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In May 1986, he presented a similar paper at the opening banquet of the 27th Annual Arizona Historical Convention, held in Douglas, Arizona.

The themes outlined in this essay are explored at greater length in the author's book: *The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846: The American Southwest Under Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982). Selected passages are reproduced with permission of the University of New Mexico Press. Citations to all quotations that appear in this essay may be found in *The Mexican Frontier*.

Sharon Johnson Mariscal read this paper at the 27th Annual Arizona Historical Convention, held in Douglas, May 1-3, 1986. It won her the SOZA PRIZE of \$500 which was presented to her by Edward Soza at the annual banquet. Mrs. Mariscal received her B.A. in Anthropology in 1982 from the University of Arizona, her M.A. in History this past May, from the U of A.

She says, "I originally wrote the paper for a seminar at the U of A for which I needed an interesting topic important to Arizona history. What could be better than the people who helped to shape that history." She is now tracing her husband's Mexican families that have been in Arizona for generations, her hobby being geneology.

Photo, front cover: *Stephen Sosa McKenna in University of Arizona uniform (cadet) with his grandmother, Solana Sosa, 111 years old. (Solana was the second wife of Jose Maria III.) Photo was taken in the early 1900s. (Courtesy Arizona Historical Society)*

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**“ ‘FROM HELL ITSELF’: THE AMERICANIZATION OF MEXICO’S
NORTHERN FRONTIER, 1821-1846” ***

by David J. Weber

In 1830, José Francisco Ruíz of San Antonio, one of the pillars of that small Mexican community, made a telling comment about the large influx of Anglo-American colonists who were settling in Mexican Texas. Whereas the central government in Mexico City sought to restrict the flow of Anglo-Americans into Texas; through the controversial Law of April 6, 1830, Ruíz wanted to welcome them: “I cannot help seeing advantages which to my way of thinking, would result,” he said, “if we admitted honest, hard-working people, regardless of what country they come from. . . even hell itself.” A decade later in Alta California, which then formed part of Mexico’s northern frontier, Pablo de la Guerra of Monterey is said to have made a similar observation about the number of Yankees settling in California. The foreigners, De la Guerra said, “are about to overrun us, of which I am very glad, for the country needs immigration in order to make progress.”

When war broke out between Mexico and the United States in 1846, foreigners did indeed overrun California, but not in a way that Pablo de la Guerra had envisioned. Armed forces from the imperialistic United States invaded California, and took possession of its principal towns, just as American forces seized the key settlements in New Mexico and southern Arizona during the war. There was no need for the United States to send troops into Texas, for that former Mexican province had rebelled in 1836 and entered the American union in 1845 — an event that, in itself, contributed to the war between Mexico and the United States. When the shooting ended and the last signatures were put on the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the imperialistic United States had possession of half of Mexico, a region embracing not only the present border states from Texas to California, but Nevada, Utah and half of Colorado as well.

To be sure, American forces had met resistance in New Mexico and California, but both provinces had fallen rather easily and no prolonged guerrilla struggle followed. How could invading armies conquer northern Mexico so easily, and why did the invaders meet so little resistance?

Part of the answer can be found in the dynamic nature of American expansionism, and this is the subject to which most American historians have devoted their attention. As a result, we have splendid studies of people such as Stephen Austin, Kit Carson, Charles Bent, and Thomas Oliver Larkin — those intrepid traders, trappers, and colonists who settled in northern Mexico and helped, often unwittingly, to prepare the region for an American conquest.

** This essay is published by permission of the Center for Inter-American and Border Studies, University of Texas at El Paso.*

American historians have also examined the forces that gave impetus to what came to be called Manifest Destiny and Mission, and the lurching, blundering policies — sometimes known as diplomacy — that led us into the war. But this represents only half of the answer. To understand why the Mexican North became the American Southwest with such ease between the Texas Revolt of 1836 and the Mexican-American War of 1846-47, it is also necessary to understand something of the nature of the Mexican frontiersmen who acquiesced to the conquest — the Mexican counterparts to the Austins, Carsons, Bents, and Larkins — and the dynamics of the Mexican society and institutions that lay behind the Mexican frontier. Here, historians are on shakier ground, for they enter into an era of Mexican history that, as Mexican historian Josefina Vázquez has put it, has been “almost systematically forgotten.”

Although our knowledge of Mexico in this era lacks depth and precision, it does seem clear that the American conquest of the Mexican north was facilitated greatly, if not made possible, by Mexico’s failure to tie her frontier to the rest of the nation through the building of strong institutional, economic, and even social ties. That Mexico failed to do this was not for lack of foresight or concern about the frontier, or because of the “natural inferiority” of Mexicans as some contemporary Anglo-Americans smugly imagined. Rather it was because of Mexico’s extraordinary internal problems. Newly independent from Spain in 1821, Mexico had embarked on a bold new political and economic course that affected every aspect of life in the nation, including life on its remote frontiers.

At the same time that some Mexican *políticos* sought to implement profound political, economic, and social changes, they met a series of seemingly insurmountable obstacles: the destructive effects of the ruinous decade of civil war that had given life to the young nation; repeated economic crises; quarrels between Church and State; the machinations of predatory and often illiterate army officers; the defiance of local leaders whose regional interests ran deeper than their allegiance to the nation; and the threats of foreign invasion. The magnitude of these problems overwhelmed Mexico’s inexperienced and sometimes doctrinaire civilian leaders, who could neither bring order out of chaos nor maintain themselves in power. As governments came and went, policies toward the frontier often disappeared in the shuffle and continuity was lost. Key officials in Mexico City understood the urgency of problems on the northern frontier, but they also saw that region’s problems as only one of a series of urgencies.

Efforts at reform then bumped squarely into immense obstacles and sent shock waves across the young nation, reaching as far away as the northern frontier. There, they shook that region’s already weak attachment to the rest of the nation and facilitated the Americanization of northern Mexico. Let us look at some examples, beginning in the political sphere.

Mexico's first national charter, the Constitution of 1824, envisioned a federal republic composed of states and territories that would be relatively autonomous like those of the United States. The idea, as Lorenzo de Zavala explained in the preamble to the Constitution, was to allow local decision making in a nation characterized by "enormous differences of climate, temperature, and their consequent influence." For the northern frontier, however, the promise of political autonomy was not realized. Due to their sparse population, New Mexico and California became territories rather than states under the Constitution of 1824 and the document gave Congress the power to draw up regulations for the internal administration of the territories. Rather than local lawmakers, Congressmen in Mexico City would decide what was best for Arizona and New Mexico. But to make matters worse, Congress was preoccupied by more pressing concerns and failed to draw up internal regulations for the territories during the years that the Constitution of 1824 was in force (1824-1835). For lack of new laws, frontier administrators turned to old Spanish laws, and those posed peculiar problems. As Carlos Carrillo of California put it: "The laws of the Spanish Cortes . . . present many difficulties, doubts, and perhaps errors in their application, because they were made for other countries, for another kind of government, and for other circumstances very different from ours." Tired of waiting for Congress to act, some frustrated frontiersmen in New Mexico drew up a plan for statehood, proposing to name the territory the State of Hidalgo. Although the plan won the endorsement of many municipalities in New Mexico, the territorial assembly tabled it.

