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The Labor Shortage and its Solution During World War II in the Grand Valley of Western Colorado
by Kristi Mease

On December 7, 1941, the bombing of Pearl Harbor plunged the United States into World War II. Men throughout the nation entered military service, causing a nationwide labor shortage. Urban areas felt this shortage less as a migrating labor force filled their employment opportunities. The population of Denver grew twenty percent during the war years, attracting one hundred thousand new residents. Tucson, Las Vegas, and Pacific Coast cities encountered similar growth patterns.[1] Rural areas, however, did not undergo such migration; thus their labor shortages proved more severe. Regions like the Grand Valley of Western Colorado, which produced highly perishable products and depended upon expedient transportation of crops, relied upon other labor sources to manage their shortages.

Following the United States' entrance into World War II, growers experienced serious labor shortages. Normally, women and children provided the vast majority of the work force; however, they failed to supply the necessary labor to harvest existing crops. Each wartime year,

the Peach Board of Control designated a specific committee to launch an intensive advertising program to recruit farm labor. They targeted newspapers and radio stations searching for workers. The program encouraged citizens to schedule vacations during harvest to fulfill their "patriotic duty" and "help the war effort" by assisting with crop production. Leaders of the Peach Board traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with government officials in hopes of resolving the labor crisis. These meetings led to the involvement of Mexican farm laborers, prisoners-of-war, and Japanese internees to solve the labor dilemma.[2]

Growers stressed the importance of farm production for military success. At the urging of farmers, the United States Government established a second Bracero (Mexican Labor) program in August of 1942.[3] Contracts between Mexico and the United States allowed growers to secure much-needed labor from Mexican farm workers. The first Bracero program found Mexican workers stranded during the Depression; consequently, the second program contained stricter requirements of American growers. If growers refused to abide by these requirements, the government denied them legal Mexican Labor. Illegal Mexican laborers did come to Western Colorado to work, but uncertainty of their numbers distressed growers. Some individuals claimed the alleged shortage of Mexican workers led to the introduction of German prisoners-of-war and Japanese internees as laborers.[4]

The Geneva Convention of 1929 provided guidelines for the operation of camps and treatment of prisoners. After reviewing the Geneva Convention articles governing the treatment of prisoners of war, American officials determined prisoners could work as laborers.[5] From 1943 to 1946, the United States experienced an influx of 375,000 Germans who surrendered to Allied Forces in Africa and Europe.[6] Virtually all Germans became laborers, thus careful consideration of the Geneva document and the prisoners' treatment became essential. Both the Army and the Red Cross investigated camps regularly, insuring strict adherence to the Geneva guidelines.[7]

In addition to Mexican Nationals and German prisoners-of-war, 110,000 Japanese Americans were relocated from their West Coast homes to remote, isolated camps in the United States interior. Like the Mexican Nationals and the German prisoners, the Japanese internees toiled in the fields of Western Colorado.

Between 1943-1946 thousands of Mexican Nationals, German

prisoners-of-war, and Japanese internees dominated Colorado's Western Slope fields, orchards, and canneries. In 1943, the first German prisoners-of-war arrived in the Grand Valley when the Peach Board of Control introduced them as a reserve pool of labor. This arrangement required that growers bore the expense of transporting the prisoners to, and retaining them in, the Valley. Officials transferred prisoners to the Western Slope from the permanent camp located at Fort Carson, Colorado; however, at this time, growers sought limited use of prisoners as laborers. The Manpower Commission[8] objected to the ambitions and fiscal squandering of the small, but influential Peach Board of Control.[9]

From 1944-1946, the Peach Board of Control and the Farm Labor Board, under the direction of the Colorado Extension Workers, brought in German prisoners and Japanese internees. Fort Carson no longer supplied German Prisoners, but they came from the main camp in Trinidad, Colorado via train or truck. Prisoners arrived in the Grand Valley in July and remained until mid-November of each year. The old Civilian Conservation Corps Camps, supplemented with tents, cots, blankets, and other equipment loaned to the growers by the Army, served as the Grand Valley's labor camps.[10] Men inhabited barracks, but were housed in tents when necessary. Eight to nine foot fences surrounded the German camps, with armed security provided by the United States Army.[11]

At this time approximately two hundred fifty men occupied each of the three converted old Civilian Conservation Corps Camps. The Fruita Camp stood at the base of the Colorado National Monument; the Grand Junction camp occupied the present site of the Veterans Administration Hospital on North Avenue; and the Palisade camp resided just south of town, near the Colorado River. The Japanese inhabited the Fruita camp, while German prisoners-of-war and Mexican Nationals remained at the Grand Junction camp. Commonly, Mexican Nationals also resided on the farmer's property rather than staying with the prisoners.

The Denver Post's report of the fair treatment German prisoners-of-war experienced in Colorado Camps, corresponding to camps throughout the United States, reinforced the commonly held belief that treatment of German prisoners in America directly affected the handling of American soldiers in Germany.[12] The Government restricted interaction with prisoners except when instructing them on specific duties. Rarely did growers abide by these orders, frequently providing prisoners with pies,

soup, overripe fruit, hot food, and cold drinks. In one case, growers made an unsuccessful attempt to prepare strudel for the prisoners.

Few people of the Grand Valley considered the Germans threatening to their personal safety. Most residents believed behavior such as singing while marching to work, smiling at other workers, enjoying food prepared by the growers' wives, and whistling at pretty girls passing their camps indicated contentment of prisoners residing in the United States.[13] A counter perspective, however, depicts the Germans solely as prisoners performing "stoop labor" while working under armed surveillance, both unenjoyable aspects of working and living in Western Colorado.[14]

Prisoners received the going wage for agricultural employment. The government, however, withheld roughly one-half of their pay to cover room and board expenses, leaving them with eighty cents per day. They weeded, thinned, topped, and harvested sugar beets; picked and sorted peaches; harvested and canned tomatoes in three of the valley's canneries; and performed various other "stoop labor" tasks.[15]

In 1945, Grand Valley farmers cultivated 2,200 acres of sugar beets and as many acres of tomatoes. The harvest yielded a bumper crop of peaches and other fruits. Eight hundred Germans picked 450,000 bushels of peaches, averaging eighty bushels per day, doubling the amount harvested by civilians.[16] One Orchard Mesa grower increased German labor efficiency by serving beer on breaks. Reportedly, they picked more peaches per man for him than for any other grower.[17] The years 1943-1946 produced bumper crops of peaches, tomatoes, and sugar beets, with little loss incurred. Many attribute the successful crops to German labor. The Mexican government failed to supply a sufficient amount of Nationals to meet valley farmers' demands. By 1945, Japanese internees no longer provided a labor source because of the settlement with the Japanese government following Japan's defeat.

Considerable shortages existed during the war years, including sugar, gas, metal, and labor. Labor, however, proved the most significant shortage in the Grand Valley. Both the nation and the war effort depended upon food production. Bumper crops from 1943-1946 challenged farmers in harvesting and transporting crops with minimal loss. The triumph of meeting this challenge is largely due to Grand Valley laborers and those organizing it. Japanese Americans, Mexican Nationals, and German prisoners-of-war became vital in fulfilling the labor void. Numerous Western Slope residents have forgotten, or have not realized, how a

nontraditional labor force enabled the Grand Valley to prosper during World War II. In an effort to combine Mexican Nationals, German prisoners-of-war, and Japanese Americans, rural areas contributed substantially to the war effort and continued to prosper.

Kristi Mease graduated from Mesa State College in 1991 with a major in Elementary Education and a minor in History. She is currently teaching at Mesa View Elementary School in Grand Junction.

NOTES:

[1]Michael P. Malone and Richard W. Etulain, The American West: A Twentieth Century History. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989.) 115.

[2]Combined Annual Report of County Extension Workers, Mesa County, Colorado. 1944, 1945, 1946.

[3]George C. Kiser and Martha Woody Kiser, ed. Mexican Workers in the United States: Historical and Political Perspectives. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979.) 67-96.

[4]Ibid.

[5]The document, written during an era of peace, required interpretation for wartime use. The United States Provost Office and The Judges Advocate Office were responsible for these interpretations.

[6]Field Service Report, Camp Carson, February 22, 1945, Office of the Provost Marshal General, PMGO Records.

[7]Janet E. Worrall, "Prisoners on the Home Front." Colorado Heritage, (1990) I:32.

[8]The Manpower Commission, a federal office, was established to help wartime labor shortages.

[9]Combined Annual Report. 1943.

[10]Ibid. 1944, 1945, 1946.

[11]Floyd Files, Interview by Kristi Mease, November 13, 1990. Notes in possession of Interviewer, Grand Junction, Colorado.

[12]The Denver Post, August 22, 1944.

