John Lomax's Southern States Recording Expedition: *Brownsville, Texas, 1939*

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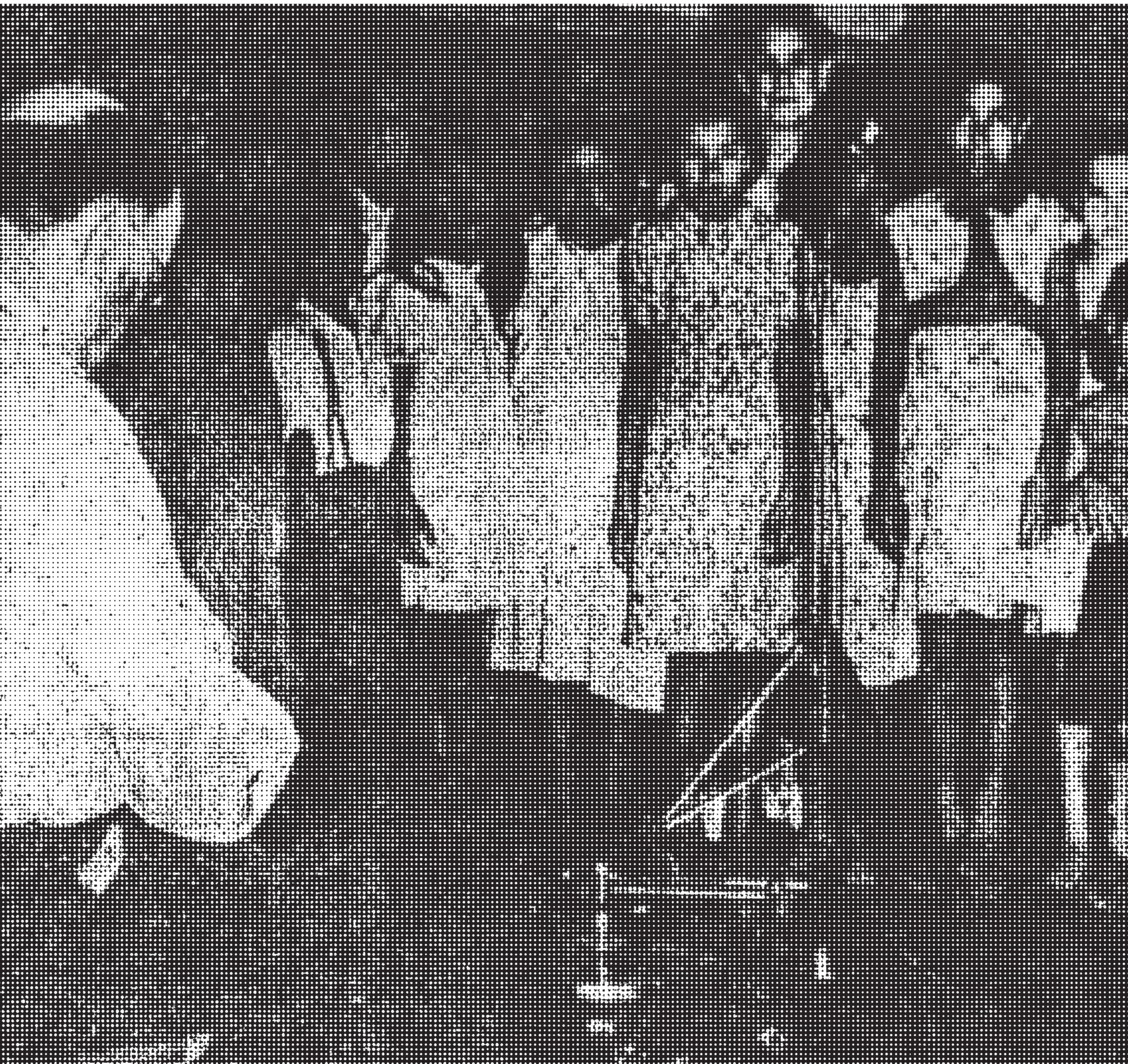
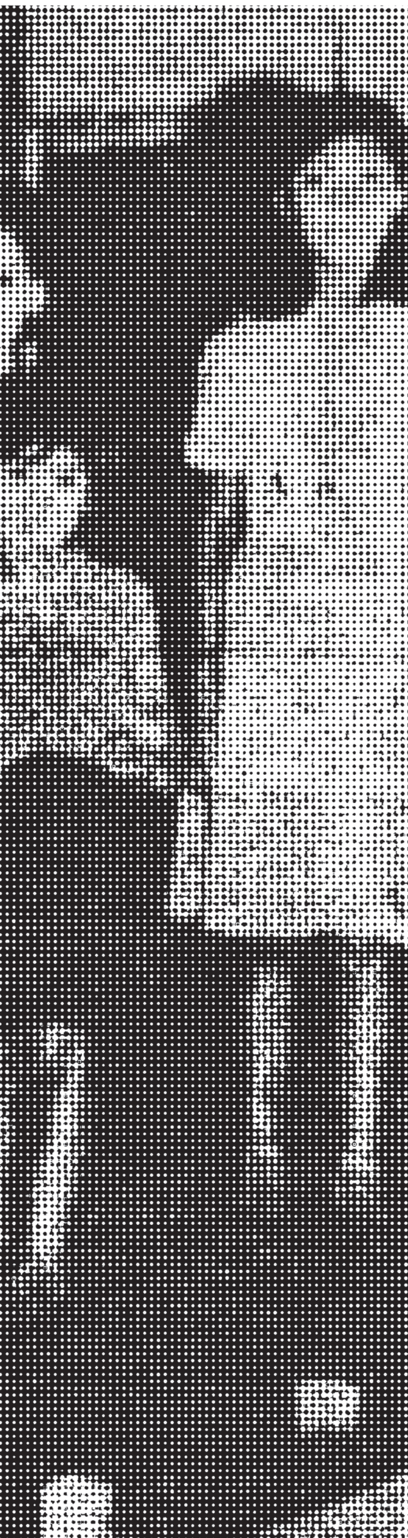


John Lomax recording the children of Blalack School. Courtesy Brownsville Herald, February 11-14, 1939.



