota?

Mr. Garcia: We like it.

Sanchez: How about you, Mary? How did you come to Minnesota?

Mrs. Garcia: After I met my husband, we settled here. We like Winona.

Sanchez: Did you get married in Minnesota?

Mrs. Garcia: No, we got married outside of Minnesota.

Sanchez: What are your educational backgrounds? Did you attend high school? Were you able to complete school?

Mr. Garcia: Oh, that was a problem. I went to seventh grade, that was it.

Mrs. Garcia: I went to the ninth grade.

Sanchez: What type of work have you done, Angel, in years past?

Mr. Garcia: For one thing, it was labor for awhile.

Sanchez: What kind of labor? Farm labor?

Mr. Garcia: Farm labor. After that I went into construction and heavy machinery. Then I went into trucking.

Sanchez: Your own business?

Mr. Garcia: My own business.

Sanchez: How many years have you been running your own business?

Mr. Garcia: It must be twelve years, already.

Sanchez: How long have you owned the tavern?

Mr. Garcia: We have owned the tavern for eight years.

Sanchez: Always in Stockton?

Mr. Garcia: Always in Stockton. The trucking business, I have had for about fifteen years.

Sanchez: How about the farm?

Mr. Garcia: About six years.

Sanchez: How about you, Mary? Have you held any jobs?

Mrs. Garcia: I worked at the knitting mills for fourteen years.

Sanchez: In Winona?

Mrs. Garcia: In Winona. Then, when we bought the bar, I quit. I started working at the bar, and I have been working there ever since.

Sanchez: Is the bar a family enterprize?

Mrs. Garcia: Yes. Well, I run it now. But, my daughter and my son work there too.

Sanchez: Chris and Adam. Do you belong to any organizations?

Mr. Garcia: I belong to the Liquor Association, the Trucking Association, and the Teamsters.

Sanchez: How about any social organizations? Where you meet to have parties? Any religious organizations?

Mr. Garcia: We are Catholics, we go to church, that is all.

Sanchez: Do you go to a Spanish-speaking church?

Mrs. Garcia: No, we go to St. Stan's.

Mr. Garcia: We go to our own Polish church!

Sanchez: Your own Polish church! How important is your Mexican heritage? Has your Mexican heritage affected your lives?

Mr. Garcia: Oh, I'm proud to be a Mexican. Like I say, "People here, help. They give you a chance. It is up to you to go over there to get it. Like everybody else". But a lot of Mexicans don't want to do that. They won't get the chance that I had. I'm proud to be a Mexican.

Sanchez: How about you, Mary?

Mrs. Garcia: Oh, I'm proud. That's about all I can say. I enjoy living here.

Chris: Hi.

Sanchez: Hi, Chris. Chris just came into the living room and joined the family.

Sanchez: Do you speak Spanish to the family at home?

Mr. Garcia: Yes, we speak Spanish.

Sanchez: Both Spanish and English, then?

Mrs. Garcia: Yes.

Sanchez: Do you ever go back to visit Mexico?

Mr. Garcia: No.

Sanchez: How about Houston?

Mr. Garcia: No, we never go to Houston. Last year, we went to Wichita Fort, Texas and Madison, New Mexico.

Sanchez: You have no particular relatives in Mexico?

Mr. Garcia: Not that I know of. There might be a bunch down there, I don't know.

Sanchez: Do you observe any celebrations or fiestas, here?

Mr. Garcia: The fourth of July! We're Americans, you know.

Sanchez: Yes, indeed. Do you eat any Mexican foods?

Mrs. Garcia: Yes.

Sanchez: Do you prepare them yourselves or do you buy them made?

Mrs. Garcia: I prepare the little that we know of!

Mr. Garcia: I make Tacos and all that at the bar for the weekend. People really like that.

Sanchez: You eat Mexican foods also, at times?

Mr. Garcia: Yes.

Sanchez: How about Mexican music? Do you like to listen to it?

Mr. Garcia: Oh, we have everything in the tavern, Mexican and American music.

Sanchez: In the jukebox, there?

Mr. Garcia: Yes. People like it.

Sanchez: How much do you think your Mexican American background has influenced your children?

Mr. Garcia: Nothing. They like to be called Mexican American, because they are.

Mrs. Garcia: They don't know any Spanish. They can't read, write, speak or understand it.

Sanchez: They didn't take it in school?

Mrs. Garcia: My oldest daughter took it in school, but she knows very little. She went to Mexico just before she got married.

Mr. Garcia: She went with a group from school. We talk Spanish, my wife and I. The kids, you know how they are! You speak Spanish to them, then that's it. They are proud of what they are too. We have a good business, everybody in the family helps. I hope business will get better yet, too.

Sanchez: Chris, as long as you are here, could you give us a reaction to how you feel towards your Mexican American heritage, which you inherited from your parents?

Chris: I'm proud of it. I'm happy I have never had to worry about people saying bad things. I have always respected where I come from. That my parents are Spanish and that I had a little bit of Spanish in me. That I'm Mexican. I'm proud of it.

Sanchez: Great! Angel, when did you come to Winona?

Mr. Garcia: I came in 1951.

Sanchez: What jobs did you hold then, when you arrived here?

Mr. Garcia: I worked at the foundry for three years.

Sanchez: That's the foundry right here in Winona?

Mr. Garcia: Yes. Then I worked in a Co-op fertilizer plant for a year. I got laid off from there. So, I went up to Bay State Mill and Company, Flour Mill. I worked sixteen years at the Flour Mill.

Sanchez: Then did you become an independent businessman?

Mr. Garcia: Yes.

Sanchez: With the truck business?

Mr. Garcia: I resigned from work. Then I went into my own business.

Sanchez: Do you have any other comments, Mary, that you would like include?

Mrs. Garcia: No, that's about it.

Sanchez: We are completing the recording here in Winona at 8:15 p.m. on the 6th of August 1976, in the living room of the Angel Garcia family. Thank you for the interview.

Mexican-American Oral History Project
Minnesota Historical Society