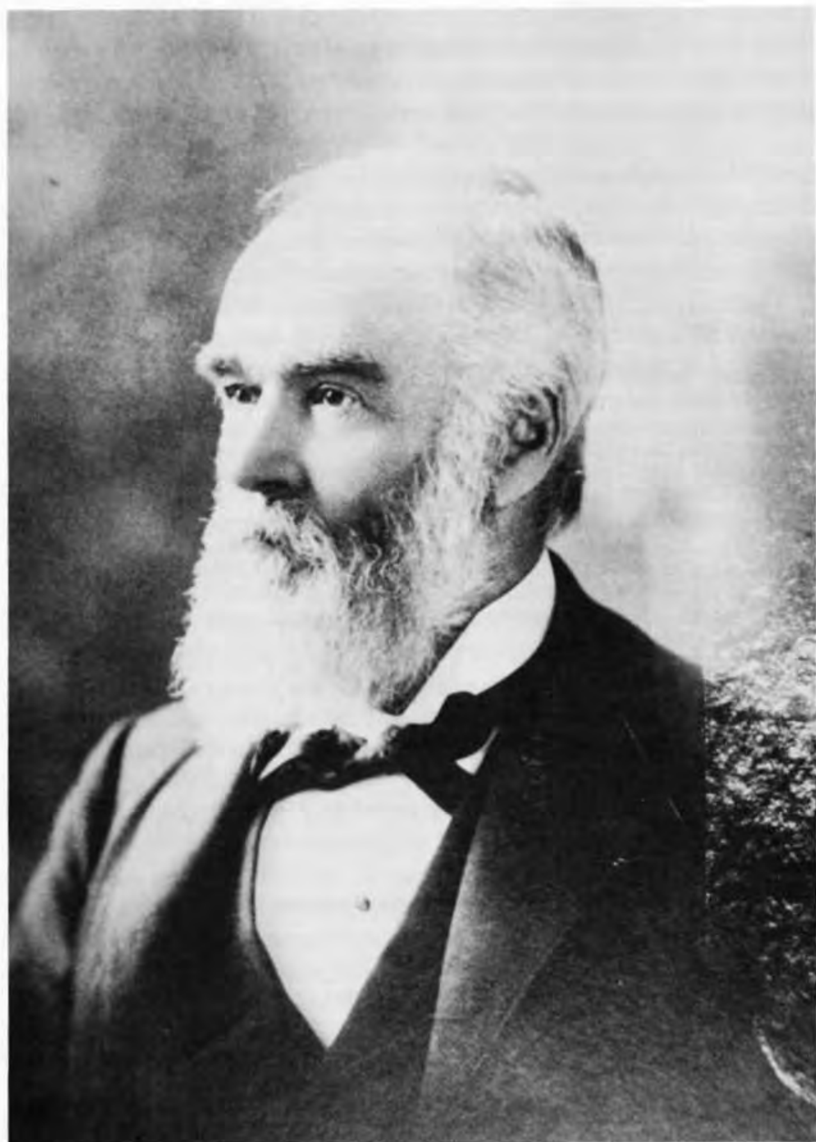
[13]Donna Roberts, Interview by Kristi Mease, November 12, 1990. Notes in possession of Interviewer, Grand Junction, Colorado.

[14]Josephine Herrera, Interview by Kristi Mease, November 1990. Notes in possession of Interviewer, Grand Junction, Colorado.

[15]Combined Annual Report. 1944

[16]Ibid. 1945. 53.

[17]Harold Zimmerman, "Harvesting Peaches with German Prisoners of War," *Journal of the Western Slope*, (Winter 1987.) 20.



John Lawrence in formal attire ca. 1906.
(Courtesy Saguache County Museum)

John Lawrence and the Opening of the San Juans, 1869 - 1882
by Edward R. Crowther

John Lawrence (1835 - 1908) arrived in Colorado during the gold rush and found his fortune. Like so many who trekked west and remained after the initial fever of '59 subsided, Lawrence did not accrue his wealth through mining for minerals. He prospered by tapping into a number of lucrative enterprises tied to the abundant mineral and agrarian wealth of the region. Lawrence worked as a freighter, a jobber, a lumberman, and as a rancher of sheep and cattle. Beginning in Conejos, Colorado in 1860, and then as a town founder of Saguache, the ubiquitous and hardy Lawrence witnessed, personified, and participated in many social, political, and economical changes in Colorado. From his headquarters at Saguache, during the 1870s and 1880s, Lawrence helped to open the San Juans. His prosperous enterprises contributed to the eventual settlement and economic development of Colorado's Western Slope.[1]

In 1867, having resolved to end a life of "eating bread, and rather poor bread," Lawrence moved to Saguache at the upper end of the San Luis Valley, an alpine desert seventy-five hundred feet above sea level. Roads connected Saguache with Conejos, Ft. Garland, and Salida.

Saguache served as the gateway to the Cochetopa Pass and the Western Slope, the domain of Ouray's Tabeguache Utes. Here Lawrence supported himself in various ways, but his principle means of obtaining cash involved fulfilling government contracts with the Utes for food and provisions. Later, he delivered mail over Poncha Pass and into the Arkansas Valley. Lawrence also marketed in South Park the excess wheat he grew at his farm above Saguache.[2]

In pursuit of "better bread" through these endeavors, Lawrence experienced life as a part-time freighter. Sometimes he drove the wagons himself, while other times, he oversaw the work of hired men. Freighting in the mountains proved difficult and frequently dangerous. Jagged mountain roads and freak snow storms delayed shipments, causing equipment to fail, and taxing the stamina of animals and drivers. Profitable freighting united three essential components: wagons, cargo, and draught animals. Lawrence and his sometimes partner, Otto Mears, purchased their first commercial wagons on July 6, 1871, buying twenty-one wagons for $750. Thereafter, his diary periodically mentions the purchase, sale, repair, or destruction of the wagons. He used oxen or mules to pull his wagons. Lawrence, like most freighters, preferred the plodding oxen that subsisted easily on native grasses, demonstrated adequate footing in the mountains, and possessed ample pulling power. But oxen moved slowly; therefore, he utilized mules when speed meant more than carrying capacity, or in the winter when snow covered the mountain meadows. Lawrence's oxen and mules carried wheat, flour, potatoes, turnips, and even tin cans into the rugged San Juans. He and his peers, according to the late Rodman Wilson Paul, became the "lifeline" that sustained the mining camps and fledgling settlements.[3]

Lawrence's initial freighting and jobbing into the San Juans began as a sideline to his farming. His business grew and transported a portion of the provisions promised the Utes by the Treaty of Washington of 1868. Annual distribution of supplies occurred at a government agency on a branch of the Cochetopa Creek, fifty five miles west of Saguache. He regularly supplied the agency with wheat and potatoes, delivering 1,581 pounds of his own wheat and 7,908 for a neighbor. Lawrence did not always find the trip to the San Juan Agency easy. On October 30, 1869, for example, his journal entry contained a note of relief: "the weather was fine and we had no accidents."[4]

In November 1870, Lawrence rode up to overtake a convoy of

The "lifeline" to isolated mining towns. Bonanza, Colorado ca. 1895.
(Courtesy Saguache County Museum)

Otto Mears, the partner. Chief Ouray, the customer, ca. 1880.
(Courtesy Saguache County Museum)

his wagons bound for the Agency with a load of wheat and turnips, along with an unspecified number of cattle. He spent the night with his convoy, only to wake and find his horse and cattle had fled the encampment. Fortunately for him, a neighbor living between the camp and Lawrence's residence found the horse, and Lawrence recovered the cattle. But the wagon belonging to Otto Mears did not fare so well, as Lawrence explains, "Mears' horses run off with the wagon . . . and broak (sic) it all to pieces."[5] His freighting operation boomed, despite obstacles –natural and beastly. Like many rugged "individuals" of the frontier west, governmental policies, such as Indian removal treaties, provided Lawrence with great economical opportunities. Then, as now, what Washington giveth, it rescindeth. In 1874, negotiations with the Utes resulted in the Brunot Treaty. This removed the Ute Agency from the Cochetopa Pass to a place just south of Montrose. Lawrence tried to continue his jobbing and freighting business with the new agency, but distance and difficulty dissuaded him. Lawrence tells this story best:

> "November 7, 1875. The four ox teams started for the new agency loaded with potatoes, oats and vegetables. I started with 4 yoke of cattle to each wagon [,] though some of them were unbroken steers. The wagons got home on Jan. 3, 1876. That is, two of them, with the hands and 5 yoke of the cattle, and one yoke that the agent at the Un-com-pa-ga-ra loaned me to come out with. They being gone 58 days. We had to leave 2 of the wagons at the Cimaron and also 13 head of oxen. The Cimaron is about 35 miles this side of the new Agency. The oxen we left there was so entirely worn out by being footsore that we could not move them, and the ones we started out with (7 yoke) were unfit for travel and of them [sic] one was left on the hills this side of the old Agency, and one up at Fullertons. I had Pedro Manchego, Francisco Manchego Francisco Gallegos, and Antonio Moreno as drivers and they all worked very faithful. It was the hardest and worst trip I ever went on in my life, having snow and wind from the time I started until I got back. And all the trip home having to travel in snow from one to five feet deep and at times to pass over drifts from 10-15 feet deep. In coming home, I left

the boys with the wagons at Cibolla and came on ahead on horseback. . . and got home Jan. 1st 1876. . ."[6]

Thereafter, Lawrence left the lucrative trade with the Agency to other freighters. His last direct business with the new Ute Agency involved the delivering of 180 horses, bonded at $29,400. Two days after sending the horses, he took two wagon loads of hay to Lake City for three cents per pound. Lawrence regularly did business in Lake City for the next four years.[7] Several factors made Lake City trade possible. First, the removal of the Utes in 1874 from the San Juans opened the area to prospecting, although a few settlers lived in the area since 1869. Lawrence continued benefiting from governmental policy. Secondly, and most importantly to a freighter, developers cut wagon trails into Lake City. In 1874 Enos Hotchkiss finished a toll road from Saguache, past the old Ute Agency, to Lake City. A year later, Otto Mears completed the improvements on a road stretching from Wagon Wheel Gap to Lake City. But the primary reason that road and removal mattered to Lawrence and his customers in Hinsdale County, lay underground. Gold and silver existed there in such quantities that 2,500 souls had established residence in Lake City by 1877. As Rodman Paul noted, quartz mining in the San Juans facilitated tremendous economic development, providing an "immense amount of business to the freighters," who hauled in everything from food to dynamite.[8] Lawrence employed himself in the Lake City trade over both the Hotchkiss and the Mears roads. The freighting operation fit well with his agrarian pursuits. He began to raise cattle in the San Juans near the old Ute agency, along the path of Hotchkiss' road to Lake City. Perhaps by trading cattle to Hotchkiss, Lawrence and the road builder came to an "understanding. . . about [the use of] the road."[9] Lawrence often departed for Lake City over the Hotchkiss road, and returned to Saguache through Wagon Wheel Gap and Del Norte by means of the Otto Mears road.