Under the Constitution of 1824, Texas also failed to achieve political autonomy. Texas entered the United States of Mexico tied to its larger and more populous neighbor to the south, Coahuila, as the single state of Coahuila y Texas. From the very beginning, when the state legislature infuriated them by abolishing their local legislature, *tejano* leaders entered into an adversary relationship with Coahuila politicians. Texans deplored the failure of the state government to address the unusual needs of the frontier and lamented the great distance that separated them from the state capital in Saltillo, described by one visitor as "ridiculously placed . . . The distance from Saltillo to Nacogdoches in the north is about three hundred leagues, whereas lands lying fifteen leagues to the south of Saltillo no longer belong to Coahuila y Texas." General Manuel Mier y Terán, who inspected Texas in 1828, termed the arrangement a "monstrosity," and the town council of San Antonio, in a memorial of 1832, blamed the lack of a responsive state government for the "paralysis" of Texas. An official inspector who visited Texas that year, Tadeo Ortiz, concluded: "I am certain that all of the ills of Texas date from its annexation to the State of Coahuila." Notwithstanding such general agreement that the arrangement had proved unworkable, Texas remained linked to Coahuila. Important decisions continued to be made in far away Saltillo and the discontent generated by that lack of political autonomy became one of the many burrs under the saddle that led Texas to throw off Mexican rule in 1836.

In the mid-1830s, Mexico abandoned the federalist system, replacing the Constitution of 1824 with a conservative charter that made government even less representative and that consciously centralized decision-making in Mexico City. For frontiersmen who had sought greater local autonomy, this was the last straw. In a stunning series of revolts, Texas, Alta California, New Mexico, and Sonora (which then embraced present Southern Arizona), declared against the central government between 1836 and 1838. All except Texas soon returned to the fold, but resentments lingered and confidence in the central government waned as instability became the hallmark of Mexican politics. From 1833 to 1855 the presidency of Mexico changed hands thirty-six times! On the eve of the North American invasion, frontier *políticos* openly expressed discontent with the failure of the political system to respond to their needs: "Hopes and promises are only what (New Mexico) has received . . . from its mother country," Mariano Chávez wrote in 1844, and another New Mexican bitterly complained: "Mexico has never been able to protect us because, unfortunately, of continuous revolts . . . opportunism has smashed the union to pieces."

The forces that fed frontier disaffection and separatism were not just political. Thoughtful frontiersmen also witnessed a weakening of economic, military, cultural, and religious ties to Mexico in the years following Mexican independence from Spain.

The Catholic Church, represented on the frontier largely by the activities of Jesuits and Franciscans, had been a bastion of strength and a key institution for frontier expansion during most of the Spanish period. The missions, which had begun to decline in the late eighteenth century, collapsed completely under independent Mexico. In the view of some Mexican liberals, missions represented antiquated institutions that oppressed Indians by holding them forcibly and denying them the full equality accorded to other Mexican citizens. Missions also aided the Church in amassing wealth and property, some liberals reasoned, and abolishing missions would indirectly weaken Church influence in secular affairs. Although they had fallen from official favor, the missions might have held on had there been enough missionaries to staff them, but most of the missionaries were Spanish-born. In 1827 and 1829, during the xenophobic aftermath of the wars of independence against Spain, Mexico ordered Spanish residents to leave the Republic, with but few exceptions. Many of those who departed were priests. Thus, the Franciscan colleges that had staffed the frontier missions faced acute shortages of manpower. By the eve of the Mexican War, only ten Franciscans remained on the northern frontier, nine of them in California.

The dismantling of the missions and the rapid decrease of Franciscans on the frontier in the 1820s and 1830s left the way open for secular priests to replace the *padres*, but the opportunity was lost. Weakened by a shortage of funds and of clergy, the bishops of the secular Church found themselves unable to fill the void left by the departing Franciscans. By 1828, half the parishes in Mexico lacked priests and a disproportionate share of those empty parishes existed in

rural and remote areas such as the frontier. Priests tended to avoid isolation, hardship, danger, and low salaries of the frontier and to gravitate toward more comfortable urban parishes. Perhaps with tongue in cheek, Antonio Barreiro of New Mexico proposed the priests ought to receive a reward for serving at a frontier hardship post. Those who ministered for ten years on the frontier, he suggested, should receive preference for a comfortable cathedral appointment in one of the nation's "civilized communities." But the problem seemed beyond simple remedy. As early as 1831, Antonio Barreiro reported that abandoned churches were falling into ruin in New Mexico and that many parishes received visits from priests only a few times a year. People could not attend Mass or receive the sacraments, he said, and "corpses remain unburied for many days . . . How resentful must be the poor people who suffer such neglect!"

Curiously, many Anglo-American visitors to northern Mexico seemed blind to the declining influence of the Church and pronounced the frontiersmen a "priest-ridden" people, who behaved obsequiously toward their priests. In fact, however, the once-powerful Church on the Mexican frontier had become a paper tiger, its temporal and ecclesiastical power greatly diminished by the time of the United States invasion.

At the same time that Mexico's political and ecclesiastical authority over her frontier subjects eroded, her military supremacy over the frontier also slipped away. In many areas of the frontier, the decades following independence saw relations worsen with those autonomous tribes of seminomadic Indians who rejected Christianity and much of Hispanic culture — Indians the frontiersmen often termed *indios bárbaros* or *salvajes*. By 1846 the situation had deteriorated to the point that some areas of the frontier had less to fear from imminent war with the United States than they had from Indians, who were better armed, better mounted, and more successful than ever at defending their lands and striking offensive blows deep into Mexico. The sources of Indian arms, and the markets for stolen Mexican livestock, were often unscrupulous Anglo American traders who had penetrated the High Plains and the Rockies of Northern Mexico in the decades before the war. As one Mexican historian, Carlos J. Sierra, has reminded us, "the guides or pioneers of the so-called American West were spies in our territory and dealers in furs and arms — many of them were constant instigators of attacks on Mexican towns and villages."

Before the arrival of Anglo-American traders in the region, Mexican frontiersmen had a near monopoly over the Indian trade and used the Indians' commercial dependency to help maintain the peace. As control over trade shifted increasingly to the westward-moving Anglo-Americans, however, its importance as a diplomatic tool for Mexican frontiersmen lessened, forcing them to rely more than ever on force of arms. Here, the timing was especially unfortunate for it seemed to frontiersmen that the Mexican military was weaker than it had been under Spain.

With a demoralized soldiery and a highly politicized officer corps, the Mexican army seemed unable and unwilling to engage hostile Indians on the frontier. Instead, like those clergy who preferred plush cathedrals to primitive frontier chapels, politically motivated officers kept their units concentrated near the centers of power — Mexico City or Veracruz — so they could be on the scene when a government tottered and opportunity beckoned. From the vantage point of the nation's capital, the defensive needs of the frontier were generally out of sight and out of mind. Seldom did newspapers note, as one did in 1827, the peculiarity of having well-equipped and well-dressed troops in Mexico City while Indian raids went unchecked in the north. Under these circumstances the frontier presidios, bastions of defense under Spain, declined under independent Mexico, and the burden of defense fell on the frontiersmen themselves, who organized ill-equipped militia to make forays against Indians.