In the spring of 1939, Texas folklorist John Avery Lomax began his Southern States Recording Expedition, focusing primarily on rural Texas and Louisiana. One of the main goals of this and other recording forays into the South and Southwest by Lomax during the 1930s was to document the musical landscape of the nation as it rapidly transformed from a mostly rural-agrarian society to an increasingly urban-industrial one. In part, Lomax wanted to preserve examples of regional folk music before they were "lost" to the growing commercialization of American music. However, Lomax also had another important goal in mind, and that was to prove that American folk music was distinct from the folk music found in Europe and elsewhere.

Prior to Lomax's groundbreaking work, the prevailing academic view toward folk music in North America, as argued by Francis James Child, Cecil Sharp, and others of the late 1800s and early 1900s, was that American folk music was not unique but, instead, was almost entirely derivative of British Isles folk music dating back centuries.[1]

Although he certainly understood that American folk music borrowed extensively from the ballads, sea chanteys, and dance music of the British Isles (and, indeed, much of Western Europe), John Lomax was convinced that, by the twentieth century, American folk music had evolved into something more complex and nuanced than simply an extension of earlier European folk music. Lomax recognized that the nation's increasingly diverse ethnic population had reshaped American culture, including music, in important ways over the previous two centuries.

So, in order to prove that American music was unique and had evolved well beyond its European roots, Lomax searched for remote locales, often in rather isolated rural settings, where he believed he would find authentic American folk music that was unspoiled by commercial or "mainstream" influences. He also focused on the music of African Americans and Mexican Americans, since neither had direct connections to the musical traditions of the British Isles and, therefore, Lomax believed, would best represent the unique characteristics of American music.

John Lomax's quest to document and preserve "pure" folk music was admirable, even though it may have been a bit misguided at times. Since he had his own preconceptions of what "authentic" music was, and because he was determined to prove Child, Sharp, and others wrong, Lomax sometimes sacrificed true objectivity in his research in order to achieve predetermined goals.

For example, in some cases, Lomax staged artificial settings, in which he recruited local African Americans to pretend to be field hands singing in unison in an attempt to replicate the rhythmic work patterns of earlier field slaves. In at least one instance, Lomax allowed a white prison guard to use a shotgun to intimidate a black prisoner into performing a song that Lomax wanted to record.[2] Despite such questionable practices, the net result of Lomax's efforts is an impressive body of musical recordings, covering a broad range of ethnic and regional styles, which otherwise might have never been documented and preserved for future generations.

Although much of Lomax's work is well known, little attention has been paid to his Spanish-language recordings in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas, conducted as part of his 1939 Southern States Recording Expedition. What Lomax uncovered during this expedition was a vast canon of Spanish-language folk music, including children's songs, *canciones, corridos* (ballads), and other musical traditions that had been passed down for generations throughout South Texas. From April 26 through 29, 1939, Lomax visited Brownsville, Texas, (on the U.S.-Mexico border) where he recorded more than a dozen local residents singing songs in Spanish.

John Lomax's interest in folk music started when he was a child living in Bosque County, Texas, near a branch of the famed Chisholm Trail. It was there that he heard the ballads and campfire stories of passing cowboys as they herded cattle north to railheads in Kansas and elsewhere. By the time he graduated from the University of Texas at Austin in 1897, Lomax had been chronicling regional folk music for nearly a decade. In 1906, he won a scholarship to attend Harvard University. With funding and encouragement from some of his professors, Lomax began traveling throughout the West gathering a remarkable collection of ballads and other types of music popular among cowboys. His 1910 publication, *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*, was one of the earliest, and most comprehensive, efforts at collecting and preserving examples of American folk music.[3]

Along with Leonidas Warren Payne (from the University of Texas) and others, John Lomax also helped launch the Texas Folklore Society, a branch of the American Folklore Society, in 1909. The organization held its first meeting in 1911, and it continues to support research, publishing, and a variety of programs aimed at preserving and celebrating the folk culture of the Lone Star State.[4]

As mentioned earlier, John Lomax had long been an admirer and collector of cowboy music, but it was fellow Texas folklorist and writer J. Frank Dobie who helped spark Lomax's interest in the Spanish-language music of South Texas.[5] Dobie was involved in studying the culture of the *vaquero* (or Mexican cowboy). This intrigued Lomax, since he was fascinated with cowboys in general and was always looking for opportunities to study the music of those groups whose ancestry was not rooted in the British Isles.

