

## TRANSCRIPT OF AN ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

MR. AND MRS. FRANCISCO GOMEZ

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

Francisco Gomez, was born in Pueblo Diario, Jalisco, Mexico in 1907. He came to the United States at the age of fifteen. He held various jobs in Texas before coming to Minnesota to work in 1927. Mr. Gomez worked for Armour Packing Company for 23 years. He was working a farm in Hollandale, Minnesota, at the time of the interview.

Mr. and Mrs. Gomez, discuss their family and give advice to the younger generation. As one of the founders of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, Mr. Gomez talks about it's inception. He also discusses his move to the United States and to Minnesota and his work history.

This is a translation of a tape recorded interview in Spanish. The original tape recording is available in the Audio-Visual Library of the Minnesota Historical Society.

INTERVIEW WITH MR. AND MRS. FRANCISCO GOMEZ

JULY 26, 1976

INTERVIEWER: GRANT MOOSBRUGGER

Moosbrugger: This is Grant Moosbrugger, interviewing Mr. Francisco Gomez, and his wife Casimira Gomez, in their home, in Hollandale, Minnesota. Today is July 26, 1976. Do I have your permission to tape this interview for the Minnesota Historical Society?

Gomez: Yes.

Moosbrugger: Could you start, by telling us when you were born, where, and something about your parents?

Gomez: My father's name was Ignacio Gomez. My mother's was Luisa Alcala. I was born in Pueblo Diario, in the state of Jalisco, Mexico. My name is Francisco Gomez. I consider myself as being raised in St. Paul, Minnesota. I was born in 1907.

Moosbrugger: Do you have any brothers?

Gomez: I have two brothers. I had three, but one died, and two are left: Alberto, and Ignacio. I have two sisters: Herlinda and Carmen.

Moosbrugger: Where were they born?

Gomez: They were born in Pueblo Diario, Jalisco, Mexico. They are still in Mexico.

Moosbrugger: How old were you when you came to the United States?

Gomez: I was fifteen years old when my father brought me to the United States, in 1922.

Moosbrugger: Did you come with your parents?

Gomez: I came with my father. My mother stayed in Mexico.

Moosbrugger: Where did you stay, when you and your father came to the United States?

Gomez: We stayed in the state of Texas. We worked on the railroad. Four months later he returned to Mexico. He left me and my brother, Ignacio. Then, after four months, we went to Fort Worth, Texas. We spent the winter there.

Gomez: We saw we were running out of money. We signed up to work on a farm in Roses, Texas, making firewood. After a couple of years, my brother went to work at a railroad camp. After two or three months, he came and got me. We were , both of us working, in Herberalville, Texas. We stayed there, working on the tracks. Then, they changed us to the road crew. The foreman liked us. There were four of us working on the crew. After two weeks of work, they started bothering us. The boss told us if we stayed two more weeks, he would give us a letter that would guarantee us a job. My father like that. After the two weeks, my father again returned to Mexico. My brother and I stayed. Then for a while, we split up. Two years later we got together, when my father came to get us to go back to Mexico. I was already married, and I couldn't go back. He told me, "I didn't bring you here to get married. I brought you here to work, so we could go back to Mexico." I told him I was very sorry, but that I couldn't go back with him to Mexico. So he returned to Mexico by himself. My brother didn't go back either. In 1930, he returned to Mexico, he never came back here again.

Moosbrugger: Were you living in Texas when you got married?

Gomez: Yes. I got married in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1926. In 1927, we were contracted to work in Minnesota. I came with my father; brother; father-in-law; mother-in-law; brothers-in-law; and my wife, to work the beet fields. I worked in the beet fields, until 1930, when we went to St. Paul. From 1930 I worked at "Amour's Meat Packing House."

Moosbrugger: What towns did you live in, from 1927 to 1930?

Gomez: Fairmount, Blue Earth, Hollandale, and St. James, we lived all over in Minnesota.

Moosbrugger: In 1930, you went to St. Paul. Where did you work?

Gomez: I was working in New Brighton, in the "Arms Plant" I worked nine months there. You couldn't work there unless you were a citizen. I had already put in my application for citizenship, and they let me work. They wouldn't

Gomez: let my brothers-in-law work, because they hadn't made any attempts to become citizens.