Mexico's failure to provide resources or direction to carry out an effective Indian policy in the north added to the discontent of the frontiersmen. As Mariano Chávez of New Mexico bitterly complained in 1844: "We are surrounded on all sides . . . by many tribes of heartless barbarians, almost perishing; and our brothers, instead of helping us, are at each other's throats in their festering civil wars."

To these failures to shore up frontier defenses, maintain a vibrant Church, and meet the political aspirations of frontiersmen, must be added Mexico's failure to integrate the frontier into the nation's economic system. Following Mexican independence, the rapid influx of foreigners, foreign merchandise, and foreign capital, together with access to new foreign markets, increased the tempo of activity in many areas of the once isolated and nearly moribund frontier economy. But the new pace of economic life did not always produce harmonious results. The frontier remained dependent upon outsiders, especially Americans, for manufactured goods, and foreigners came to play an important role in local commerce and industry. Trade deficits characterized the new arrangements; specie and investment capital remained in short supply; and some natural resources, especially beaver and sea otter, seemed threatened to the point of extinction.

Put simply, the pull of the vigorous American economy reached beyond the United States borders onto the neighboring Mexican frontier, as American economic colonialism quickly supplanted the old Spanish colonial structure after 1821. The American economy gave impetus to the economic growth of northernmost Mexico, but at the same time it pulled that region into the American commercial orbit and away from its own economically weak metropolis. Mexico's failure to exert a strong economic counterforce contributed to the growing sense of alienation of some of her frontiersmen. They could not mistake the new reality that the lines of commerce no longer ran just north and south as they had prior to Mexican independence.

The westward thrust of American economic activity and American population began to Americanize Mexican frontier society and culture well before the American military conquest of the region. American influence was strongest in East Texas, close to the American border. Speaking of the *tejanos* at Nacogdoches, one Mexican officer noted in 1828:

Accustomed to the continued trade with the North Americans, they have adopted their customs and habits, and one may say that truly they are not Mexicans except by birth, for they even speak Spanish with marked incorrectness.

American influence extended to San Antonio, too, where a Swiss scientist noted in 1828 that “trade with the Anglo-Americans, and the blending in to some degree of their customs, make the inhabitants of Texas a little different from the Mexicans of the interior.” Indeed, as American influence spread throughout Texas, it seemed to one official, Juan Almonte, that it would be wise to make the whole state of Coahuila y Texas officially bilingual and to translate all laws and government acts into English.

Not just in Texas, but wherever Americans gathered in significant numbers — in Santa Fe, Taos, and in California’s coastal communities — American influence was apparent to contemporaries. “These foreigners gradually modified our customs,” California Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado would later recall.

As early as 1825, the governor of Chihuahua expressed the hope that contact with Americans “would produce the advantages of restraining and civilizing the New Mexicans, giving them the ideas of culture which they need to improve the disgraceful condition that characterizes the remote country where they live, detached from other peoples of the Republic.” Whatever its benefits, however, American cultural influences also had seductive qualities that could further weaken the frontiersmen’s ties to central Mexico, as one Mexico City newspaper warned in 1825:

Territorial limits are barriers too weak to stop the progress of the Enlightenment. Mexicans who live under poverty and ignorance on one side of the river cannot remain unaware of the fortune enjoyed by citizens of the United States who live on the opposite bank.

Nearly a decade later the struggling young Santa Fe newspaper, *El Crepúsculo de la Libertad*, took up the same theme of the danger inherent in America’s cultural penetration of the region:

The reign of brute force has been replaced by that of reason . . . We can be sure that the Americans will not take our land with bullets . . . their weapons are others. They are their industry, their

ideas of liberty and independence. The stars of the Capitol of the North will shine without a doubt even more brightly in New Mexico where the darkness is most dense due to the deplorable state in which the Mexican government has left it.

As the Mexican period wore on, officials expressed fear that the *californios* and *nuevomexicanos* would not resist if Americans tried to take over their respective provinces. Ties between Americans and Mexican frontiersmen may have begun with commercial alliances, but as Manuel Castañares warned the central government in 1844, the sympathy that the frontiersmen had toward *norteamericanos* was based not only on their economic interests but also on “the much stronger ties of marriage and property” The *californios*, Castañares warned, regard the Americans “as brothers.”

Some of the Mexican frontiersmen, then, seemed to have undergone a pattern of change similar to that of other frontier peoples — one which fits anthropologist Owen Lattimore’s classic description of a “marginal” border population whose “political loyalty may be emphatically modified by economic self-interest in dealings with foreigners across the border.” Although trade often brings frontier peoples into contact, their activities are not “limited to the economic,” Lattimore argued. Frontier residents “inevitably set up their own nexus of social contact and joint interest.”

Settlers on the Mexican frontier were no exception. The “ambivalent loyalties” that Lattimore found characteristic of border peoples were probably intensified in the Mexican Far North by the neglect of the central government, extreme distance from the nation’s core, and by virulent regionalism — a key feature of Mexican life in the early part of the nineteenth century. Indeed, some contemporaries questioned whether Mexico existed as a nation or whether it was simply a collection of semiautonomous provinces. Loyalty to one’s locality, one’s *patria chica*, frequently took precedence over loyalty to the *patria*, or nation as a whole.

Ambivalent loyalties exacerbated by the frontiersmen’s growing contact with Europeans and Americans in the Mexican era, took its most extreme form in Alta California, the most isolated of the northern provinces. Even casual visitors to California noted the hostility and deep hatred that the *californios* held toward Mexicans from “*la otra banda*,” or “other shore,” as *californios* termed central Mexico. Mexican-born Governor José Figueroa noted in 1833 that the *californios* looked upon Mexicans with the same animosity that Mexicans viewed Spaniards. Intensifying the hostility that many frontiersmen held toward residents of central Mexico was a knowledge that Mexican officials viewed frontier peoples with contempt and described them as uneducated rustics who lacked the training and competence to manage their own affairs. “The best of the Mexicans among us,” one *californio* later recalled, “were far more insulting and offensive than any foreigner.”

Thus, as the military forces of the expansionist United States moved into the Mexican north, they found a people who had already begun to be Americanized, and whose loyalties toward Mexico had become ambivalent. Mexico had tried to pull the Far North tightly to the center of the nation by building strong political, ecclesiastical, military, economic, and demographic links, but the center did not hold. The disaffected periphery had begun to drift away. America's political incorporation of the Mexican frontier in the mid-nineteenth century represented the culmination of a process as much as it did the inauguration of a new era.



* * * * *

THE SOSA/SOZA FAMILY OF ARIZONA

by Sharon Johnson Mariscal

In Tucson on April 9, 1975, a family proudly sat down to dinner pleased with the day's activities. This was no ordinary household however, but a genuine bicentennial family and a reunion of more than 250 of the 1,600 descendants of Jose Maria Sosa and Rita Espinosa, progenitors of the notable Sosa/Soza¹ family of Arizona. Both Governor Raul Castro, who gave a stirring extemporaneous speech, and Tucson Mayor Lewis Murphy attended the banquet.² Congressman Morris Udall (D-AZ) telegraphed his congratulations saying, "I share your tremendous pride in the contributions to the history and culture of Arizona and the Southwest of your forebears."³

The reunion dinner coincided with the dedication earlier that day of the Jose Maria Sosa Room in the John C. Fremont House located on the grounds of the Tucson Community Center.⁴ Several hundred people witnessed the ceremonies as Governor Castro praised the family, stating, "We pay tribute to the Sozas . . . we thank them for making Arizona a great state."⁵ Mayor Murphy proclaimed the day "Soza Bicentennial Day."⁶ Also attending were Bishop Francis Green and Huachuca City Mayor L. F. Gonzales, himself a Sosa/Soza descendant.