In addition to Lomax, J. Frank Dobie also recruited others to help document and preserve the musical culture of the American Southwest, including Jovita González. A native of South Texas, González served as President of the Texas

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Folklore Society from 1930 to 1932 and proved to be an asset for John Lomax's Southern States Recording Expedition into the Rio Grande Valley.[6] From the Great Depression of the 1930s until 1950, Lomax served as the Archivist of American Folk Song, securing funds from the federal government to record and archive music throughout the United States, the Caribbean, and Europe, with the help of his wife, Ruby Terrill Lomax, and his son, Alan Lomax.[7]

For John Lomax, South Texas, and Brownsville in particular, was an ideal "laboratory" for studying the overlapping folk cultures of the United States and Mexico. What Lomax found in this area was a rich and diverse sampling of music, which, at the time, even he could not have fully understood. In a variety of ways, the complex musical landscape that Lomax encountered in South Texas was a reflection of the region's rich culture, its long history of ethnic and racial tensions, its stark socio-economic disparities, and the ongoing efforts by Tejanos (Texans of Mexican descent) to reconcile their bicultural identities as both Americans and ethnic Mexicans.[8]

Two women who were especially important to Lomax's Spanish-language folk music recordings in the Brownsville area are Manuela Longoria and Otila Crixell Krausse. Manuela Longoria, who recorded twelve songs (most in Spanish) for Lomax's Southern States Recording Expedition, was the principal at Blalack Mexican School, located at Paredes Road and Coffee Port Road near Brownsville. The rural school served nearby Mexican-American children, who were only allowed to speak and write in English while at school, although Longoria did allow students to sing songs in Spanish.

The Longoria family had been in the Brownsville area since the American Civil War. Like most Tejanos, Manuela Longoria had spent her life trying to reconcile an ethnic and cultural "duality," balancing the desire to preserve and celebrate her ethnic Mexican heritage with the pressure all immigrant and ethnic groups have faced to assimilate into "mainstream" American society. As with virtually every other immigrant and ethnic community, Texas Mexicans practiced selective assimilation, through which they retained certain aspects of their own cultural traditions while also selectively adopting traditions and practices from other groups.[9]

On April 24, 1939, John Lomax recorded Manuela Longoria singing "La Chinaca," an old Confederate song handed down from her father, Crisostomo Longoria, who had died in 1935. "La Chinaca" provides some insight into the experiences of Mexicans and Mexican Americans during the American Civil War. Crisostomo had been a Confederate soldier stationed along the U.S.-Mexico border. By contrast, Manuela's grandfather served in the Union Army at the same time. Such divided loyalties between the North and the South, as represented by members of the Longoria family, are a reminder of the often-overlooked impact of the U.S. Civil War on Mexican Americans.

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To better understand how the American Civil War (1861-1865) influenced Mexican and Mexican-American society, it is important to consider events that were taking place within Mexico around the same time. In 1861, some 6,000 French troops landed at Veracruz on the Gulf of Mexico in hopes of establishing a new government that would support France's colonial interests in Latin America. As French soldiers marched toward the capital of Mexico City, they encountered stiff resistance from a hastily-assembled group of about 2,000 troops under the command of General Ignacio Zaragoza near Puebla de Los Angeles. Although poorly equipped and vastly outnumbered, Zaragoza's forces defeated the French on May 5, 1862 (a day of great ethnic and national pride for Mexicans and Mexican Americans now celebrated as "Cinco de Mayo.") However, the following year France sent a second expedition of 30,000 troops, which successfully captured Mexico City

and installed the Emperor Maximillian I as ruler of Mexico. For the next five years, Mexicans resisted French occupation and, in 1867, they finally expelled the French and executed Maximillian.

These political struggles in Mexico, lasting from 1861-1867, affected Texas-Mexican society in a variety of ways. Since Ignacio Zaragoza, the victorious commander of Mexican troops at Puebla on May 5, 1862, had been born in Goliad, Texas, he became a hero on both sides of the border and a potent symbol of triumph over adversity for Mexican Americans who found themselves increasingly marginalized at the hands of the rapidly growing Anglo population in the Southwest. At the same time, there were some Tejanos who believed that they might benefit from French occupation of Mexico because it would allow for a potentially lucrative political and commercial alliance involving France, Mexico, and the Confederate States of America. However, as the Confederacy sought to reinforce France's presence in Mexico, the U.S. government worked with Mexican forces in their efforts to defeat the French and prevent France from aiding the Confederate war effort.[10]

This struggle for control of Mexico and the American Southwest helped create political and ideological rifts among Texas Mexicans. Those who hoped for a French-Mexican-Confederate alliance supported Maximillian's government and sympathized with the American South's efforts to establish its independence from the United States. Some Tejanos, including Crisostomo Longoria, enlisted in the Confederate military, while Manuela's grandfather joined the Union Army.

The few lines of the song "La Chinaca" remembered by Manuela Longoria reflect these divided loyalties present among Tejanos:

Recent works on Cinco de Mayo reveal the complex dynamics involving the United States and its people in the conflict between Mexico and France. For example, historian David E. Hayes-Bautista's *El Cinco de Mayo: An American Tradition* documents the role Mexican Americans and the Union played in California during the American Civil War. Hayes-Bautista states that many Mexican Americans understood that a victory by the Confederacy would result in the establishment of a political and social system based on white supremacy and might encourage the spread of slavery into the American West. For Mexican Americans who were leery of living under Confederate rule, support of the Union would help ensure greater social, political, and economic freedom in the West and Southwest. By contrast, those Tejanos who served in the Confederate army believed that the best interests of Texas and the entire region lay in stronger political and commercial ties with France, Mexico, and the Deep South. Consequently, most Tejanos who supported the Confederacy did so more for economic and geopolitical reasons than because of slavery or racial attitudes.[12]

Union blockades of Southern ports during the war forced the Confederacy to export more and more of its goods (especially cotton) through Mexico under a Mexican or French flag.[13] As a result, Confederate troops patrolling the Rio Grande were helping protect and facilitate international trade that greatly benefitted the Southern economy. In many ways, Crisostomo Longoria and other "Tejanos in gray" were hoping to guard their investments and future trade with Mexico and the French by serving as Confederate soldiers along the Texas-Mexico border. Others went even further in their attempts to aid the Confederate cause. For example, Santos Benavides of Laredo became a colonel in the 33rd Texas Cavalry, or