Like the journey to the old Ute agency, Lawrence's trips to Lake City often proved eventful. He went to Lake City by stagecoach in December of 1876, probably to obtain a contract to ship tin cans made in New York to the Cook Reduction Works. He survived the arduous descent over Slumgullion Pass, but on his return trip, "when the coach got opposite Crook Reduction Works, it upset and we had to go from there. . . in a wagon." Things did not improve for Lawrence after taking the stage from Del Norte. He walked home from the way station, noting that the

"snow [stood] very deep."[10]

The lack of rapid communication between Lawrence's enterprises and Lake City both helped and hindered him. On September 1, 1877, Lawrence set out for Lake City "on the buckboard... to see about getting my pay from I.K. Hall for the old sorrels, but he was at Colorado Springs." Rather than lament the time lost on the fruitless five-day round trip, he records that, "while I was gone, the hands were at work on the hay and they got it all cut," saving him some effort.[11]

Lawrence faced a more serious journey to Lake City in the early winter of 1877. On November 12, his diary states:

> "I started to Lake City today with the 4 ox teams loaded with oats. We stopped at the cattle ranch [near the old Ute Agency] where [hired hands] . . . .went ahead of us and got all the cattle together and branded the calves. . . On Beaver Creek we broke one front wheel and I had to bring it back to the Old Agency and get it fixed. We also broke one wagon tung but nevertheless we had a very good and nice trip. I got home on the 29th. . . On the 17th [of November] two of my hired men. . . started up to Lake City with the horse wagons loaded with oats. They got to Lake City ahead of us and came back and met us and took off two loads from the ox wagons and went back to Lake City."[12]

Lawrence literally prospered by the sweat of his brow. Freighting demanded labor. In December 1877, Lawrence shipped 17,000 pounds of oats to Lake City "to be sold at commission." He loaded ten ox teams to ship the oats. But the hardy Lawrence mixed his labor with his leisure well. He accompanied his oats to Lake City and on Christmas Day placed a winning bet on a horse, claiming a prize of "considerable money, a wagon, and a watch." One of his hired men also "won some money," but "got high and lost it all playing cards."[13]

The economics of the frontier changed rapidly, as technology slowly turned the pristine, "silvery San Juans" into the domain of the Iron Horse. What an "old frontiersman" called "a hunter's paradise, a region fit for the gods," now joined other outposts, linked by the rail to the outside world. This transmogrification rendered freighters like Lawrence obsolete. On July 10, 1878, the Denver and Rio Grande finally lived up to its name, reaching the big river at the present site of Alamosa.

San Luis Valley grain was worth its weight in gold in the mountains.
(Courtesy Saguache County Museum)

Wagons of wool, Saguache, Colorado 1885.
(Courtesy Saguache County Museum)

Adjusting to the times, Lawrence began transporting hay to Leadville, carrying wood back to the San Luis Valley on his return, although he continued the Lake City trade for a time. By 1882, railroads bypassed his Saguache based trading company. A line extended from Alamosa to the Wagon Wheel Gap and, the same year, a line opened from Chama to Durango, which already had rail service to Silverton. The dangerous Silverton to Lake City wagon road proved shorter by far than the route from Saguache and, in any case, rail transport came to Lake City in 1889.[14]

Lawrence continued to find ways to prosper in his mutable world, as his enterprises flourished in the Western Rockies. Even before the rail line became completed to Durango, Lawrence began to swap his wagons and draught animals for sheep. An entry from his journal in July 1882 illustrates his economic transformation by discussing his trip to Amarilla, New Mexico, to trade:

> "20 head of horses and mules, 2 Mitchell wagons, 3 large ox wagons, 1 spring wagon, and 1 buckboard for sheep." He did well, swapping his wares, save for "one large wagon, for 1175 head of sheep, 2 large sorrel mules, seven little and big jacks, and one set of harnesses."[15]

Given his land holdings in both the foothills and high country of the San Juans, an arid region with difficult terrain, sheep raising made sense for Lawrence. Rodman Paul summarizes the advantages of sheep:

> Of course they preferred the lush valley pasture, but in summer they were willing to browse high up in the slopes of mountains and into forests, while in winter and spring they found food in the lower hills, plains, and deserts. They would eat weeds and scrubby forage that cattle normally scorned; they clipped any growing thing right down to the ground; and they could go without water for two or three days if necessary, provided they had access to some kind of succulent feed. Their pronounced herd instinct, reinforced by their herder-guardian's daily discipline, made them more manageable than cattle.[16]

Lawrence broadened his financial base, traveling from "Villa Grove, to Salida, to Gunnison, to Montrose, and Lake City. . . to see about selling cattle and sheep." Other trips took him to Aspen, where he began grazing his sheep in the summer. When he was not profiting from his

own herd, he allowed others to run cattle on his land. J.C. Mee of Grand Junction, for instance, paid him $1150 to winter one hundred head of cattle from November 22, 1887 to May 1, 1888.[17]

In addition to cattle and cash, Lawrence's will of 1908 disposed over 11,000 sheep, indicating his success as a rancher in a land generally renowned for its mineral wealth. Miners may have imagined "mountainsides. . . bursting with wealth," but John Lawrence acquired his fortune on top of the ground as a contractor, freighter, and rancher, supplying the dreamers with sustenance. Embodying Horace Greeley's axiom for the nineteenth century of going west to prosper, rugged John Lawrence labored hard and adapted to his opportunities, transcending the frontier of the high Colorado Rockies.[18]

A native of Vicksburg, Mississippi, Edward R. Crowther holds a Ph.D. in history from Auburn University and is currently an Associate Professor of History at Adams State College. His articles have appeared in the Journal of Negro History, the Alabama Review, and the San Luis Valley Historian.

NOTES:

[1]Lawrence is best known for his diary, copies of which can be found in the University of Colorado Library and the Colorado Room of the Library at Adams State College. An abridgement of the Diary done by Bernice Martin has been published as Frontier Eyewitness: Diary of John Lawrence, 1867-1908. No biography of Lawrence exists, but readers may find useful my "John Lawrence and Chief Ouray: Cultural Clash and Personal Interaction in the San Luis Valley," *San Luis Valley Historical Review* 23 (No 2, 1991): 5-31.

[2]Ibid, 30, 35, 38.

[3]Diary, 63, Rodman W. Paul, The Far West and Great Plains in Transition, 1859-1900 (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 12, 52. Otto Mears, "The Pathfinder of the San Juans," was a Russian born entrepreneur and opportunist. He and Lawrence were occasional business associates and generally political rivals. See Inter Alia, LeRoy Hafan, Colorado and Its People (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1948), I: 369-70, 390; II: 114-15, 147-58, 270, 671; and Helen M. Searcy, "Otto Mears, " Pioneers of the San Luis Country (Colorado Springs, Outwest Printing, 1942). I: 15-47.

[4]Diary, 39.

[5]Ibid., 55.

[6]Ibid., 93.

[7]Ibid., 96-97.

[8]Hafen, Colorado, 1:338; Thomas Gray Thompson, Lake City, Colorado: An Early Days' Social and Cultural History (Oklahoma City: Metro Press, 1977), 1-5; Paul, Far West 42 (Quote); Idem, Mining Frontiers of the Far West, 1848-1880 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), 109-134.

[9]Diary, 91.

[10]Ibid., 99.

[11]Ibid., 101.

[12]Ibid., 102.

[13]Ibid., 102.

[14]Sidney Jocknick, Early Days on the Western Slope of Colorado. ... (Denver: Carson Harper 1913), 32, 134, 162, Hafen, Colorado II: 651, 663,: Thompson, Lake City, 3; Diary 105.

[15]Diary, 114.

[16]Paul, Far West and Great Plains, 207.

[17]Diary, 115, 121, 126, 132.

[18]Ibid., 177, Jocknick Western Slope, 162.

Unidentified student discing a field, ca. 1984.
(Credit MSC Ag. Dept.)