The house, called after the more historically familiar name of Fremont, had been built in the 1850s by Jose Maria III, grandson of the first Jose Maria. Its significance lay in the fact that it later had been the home of John C. Fremont, the only territorial governor to have lived in Tucson.⁷ Today, the building serves as an educational tool demonstrating territorial architecture and home furnishings in the three decades running from 1850-1881 and territorial government from 1863 until the advent of statehood in 1912.⁸

Although the day's accomplishments represented quite a bit of work by numerous people, Edward Soza of Altadena, California, family historian and fourth great grandson of Jose Maria I, had been the prime catalyst. He had begun documenting the family history ten years earlier after reading a magazine article⁹ mentioning some of his ancestors and finding himself unable to tell his children much more than was in the story.¹⁰ In explaining why he put so much effort into the discovery and recognition of his research, Edward, in his speech at the reunion dinner affirmed,

When I leave I will not leave any great wealth or treasures for my children and descendants . . . but a legacy of their ancestry . . . I pray that this legacy will be the genesis for the inspiration and encouragement, for future generations . . . to seek excellence, greatness, and professionalism . . . always with dignity, integrity, and complete morality.¹¹

Edward had brought this two hundred year old legacy to light from the half remembered memories of old-timers, from forgotten baptismal rolls, government records, and dusty archives. Modern Tucsonans often fail to realize the length of Hispanic influence on Tucson and southern Arizona. Many Hispanic families have lived in the area for six and seven generations. They pioneered the land before Arizona or even the United States came into existence.¹²

These early pioneers established the most effective methods of battling Indians, for example, employing *compañías volantes*, the successful small detachments of mobile cavalry. They also developed ranching and farming techniques such as branding, trail drives, roundups, and cattlemen's associations, all of which the later arriving Anglos adopted. Even the Hispanics' tough, desert bred cattle, *criollos*, dominated the southwestern ranges until late in the 19th century. Anglos also borrowed many Spanish terms making them their own. Lariat came from *la reata*, dally from *da la vuelta*, and chaps from *chaparreras*. Farming techniques included the utilization of a system of irrigation using the available water to the fullest advantage and an emphasis on winter crops.¹³

This way of life in what was to become Arizona was an extension of the lifestyle that had been evolving for two hundred years in New Spain, and that moved northward with the extension of Spanish policy. In 1752, the Viceroy of Spain, stationed in Mexico City ordered a military outpost established along the northern frontier in order to protect the missions and mines from marauding Indians. A presidio was built at Tubac and the little town that formed around it became the first European settlement in what was later called Arizona.¹⁴

Jose Maria Sosa was stationed at the presidio when Don Hugo O'Connor, Irish mercenary long on the payroll of Spain, arrived in 1774 to inventory the presidio and make recommendations as to its effectiveness. The crown intended to employ a more aggressive military policy against the Indians and sought to establish a line of twenty presidios from the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of California. As a result, some were abandoned, others built, and some simply moved. In his inventory, Don Hugo listed Sosa as a young man twenty-eight years of age and in good health and circumstances¹⁵ and further recommended that the presidio be moved from Tubac eighteen leagues north to an area near the mission called San Xavier del Bac because the "requisite conditions of water, pasture and wood occur, as well as a perfect closing of the frontier."¹⁶ Thus, Jose Maria Sosa arrived in Tucson with the presidio forces in 1775; he eventually married Rita Espinosa and began a family.¹⁷

The garrison there stood as the northernmost post of the frontier. The soldiers battled Indians from the Santa Catalina Mountains to the Chiricahua Mountains and north to the Tonto Basin and as far east as the San Francisco

River. They also defended the settlements in the Santa Cruz Valley.¹⁸ Farmers and ranchers persevered “fighting Indians with one hand and raising crops and cattle with the other.”¹⁹ Eventually, Tucson flourished and the government began awarding land grants.²⁰



Tucson - walled city. An artist's conception of the Royal Spanish Presidio of Tucson. 1795. (Courtesy Arizona Historical Society)

Meanwhile, Sosa's military career escalated. He received promotion to second corporal in 1778, sergeant in 1782, and finished his career with a royal commission as Alferez 20 or Ensign Second Class. After serving twenty-nine and a half years in the Spanish Royal Presidio Forces and distinguishing himself both in battle and service, Sosa retired in 1799 at the age of fifty-five. Evidently, his “good circumstances” had also increased because Father Pedro Arriquerbar listed him in the 1797 census of the Village of Tucson as having four servants in his employ. It is interesting to note that the commanding officer of the presidio engaged only a single servant. That Sosa died sometime before 1811 is evident from a letter the priest wrote to the Bishop in Hermosillo on behalf of Jose Maria II who sought permission to marry. In the letter the young man was referred to as “son of the late Sosa.”²¹

This second Sosa made administration rather than soldiering his career. In the 1830s he held the office of Civil Administrator of the Tumacacori Mission lands and was himself the holder of a large grant covering the three mile distance between Tubac and the Tumacacori Mission. Granted by the governor of Sonora and titled the “Torreon Land Grant” after the nearby Torreon Peaks, it was not part of the 13,000 acre grant by the same name in New Mexico.²²



Plano de Tubac. Original in British Museum. (Courtesy Arizona Historical Society)

Sosa and his wife, Gregoria Nuñez, were the parents of eight children, according to the 1831 census of Tubac. Of them, the lines of only three, sons Calistro, Manuel, and Jose Maria III are the ones most fully traced. This last son is remembered as being the builder of a home in Tucson for his second wife, Solana Alcantara Mendoza. It later became home to the fifth territorial governor, John C. Fremont and his daughter, Elizabeth. The 1862 Fergusson map shows only a small house. Archaeological evidence uncovered during reconstruction of the building one hundred and ten years later indicates that the original structure probably contained only one or two small rooms, a size typical of the times.²³

Fifteen year old Manuela Sosa, daughter of the builder, married Civil War veteran Michael McKenna in January 1867. They are the first documented owners of the home. In 1871 the Village of Tucson incorporated and the following year offered deeds to any who made certain improvements to his property. Having complied with the requirements, McKenna received the deed to lot 1, block 222.²⁴

An article produced in the original home can be seen today on display in the Jose Maria Sosa Room. At one point during their residence McKenna became ill suffering a series of paralyzing strokes. During this time Manuela began making a quilt from samples of wool material used for men's suits. Lacy feather stitching joined the pieces and delicate embroidery recorded the dates of family births and marriages. Later, other ladies of the family worked on the quilt with Manuela. It is not difficult to imagine her sitting beside the bed quietly sewing while McKenna napped, the easier to be near if he woke and needed her. In 1878, the house sold, ownership passed from family hands.²⁵

