South of the Guadalupe: A History of Nixon and Southern Gonzales County (review)

Charles D. Spurlin

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ballads known as corridos have on Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and specifically, Mexican immigrants in the United States. The aim of the author is to examine the role of corridos in shaping the cultural memories and identities of transnational Mexican groups, focusing on transnational communities from northern Chihuahua through northern Texas and New Mexico.

In proving her argument, Chew Sánchez begins by discussing and comparing certain details, such as the recorded history, characteristics, identities, immigration, and migration of Mexicans living in the American Southwest and in Mexico after the U.S.–Mexican War. The second chapter defines the corrido, focusing particularly on corridos about immigration and how those ballads impacted migrants culturally, socially, personally, and collectively. The author's third chapter analyzes how her interviewees of Mexican descent, whether migrants, songwriters, singers, disc jockeys, or others, understand the meaning of life through the corrido. Chew Sánchez uses the fourth chapter of her study to describe how corridos are transmitted to the Mexican migrant populace in transnational communities. The last chapter focuses on the importance of Los Tigres del Norte, the most popular Mexican musical group, famous for performing corridos about immigration, in preserving the migrant memory through their music.

The author's work is well organized and presented. She provides a Spanish phrase or sentence with almost each chapter title and subtitle that gives the Spanish reader an understanding of what to expect. Chew Sánchez also focuses on issues relevant to this study, such as migrant women, clothing, female singers of corridos, and *narcocorridos* (ballads about drug trafficking).

There are some items in the work that need attention. Although the book focuses primarily on Texas and New Mexico, it would have been beneficial to add migrant viewpoints of corridos from Arizona and California to assure balance among all states that border Mexico in further proving the argument. The author might have interviewed adolescents of Mexican descent to see whether corridos are important to their migrant memory. Chew Sánchez might also have attempted to ascertain Anglo American perceptions of corridos, especially of some who understand Spanish or are acquaintances of Mexicans living in transnational communities.

Despite these omissions, this historical analysis is a grand achievement because historians, particularly those focused in Chicano, Mexico, borderlands, Southwest, and/or immigration studies, have not previously ventured into this territory. Immigration is a timely issue, and reading Dr. Chew Sánchez's work will help Americans and Mexicans understand life for transnational migrants. What better way to understand a group of people than by listening to music that truly defines them. "*Si con mi canto pudiera derrumbaría las fronteras para que el mundo viviera con una sola bandera en una misma nación.*"

University of Texas–Pan American José A. P. Alaniz

South of the Guadalupe: A History of Nixon and Southern Gonzales County. By Donald D. Hoffman. (Privately printed, 2006. Pp. 292. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 0978737008. $39.95, cloth.)

Cattleman Donald D. Hoffman, a native of southern Gonzales County and former teacher and principal at Nixon High School, succinctly states his *South of the Guadalupe* "is not a history of one generation of Anglo settlers, or even two or three. Rather it is the history of a particular piece of land and the people who have lived on it since the beginning of time" (p. 3). True to his premise, the author traces the history of Gonzales County, placing emphasis on the southern portion, from the era of the dinosaurs to the present day by providing brief accounts of the area's relationship to Native Americans and their culture; Spanish explorers, missions, and presidios; the establishment of the Green DeWitt colony; the Texas Revolution and the Republic period; Texas's entry into the Union; and the major events in American history.

The development of southern Gonzales County began in 1849 when Paul Murray, a migrant from Mississippi, established a general store and gristmill some thirty miles south of Gonzales where several trails leading to the interior and the coastal region crisscrossed. By the early 1850s, the community that emerged around Murray's business ventures became known as Rancho, and in 1855, a post office was opened in the settlement. Throughout the remainder of the century, Rancho continued to expand. With an increased population, a newspaper was established, and a hotel was built. Also, a Masonic Lodge was chartered, a school district that closely resembles the current Nixon-Smiley School District was created, churches were organized, and several medical doctors moved into the town. But shortly after the beginning of the twentieth century, the town of Nixon emerged, shattering Rancho's growth.