"La Chinaca"[11]

Por hay viene la chinaca Toda vestida de griz Preguntandole a los mochos Donde esta su Emperatriz	There comes the revolution All dressed in gray Asking the people of Mexican descent (Mexican Americans) Where is your empress?
Si vien puebla se perdió No fue falta de valor Fue por falta de elementos Para la Confederación	Yes, fine, Puebla was lost But it was not for lack of valor It was lack of food (elements) For the Confederacy

what locals called the Benavides Regiment, raiding Mexico to capture and return fugitive slaves.[14]

Historian Jerry Thompson was one of the first to shed light on the Mexican-American soldier during the American Civil War. In his 1976 work, *Vaqueros in Blue and Gray*, Thompson documents the role that Mexican Americans played on both sides of the war effort.[15] In his most recent work, *Tejanos in Gray: Civil War Letters of Captains Joseph Rafael de la Garza and Manuel Yturri*, Thompson tells the story of affluent Texas Mexicans from San Antonio who, like Crisostomo Longoria, saw themselves as having more in common with the Confederacy than the Union.[16]

In addition to Mexican Americans, African Americans played an important role in the American Civil War, both as civilians and soldiers, and many became part of the social, political, and economic dynamics that were at play along the Texas-Mexican border. For example, black slaves sometimes helped transport Confederate cotton to Mexico. This allowed the Southern cotton industry to continue exporting to the outside world, but it also meant that slave owners ran the risk of slaves attempting to escape to freedom in Mexico. Sallie Wroe, a former slave from Austin, told the story of how her father and three uncles went to Brownsville, Texas:

> One day pappy and Uncle Paul and Uncle Andy and Uncle Joe was taking bales of cotton on [an] ox wagon down to de Rio Grande. Each men was driving a ox wagon down to Brownsville, where they was to wait to meet Massa Burdette. But pappy and de others left along wagons long de river bank and rolled a bale of cotton in de river and four of them got on the bale and rows with sticks cross over into Mexico. This was during the war. Pappy come back to us after freedom and say he done got long fine with Mexico. He learn to talk just like them. . . . He brought some money from Mexico and taken us all to Brenham and bought us some clothes.[17]

At the time, Mexico and the United States did not have any formal agreements regarding fugitive slaves. The U.S. Congress had passed fugitive slave laws as early as 1793, but they were not enforceable in Mexico. Although such local leaders as Santiago Vidaurri, José María Jesús Carbajal, James H. Callahan, and John S. (Rip) Ford repeatedly lobbied both the U.S. and Mexican governments for a fugitive slave act, none was ever enacted that applied in Mexico. However, this lack of laws did not stop former slave owners or bounty hunters from making raids into Mexico to retrieve fugitive slaves. Although this situation finally ended with the 1865 Union defeat of the Confederacy and the official abolition of slavery, the racial, ethnic, political, and economic environment of Texas only grew more complex following the Civil War, as an increasingly diverse influx of English, Irish, Scottish, French, German, Czech, and other immigrants poured into the American Southwest.

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Just as it had happened elsewhere throughout the United States, the mass migration of immigrants into Texas during the late 1800s and early 1900s led to organized efforts by public officials and community leaders to "Americanize" these new arrivals. This involved everything from subtler forms of social pressure aimed at convincing immigrants to assimilate all the way to blatantly racist and bigoted legislation designed to marginalize immigrant communities. In South Texas, with a large Spanish-speaking population, "Americanization" often meant pressuring Tejanos to speak English (instead of Spanish), abandon long-held ethnic traditions, and submit to a rather vaguely defined (and highly subjective) process of becoming "100% American." Like virtually all other immigrant groups and ethnic minorities, Texas Mexicans chose to selectively assimilate by preserving certain aspects of their heritage while also working toward more fully integrating into mainstream society.

As the principal of Blalack School, Manuela Longoria was directly involved in this process of Americanization along the Texas-Mexican border, especially in relation to her (mostly Spanish-speaking) students. In 1915, Brownsville I.S.D. opened its first schools—Brownsville High School,

City Grammar School, Blalack School, Las Matanzas School, Media Luna School, Nopalita School, Linerro School, and West Brownsville School—all of which included curriculum aimed at encouraging students to further assimilate into the increasingly dominant Anglo culture.[18] Consequently, Manuela Longoria was expected to teach her students to speak, read, and write in English and not allow them to use Spanish in the classroom.[19] However, she refused to enforce a strict "English only" policy at Blalack. In fact, her students recorded several Spanish-language songs for John Lomax ("La Pájara Pinta," "Las Àguilas de San Miguel," "Los Florones de la Mano," "Maria Blanca," and "Señora Santa Anna"), although when Lomax asked the children to write out the Spanish lyrics to these songs, he learned that this was not allowed.[20]

Manuela Longoria is a remarkable example of an educator who tried to meet the demands placed on her by policymakers to assimilate her students. At the same time, she fully understood that she was operating within a social environment that relied extensively on the Spanish language to communicate information and culture. Longoria's actions reflect the same determination seen among many ethnic and racial minorities to play an active part in "negotiating" the terms of their assimilation process.

Manuela Longoria's willingness to defy the rules and permit the use of both Spanish and English in her classrooms, even if only on a limited basis, had an impact on the larger community beyond just her students. The fact that she allowed her pupils to sing in Spanish helped strengthen ties between the school and many of the mostly poor Spanish-speaking parents. This paid off for Lomax when he invited some of the parents to sing at the Blalack School. Had it not been for Longoria's efforts at relationship-building within the community, it is likely that many of the parents would not have felt comfortable setting foot in the school, much less singing in Spanish for an Anglo stranger.