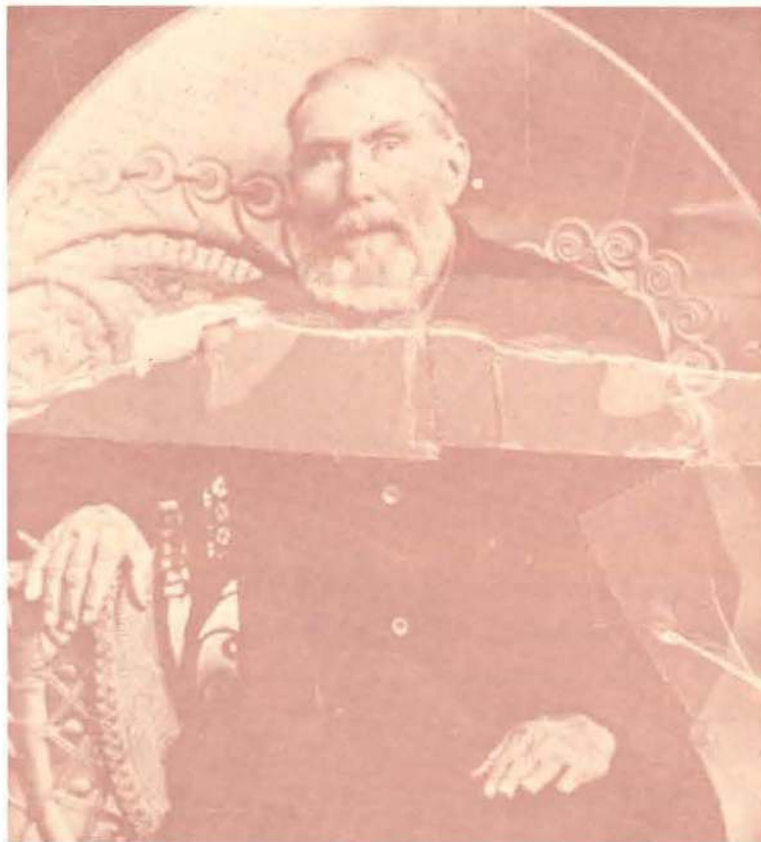
Sosa's son, Manuel, became the first justice of the peace in Tubac, following his father's example of public service. At times, he also acted as a guide for the U. S. Army. Wanting a more settled life and deciding to farm, he moved his family to Tucson which was still a walled village with only one main street. His thirteen acres in the Tucson Mission fields lay where the La Quinta Motel near St. Mary's Road runs today. When Manuel died in an Indian attack in 1850, ownership of the land passed to his wife, Luisa Campa and their two sons, Plácido and Antonio. Some time later, Luisa married Calistro, her late husband's brother. Eventually they sold the land and moved to the San Pedro River Valley in the area of present day Redington, first residing for a short while at both Rillito and Tanque Verde.²⁶

When the extended family, which included the now adult five brothers and step-brothers, arrived in the valley in the 1870s, they were among the first permanent settlers, the Apaches having prevented earlier settlement. The men immediately applied for homesteads, but two of the brothers, Plácido and Juan, decided to move on, and selling their land to their brother Antonio, settled in the Tempe area where they numbered among the earliest pioneers. Juan again

farmed, but also took an active hand in the development of the region. He helped build the first ferry across the Salt River and his labor on the construction of the Hayden Canal, used not only for irrigation but also as a power source for the Hayden Flour Mill, earned him free water rights for his own land. Juan drove a stagecoach from Tempe to the capitol at Prescott, and for a time, carried the U. S. Mail by horseback to Tucson. Following in the family tradition of service, Juan served as deputy for three terms under Sheriff Carl Hayden.²⁷

Like the Soza brothers, Hispanic ranchers and farmers continued to spread across the landscape. The Aguirres, Aras, and the Robles families established large ranches to the west of Tucson in the Altar and Avra Valleys while Antonio Soza and others settled in the San Pedro Valley to the east of Tucson.²⁸ Frank Escalante, who grew up on a homestead in the Rincon foothills once observed, “from this mountain to that mountain, from the Rincons to the Catalinas, used to be owned by Mexicans.”²⁹

Antonio Soza was beginning to make his own mark in the valley. He located his first homestead on a plot next to the river and built a small adobe house with a roof of mud and saguaro ribs. One day a terrible flood arose and washed everything away. The family sheltered in a stable with a hog, the only thing they had been able to save. Wiser, Antonio built their next home farther from the river.³⁰



Antonio Campa Soza, late 1890s. Son of Manuel and Luisa Campa. Antonio died in 1915. (Courtesy Arizona Historical Society)

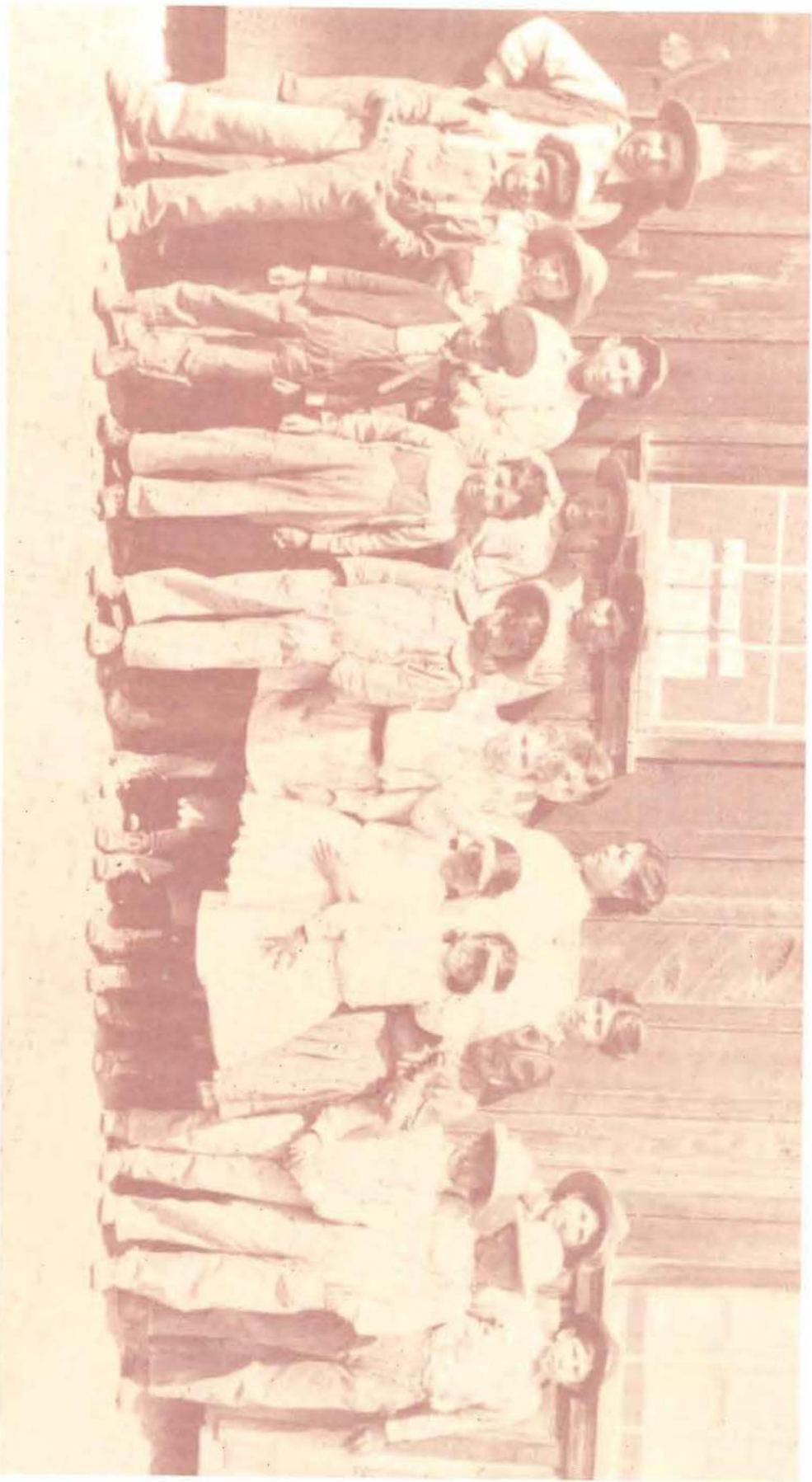
Life in such an isolated area proved difficult. The self-sufficient family made its own lye soap and produced dye from cactus roots and mesquite beans. The dirt floors of the home required constant sprinkling, pounding, and sweeping to keep down the dust. When Antonio gathered the family for daily prayers, no matter what else they prayed for, they always prayed for rain, so necessary for the cattle and hogs and wheat and barley that they raised in abundance.³¹