The Howard Lathrop Agricultural Center
by David Rowe

A recent promotional pamphlet distributed by Mesa State College introduces the Howard Lathrop Agricultural Center by declaring: "This fully equipped farm is unique in that it provides an excellent opportunity for Mesa State College students to obtain hands-on training in the Mesa State College Agricultural program."[1] Many Grand Valley residents are unaware that Mesa State College operates a farm. Those who know of its existence associate it with the State Home and Training School Farm rather than the college. The successful operation of the college farm continues fourteen years after its inception, constantly reaping profits. The farm represents eight areas of agriculture: corn, oats, barley, hay, cattle, sheep, hogs, and horses. This range reflects the Grand Valley's agricultural diversity, except fruit production. The farm's success grew from a strong foundation established over the past 109 years.

The Howard Lathrop Agricultural Center traces back to March 3, 1885 when Congress approved the establishment of an Indian School in Grand Junction.[2] A number of individuals urged the founding of an Indian School. The original proposal came from the collaboration of

Judge Alexander Gullet of Gunnison and Grand Junction residents James W. Bucklin and Editor of *The Grand Junction News*, D.P. Kingsley. The three men met at Denver's Windsor Hotel in February, 1885 and drafted a petition to send to Henry Teller, Secretary of the Interior.[3] Grand Junction was selected because of its agricultural advantages, cheap building materials, and central location.

Gullet's motives for initiating an Indian School are unclear. *The Grand Junction News*, however, disclosed the motivation of the other men, with economic motivations figuring most prominently:

> "The government allows $167 for the support of each pupil in these schools. If the school is planned for 100 pupils this will mean $16,700 will be expended here, when the school is in full operation."[4]

The newspaper further confirmed that all expenditures of the earned funds would be in western states and territories.[5] Enhancing Grand Junction's pride became an additional motive, with the community supporting the establishment of an Indian School, as Dave Day, the editor of *The Grand Junction News* further suggested another reason for the school:

> "A very great advantage which does not seem to have entered into the minds of those who located the school at Grand Junction, would be, that the children would serve as hostages for the good behavior of their parents, and would also have the tendency to promote a kindly state of feeling between the races, a state which is most lamentably deficient at present."

Regardless of motive, the Indian School's purpose appeared commendable.

According to *The Grand Junction News*, the school's objective was:

> ". . . to educate the children of various tribes of Indians tributary to this point, in agriculture through all its branches, and along with that to give them no inconsiderable amount of book learning."[8]

An additional suggestion proposed that Indians residing at the

school would easily adapt to agricultural pursuits.[9] This fundamental philosophy of agricultural education, coupled with traditional education, exhibits the present purpose of the Howard Lathrop Agricultural Center.

Washington officials informed Gullet of governmental approval to allocate funds for the construction of buildings, but stipulated that one hundred sixty acres, complete with water rights, must be acquired by donation.[10] J.A. Layton, Mesa County Clerk and Recorder, and S.G. Crandall secured the land from the secretary of the Grand Junction Town Company, Thomas B. Crawford. Crawford donated the parcel to the Federal Government by transference of deed, executed February 5, 1885.[11] This quarter section, situated one mile east of Grand Junction city limits, currently houses the Grand Junction Regional Center.

The prime locale of the Indian School appeared to hold great promises. John B. Riley, one of the initial inspectors from the Department of the Interior, characterized the one hundred-sixty-acre farm as the best in the valley. If properly cultivated, Riley felt the farm capable of producing enough vegetables, hay, grain, and fruits to support a school of one hundred fifty students.[12] Yet the agricultural aspect of the Indian School failed to materialize until the 1890's when building construction began. According to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the fabrication of a $100 brick dairy barn and a $1,500 frame horse barn signified the first major step toward agricultural production.[13]

The school managed a small dairy and horse operation by 1892. It possessed five brood and working mares, two work horses, two colts, nine high-grade Holsteins, nine calves, and one bull. "The horses are all good and in better condition than I have seen at other agencies or schools,"[14] reported Inspector William S. Junkin. He further indicated that the school harvested 9600 pounds of oats, 892 pounds of potatoes, and 31 pounds of hay, and credits Superintendent Thomas Lemmon with the expansion.[15] Throughout the 1890's, reports continued to reflect an increase in dairy and crop production. A positive relationship between the Indians and agriculture existed, with students producing much of the needed foodstuffs demanded by the Grand Junction Indian School.

In 1910 the Federal Government closed the school, basing its decision on the routine flooding at the school farm, as well as neighboring farms.[16] Upon closure, the Federal Government stipulated the property continue supporting agricultural research and education. The State of Colorado fully intended to further the original objective and establish a

school of horticulture, forestry, and vocational learning on this site. By an act of the Colorado General Assembly, the State Board of Agriculture assumed control of the land and its facilities, placing it under identical regulations as the College of Agriculture in Fort Collins. In exchange for the grant, the Federal Government mandated the State of Colorado to admit all Indian students into their institution free of charge, and on equal basis as all other Americans.[17] Available evidence reveals that the agricultural school failed to materialize due to a continued high water table and poor drainage system.

In 1916, the State of Colorado petitioned the Federal Government for consent to operate a home for the insane on the site of the old Indian School. Congressional approval granted the transformation on May 18, 1916. The Congressional Act declared:

> That the lands, building facilities, and all property rights granted to the State of Colorado for educational purposes by Section Five of the Congress approved April fourth nineteen hundred and ten, may, in lieu of the use designed in said grant be utilized by said state for the care of the insane, as an agricultural experimental station, or for such other public purposes as may be authorized by the legislature of the State: Provided, that Indians shall always be admitted free of charge and upon equality with white persons.[18]

The statement, "... as may be authorized by the legislator of the State," provided Colorado absolute control of the land and facilities.

The Colorado State Home and Training School for Mental Defectives opened on December 15, 1920 under the direction of Dr. Carl Plumb. Apparently the State assumed expenditures for farmland drainage, solving part of the problem; however the situation continued to plague the Home for several more years. In the second Biennial Report of the State Home, 1921-1922, Dr. Plumb reported the repair of six buildings, noting the repairs and improvements placed the institution in first-class physical condition.[19] The assumption that the Home installed a drainage system between 1916-1920 stems from the lack of reference to the system in any documents drawn up by the Secretary of Interior after 1916.

Dr. Plumb not only deserves credit for opening the State Home,

but with reintroducing viable farming to the institution. In the same Biennial Report, Dr. Plumb states:

> "Our farm comprises 170 acres, but due to the fact that the land has been allowed to go to seep, the ground has not been in such a condition that we have been able to raise anything. This land has been drained, and we are actively working it, using every method available to bring it back. It is getting better all the time, and in a few years we will be able to grow good crops. Under such conditions as we have now it is impossible to make any showing, as we not only do not get anything from the land, but are compelled to buy everything we use. However, this land is coming back and we feel certain will in time grow large crops."[20]

In addition to the agricultural revitalization program, the State Home maintained a livestock operation. From 1920 to 1922 annual production and consumption at the Home equaled 415 pounds of pork, 480 pounds of veal, 18,250 gallons of milk, 439 dozen eggs, 80 tons of silage, and $500 of garden produce. Total value of produce consumed amounted to $3,475.[21]

These figures did not prove outstanding; however, despite continued substandard soil conditions, the farm saw definite progress. Superintendent B.L. Jefferson related that effort continued in land reclamation and improved soil conditions. In 1933 dairy and livestock production increased greatly, milk production rose by 26,694 gallons, pork increased by 50,770 pounds, eggs by 3,941 dozen, and silage by 80 tons. 1933's alfalfa, oats, and corn crops, however, only proved adequate.[22]

The farm's purpose in relation to the rest of the State Home lacked definition. In 1937 Dr. Jefferson outlined a specific program to incorporate patients into vocational training on the farm. Not only did this define the farm's purpose, it offered a reduction in cost to the taxpayer for maintaining the State Home.[23] The incorporation of Jefferson's proposal proved beneficial to both the farm and its residents.

During the 1940's, the farm expanded by 123 acres. Jefferson stimulated this growth by purchasing the eastern parcel. This proved important for many reasons; first it opened additional land for cultivation

Shearing sheep, ca. 1986.
(Credit MSC Ag. Dept.)

Hereford in squeeze chute, ca. 1980.
(Credit MSC Ag. Dept.)

and allowed the Home to become self sufficient in dairy and poultry products. However, this degree of success did not materialize until the 1950's. Further, this particular site housed all of the Home's new farm buildings. Currently, this quarter section constitutes over one-half of the College Farm. Jefferson continued expanding the farm by engaging in several other real estate transactions. The purchase of 43.5 acres on the southeast corner from R.F. Watkins et al Trustees for $1,410.00,[24] the northeast corner of 20 acres from Jefferson for $10.00 and other considerations,[25] the north central plot of 30 acres, from Katherine Oyler for $2,500.00, and the 28.9 acre northwest lot from Frank O. Cary[26] all dated October 1943, with the exception of the Southeast parcel purchased by Jefferson in June 1937.[27] Clearly, Jefferson intended to expand for quite some time. Total expansionary expenditures equaled $7,078.00, with current value at approximately $246,000.[28] Following these purchases, the State Home Farm consisted of 296 acres.

The farm continued to undergo expansion with the construction of buildings on the newly acquired land, beginning around 1947. State Home administrators removed old buildings erected by the Indian School and moved the operation approximately one mile from the Home. These new structures included a dairy barn, a chicken house, and a hog facility.[29] Currently, the Howard Lathrop Agricultural Center utilizes these buildings and the locale of the old buildings houses the Regional Center's warehouse.

