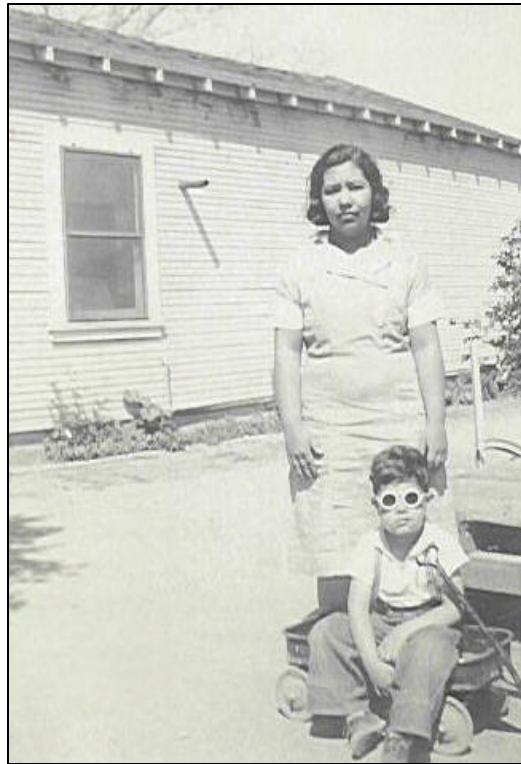


My Life In Old San Juan

by

Mary Velasco Sellen



Mary & her brother Richard
1941

Recorded, transcribed, compiled and edited

by

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Interview 1

This is Mary Velasco, of course now I'm Sellen because I got married. I was born in Guadalajara, Mexico in April 25th, 1921. My mother's name was Guillermina Gonzales Velasco, my father was Jesus Macias Velasco. We came to United States in 1923, April the 9th, so actually I was going be 2 years old on the 25th of April. And we came straight to San Juan Bautista in California. We stopped at the...there was a place I would say five, six miles outa town where they had a depot where the train would come in and then they'd have a bus, a van that would bring people to San Juan. My mother, when she saw the town she said, "Oh no." Being that she came from a big city she thought that she was gonna live in a hacienda. Well anyway we moved here and we lived where they had...right now they turned it into a antique shop. It used to be a blacksmith shop; I even worked there for awhile, welding. We lived in a little cabin for awhile until my father was able to get himself a place on the corner Second Street which used to be the old meat market. I did have a sister that was only five months old and her birthday was in November. Her birthday was in November 1st, 1922.

When we were in Mexico my father had some relations here, which would be my uncle who was married to my aunt and my aunt was related to my father. Colacas. My uncle was named David Colaca and his wife Nicolasa, they lived right



David & Nicolasa Coloca

here next to us in San Juan. Why we came to San Juan was because this uncle kept saying, "Come to San Juan, you can shovel the money." So here comes my father, and my mother was very disappointed because she left all her stuff in Mexico, and of course my father did have a good job, because he was a furniture maker. But we came here and eventually we stayed in a little cabin until my father got permission to do something with the old meat market, which was vacant, nobody was using it anymore. They had moved the meat market right there on Third Street which is Felipe's restaurant. That used to be the meat market there. And it was there for quite awhile, I guess. We moved there in 1924 and my father got a job right away at the cement plant, we had a cement plant here in town. And my father said that if we had a boy he would buy himself a new car. My mother did have a boy and he was born in July the 21st, 1924. He was born there in that house .

My brother was named Raymond, Velasco of course. And then we had another sister which was Anita Ann, I don't know why they put the Ann, but it was Anita Ann and she was born in April the 17th, 1926.

Then, finally, we moved to another house right on the corner where the pepper tree store is now. There used to be a beautiful home there and we lived there for quite awhile until 1930 when the plant closed. Then we moved on Fourth Street to a building that used to be the Japanese school, and they had moved to over in Washington and Fourth, and my father converted into living quarters there, and that's where... No, that other house on Third Street, that's where my sister Charlotte was born. She was born in August the 14th, 1930. And we had another sister was born and she was Lupe, and she was born in December the 3rd, 1932.

When we had the plant close a lotta people left. They went to Redwood City to the cement plant over there but my father never wanted to move out anymore and so we stayed here and I have lived, so far, eighty years in San Juan.

My brother was born on Fourth Street here and that was Richard Velasco and he as born June the 26th 1936. So actually all our family has been here and I went to school here in the old school down on First Street, which later on it was burned.

When we were living on Second Street I started to got to school when I was seven years old, but at that time you had to know how to speak English and I didn't know a word of English, so I stayed back. And then my sister started. And if you didn't do things right you get a spanking in your hand. Like writing. You're supposed to write perfect because the teacher, Mrs. Shaw, was a very strict teacher about writing, you had to write good. If you didn't do it right you had to put your hands out and she'd spank you with a ruler. But that's how come I got a good hand writing, because she taught us how to really write. She lived on Third Street at that house right on the corner. That's where all my sisters and brothers went to school. It was a beautiful school and we had lotta fun, I never had any problems except, you know, sometimes the gringo kids, they always call you all kinds of names, specially "you black nigger" and "you greasy Mexican" and all that, but you know on Second Street where the park is right now? There used to be what they call a boardinghouse there, some little hotel, and they knocked it down and they just had a vacant lot there and these kids that used to call me all kinds of names, you know you couldn't fight in school because if you did you would get a spanking from the principle. So I always meet some of these guys and we had it out. I beat lotta those guy up. Of course as they grew up they used to dare me and say, "Well can you beat me up now?" And they were monsters. But we became friends after. I mean you know, kids are kids, regardless how old they are, they're kids, that's all there is to it.