Moosbrugger: Could you give us the names of your children, in order?

Gomez: From my first wife? The first was Nicolas Gomez, he was born in Wellington, Minnesota, on the sixth of December. Consuelo was born on a farm also in Wellington, on the twenty-ninth of July, 1929. Luis was born in Truman, Minnesota, on August 31st. The rest were born in St. Paul, which are: Gloria and Dolores March 29, 1934, they are twins. Franky was born in November of 1937, on Thanksgiving Day. Esperanza was born in 1940, she was also a twin, but the doctor killed the other one. Then I was alone for three years, until I got married again in 1945. We started having a family. Raymond Gomez, was born on November 3, 1945. Francisca was born on July 14, 1947. Alberto was born June 16, 1950. Juanita was born October 21, 1951. Jesse was born June 6, 1953 and Francisco (Pancho), was born August 12, 1960.

Moosbrugger: Could you tell us some of the experiences you had with the first "Our Lady of Guadalupe Church?"

Gomez: Father Dicks came, with a suitcase in each hand and asked us if this was the church. We said, "Yes." He was a short man, but he had a good heart. He gathered all of us together, and started to explain to us that he was there to help us buy the church. Some could help with money, and the others could help by doing some of the work. I didn't have a job then, so I helped out by working. He organized the "Ladies of Guadalupe" and the "Sacred Heart of Jesus". We all helped to pay off the church. Later we moved and couldn't attend church there anymore.

Moosbrugger: Did these societies help all of you in your lives?

Gomez: They helped pay off that church. Then they changed the churches. They didn't ask me to help with the other church, because I helped with the first church. In those days, life was pretty rough, 1933 and 1934. My brother asked me for some money. I had to get a loan from the First National Bank

Gomez: in St. Paul. I paid it off little by little each month.

Moosbrugger: Where was you brother?

Gomez: In Mexico. He needed the money for his daughter, who got sick, or was getting married, something like that.

Moosbrugger: What kind of jobs did you have in St. Paul?

Gomez: In 1930, there weren't any jobs in St. Paul, not until 1933. At that time Roosevelt was running for the election, and he won. Then for two or three years, there were jobs for poor people, and welfare for those who had a large family. We worked for sixty-one dollars a month. If it wasn't enough, we had to go to the welfare so we could live. In 1934 or 1935, they started Social Security. Now that I am old, that's how I live, on Social Security, from that good man. President Roosevelt was really a good man.

Moosbrugger: Was it during the term of President Roosevelt, that you found a job?

Gomez: Yes. It was during the term of Roosevelt that I found a job, at the Arms Plant, in New Brighton. Then I changed to Armour's, where my compadre, Federico Saucedo, worked. I stayed there for twenty-three years, until they gave me my pension, because of the disability of my leg. That's when I retired.

Moosbrugger: Could you tell us some of the customs, or traditions, that you observed with your children?

Gomez: The only problems we had with our children, was raising and taking care of them, and watching them grow. Some grow to have better imaginations than us. If they are more intelligent than us, it is better; but they are all sons and daughters just the same. They were too little to work and help out. I wish they would make a good united family when they grow up; to organize the family and help each other to advance themselves. Everything I did, was for them. Like the house I had built for them. I still owe on it. I told him I had four thousand dollars. I gave the man the money.

Gomez: The rest I pay in payments of one-hundred-fifty dollars a month. He gave me all the wood, I paid him everything. He liked the way I do business, he built my house for Fourteen Thousand. People say that it is a good price, but I don't know. He did the frame and everything else. I put in the first floor. I am putting in some more bedrooms, because it only has two bedrooms upstairs. I still owe Ten or Twelve Thousand dollars. I hope God will give me strength to it. I will be very happy to pay it, I pay my bills in advance whenever I can. When I buy a car, I get ahead in my payments, then they can't send me letters if I miss a payment when I don't have the money. They trust me, and I trust them. Right now, I have a problem with the man who didn't finish putting in by furnace. He left out the cold ducts. I have been calling him, I have called him three times. Maybe I'll have to get a lawyer.

Moosbrugger: Do you eat typical Mexican food in your family?

Mrs. Gomez: Yes. I have made meals for our family and friends. I make menudo, tacos, enchiladas, and mole.