Charles W. Lilley, Assistant Director of the State Planning Commission, designed the new building project in 1949. Lilley's State Home project improved the livestock operation; however, crop production failed to reach full capacity because of persisting substandard soil conditions. Dr. Jefferson maintained that the State Agricultural Extension Service worked diligently to improve the ground for superior crop production.[30] This dilemma, however, remained unresolved until 1954, when Joe Richards, hired by Superintendent Dr. Archer C. Sudan, replaced Jefferson following his death.[31]

Richards assumed the farm manager's position in April, 1954 and expressed concern over substandard crop production. The inferior quality of the fields rendered them incapable of supporting a dairy herd for more than a few days.[32] The poultry and hog operation supported the entire Home; nevertheless, Dr. Sudan encouraged Richards to increase farm production to full capacity. Dr. Sudan's support enabled Richards to receive seventy-five to eighty percent of requested improvements, allowing him to build the majority of the current farm buildings.[33]

Substandard soil conditions and a high water table continued to plague the State Home farm, hindering optimum crop production. According to John Dixion, of the Soil Conservation Service, the water table rose to approximately two feet below the surface. Richards, in conjunction with the Soil Conservation Service, constructed cement ditches which lowered the water table.[34] Overall, the change in farm management significantly improved farm conditions. In 1954, farm cultivation remained at seventy acres, increasing to 234 acres by 1958.[35] In those four years, Richards built a cement irrigation system, leveled the fields, instituted proper farm management, and incorporated a sound fertilizing program. In addition to incorporating a beneficial land management program, Richards increased livestock production, with dairy and hogs experiencing the most notable upgrades. He increased the dairy herd to 159 cows that returned 97,463 gallons of milk. Yields of 483 tons of silage, 65,130 pounds of oats, 66,230 pounds of wheat, 109,250 pounds alfalfa, and $407.15 worth of garden vegetables further illustrates Richards' success. This era of the farm's history marks the highest level of crop production. The State Home Farm maintained this level of production until its closure in 1971.

A *Denver Post* article suggests the farm's closing stemmed from the Joint Budget Committee's opinion that the farm failed to break even and the program no longer proved necessary. State Senator Harry Locke of Salida argued, "the costs were getting a good deal higher than what we could buy the products for in the valley."[36] State Senator Joe Shoemaker of Denver asserted:

> "It was felt that there aren't many dairies of farm type operations where mentally retarded kids of this type could get a job. If they have enough IQ to be able to use that type of training, they are better off doing some other kind of work."[37]

Agricultural operations at the State Home ceased June 30, 1971, marking the end of fifty years of a productive agricultural program. All livestock and equipment were either transferred to other agencies or sold.[38]

The State Home period contributed greatly to the future success of the Howard Lathrop Agricultural Center. The expansion in the 1940's constituted some of its finest producing fields. Richards work of lowering the water tables permitted the farm to consistently achieve high yields. The activities between State Home possession and Mesa State assuming

Current v
(Cr

Dairy barn, ca. 1960's.
(Credit MSC Ag. Dept.)

iew of the college farm.
edit David Rowe)

Greenhouse for Horticulture lab, ca. 1970's.
(Credit MSC Ag. Dept.)

operations are vague. It is known, however, that the State leased out property for private enterprise, but no documentation of production exists.[39]

Mesa State College assumed the farm operations under the direction of Maylon Peters in the Spring of 1978. Initially, the budget allowed $12,000 for management and maintenance. The Mesa College Scholarship and Development Fund loaned the program $5,000, which the center repaid. The State also leased portions of the farm to David Fuller, David Skinner, and James Todd, who utilized the cattle facility for calving purposes.[40] This practice currently continues, with Fuller leasing approximately twenty-five acres and Todd leasing the cattle facility.

The farm is appropriately named after Howard Lathrop, a successful Montrose sheep rancher. Following Lathrop's death, his widow established an endowment for an agricultural program at Mesa State College. The Lathrop endowment provided the farm with $20,000 in the first year of operation. These funds furnished the College farm with some of its first equipment. Today that equipment holds an estimated value of $250,000.

In past years, the farm orientation concentrated on crop production. Today, management focuses on incorporating a livestock program in coordination with crop production. This allows expansion of livestock because crops support the animals. Marketing grains through livestock returns provides higher returns on grain than if sold as a cash crop. The college farm proves self-sufficient and receives no state funding for operational purposes. The total farm operation results from income generated on the farm itself.

While the College farm is successful in its own right, it is also successful as a result of the efforts of numerous individuals. The creation of an Indian School in Grand Junction secured the land and began the initial clearing and cultivation of it. The period of the State Home accounted for the greatest contribution in creating superior crop production by solving the high water table and constructing cement irrigation ditches. The College carried forward the beginning philosophy of Agricultural Education. Mesa State College sincerely desires to carry on the tradition of success established over the past 109 years of work on this farm.

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NOTES:

[1]Mesa State College, Howard Lathrop Agricultural Center, Pamphlet, 1991.

[2]U.S. Congress, Appropriations for the Indian Department, 48th Congress, 2nd sess., Ch. 341, 1885, 382.

[3]"The Indian School," Grand Junction News, 3 October 1885, 1.

[4]"The Indian School," Grand Junction News, 4 July 1885,1.

[5]"The Indian School," Grand Junction News, 4 July 1885, 2.

[6]Dave Day, "The Indian School," Grand Junction News, 28 March 1885,2.

[7]"The Indian School," 4 July, 1885.

[8]Day, 2.

[9]"The Indian School," 4 July 1885, 2.

[10]U.S. Congress Appropriations, 1885, 382.

[11]U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs to Warren F. Reams, 26 April 1956, Grand Junction Regional Center Archives.

[12]John B. Riley, U.S. Department of Interior to Secretary of the Interior, 26 January 1887, Mesa State College, Western Americana Collection, Reel 17, Grand Junction, Colorado.

[13]Robert S. Garner, U.S. Department of the Interior, to Secretary of the Interior, 3 November 1891, Mesa State College, Western Americana Collection, Reel 17, Grand Junction, Colorado.

[14]Robert S. Garner, U.S. Department of Interior to Secretary of the Interior, 26 January 1887, Mesa State College, Western Americana Collection, Reel 17.

[15]William S. Junkin, U.S. Department of Interior to Secretary of the Interior, 3 November 1892, Mesa State College, Western Americana Collection, Reel 17.

[16]In December 1815 inquiry to the feasibility of reopening the Indian School took place. Albert H. Kneale, director of the Ouray, Unitah reservation, advised not to reopen due to a high water table and poor drainage.

[17]Colorado General Assembly, An Act establishing a school of Horticulture and Forestry at the Grand Junction Indian School in Mesa County, House Bill No. 365, 28 April 1911.

[18]U.S. Congress, Grand Junction School, Colorado Modified Use by State. 64th Cong., Sess. 1, ch 125, 18 May 1916.

[19]Carl W. Plumb, M.D. Second Biennial Report of Colorado State Home and Training School for Mental Defectives 1921-1922, Grand Junction Regional Center Archives.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid., 29-31.

[22]B.L. Jefferson M.D., Second Biennial Report of Colorado State Home and Training School for Mental Defectives 1933, 16-23, Grand Junction Regional Center Archives.

[23]Ibid., 1937,11.

[24]Jefferson purchased this parcel at a tax sale.

[25]This plot originally was bought at a Court House Auction by Jefferson for $2,500.00. This also houses the Farm Manager's residence. The time of construction for this house is estimated to be 1910 and came with the purchase of the property.

[26]This lot contained Cary's home, but because of its condition, the Home never utilized it. The house was torn down and the land currently produces crops.

[27]Colorado Division of Public Works, Real Property Inventory State Home and Training School, 28 June 1968, 3-8.

[28]Bob Stevens, Interview by David

Rowe, 28 November 1991, Stevens Real Estate Services, Grand Junction Colorado. Notes in possession of Interviewer, Grand Junction, Colorado.

[29]Colorado State Home and Training for Mental Defectives, Inventory of Buildings, July 1947.

[30]"Sudan Resigns Post at State Home Here," The Daily Sentinel, 17 March 1956, Joe Richards Collection.

[31]Joe Richards, Interview by David Rowe, Fruita Colorado, 5 December 1991. Notes in possession of Interviewer, Grand Junction, Colorado.

[32]Ibid.

[33]"State Home Restores Green Fields to Alkali Flats," The Daily Sentinel, April 1959, 6.

[34]Ibid.

[35](Richards 1991.)

[36]Charles Carter, "School for Retarded About to Lose Farm." The Denver Post, 18 May 1971, 14.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Robert M. Porter, State Home and Training School, to Hilber Schauer, Director of Department of Institutions, 6 June 1971, Grand Junction Regional Center.

[39]Ross Sparks, State Home and Training School, to Robert Porter, 12 April 1972, Grand Junction Regional Center Archives.

[40]Alice Wright, "Mesa College Offers Career Farming," The Daily Sentinel, 30 October 1979,16.