Even so simple an activity as shopping presented difficulties. The family generally traveled either to Benson or Tucson. A trip to the latter took three days by covered wagon and necessitated camping out along the way. The boys rode ahead to clear the road through Redington Pass. On one occasion, a flood made shopping even nearby impossible and Antonio's wife, Jesus, shed many tears insisting that her children would starve. He began cleaning and grinding wheat, and Jesus, still "in a flood of tears" tried to help. Then a ranch hand carved a couple of stones into grinding stones and Antonio set up a mill powered by a pair of burros. After that, there was always plenty of flour. Generously, Soza invited his neighbors to use the mill at any time.³²

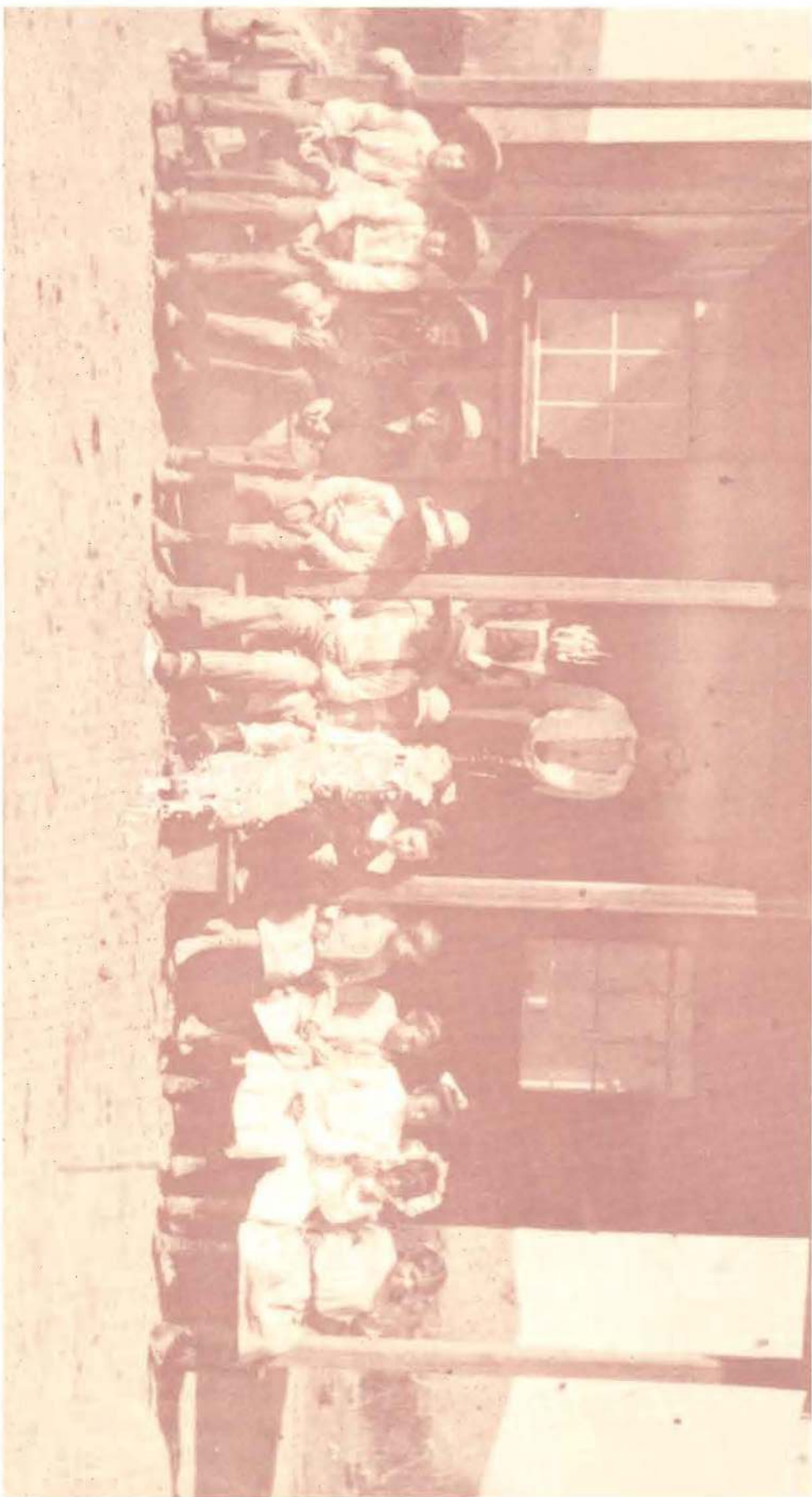
Because of the difficulties of travel, Father Julio Gheldof did not come often and many couples lived together before marriage while awaiting his arrival. Babies went unbaptised. Antonio went to Benson to get the priest whenever necessary. Finally, Father Gheldof asked him to build a church. So he did. He built it on the ranch and called it *La Capilla de San Antonio de Padua de Lisboa* after his patron saint. Bishop Granjon and Father Gheldof officiated at the dedication on February 2, 1903. Antonio and his neighbors had a real house of worship at last and another facet of civilization had been established in the wilderness.³³

Not only concerned with the spiritual welfare of his friends, Soza also worried about education for the children. A small school existed in the town of Pool, but only a few children, mostly from the ranch, attended. Not satisfied with this arrangement, Soza next built a school on the ranch and hired a teacher and gave him board and room. Later, as more settlers arrived in the area, the school moved back to Pool. Still interested in public education, in 1901 Antonio served as Clerk of the Board of Trustees of Pool School.³⁴

Antonio prospered as his holdings grew, his crops flourished, and his cattle and hogs increased. Eventually, eight cattle brands were listed to his name. Hospitality served as the by-word of the ranch. No traveler through the area was allowed to take his meals anywhere but at the house. The honor and high regard in which his neighbors held him were reflected in the fact that certain nearby geological features began to be called by his name. On the map one may locate Soza Wash, Soza Mesa, and Soza Canyon. When the U. S. Geodetic Survey passed through, the names became official.³⁵



