

## 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY Oral Histories



### CARMEN

Carmen spent her early childhood on a ranch in Mexico. She was sent to Los Angeles to escape poverty but defines home based on her experiences in Mexico.

### DANIEL

Daniel grew up in Echo Park. Gentrification forced him to move to South Gate where he opened a Latino coffee shop, his new home, where he builds and helps his community.



### CINDY

Cindy suffered childhood abuse and used art and therapy to overcome her trauma. Now she finds home through creating safe spaces and sharing with others.

### SANTOS

Santos moved to Long Beach from Acapulco, Mexico and had a hard time adapting to the new culture. He found home by rebuilding a good relationship with his daughters.



### ANNA LISA

Anna Lisa lost her father at an early age. Family hardships caused her to lose all the objects that she associated with her dad. She realized that for her, home, was within her, in memories of her father, not objects.

Scan this code for further historical information:



## VISIT RANCHO LOS CERRITOS MUSEUM & HISTORIC SITE:

Rancho Los Cerritos (RLC) is a National, State, and Local Historic Landmark located in Long Beach California. RLC serves as a living museum of California history. Tours of the Rancho's 1844 adobe home and gardens, as well as immersive programs that weave together history, the arts, and STEAM learning initiatives, provide visitors of all ages a glimpse into California's past.

### Hours

Closed Monday and Tuesday,  
Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, 1:00 – 5:00 pm,  
Saturday, 10:00am – 5:00pm,  
Sunday, 1:00- 5:00pm

### Tours

Self-guided tours are available in English, Spanish, Khmer, and Tagalog. Docent tours of the house & gardens are offered on an ongoing basis during Museum hours and are available in Spanish upon request.

### Group Tours

Reservations are required for groups of 10 or more.  
Call 562.206.2040 or email [rancho@rancholoscerritos.org](mailto:rancho@rancholoscerritos.org)

### Free Parking

This exhibition is funded in part by:



NATIONAL  
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FOR THE  
HUMANITIES



**ROOTS IN CALIFORNIA:  
CONCEPTS OF HOME**  
MARCH 27, 2022 – MARCH 12, 2023



**RANCHO  
LOS  
CERRITOS**



Liera family during oral history interview in 1989; left to right, RLC volunteer Mickey Mellevoid, Concepción Liera & Manuel Liera

## WHAT IS ORAL HISTORY?

Oral history is the transmission of knowledge through spoken words, which can take the form of stories, traditions, or songs. It is a method of gathering, recording, and preserving a variety of personal knowledge that is not typically documented in written form.

This exhibition includes quotes from the oral histories of Mexicans and Mexican Americans who were tenants (residents) at Rancho Los Cerritos (RLC) in the early 20th century. Their voices and memories offer us a unique window into the past.

## TENANT PERIOD AT RANCHO LOS CERRITOS (1890 - 1930)

During this time period various tenants resided at Rancho Los Cerritos in the adobe house. Many of these tenants were Mexicans and Mexican Americans who worked the farmlands at RLC. They also worked at the Virginia Country Club and other neighboring businesses. At this time, the RLC adobe was in disrepair—a crumbling structure that required work and renovations—however, the tenants made do with what they had and their stories are indicative of their resourcefulness. Through a recounting of their memories growing up and residing in the adobe house, the tenants' stories offer insight into the lived experience of early 20th century working class people in Southern California. These stories, preserved by RLC in the form of oral histories, reflect a specific time in California history when major cities throughout Southern California began to experience rapid industrial development and growth.

Rancho Los Cerritos' tenant, Virginia Murillo and her three children, c.1900



Farmworkers during World War I, c. 1918

## MEXICANS AND MEXICAN AMERICANS IN CALIFORNIA

By the late 19th and early 20th century, the Mexican American identity began to take shape throughout the Southwest. After the Mexican-American War in 1848, many Mexicans gained US citizenship through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, although it did not bring the protection promised to the Mexican-American people. In the 1890s, California commerce and industry was booming. Anglo-Americans established wealth through business and land ownership. The majority of Mexicans and Mexican Americans were relegated to the working class, hardly given the resources necessary to prosper. Because the California agricultural industry increased between 1910 and 1920, Mexican migrant workers, through the U.S. Guestworker Program, were allowed to go back and forth between Mexico and the U.S. During the Great Depression (1930s), anti-Mexican sentiment led to laws that resulted in the removal of more than a half million Mexicans and Mexican Americans from their homes.