Las Inmigrantes Mexicanas
by CherylAnne Richards

Preface

As I prepare to write this ethnography, I find myself asking, "So, who are these people, anyway?" I have a problem defining as "different" people who are a part of our American society--a problem left over from early childhood socialization. Growing up, I was fairly sheltered from ethnic prejudice, both by lack of exposure to minorities, and by attitudes communicated by significant people in my life: parents, teachers and peers. We had a series of live-in babysitters--three sisters from Mexico who came, individually, to stay with us when my mother went back to work. They provided me with an exposure to Spanish at an early age, and their presence was a thoroughly positive experience. The few blacks, Hispanics and Asians in my schools were well liked, and, growing up in the 60's, I was exposed to racial strife only via television.

One message during those turbulent times was a counter-argument to the mentality that said that blacks are inferior human beings. The message was: all races are equal, possessing the same potential of intelligence and abilities, and deserving of the same opportunities and

respect toward their dignity as human beings. My very young mind embraced this idealism, however, it distilled the message into: "They're just like us"–"they" meaning any ethnic group, and "us" meaning the Anglo majority. This attitude formed during my grammar school years. Civil rights was not a topic of study. Racial issues were not openly discussed with children. I just knew that prejudice was evil, was wrong because... well, "they're just like us."

Today, I'm much older and somewhat wiser–even a little bit educated. I've traveled from one end of the naïeveté-cynicism continuum to the other and back again with the ebb and flow of personal experience. But ideas formed in early childhood are perhaps the hardest to shake. So what on earth does a would-be anthropologist do with the ingrained preconception that "they're just like us"–choose another line of work?

Of course, now I know that not all cultures share the same structure, world view or values that characterize white America; that within white America there are many sub-groups that hardly resemble each other in these aspects; that although all peoples share fundamental impulses of survival, creativity and spirituality, these common factors are so foundational that an enormous variety of observable behavior evolves from them. Obviously, all peoples are not alike.

Still, there exists that child within me with her "gut" reaction to racial prejudice. Recognizing this bias toward viewing other cultures as the same as mine, I was determined to uncover differences between the world of the Mexican immigrants and my own world of working-to-middle-class Anglos. The more differences I "dug" for, the more similarities I uncovered. The more philosophical my questions, the more I found my own experience reflected in my informants' answers. Several times during interviews, I have inquired about goals or attitudes, and in response received first a puzzled look, and then, "We are just like you in this respect–we are no different."

Because I was not a complete stranger to Latin American culture going in to this study, perhaps I should not find it strange that my ideas about what I would discover would be validated. Still, I find myself asking "Do we always find what we think we will find?" I made a conscious effort to leave my mind open to "surprises", to look beyond the words for meanings, to understand. Although my study was short on surprises, the experience truly deepened my understanding and further developed my empathy for these women with whom I share many life

Children practicing traditional dancing.

Children in an "English As A Second Language" classroom.

experiences.

My intent in this paper is not to make a comparison between Anglo culture and the culture of the Mexican immigrant, but simply to present what I learned through my fieldwork. Perhaps my readers will recognize what all we share with our neighbors from the South–just how "like" we are.

The Study

I chose the Hispanic community of Grand Junction as the subject of my study because of my love of the culture: the language (of which I speak enough to "get by"), the folk arts, and the foods. I soon discovered that my scope, as such, was far too broad, and since my main interest was the language, I decided to focus on the immigrants (those who had moved to the States to stay) because I knew the Spanish language would still be in use. I did not feel comfortable with the idea of interviewing migrant workers, most of whom would be men with little or no knowledge of English.

I further narrowed the scope of my study to include only women from Mexico, knowing that most of the women would be married, have children, and, having made Colorado their home, would have some knowledge of English. True, I was attempting to make myself more comfortable, considering that I, too, am a married woman with children, but the language limitations proved to be very challenging, and the "common ground" I shared with my informants provided communication on an intuitive level that goes hand-in-hand with shared experience.

I interviewed a total of seven women, two of whom are third-generation Colorado Hispanics who work very closely with the immigrants through the English as a Second Language (ESL) program. I began and ended my series of interviews with these two key-informants, finding them to be a wealth of information because of their shared culture (indeed, they expressed to me that it was difficult to talk about the immigrant women as "them" because they considered themselves to be the same), and their close contact with these families over a long period of time. The long-range perspective of these two women enabled me to view a sort of "evolution" that often takes place in the lives of immigrant women as they meet the challenges that immigration poses over the years--something I would not have been able to see as clearly in this limited study.

Of the five women who were the subjects of my study, four had moved to Colorado from Mexico as young, married adults. The one exception moved here with her parents at the age of nine. All were mothers with two, three or four children; infant to middle-school aged. All were professing Christians who attended church regularly: three Catholics, two Baptists. None of the five appeared to live in poverty, but seemed to live in the working-class to lower-middle-class range. (I did not ask about incomes, but only observed living conditions.) With one exception, their husbands were employed full-time. Two of the women were full-time college students, and all had held part or full-time jobs outside the home, in Mexico and/or here. These five women represent a very broad range of levels of education, from completion of the eighth grade to completion of medical school plus five years at Mesa State College. Three of the five were formerly "campesinas" (peasants), growing up in the tiny pueblos of rural Mexico, and two were from middle-class homes in the city.

I offer the above "profile" of the group to illustrate both the commonalities and diversity which I encountered in my study. Though each set of circumstances seemed unique in one or more aspects, as my study progressed, I found many common threads linking the experiences of these five women. In the following pages, I will present my observations and descriptions of events and attitudes shared by at least two, more often, all of my informants at one point or another in their lives. So as not to get bogged down with numbers and "exceptions" (as illustrated in the previous paragraph!) I will present my observations as representative of the group.

Two notes: I use the "immigrant" to refer to people who have moved here to make their permanent homes. I did not inquire as to the legal status of any informant, and noted any reference to status, citizenship, amnesty, etc., in a very general way when that information was offered. Also, any names given in this paper have been changed, as has very specific data referring to events, to protect the privacy of my informants.

Balada de la loca fortuna

Con el sol, el mar, el viento y la luna
voy a amasar una loca fortuna.

Con el sol haré monedas de oro
(al reverso, manchas; al anverso, luz)
para jugarlas a cara o a cruz.

Cerraré en bottellas las aguas del mar,
con lindos marbetes y expresivas notas,
y he de venderlas con un cuentagotas
a todo el que quiera llorar.

Robador del viento, domaré sus giros,
y en las noches calladas y quietas,
para los amantes venderé suspiros,
y bellas canciones para los poetas...

En cuanto a la luna,
la guardo, por una
sabia precación,
en la caja fuerte de mi corazón...

Con el sol, la luna, el viento y el mar,
qué loca fortuna voy a improvisar!

Enrique González Martínez

The Ballad of Mad Fortune

With the sun and the sea, the wind and the moon
I'm going to pile up a fortune soon.

With the sun I will mint me coins of gold,
Dark on one side, on the other side bright
To play games of toss-up coin as of old.

I'll bottle the water up out of the sea,
With pretty bright labels, with tags gayly,
I'll sell it with a glass-dropper to keep
For all who want to learn how to weep.

I'll kidnap the wind, then control its flight,
And in nights of quiet with breathlessness blent,

Sell its sighs to lovers for their delight,
And its songs to poets who are silent.

I will keep her a while,
As for the moon,
A kind of protection all of my own,
Safe in my heart's strong-box of stone.

With the sun and the sea, the wind and the moon,
What a mad fortune I'll pile up soon!

Translated by Edna Worthley Underwood

"Quién no se arriesga, no pasa la mar."
(Who will not take a chance, will never cross the sea.)

The Promised Land... golden opportunities... the American Dream... These were the clichés running through my mind when I listened to the responses to my question, "Why did you come here?" For campesinos, life in Mexico was often a life of suffering. Fathers, weary of working as migrant laborers far from their homes for nine months a year, and mothers, weary of stretching that paycheck that arrived in the mail from month to month, packed up the children and headed north. Young married couples, seeing that they would never be able to afford a car or a home if their lives followed in the same pattern as their parents, did the same. For some, the deciding factor was the prospect of offering their children an education beyond the eighth grade, thus insuring for them a new world of opportunities.

The women I talked to who were from the rural areas all used the word "suffering" when they spoke of life in Mexico. They spoke of poverty and sickness, of a lack of jobs. There were the rich and the poor, and neither the rich, nor the government, helped the poor. But in the U.S., the government helped the poor. They took taxes out of your checks, but gave them all back at the end of the year. There were educational programs, health-care programs, and help finding jobs.

And jobs were the key. It was my impression that these people came, not looking for a hand-out, but wanting to work--eager to take those minimum-wage jobs as agricultural laborers, construction workers and dishwashers, that most Americans refused to take.

Families working together in onion fields.

Women sorting onions in packing shed.

While most immigrants were not considering the opportunities in education that the U.S. offers for themselves, they certainly were for their children. Hispanics are extremely family oriented by Anglo standards, and children are viewed as nothing less than precious. The prospect of enabling their children to complete a high school education, and to go on to college may have been the lure that caused the immigrants to sever the extended family ties for the good of their children. College was a dream that could rarely be entertained in the poverty of the pueblo.

Sonatina

La princesa está triste... ¿Qué tendrá la princesa?
Los suspiros se escapan de su boca de fresa,
que ha perdido la risa, que ha perdido el color.
La princesa está pálida en su silla de oro,
está mudo el teclado de su clave sonoro;
y en un vaso olvidada se desmaya una flor.