Atanviro Hernández, a local farmer, recorded "El Corrido de Leandro Rivera" and "Manuel Le Dice a Juanita" in Spanish before his children sang "We Are Children of America" in English. Maria Rodríguez and others, including the children, sang "La Indita," "Señora Santa Anna," "A La Mar Fueron Mis Ojos," and "Ya Me Casé Con Ustéd." By permitting both the children and their parents to sing traditional Mexican folk songs in Spanish, as well as some tunes in English, Longoria allowed the community to celebrate its ethnic heritage while also making certain that her students pursued their regular English-based curriculum.[21]

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Charro Days poster. Courtesy Rene Torres, Private Collection.

Manuela Longoria expanded her bilingual educational efforts into the local community in other ways as well. In 1938 and 1939, she took part in the planning of the children's parade for an annual community event known as "Charro Days." The first Charro Days celebration took place in Brownsville in February 1938 and lasted four days. Promoters hoped that the pre-Lenten celebration would attract winter tourists to the Rio Grande Valley. According to past president John Patriarca, Charro Days were intended to "celebrate life on the border and the culture and history that we have in common" between Mexico and the United States. The Charro Days event has always been promoted as a twin-cities celebration between Brownsville and nearby Matamoros, Mexico, immediately across the Rio Grande. The 1938 celebration included "fireworks, parades, street dances, boat races, a bullfight and a rodeo—on both sides of the international bridge. Soldiers from Fort Brown [Texas] marched in formation, horse-drawn floats paraded through the streets, and the town's finest dressed up for the Grand Ball." Manuela Longoria made sure that the Mexican-American children of Blalack School also participated in the Charro Days celebration.[22]

Longoria helped her students celebrate their Mexican-American identity in other ways as well. For example, during World War II, she fashioned a military service flag honoring past Blalack schoolchildren. The red and white flag included twenty blue stars, one for each of her former students serving in the U.S. Armed Forces.

In a number of ways, Manuela Longoria tried to help her students and the local Texas-Mexican community integrate into mainstream society while still maintaining a strong connection to their own ethnic heritage. She understood that her students needed to learn English in order to more fully assimilate, but she did not believe this required abandoning the linguistic or other cultural traditions of their ancestors. As a result, she devoted much of her time and energy to helping negotiate the assimilation process for her students and other Mexican Americans in the Brownsville area. It is not clear how much, if any, of this was evident to John Lomax, but the recordings he made in connection to the Blalack School provide a glimpse into the bicultural and bilingual experiences of Longoria and those with whom she interacted.

Otila Crixell Krausse is another South Texas native who recorded for Lomax. Her song selection, and her life experiences, offer additional insight into the complex and sometimes volatile ethnic, social, and linguistic dynamics at play throughout the Texas-Mexican border region at the dawn of the twentieth century. She performed "El Corrido de Los Rinches" for Lomax. (*Rinches* is a derogatory term for Texas

Vicente "Tito" Crixell. Courtesy Brownsville Herald, February 11-14, 1939.

Rangers and other Anglo law officers.) This song describes the tensions that existed between the Texas Rangers and the Brownsville municipal government during the early 1900s.[23] Otila was the daughter of José Crixell, who was killed in 1912 by a former Texas Ranger named Paul McAlister, working at the time as a deputy sheriff. The killing of José Crixell was part of a larger political feud that plagued Cameron County and the city of Brownsville for years and reflected the level of distrust and animosity that had developed between Anglos and Tejanos in the area.

In the early twentieth century, two political parties dominated Cameron County and the Brownsville city government. The Democrats (locally known as the "Blues") were led by political boss and County Judge Jim B. Wells, who controlled essentially all matters at the county level. By contrast, the Independents, also known as the "Reds" (many of whom were Tejanos), ran Brownsville's municipal institutions, including the Police Department, which often clashed with county law officers and others associated with the Blue party. Several of Jim B. Wells's men were former Texas Rangers who went on to serve as county deputies. The Mexican-American community in and around Brownsville already had a long history of negative encounters with the Texas Rangers, so tensions between local Anglos and Texas Mexicans only escalated as the Red and Blue factions competed for power in the area.[24]

In 1910, José Crixell became City Marshall in Brownsville, a prominent position within the municipal government that put him in charge of city police forces. His election helped set in motion a chain of events that are at the center of Otila Crixell Krausse's "El Corrido de Los Rinches."[25] The *corrido* (or ballad) describes a shooting on December 16, 1910, involving county deputies Alfred R. Baker and Harry Wallis and a Brownsville police officer named Ignacio Treviño. The conflict took place in downtown Brownsville at the White Elephant Bar, owned by Vicente "Tito" Crixell, the brother of José Crixell.[26]

Although Alfred Baker and Harry Wallis were working as county deputies, both were former Texas Rangers. Officer Ignacio Treviño had already had a few run-ins with the Texas Rangers, so when Baker, Wallis, and other county officers converged on the White Elephant, Treviño barricaded himself inside. After a lengthy gun battle, in which no one was injured, Treviño negotiated a temporary truce, left town, and sought refuge across the border in Mexico.[27] Soon afterward, "El Corrido de Ignacio Treviño" became a popular ballad among the Texas-Mexican population of South Texas.