Pool School, Cochise County, District 24, 1907. L. to R., top row: Vincente Manzo, Enrique Moreno Soza, Jose Moreno Lopez, Benito Moreno Soza II, Carlos Moreno Soza, Rita Vasquez, Edvina Valdez, Estefana Valdez, Juan Moreno Soza, Benito Moreno Lopez. L. to R. 2nd row: Carlos Vasquez, Francisco Manzo Soza, Alberto Moreno Soza, Celso Sierra, Francisca Moreno Soza, Magdalena Sierra, Guadalupe Sierra, Sofia Vasquez, Jesus Salas, Juan Salas. (Courtesy Arizona Historical Society)



School at Antonio Soza's ranch in the San Pedro Valley. L. to R.: one behind post not identified, Jose Lopez, Carlos Vasquez, Carlos Soza, Benito Soza (may be Francisco Vasquez), Juan Soza, Alfonso A. Sanchez (scratched), Albert Soza, Isabel Alvarez (Indian we raised), unknown, Rita Vasquez, Sofia Vasquez, unknown. Back row: Francisca Soza, Mariana Priest (teacher from Tempe). From Mrs. Maria Gonzales de Soza, 1939. (Courtesy Arizona Historical Society)

Times were changing. Drought, land speculation, and a desire for the benefits of city life drove many farmers and ranchers from the land. In town they took up various occupations and became carpenters, laborers, blacksmiths, merchants, and so forth. In 1900, Antonio, recognizing these changes and wanting to provide the best education possible for his children, bought them a house on Fourth Avenue in Tucson to enable them to attend city schools and get the education to meet these changes. He died in 1915. His widow, Jesus, became an astute business woman owning and operating several Tucson grocery stores and a gas station until her death in 1939 when she returned to the San Antonio Ranch for the final time to rest beside her husband in the family cemetery.³⁶



Mrs. Jesus Moreno de Soza, wife of Antonio; died in 1939. (Courtesy Arizona Historical Society)

Like many other early Hispanics, Antonio and Jesus had gone into an unsettled area and worked and struggled to earn prosperity and security for their family. Their efforts to establish the various facets of civilization smoothed the way and made life easier and less a struggle for those who followed in later years.

In the words of Arizona Congressman Morris Udall, “the contemporary members . . . haven’t done so badly either.”³⁷ Ezekiel Soza, born in 1915 in Tempe and grandson of Juan and Jesus Sotelo, carried the family honor and name even further into history. In the 1960s he worked as a civil engineer and surveyor in Antarctica conducting control and topographic surveys with the United States Antarctica Research Program, mapping 15,000 square miles. Most areas in the survey had never before been mapped or explored; some had never been traversed by man. Now, they would be open to future exploration and study.³⁸

In 1965 the United States Board of Geographic Names, in recognition of his important work on the surveys named Mount Soza, located near the Geographic South Pole, in his honor. Further honors awaited him. At a ceremony in Menlo Park, California in 1970 Ezekiel received a United States Department of the Interior Antarctica Service Certificate and was also awarded the United States Congressional Antarctica Medal in recognition of his contributions. The gold-colored medal, about the size of a half dollar, bears the figure of an explorer and the words, “Antarctica Service” on the front and the words, “courage sacrifice devotion” on the reverse. Others being honored by the Department of the Interior received various awards.³⁹

At the time of the ceremony, the current Antarctica team was mapping the last unexplored mountain range in the world.⁴⁰ Those receiving the awards had been part of the long period of world exploration finally finished. Just as his fourth great grandfather, Jose Maria I, had been one of the first to open up a part of the world for his fellow man, Ezekiel had been one of the last to complete that opening. He refused credit for himself, however, declaring instead, “Rather than assuming any personal glory I would like to think it reflects honor on our pioneer ancestors.”⁴¹

Ezekiel’s cousin, Edward, grandson of Antonio and Jesus, was born in Benson in 1921. After receiving a degree in economics and foreign trade from Pennsylvania State University, he made the textile industry his profession. Phyllis Fine became his wife and soon they were raising a family of three.⁴²

When the children grew older and began asking questions about the family origins, Edward found he had few answers. He questioned older family members who gave him information that sometimes led to more questions than answers. He became “hooked.” As so many before him have discovered, genealogy quietly begins as a hobby, but quickly becomes an obsession. To fill in the many

blanks, Edward wrote hundreds of letters to federal, state, and local governments, to churches, schools, various organizations, friends, relatives, and anyone remotely interested. The opportunity to have a room in the Fremont House named after the founding Sosa only accelerated his efforts as did his dream of a bicentennial family reunion dinner. The budding historian began receiving invitations to speak to such groups as the Arizona Historical Society and the Southern Arizona Genealogical Society.

His dedicated labors did not go unnoticed. At a luncheon awards ceremony at the Arizona Inn on February 19, 1975, six recipients, Edward among them, received awards for their contributions to Arizona history. Then Director of the Arizona Historical Society, Sidney B. Brinkerhoff, affirmed that both the society and the honorees were devoted to the philosophy that "in a world of change and turmoil the only abiding absolute is our heritage . . ."⁴³ Edward received the Al Merito Award "for his painstaking and thorough research"⁴⁴ into his family history. In speaking of his accomplishments Edward explained, "I seek nothing except to inspire others to exert themselves to the ultimate and to reflect true professionalism."⁴⁵

As he sat at the banquet table that night, Edward had every right to feel proud of his family's participation in the long Hispanic heritage that Tucson and southern Arizona have enjoyed. From his fourth great grandfather, Jose Maria I, who, as a member of the presidio forces, helped hold back the Indians to open the land for colonization, through others who administered and developed that land, down to present-day members such as Ezekiel who helped to open another land for mankind's use and to Edward, himself, who had researched, recorded, and publicized Sosa/Soza deeds, thus opening to public awareness an important but sometimes overlooked aspect of that heritage; all have contributed in some way. Certainly, the Sosas/Sozas have done their part in producing and preserving that heritage for future generations and, thereby, have earned an honored place for themselves in the history of the Southwest.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Antonio Soza was the family member who changed the spelling of his name to the "z" form that many follow. (See *Tucson (Arizona) Daily Citizen*, August 30, 1972). Many have kept the "s" form, however. In discussing the family in general, both forms are used. There also seems to be some debate on the meaning of the name. At least one source says the name is the Spanish form of "Sousa" a Portuguese name referring to one who came from a salty place, while others state it means "fire-guardian" or one who cared for sacred fires in pre-Christian temples. (See Richard D. Woods and Grace Alvarez-Altman. *Spanish Surnames in the Southwest United States: A Dictionary*. (Boston: G. K. Hall and Co., 1978), p. 132 and La Reina Rule. "What Your Name Means." *Southland Magazine*, undated article in envelope "Maria Sosa Gonzales" in box 85-13-A/7/16/3 at the Arizona Historical Society (AHS).

² Edward Soza. Speech given at the dedication of the Jose Maria Sosa Room, April 9, 1975. Copy in possession of author; Edward Soza to the Editor. *Citizen*, April 25, 1975.

³ Morris Udall to N. A. Gonzales. Telegram in care of Soza Family Dinner, April 9, 1975 in envelope "Maria Soza Gonzales Family" in box 85-13-A/7/16/3 at AHS.

⁴ Edward Soza, "Arizona Bicentennial Family," *Que Pasa*, Vol. 2, No. 12 (December 1976): pp. 16-19; *Citizen*, April 7, 1975.