Rubén Darío

Sonatina

The princess is sad... What can be wrong with the princess?
Sighs escape from her strawberry lips
Which have lost their laughter, which have lost their color.
The princess is pale on her chair of gold,
The sonorous keyboard is silent;
And in a vase there droops a forgotten flower.

Translated by Seymour Resnick

"No es oro todo lo que reluce."
(It is not gold, all that shines.)

For others, like Carla, coming to the U.S. was not her dream, but her husband's. Well educated and well employed, Carla had a nice middle-class home in the city. She was close to her parents and her married siblings, and, juggling her job and the traditional role as mother and homemaker, she had contentment with the emotional support of her

extended family. But her husband was enamored by the "opportunities" he'd heard about in the U.S. As a skilled technician, he found work here in his field. They moved into a house smaller than the one in Mexico. Their three children are in school learning English. Carla's husband is almost fluent in English through daily on-the-job exposure.

But Carla's spoken English is extremely limited, and as a result, she is isolated. At one point she referred to her home as a "prison" and herself as a "prisoner". She doesn't know what her husband sees in this place--they are not better off economically and his work is the same as it was in Mexico. Only here, she is without the satisfaction of a meaningful job and without the social "safety-net" of an extended family. In a society where young women live in their parents' home until marriage, and where siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents choose to make their homes within blocks of each other, the effect of Carla's isolation cannot be underestimated.

Through my fieldwork, Carla and I became good friends. What I at first took for contentment and commitment to her traditional role, I later discovered was resignation and depression. A dutiful Hispanic wife, she had followed her husband's desire to come here, and like others have told me, discovered the pain of intense loneliness. I once commented on her immaculate house. She laughed and replied, "It was not so in Mexico, but here--what else have I to do?"

Versos sencillos

Yo soy un hombre sincero
de donde crece la palma,
y antes de morirme quiero
echar mis versos del alma.

.....

Cultivo una rosa blanca
en julio como en enero,
para el amigo sincero
que me da su mano franca.

Y para el cruel, que me arranca
el corazón con que vivo,

cardo ni ortiga cultivo;
cultivo la rosa blanca.

José Martí

<u>Simple Verses</u>

I am a sincere man
From where the palm tree grows,
And before I die I wish
To pour forth the verses from my soul.

. . . . .

I grow a white rose
In July as in January
For the sincere friend
Who gives me his frank hand.

And for the cruel one who tears out
The heart with which I live,
Neither thorn nor thistle do I grow;
I grow the white rose.

Translated by Seymour Resnick

"Díme con quién andas y te diré eres."
(Tell me with whom you walk and I will tell you who you are.)

For years I've asked myself, "What is it about this language, Spanish, that makes me think or feel differently when I am using it?" Is it the beauty of the sound of it, the poetry in the word order, the tones of respect in the "Usted" form or the tenderness in the "tu" form? Far from answering that question, all I know is that I am kinder when I speak it and less of a "brash American."

It is true that within the structure of the Spanish language are subtleties of expression denoting gender, formality, and familiarity. The language is peppered with idioms of courtesy and good will. And politeness is never overdone. (Consider the English: "Pass the salt," and the Spanish: "Do me the favor of passing the salt, please."

It is no wonder every informant named the retention of the Spanish language as a priority in their goals for their children. In discussing the importance of Spanish with the women, I got the impression that there was no doubt in their minds that it was essential to their identity as a people, but they were hard-pressed to explain "why," never having needed to address the question. Responses to my inquiries included: "Having two languages means I can understand two different cultures. I can understand the way Anglos think as well as the people in Mexico–Hispanics think differently." "There is a lot of respect communicated in it. And there are so many words that have slightly different meanings, but translate to one word in English. I want my children to know it--to keep in touch with their people." "A lot of the second generation Mexicans lose their language, but when you lose Spanish, you lose a lot of the culture. There are so many expressions that don't translate."

As the language is a key to this community's sense of identity, so are the courtesies. Customs include verbal greetings more formal than our English "Hi", hand shaking as a greeting, showing respect for elders by acknowledging their presence, and giving to guests gifts from your home (usually food). While my informants lamented the gradual disappearance of these courtesies over the generations, my observation was that they were well intact among the adults. Furthermore, I noticed a smaller "personal space" among the immigrants–they touched each other far more frequently than do Anglos, and hugging as a greeting and a farewell gesture is common.

One thing that surprised me in our discussions about identity as a people was the frequency with which the subject of food came up. Possibly because, as an Anglo, I can't imagine getting too excited about Thanksgiving turkeys, Christmas fruitcake, or Easter ham. These women are <u>proud</u> of their traditional cuisine (with good reason, in my opinion), and food is central to all of their holiday gatherings.

Most expressed concern that their children learn their history. They want their children to know that they are descendants of Native Americans, about their battles for independence, and what living in Mexico was like. One woman told me: "I want my children to realize that they are Mexican as well as American–that they are part of the Mexican people--and to be proud of that."

Mothers of daughters fear the influence of American immorality. These are women who were raised to believe that hand-holding and

kissing were taboo until engagement--dating, as we know it, out of the question. Growing up in families where sex was never discussed, they are at a loss to inform their daughters when they come home from school with questions. What these women want is to raise their daughters with the moral convictions that they had (virginity until marriage), but lacking the social support for those boundaries in the general population, they are without the backing to accomplish this. (Interestingly, they never voiced this same concern about their sons.) I have wondered about the role that prejudice and discrimination plays in the unification of a minority--whether or not a stronger sense of identity and cohesiveness grows under the pressure of bigotry. While some of the women in my study had experienced racial slurs, they passed it off philosophically, saying that most people were kind, but there were always a few mean people in any population. One woman told me that children could be cruel, but as she got older, she saw less and less racism toward Hispanics--perhaps due to the small size of our community.

However, both of the women who work with the immigrants said that they saw prejudice and discrimination on a daily basis--in housing, jobs, between children at school, teachers and Hispanic students, and in the population in general. Perhaps because of their position, and complete fluency in both languages they are better equipped to detect bigotry, in all of its subtle and overt forms, than the more isolated immigrant women.

As I've mentioned before, the Hispanic emphasis on the importance of family is very strong. In my opinion, this, above all, depicts the essence of the people in my study. The idea of family <u>not</u> being of primary importance was so foreign to my informants that when I told them that Anglo society was often different in that respect, they began questioning me about particulars. They could hardly believe it could be otherwise! In one woman's words: "Families are very close in Mexico. Children usually live with their parents until they are married, or if the young men move out, they usually stay very close--stay in contact. Here, mothers and grown children live in the same town, not seeing each other. I'll ask someone, 'How is your mother doing?' and they'll say, 'Oh, I don't know--I haven't seen her in weeks.'"

These strong family ties are both a blessing and a curse to the immigrant--providing a strong sense of security among the immediate family here, but intensifying the sense of loss at leaving extended family

in Mexico.

Meciendo

El mar sus millares de olas
mece, divino.
Oyendo a los mares amantes,
mezo a mi niño.

El viento errabundo en la noche
mece a los trigos.
Oyendo a los vientos amantes,
mezo a mi niño.

Díos Padre sus miles de mundos
mece sin ruido.
Sintiendo su mano en la sombra,
mezo a mi niño.

Gabriela Mistral

Rocking

The sea its thousands of waves
Divinely rocks.
Listening to the loving seas
I rock my child.

The wind wandering in the night
Rocks the fields of wheat.
Listening to the loving winds
I rock my child.

God in Heaven His thousands of worlds
Rocks without noise.
Feeling His hand in the dark
I rock my child.

Translated by Seymour Resnick

"Tortillitas para Mamá. Tortillitas para Papá.
Las quemaditas para Mamá. Las bonitas para Papá."

(Little tortillas for Mama. Little tortillas for Papa.
The burned ones for Mama. The good ones for Papa.)
Traditional children's rhyme.

Among the immigrants, family roles are very traditional. Even if the woman works outside the home, she is expected to fulfil all the female roles of mother, housekeeper, laundress, and cook. According to my informants, this does not change, even if she manages to gain some measure of independence.

Hispanic marriages are traditionally not egalitarian--husbands dominate their wives, and wives are supposed to submit to that domination. In Mexico, women have no rights, and it is customary for her to ask permission from her husband to do anything out of the ordinary daily routine. Most husbands do not want their wives to get a job because she has more exposure to the world outside of her family unit, which generally leads to more independence.

The women in my study told me that they were content to stay at home while their children were young, to provide a home environment where "Mamá" was always present. They all seemed to place a great deal of importance on mothering, and this was obvious to me as I watched the tenderness and affection with which they cared for their babies.

However, all expressed to me a desire to become fluent in English and find satisfying employment at a later point in their lives. Some spoke of employment they had had prior to immigration. Others spoke of jobs they'd held here before they started having children. Job experiences of my informants included: maid, seamstress, secretary, office worker, nurse, accountant, social services worker, and pediatrician. With one exception, all of the women either took a lower-ranked position (requiring less skill and offering less reward) or became full-time homemakers upon immigration, citing their lack of English skills as the reason. Looking toward the future, all said that they would like to have a job where they are in a "helping-position", able to use their Spanish to serve their own Spanish-speaking community.