"El Corrido de Ignacio Treviño"[28]

El dieciséis de diciembre apestó a pólvora un rato, donde encontraron los rinches la horma de su zapato.	On the sixteenth of December, it stank of gunpowder a while; that was when the *rinches* found the last that would fit their shoe.
Cantina de El Elefante donde el caso sucedió, en donde Ignacio Treviño con Ios rinches se topó.	At the Elephant Saloon, that's where the events took place; that's where Ignacio Treviño locked horns with the *rinches*.
Cuando las primeros tiros la cantina quedó sola, nomás Ignacio Treviñio su canana y su pistola.	At the sound of the first shots, the saloon was deserted only Ignacio Treviño remained, with his pistol and cartridge belt.
Decía Ignacio Treviño con su pistola en la mano: No corran, rinches cobardes, con un solo mexicano	Then said Ignacio Treviño, with his pistol in his hand, "Don't run, you cowardly *rinches*, from a single Mexican."
Entrenle, rinches cobardes que el juego no es con un niño, soy purito mexicano, me llamo Ignacio Treviño	"Come on, you cowardly *rinches*, you're not playing games with a child; I am a true-born Mexican, my name is Ignacio Treviño."

Ignacio Treviño's brother, Jacinto Treviño, also became involved in a conflict with Texas Rangers and county deputies that would inspire an even more well-known ballad, "El Corrido de Jacinto Treviño." This incident started in 1911, when a local Anglo named James Darwin beat Treviño's younger brother so severely that he died of his injuries. Treviño tracked down Darwin and killed him before escaping into Mexico. Within a few months, Jacinto Treviño crossed back into Texas to meet with a cousin who, unbeknownst to Treviño, had arranged an ambush involving both Texas Rangers and county officers. Treviño managed to evade the ambush and in the process kill his cousin, a Texas Ranger, and a deputy, before escaping back into Mexico where he lived to an advanced age. Because Jacinto Treviño prevailed against overwhelming odds and managed to elude capture for the remainder of his life, he became a folk hero of sorts to Mexican Americans throughout South Texas. "El Corrido de Jacinto Treviño" soon became another popular musical celebration of one man's ability to prevail over the dreaded *rinches*:

"El Corrido de Jacinto Treviño"[29]

Ya con ésta van tres veces
que se ha visto lo bonito,
la primera fue en Macalen,
en Brónsvil y en San Benito.

Y en la cantina de Bekar
se agarraron a balazos,
por dondequiera saltaban
botellas hechas pedazos.

Esa cantina de Bekar
al momento quedó sola,
nomas Jacinto Treviño
de carabina y pistola.

Entrenle, rinches cobardes,
que el pleito no es con un niño,
querían conocer se padre?
¡Yo soy Jacinto Treviño!

Entrenle, rinches cobardes,
validos de la ocasión,
no van a comer pan blanco
con tajadas de jamón

Decía el Rinche Mayor,
como era un americano:
-¡Ah, que Jacinto tan hombre,
no niega el ser mexicano!–

With this it will be three times
that remarkable things have happened,
the first time in McAllen,
then in Brownsville and San Benito.

They had a shootout
at Baker's saloon;
broken bottles were popping
all over the place.

Baker's saloon
was immediately deserted;
only Jacinto Treviño remained,
with his rifle and his pistol.

Come on you cowardly *rinches*,
you're not playing with a child.
You wanted to meet your father?
I am Jacinto Treviño!

Come on you cowardly *rinches*,
you always like to take the advantage;
this is not like eating white bread
with slices of ham.

The chief of the *rinches* said,
even though he was an American,
"Ah, what a brave man is Jacinto;
you can see he is a Mexican!"

José Crixell. Courtesy Rene Torres, Private Collection.

On the night of August 9, 1912, former Texas Ranger Paul McAlister gunned down Brownsville City Marshall José Crixell inside the White Elephant Bar owned by Tito Crixell. This incident was more than a mere skirmish between two men. It reflected a much larger dispute between the "Blue" (mostly Anglo) associates of Judge Jim Wells, who wielded power at the county level, and the "Red" (mostly Tejano) officials, including José Crixell, who were increasingly exerting their influence at the municipal level. Ultimately, Paul McAlister was found not guilty of murder because of testimony that Crixell had drawn his gun first in an attempt to kill McAlister.[30]

So, although the local Tejano population, as represented by José Crixell and others, was gaining greater political strength despite the dominance of Jim Wells and his Blue political party, it came at a great cost to Brownsville's Texas-Mexican community. Conflicts between Tejanos and *rinches* persisted throughout the first half of the twentieth century. As a result, the Texas Rangers and county deputies figure prominently in the *corridos* recorded by Lomax during his Southern States Recording Expedition, although it is unclear as to whether Lomax understood at the time the ethnic, social, and cultural subtext of these songs.

Another Brownsville area resident, José Suarez, recorded two songs for Lomax that provide additional insight into the racial, ethnic, and political environment of South Texas during the early twentieth century. One of these songs, "El Corrido del Soldado," tells the story of the so-called Brownsville Raid of 1906, which involved an armed clash between local citizens and African-American troops stationed at nearby Fort Brown.[31]

On July 28, 1906, 170 black soldiers from Companies B, C, and D of the Twenty-Fifth United States Infantry arrived in Brownsville with orders from then Secretary of War William Howard Taft to replace the white soldiers currently garrisoned at Fort Brown. Although many of these black troops had distinguished themselves on battlefields in Cuba, the Philippines, and elsewhere—and counted six Medal of Honor recipients among their ranks—they encountered a hostile reception from most residents of Brownsville. Both Anglo and Tejano townspeople seemed to harbor a mistrust of these African-American servicemen and resented the fact that the federal government had "forced" them upon the community.[32]

