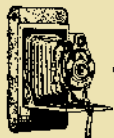




*The Cortez sisters tie the knot, St. Paul, 1946 (MHS COLLECTIONS)*

## Double Wedding



THE SECOND WORLD WAR IS OVER, and it's time to celebrate with a double wedding on the East Side of St. Paul. Sisters Rafaela and Ruby Cortez became Mrs. Carlos Martin Garay and Mrs. Joseph Reyes Moreno on May 18, 1946, in a Roman Catholic ceremony at the Church of St. Ambrose on Payne Avenue. Rafaela and Carlos stand in the center of the aisle, and Ruby and Joseph are just to the left.

At the time of this photo, both Mexican American and Italian American families lived near the church in Railroad Island, a neighborhood surrounded by railroad tracks. St. Ambrose had been established there as an Italian parish in 1911. By 1946, Woodward Avenue, the street running alongside the church, was home to the Cortezes as well as Cocchiarellas, Juarezes, Francos, and Estradas.

Like the young boy in the far right foreground, we gaze at the wedding party and wonder what happened to

the couples joined that day by Father Louis Pioletti. Immediately after the ceremony, guests attended a dinner at the Cortez home and a wedding dance at the nearby Neighborhood House. The next year, Carlos and Rafaela Garay started their family of five children, whom Carlos supported by working in the Armour meatpacking plant in South St. Paul. Joseph and Ruby Moreno had two sons. While Joseph was employed in the Whirlpool factory on the East Side, Ruby worked at Armour with her brother-in-law. Both families lived on the East Side for the rest of their lives.

This photo is evidence that formal weddings were important to the Cortez family. Rafaela and Ruby had grown up working in the beet fields of southern Minnesota. For this major rite of passage, their family hosted a big celebration with all of the trimmings.

—BONNIE G. WILSON

*Bonnie Wilson, author of Minnesota in the Mail, was curator of photography at the Minnesota Historical Society from 1972 to 2005.*



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