The traditional male role is that of provider and head of the family. I did not find any instances where a Hispanic father helped with

any of the chores, cooking, or childcare--and I got some hearty laughs in response to that question. Most of the women eventually used the word "machismo" in our discussions on male attitudes, describing it as the Hispanic male's disposition toward authoritarian rule over their household. (This word always brought a smile, laugh, or, in one instance, a "muscle-man" pose from my informants.) The women in my study told me that male dominance was prevalent, was traditional, and was a serious problem for many immigrant women, but that coming from a "good man" it was tolerable--and each assured me that her husband was a good man.

Hombre pequeñito

Hombre pequeñito, hombre pequeñito,
suelto a tu canario que quiere volar...
yo soy el canario, hombre pequeñito,
déjame saltar.

Estuve en tu jaula, hombre pequeñito,
hombre pequeñito que jaula me das.
Digo pequeñito porque no me entiendes,
ni me entenderás.

Tampoco te entiendo, pero mientras tanto
ábreme la jaula, que quiero escapar;
hombre pequeñito, te amé media hora,
no me pidas más.

Alfonsina Storni

Dear Little Man

O my dear little man, O my dear little man,
Free your canary, as it wants to fly away;
For I am your canary my dear little man,
O let me hop and play.

I went inside your cage, O my dear little man,
O little man, within whose cage I now am penned.

I call you "little." for you do not comprehend me.
Will never comprehend.

Nor am I comprehending you, but in the meantime
Please open that cage door, as I wish liberty;
O my dear little man, I loved you half an hour,
So ask no more from me.

Translated by Mildred E. Johnson

"Poco a poco se va lejos."

(Little by little one goes far.)

According to my key-informants who work closely with these families, male dominance becomes much less tolerable over time. Although shared housework and childcare was not perceived to be a realistic goal for these couples, most immigrant women eventually want out from under the authoritarian rule of their husbands. As these women observe the independence of their Anglo neighbors and fellow "Hispanas," they too want the freedom to come and go as they please, to drive a car, to make decisions on their own, to earn and spend their own money--to have some control of their own lives.

This "evolution" toward independence takes place gradually over a period of years. My key-informants described this as "Americanization," (a term that I found unsettling) and used it in a purely positive context. When I grasped the idea of a process unfolding here, I realized that each immigrant woman I had interviewed seemed to be at a different place along that road to independence in direct relation to the number of years since immigration. Concerned that the term Americanization had negative implications, I asked: "Do you think that anything is lost in this evolution you've described to me--this Americanization? Anything in the way of values or customs?"

Her response was: "Not at all. The immigrant woman's values remain intact. Even after she has achieved a more equal relationship with her husband, when she speaks English well, drives a car, works and has her own money, her values are the same--she raises her children the same. We are a proud people--in our heritage, our religion, our families,

our food and our holiday traditions."

"El vino tiene dos males: si le echáis agua, echáislo a perder;
si no lo echáis, pierde a vos."
(Wine has two defects; if you add water to it, you ruin it:
if you do not add water, it ruins you.)

Question: "If you could see anything changed about your community of people, what would that be?"

Carmen: "I don't have to think too hard about that one. But everything I would like to see changed has to do with men! Within our community there are many men who abuse alcohol, drinking at the bars every night and neglecting their wives and children. Many are "mujeriegos" (women-chasers), going from one woman to another, cheating on their wife. These men seem to have no conscience, they have no responsibility to God. I would like to see more men being faithful to God and to their families. Most don't go to church with their wife and children and seem to have no direction in their lives, no sense of spirituality. I am lucky. My husband doesn't drink or smoke, and he is faithful to me, but there are so many other women who suffer with their husbands. That is what I would like to see changed–that those men would develop a conscience."

Si eres bueno

Si eres bueno, sabrás todas las cosas,
sin libros... y no habrá para tu espíritu
nada ilógico, nada injusto, nada
negro, en la vastedad del universo.

El problema insoluble de los fines
y las causas primeras,
que ha fatigado a la Filosofía,
será para ti diáfano y sencillo.

El mundo adquirirá para tu mente
una divina transparencia, un claro
sentido, y todo tú serás envuelto
en una inmensa paz.

Amado Nervo

If You Are Good

If you are good, you will know all things
Without books... and there will be for your spirit
Nothing illogical, nothing unjust, nothing
Black, in the vastness of the universe.

The unsolvable problem of the ends
And the primary causes,
Which has perplexed philosophy
Will be for you clear and simple.

The world will acquire for your mind
A divine transparency, a clear
Meaning, and your whole being will be enveloped
In an immense peace.

Translated by Seymour Resnick

The following conversation was entirely in Spanish, so I'm offering here my "paraphrase" of its content.

"Where have you been, amiga? I've called, and you're never home."

Carla: "I just got back from a trip home for the holidays. We were there for two months, just the baby and me. My husband and the older boys stayed here to work and go to school. It was wonderful--to be with my family again. I have missed them so much."

"Was it hard to come back?"

Carla: "Yes and no. You see, it was just too hard for me here. So empty. I went back to see if I wanted to stay in Mexico--we still have a beautiful home there, and our families. Manuel sent the baby and me back, so I could figure things out."

"But as you see, I came back here--to be with my husband and my kids. I realized that living in Mexico would mean working full-time. I would not have the time to spend with my children, to care for them while they are young. And here I have nothing but time. I can devote myself to them, and I will be content. It was a difficult decision."

(I didn't ask her what implications moving back to Mexico would have had for her marriage, but she indicated to me that her husband, and

possibly the older children would remain here whatever her decision.)

"Now that I have chosen, I have contentment in my heart. I have peace. It is a spiritual thing–I feel that God is with me. He will provide for me. You see, it 'evens out.' (Carla holds out her hands in a gesture symbolizing the level baskets in a scale.) On the one side I have my work, my family, my friends--a busy life, full of activity. On the other side I have a lot of time to be with my children while they are growing up–and I have peace in my heart."

As her friend, I watch Carla's face, wondering if what I see there is a sad resignation, or truly a peace born of patience.

Nada te turbe,
nada te espante,
todo se pasa,
Díos no se muda:
la paciencia
todo lo alcanza:
Quién a Díos tiene
nada le falta:
solo Díos basta.

Teresa de Avila

Let nothing bother you,
let nothing upset you,
everything passes,
God doesn't change:
patience
acquires everything:
Whoever has God
lacks nothing:
only God is enough.

Afterword

Having identified, at the beginning of this paper, my bias toward viewing other groups of people as "just like us," and the tenacity with which that notion persisted throughout my interviews with the immigrants, I feel a need to resolve the apparent contradiction that arises. That is, how can the subjects of my study be both very distinct from our

mainstream society and still perceived as "just like us"?

First of all, the very narrow focus of my study lends itself to comparison of similarities. The group I studied were women, all of whom were wives, mothers and homemakers. These labels of status cross cultural boundaries and suggest an array of daily activities/duties that attach themselves to these roles--at least throughout working and middle-class America. But beyond the activities are the attitudes; the altruistic concern for her children, the sense of dependency and subordination so often linked to a position wherein labor draws no paycheck, the expression of creativity within domestic duties (such as special cooking, sewing, handcrafts), the attitude of self-sacrifice toward the goal of unity and harmony within the home, the search for a sense of meaning and esteem through religious/spiritual convictions.

While I feel that this description accurately depicts the attitudes of my informants, I must ask myself, what group of people in the Anglo majority constitutes the "us" in the notion "they're just like us"? To whom am I comparing these immigrant women? And here I find myself at a loss, for in my lifetime, I have known far more dysfunctional families than functional, and though I've known many women who share the attitudes I've described, few of them have felt satisfied or "successful" in their roles of homemaker, wife and mother.

Though I'm reluctant to admit it, my notion of "us" must certainly come from some hodgepodge of images ranging from "Father Knows Best" to Norman Rockwell illustrations to Latter Day Saints' television ads; from a time in our history when the value of a person was not based on the size of their paycheck, and women in traditional roles were recognized as essential to society--a time when the labor of a woman's hands was considered as valuable as the labor of a man's. While I am not suggesting that "a woman's place is in the home", I do mourn the loss of esteem that was once attached to women's roles--that rightly belongs to those women, today, who choose to perform them.

The ideal life toward which many working-to-middle-class Americans aspire includes the "American dream" of owning a home and a vehicle. Beyond financial security, that ideal would most likely include: a satisfying, lasting marriage; healthy, happy children; meaningful work; extended family ties; community involvement; and a commitment to religious or spiritual beliefs.

The word "ideal" is key here because the "us" I'm describing

certainly exists in some idealistic realm. Few of "us" manage to incorporate all the aspects I've mentioned or keep them in a state of balance or harmony. This idealistic notion of "us" does exist at least in the mind of Anglo-America–perhaps as a goal, perhaps as nostalgia–just as I observed it to exist in the responses of the immigrant women I interviewed. My original perception of "they're just like us" would have been better put as, "the way they'd like to see themselves is much the same as the way we'd like to see ourselves."

When I asked my informants what they would like to see changed within their community of people, I was asking them about their reality, and I found that their real world falls short of that ideal world every bit as much as ours does, although many of the problems and challenges they face are unique to their group.

In conclusion, if two distinct groups of people share the same idealism–the same dream of a happy, harmonious, culturally rich and moral existence–they can be said to have much in common. Our deepest, perhaps "loftiest" motivations must come from that dream, and it is in this deeper sense that we are truly "like."

All of the poems included in this paper were taken from:

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