Dr. Frederick J. Combe, who served with black troops as a medical officer, stated, "These people will not stand for colored troops; they do not like them . . . these Mexican people do not want them here." Victoriano Fernández, a Mexican-American police officer, reportedly told some townspeople, "I [would] like to kill a couple of them when they get here. . . . The colored fellows will have to behave themselves or [I] will get rid of them and all we have to do

The White Elephant Bar where José Crixell was killed. Courtesy Brownsville Herald, February 11-14, 1939.

is to kill a couple of them." There was a handful of African Americans already living in Brownsville, and a few of them warned the arriving soldiers that local Anglos and Mexicans "didn't want these damn niggers down here."[33]

The first openly violent confrontation between black troops and locals occurred on August 5, 1906, when an Anglo customs inspector named Fred Tate pistol-whipped Private Frank J. Lipscomb for supposedly bumping into Tate's wife while passing her on the sidewalk. Around the same time, other black troops began experiencing similar problems. On August 5, Private Clifford I. Adair was crossing the Rio Grande bridge back into Texas after shopping in Matamoros when U.S. customs officials confiscated a pen he had purchased in Mexico because, according to the officers on duty, Adair had not paid the tax on it. Several days later, A.Y. Baker, a local Texas Ranger, pushed Private Oscar W. Reid into the Rio Grande at the same border checkpoint. On August 12, Mrs. Lon Evans, an Anglo resident of Brownsville, reported to local officers that she had been attacked by a black soldier, an accusation which was later dismissed in court.[34]

At midnight on August 13, 1906, the growing tensions between local citizens and the black soldiers stationed at Fort Brown erupted into a brief but violent flurry of gunfire. More than 200 shots were fired within about ten minutes, leaving one person dead and injuring another. Although several reports stated that it was Brownsville residents who initiated the attack, black troops were soon implicated in what became known as the "Brownsville Raid." Evidence later demonstrated that it was nearly impossible for black troops to have been involved in the raid since they had never left their barracks. However, the War Department removed the soldiers from Fort Brown on August 21, 1906, and, in November of the same year, dishonorably discharged 167 men of Companies B, C, and D of the Twenty-Fifth United States Infantry.[35] When the Nixon Administration finally reversed the dishonorable discharges in 1972, only one of the 167 soldiers was still alive to witness the long overdue exoneration.[36]

The recordings made by John Lomax in Brownsville, Texas, as part of his 1939 Southern States Recording Expedition, provide important insight into the complex racial, ethnic, political, and social dynamics along the U.S.-Mexican border region during the first half of the twentieth century. The songs performed by Manuela Longoria help illustrate the experiences of many Texas Mexicans in relation to education, cultural assimilation, and conflicting loyalties during the American Civil War. Likewise, Lomax's recordings of Otila Crixell Krause, José Suarez, and others reveal the sometimes violent political history of Cameron County.

For John Lomax, the recordings he made in Brownsville, Texas, were simply "race music sung by racialized bodies."[37] There is no clear evidence in his subsequent writings or recordings to suggest that Lomax truly understood the complex social, cultural, racial, and political issues reflected in the Spanish-language music that he helped document. As a result, he largely overlooked the role of Tejanos in the American Civil War, the use of educational institutions to assimilate Mexican-American schoolchildren, and the often troubled relationship involving Anglos, Tejanos, and African Americans in South Texas. However, because Lomax did preserve some examples of the music that originated along the Texas-Mexican border during the early twentieth century, he at least provided future researchers with important material to help us better understand this volatile and transformative period in American history. ★

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Notes

1 See Benjamin Filene *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000) and William A. Owens *Tell Me a Story, Sing Me a Song: A Texas Chronicle* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983) for more on the decades-long debate over the uniqueness and "authenticity" of American folk music.

2 Benjamin Filene, "'*Our Singing Country*': John and Alan Lomax, Leadbelly, and the Construction of an American Past," *American Quarterly* 43, no. 4, (1991), 618.

3 Wayne Gard, "John Avery Lomax," in the *Handbook of Texas Music*, 2nd ed., ed. Laurie E. Jasinski, (Denton: Texas State Historical Association, 2012), 368.

4 http://www.texasfolkloresociety.org/index.html (accessed April 25, 2016).

5 See Texas Folklore Society History 1909-1997, http://www.texasfolkloresociety.org/TFS_History.html, and Southern Mosaic: The John and Ruby Lomax 1939 Southern States Recording Trip, https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9908/lomax.html (accessed June 1, 2014).

6 For more on González, see the Jovita González Mireles Papers at the Wittliff Collections, Texas State University, San Marcos (http://www.thewittliffcollections.txstate.edu/research/a-z/gonzalez_mireles.html).

7 For more on the life and career of John Lomax, see Nolan Porterfield, *Last Cavalier: The Life and Times of John A. Lomax* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996); see also the "John Avery Lomax Family Papers" at the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.

8 One of the best sources on Tejano musical culture and efforts by Texas Mexicans to selectively assimilate is Manuel Peña's *Música Tejana: The Cultural Economy of Artistic Transformation* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999).

9 See Peña's *Música Tejana* for an in-depth discussion of how pressure on Tejanos to assimilate came from both inside and outside of the Texas-Mexican community.

10 For more on the interplay of French, Mexican, Confederate, and Union interests in the U.S.-Mexico border region during this period, see John Tutino, ed., *Mexico and Mexicans in the Making of the United States* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012).

11 Manuela Longoria performance of "La Chinaca" recorded in Brownsville, Texas, by John A. Lomax, April 24, 1939. From Library of Congress, *The John and Ruby Lomax 1939 Southern States Recording Trip.* Real Audio, MP3, Wave. http://memory.loc.gov/afc/afcss39/260/2607a2.mp3 (accessed June 1, 2014).