⁵ John Bret Harte. "Three Rooms Dedicated at Fremont Ceremony." *Citizen*, April 10, 1975.

⁶ L. C. Murphy. Mayoral Proclamation, Soza Bicentennial Reunion Day, April 9, 1975, in envelope "City of Tucson Proclamations," in box 85-13-A/7/16/3 at AHS.

⁷ Soza, "Arizona Family," p. 16; Micheline Keating. "Soza: A Name Older Than Arizona." *Citizen*, October 26, 1972.

⁸ Bret Harte. *Citizen*, April 10, 1975.

⁹ Nat McKelvey. "Reckless Romantic Redington." *Arizona Highways*, Vol. 34, No. 5 (May 1958), pp. 34-39.

¹⁰ Edward Soza. "Soza Family." Proposed paper to be read at the Arizona Historical Conference at Sierra Vista-Fort Huachuca, Arizona in box 85-13-A/7/16/3 at AHS.

¹¹ Edward Soza. Speech given at the Bicentennial Reunion Dinner, April 9, 1975 at the Braniff Place Hotel, Tucson. Copy in possession of author.

¹² Thomas E. Sheridan. *Del Rancho Al Barrio: The Mexican Legacy of Tucson*. (Tucson: Arizona Historical Society, 1983), p. 8.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10; Kenneth Arline. "Tubac: Arizona's St. Augustine." *Phoenix (Arizona) Gazette*, January 20, 1975.

¹⁵ Odie B. Faulk. "The Presidio: Fortress or Farce?," *New Spain's Far Northern Frontier, Essays on Spain in the American West 1540-1821*, David J. Weber, ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), p. 70; Sosa/Soza Family Bicentennial Reunion Book in file "S731: Soza Family" at AHS.

¹⁶ Hugo O'Connor. Selection of Site and Certification of Presidio at Tucson. Signed August 20, 1775 at Tucson. Copy of translation in possession of author.

¹⁷ Edward Soza to Charles C. Colley at AHS, April 24, 1982. Copy in the possession of author.

¹⁸ Thomas E. Sheridan. *Los Tucsonenses: A History of the Mexican Community in Tucson from the Gadsden Purchase until World War Two* (Tucson: Arizona Historical Society, forthcoming), p. 18; Sheridan, *Del Rancho Al Barrio*, p. 9.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

²¹ *Phoenix Gazette*, August 23, 1972; Edward Soza. "Soza: Cochise County Pioneer Settlers," undated outline in possession of author; Edward Soza. Speech to Arizona Genealogical Society, Tucson, April 8, 1975. Copy in author's possession. An article published in the *Citizen* on June 21, 1973 and entitled, "Tucson a Century Ago," featured the reminiscences of Mariana Dias who was over one hundred years old. She remembered Rita Sosa (a common misspelling of the name) as having been well to do. Interestingly, she also remembered Padre Pedro as wealthy.

²² Sosa/Soza Family Bicentennial Reunion Book; Edward Soza to Gilbert Pederson (writer of proposed census for Tucson 1821-1856), December 12, 1973 in box 85-13-A/7/16/3 at AHS.

²³ Genealogy of Sosa/Soza family from file "Soza Family" at John C. Fremont House; Solana Sosa. Obituary. (Tucson) *Arizona Daily Star*, December 19, 1906. When Solana died she was 111 years old, Tucson's oldest citizen, having been born in 1795.; Bruce Hilpert. "La Casa Del Gobernador, John C. Fremont House," Tucson: Sonoran Heritage/Tucson Public Library, 1979, p. 3. Available at Fremont House.

²⁴ Michael McKenna. Biographical file at AHS; Hilpert. "La Casa Del Gobernador," p.3.

²⁵ McKenna. Biographical file; "Soza Family" file at Fremont House.

²⁶ Reminiscence of Jesus Soza in file "Antonio Soza-MS 750" at AHS; Edward Soza to the Southern Arizona Genealogical Society, July 16, 1971 in box 85-13-A/7/16/4 at AHS; Samuel Hughes. Affidavit, signed April 10, 1896 in Tucson in box 85-13-A/7/16/4 at AHS; Edward Soza to Sidney B. Brinckerhoff, February 7, 1977 in file "Antonio Soza-MS 750" at AHS; Edward Soza. "Cochise County Pioneers."

²⁷ Nat McKelvey. "Reckless Romantic Redington," p. 37 Edward Soza to John Eversole, December 14, 1972 in file "American Revolution Bicentennial Commission" in box 85-13-A/7/16/4 at AHS; Genealogy of the Sosa/Soza Family from file "Soza Family" at Fremont House; Reminiscences of Helen Soza Rodriguez (daughter of Juan) given on April 7, 1977 in envelope "Juan Soza-Tempe" in box 85-13-A/7/16/3 at AHS; *Arizona Daily Star* (Tucson), August 26, 1936.

²⁸ Sheridan. *Los Tucsonenses*, pp. 103-104.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

³⁰ Reminiscences of Jesus Soza.

³¹ Thomas E. Sheridan. "The Mexican Legacy of Tucson: A Round-up of Facts and Photos," *Citizen*, October 8, 1983; *Citizen*, March 19, 1981; Reminiscences of Jesus Soza.

³² *Citizen*, March 19, 1981; *Citizen*, November 5, 1982; Reminiscences of Jesus Soza.

³³ *Ibid.*; Soza. "Arizona Family," p. 18.

³⁴ Reminiscences of daughter Maria Gonzales in Reminiscences of Jesus Soza; Soza. "Arizona Family," p. 18; Ruby E. Fulghum, County Superintendent, To Whom It May Concern, February 5, 1942 in file "Ben Soza-MS 750" at AHS.

³⁵ *Citizen*, April 7, 1975; Reminiscences of Maria Gonzales; Sosa/Soza Family Bicentennial Reunion Book; Roy F. Thurston to Edward Soza, September 4, 1971 in file "National Archives, Washington National Records Center" in box 85-13-A/7/16/3 at AHS. He pointed out that the names of land features are often those of early settlers in an area and gradually become accepted. Local residents then pass the names on to the topographic engineers and so they are printed on maps without any formal action having taken place.

³⁶ *Arizona Daily Star*, November 4, 1982; File "Antonio Soza-MS 750" at AHS

³⁷ Morris Udall to N. A. Gonzales. Telegram, April 9, 1975.

³⁸ Ezekiel Soza Memorial Card in envelope "Zeke Soza" in box 85-13-A/7/16/3 at AHS; Ezekiel Soza. Obituary. (Phoenix) *The Arizona Republic*, February 27, 1983; *Menlo Park* (Calif.) *Recorder*, December 23, 1970.

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⁴⁰ *Menlo Park Recorder*, December 23, 1970.

⁴¹ Ezekiel Soza to Edward Soza. Undated letter in envelope "Zeke Soza" in box 85-13-A/7/16/3 at AHS.

⁴² Edward Soza to William R. Van Sant, March 10, 1975 in file "Southern Arizona Genealogical Society" in box 85-13-A/7/16/4 at AHS.

⁴³ *Citizen*, February 20, 1975.

⁴⁴ Edward Soza to Dr. Sylvia Gonzales, March 10, 1975 in box 85-13-A/7/16/3 at AHS.

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