Moosbrugger: Do your daughters know how to cook Mexican food, too?

Mrs. Gomez: No. Not like me, because they are modern. We are a modern family.

Mr. Gomez: Every Christmas, our table is filled with different Mexican food. All the children come over, some from St. Paul. Only her children come, because my first wife's children aren't too friendly. We have a full house for Christmas and Thanksgiving.

Moosbrugger: Do they have the ability to speak Spanish?

Mrs. Gomez: The girls speak a little, and they understand more. The boys don't, maybe they understand, but they don't speak Spanish.

Moosbrugger: Did the majority of your family marry out of their race?

Gomez: Yes.

Moosbrugger: Do you have Mexican music in your home?

Mrs. Gomez: Yes. The girls like Mexican music. My sons have tapes in Spanish and in English.

Moosbrugger: Have you visit Mexico?

Gomez: Yes. Some my children have never been to Mexico. Pancho and my two oldest daughters went. Pancho was only four years old when we took him to Mexico. He got kicked by a horse which belonged to my brother. He still remembers that. It's been about six years, since we have been to Mexico.

Moosbrugger: Do you have plans to visit Mexico in the future?

Gomez: I have plans, but I don't know if my body can make it. The three times I have gone, one time my step-son drove, and the other times I have taken one of my sons-in-law: Juan Rea, and Juan Rabittor. Rabittor, is Italian, they are divorced now. We have always had good luck, except one time. The first year, Juan Rea, took us in his little old car, so we had problems with the car. But it took us to Mexico and back. They have gone with us to help with the driving.

Moosbrugger: Why did you decide to move to Hollandale, after living so many years in St. Paul?

Gomez: Well, I bought this piece of land from my brother-in-law for five hundred dollars. I wanted to make my garden here, and return to St. Paul for the winter. When I did, I didn't like it back in St. Paul, it was too noisy. The police and fire engines made too much noise. We couldn't sleep in the city. So we returned to the country where it is peaceful.

Moosbrugger: Mrs. Gomez, your parents live close to you. How close?

Mrs. Gomez: About seven miles away.

Moosbrugger: What are their names?

Mrs. Gomez: Felix Luna, and my mother's name is Manuela Luna.

Moosbrugger: How long have they lived here?

Mrs. Gomez: They've lived here for thirty years. They were migrants.

Moosbrugger: Did they live in Geneva?

Gomez: Four miles from Geneva. He lives on a little farm. He rents his land. he gets Social Security too. They want their children to buy the land from him, but they don't want to. I don't know what their thoughts are.

Moosbrugger: Do you make trips to St. Paul and other places to get food? Why?

Gomez: Yes. We can go to Austin and Albert Lea to the big stores. Here in Hollandale, you buy a cup of coffee, and they want to take all your money. I go to the Bonanza Warehouse, you can get your food a lot cheaper there. We go to three different stores to get our food. I do the same for gas, too. I look for all the deals or bargains.

Moosbrugger: Could you give us the philosophy that you have learned from your parents?

Gomez: I have read in the Bible, "If you help someone, you help yourself." I plant my garden here. When I harvest, I always give my neighbors some of my harvest, and to anyone else who visits us. I pray that God will give me the strength to finish my house, which I will leave to my son. If he wants to sell it, he can. I have done what I had to do. I am waiting for a Mexican friend who wants to sell his land. I told him that I would buy it in August. There are a lot of trees on the land and it will worth something someday. He wants \$1,600.00 for it. I'll leave it to my children.

Moosbrugger: What advice would you give to your children and grandchildren?

Gomez: To live well, and save. Work is hard, but saving is the hardest. In the twenty some years that I worked at Armour's, I only paid my house in St. Paul off, and saved four thousand dollars. Then we bought this house, here. So my advice is learn to save your money, because you never know when you will need it.

Mrs. Gomez: My desire is that my grandchildren be intelligent and get educated. That they be someone important, like a senator: to represent the Mexican people.

Mrs. Gomez: Right now we don't have anyone to represent us. There is nothing left for us except to die. So all I can do is advice my grandchildren to get all the education that they can and to make something of themselves. If they don't listen, there is nothing else that I can do except hope for the best.

Moosbrugger: Thank you very much for the interview.

Mexican-American Oral History Project  
Minnesota Historical Society