12 David E. Hayes-Bautista, *El Cinco de Mayo: An American Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

13 David Montejano, "Mexican Merchants and Teamsters on the Texas Cotton Road, 1862–1865," in Tutino, ed., Mexico and Mexicans in the Making of the United States.

14 Evan Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas: The Progressive Era* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982); John Denny Riley, "Santos Benavides: His Influence on the Lower Rio Grande, 1823–1891," (Ph.D. dissertation, Texas Christian University, 1976); Jerry Thompson, "A Stand Along the Border: Santos Benavides and the Battle for Laredo," *Civil War Times Illustrated*, August 1980; Jerry Thompson, *Vaqueros in Blue and Gray* (Austin: Presidial Press, 1976); Robert N. Scott, H. M. Lazelle, George B. Davis, Leslie J. Perry, Joseph W. Kirkley, Fred C. Ainsworth, John S. Moodey, and Calvin D. Cowles, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880); J.B. Wilkinson, *Laredo and the Rio Grande Frontier* (Austin: Jenkins Publishing Co., 1975)

15 Thompson, *Vaqueros in Blue and Gray*.

16 Jerry Thompson, ed., *Tejanos in Gray: Civil War Letters of Captains Joseph Rafael de la Garza and Manuel Yturri* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2011).

17 "Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938," Interview of Sallie Wroe, (https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/S?ammem/mesnbib:@field(AUTHOR+@od1(Wroe,+Sallie) (accessed April 25, 2016), 2.

18 The Records Management Department: Brownsville Independent School District, http://www.bisd.us/Records/html/History.html (accessed June 1, 2014); the term "Anglo" can be problematic when used in discussions of immigrant and ethnic communities. Technically, an Anglo is someone whose ancestors came from the English-speaking parts of the British Isles. However, in recent years "Anglo" has become a commonly used term in the Southwest for anyone whose ancestors were white Europeans, even if those ancestors originally spoke German, French, Italian, Irish, or any number of other European languages. For the purposes of this article, the term "Anglo" is used in this more recent, generic way.

19 For more about educational policies toward Mexican-American children in the Southwest, see Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., *Brown, Not White: School Integration and the Chicano Movement in Houston* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press), 2001, and Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr., *Let All of Them Take Heed: Mexican Americans and the Campaign for Educational Equality in Texas, 1910-1981*, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2011).

20 John A. Lomax and Ruby T. Lomax, *1939 Southern Recording Trip Fieldnotes*, March 31-June 14, 1939, Images 61-78, Library of Congress,https://www.loc.gov/resource/afc1939001.afc1939001_fn0001/?q=&sp=1&st=slideshow#slide-61.

21 Lomax and Lomax, *1939 Southern Recording Trip Fieldnotes*: Images 63-78, https://www.loc.gov/resource/afc1939001.afc1939001_fn0001/?q=&sp=1&st=slideshow#slide-63.

22 "The History of Bownsville Charro Days," www.charrodays.org/history (accessed June 1, 2014).

23 Otila Crixell Krausse performance of "El Corrido de Los Rinches," recorded in Brownsville, Texas, by John A. Lomax, April 28, 1939. From Library of Congress, *Lomax 1939 Southern States Recording Trip*. Real Audio, MP3, Wave. http://memory.loc.gov/afc/afcss39/261/2617a1.mp3 (accessed June 1, 2014).

24 Peña's *Música Tejana* provides additional information on how long-simmering tensions between Texas Rangers and the Texas-Mexican community have been articulated in numerous corridos.

25 Krausse, "El Corrido de Los Rinches."

26 Tito Crixell also recorded in Spanish for Lomax. For an example of this, see Tito Crixell's performance of "Las Manañitas," recorded in Brownsville, Texas, by John A. Lomax, April 28, 1939. From Library of Congress, *Lomax 1939 Southern States Recording Trip*. Real Audio, MP3, Wave. http://memory.loc.gov/afc/afcss39/261/2617b1.mp3 (accessed June 1, 2014).

27 Américo Paredes, *A Texas-Mexican Cancionero: Folksongs of the Lower Border* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 31-32.

28 Ibid., 67-68.

29 Ibid., 69-71.

30 Charles H. Harris and Louis R. Sadler, *The Texas Rangers and the Mexican Revolution: The Bloodiest Decade, 1910-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 106-107.

31 José Suarez performance of "El Corrido Del Soldado," recorded in Brownsville, Texas, by John A. Lomax, April 28, 1939. From Library of Congress, *Lomax 1939 Southern States Recording Trip*. Real Audio, MP3, Wave. http://www.loc.gov/item/lomaxbib000074mp3 (accessed June 1, 2014).

32 For more on African-American conflict with ethnic Mexicans, see Alwyn Barr, *Black Texans: A History of Negroes in Texas, 1528-1971*, Negro Heritage Series (Austin: Jenkins Publishing Co., 1973); James N. Leiker, *Racial Borders: Black Soldiers Along the Rio Grande*, 1st ed., South Texas Regional Studies (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002);

Gerald Horne, *Black and Brown: African Americans and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920*, American History and Culture (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Thomas E. Simmons, *Who's Shooting Firecrackers? : The "Riot" at Fort Ringgold*, Texas, (Self-published 1996).

33 John Downing Weaver, *The Brownsville Raid* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970), 21-23.

34 Ibid., 26-29, 89-90.

35 Ibid., 15-17.

36 Garna L. Christian, "The Brownsville Raid of 1906," *Handbook of Texas Online*: https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/pkb06 (accessed on June 26, 2016).

37 Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 5.