John T. Nixon and four of his siblings migrated to Texas in the 1850s. He eventually settled in Rancho and became a merchant. In the 1890s, Nixon began purchasing land for a ranch that ultimately consisted of more than two thousand acres. After he died in 1904, his widow and daughter turned to Robert Fulton Nixon, John Nixon's nephew and a Gonzales attorney, to dispose of the ranchland. Presumably, Robert Nixon thought the most profitable way of doing this was to lay out a town site and sell off the property in lots. Meanwhile, the Gulf, Harrisburg, and San Antonio Railroad, a Southern Pacific line, was in the process of linking Stockdale to Cuero by rail, passing through the Nixon ranch. Needing assistance from the railroad in providing publicity for the new town of Nixon, an arrangement was consummated between attorney Nixon and the railway whereby the railroad received half the town blocks in exchange for advertising the community. Evidently, the deal between the two parties accomplished what Nixon had expected. In 1906, a town site was laid out, and almost immediately afterward, people moved to the new settlement and businesses emerged. Without a railroad to compete with its neighbor, Rancho declined out of existence, leaving Nixon as the principal community in the area.

Hoffman provides interesting details on the region's various families and individuals, social life, government, education, outstanding athletes, and economy, highlighting Nixon's poultry business. Interspersed throughout the book are relevant photographs, lists, maps, excerpts from newspapers, notable drawings by the late Jack Jackson, and even clips from Texas history movies. There are some historical errors in the work, such as the reference to Mission Espiritu Santo being closed

immediately after the secularization decree of 1794 when in fact missionary work continued, albeit limited, at the mission until 1830. Furthermore, the reader will receive a heavy exposure to William A. Dunning's interpretation on Reconstruction and will be exposed exclusively to the Taylor side of the Sutton-Taylor Feud. Nevertheless, *South of the Guadalupe* overall is a worthy publication on local history.

Victoria CHARLES D. SPURLIN

César Chávez: The Catholic Bishops, and the Farmworkers' Struggle for Social Justice. By Marco G. Prouty. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2006. Pp. 185. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 0816525552. $40.00, cloth.)

Few Chicano movement leaders have received the same depth of attention as César Chávez. Thanks to the insightful works of historians like Richard Griswold del Castillo and Richard A. García, among many others, we have developed a clear understanding of Chávez and his work. Just when one may have thought, then, that the final chapter on Chávez's life had been written, along comes Marco G. Prouty with yet another book on Chávez and the farmworker movement in California, *César Chávez: The Catholic Bishops and the Farmworkers' Struggle for Social Justice.*

Employing the rich historical archives at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Prouty sheds new light on the farmworkers' struggle from the perspective of the Catholic Church. Digging through the papers of the Association of Chicago Priests Collection at Notre Dame University, the Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on Farm Labor Papers at the United State Conference of Catholic Bishops' archives in Washington, D.C., the Collections of Labor and Urban Affairs–United Farm Workers at Wayne State University in Detroit, and the Msgr. George G. Higgins Collection at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., Prouty attempts to demonstrate the significance of the Catholic hierarchy in the farmworkers' movement. Through detailed readings of letters, official pronouncements, and other documents, Prouty shows the reader how clerical leaders built a broad base of religious support for the United Farm Workers movement based on Church teachings dating back to Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891).

Prouty's book is divided into three chapters and an epilogue. The first chapter examines the roots of the conflict, by tracing the plight of the farmworker in California at mid-century, as well as the rise of both César Chávez and his eventual close ally, "the Labor Priest," Msgr. George G. Higgins. The second chapter explains the grape strike and boycott and shows how the intervention of the Catholic Church, four years into the process, finally helped secure an end to the dispute. The church entered the fray late because both the growers and the farmworkers were Catholic. As Prouty nicely puts it, "The farmworkers filled the pews, and the growers enriched the coffers" (p. 4). The third chapter studies the "battle of the salad bowl" as Prouty describes the lettuce pickers' strike. In this particular instance, the Catholic Church more openly backed Chávez and the farmworkers, because it did not face divided loyalties as it did with the grape strike.

Overall Prouty takes a balanced look at Chávez and demonstrates that he too had a dark side, which in fact helped drive off key leaders in the movement. Chávez