

Collection #  
SC 3471  
DVD 1446–1448

**SANDRA VALDES  
LATINO ORAL HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEW,  
14 NOVEMBER 2017**

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## **COLLECTION INFORMATION**

**VOLUME OF COLLECTION:** 1 folder, 3 DVDs

**COLLECTION DATES:** 14 November 2017

**PROVENANCE:** Sandra Valdes, East Chicago, Indiana, July, 2018

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**ACCESSION NUMBER:** 2017. 0375; 2018.0234

**NOTES:** This forms part of the Latino Oral History Project

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Sandra Valdes was born as Sandra Godinez in May of 1948 in East Chicago, Indiana, to Maria del Refugio Ramirez de Godinez and Rafael Martinez Godinez. Both of her parents were a part of the early community or Mexican Colony of Indiana Harbor (East Chicago) in the 1920s. Her parents are both from Ixtlan de los Hervores, Michoacán, Mexico. They did not know each other previously before immigrating to Indiana. Sandra recounts that her mother and grandmother, Josefa Saucedo Ramirez, lived and worked in Kansas City in 1917 or 1918.

Records show that the Ramirez family moved to Indiana Harbor in 1925. In 1925, the Mexican Colony in Indiana Harbor was less than ten years old, but well established. By September of 1926, the community and various social groups convened the inaugural Fiestas Patrias parade, a tradition that continues in East Chicago today. Every year candidates are nominated for the Fiestas Patrias Queen. Maria del Refugio Ramirez, age twenty-one, was the very first Fiestas Patrias Queen in 1926.

The Ramirez family did not stay long in Indiana Harbor. They returned to Mexico in October of 1928 and resided in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. Maria del Refugio Ramirez did not return to Indiana Harbor until 1947, to join her husband Rafael Godinez.

In this interview, Sandra recounts her mother's experience living in Indiana Harbor as well as her own. She mostly speaks of her mother and father's romantic relationship that began in Indiana Harbor in the 1920s and promptly ended after Maria del Refugio accepted her title as the inaugural Fiestas Patrias Queen. After Maria del Refugio and her family returned to Mexico, Rafael stayed in Indiana Harbor, got married to Maria de Jesus Salcedo and had a son, Javier Rafael Godinez, in 1937. Shortly after giving birth, Maria de Jesus died of post partum complications. Due to being a single parent, the economic hardship of the great depression, Javier was sent to Ixtlan de los Hervores, Michoacán, Mexico to live with his grandparents; Jesus Godinez and Soledad Martinez de Godinez.

While visiting his son in Mexico during the 1940s, Rafael Godinez rekindled his relationship with Maria del Refugio, who at the time remained unmarried. They later married in Mexico in 1942 by the civil court and in 1947 by the Catholic church in Ixtlán. A short while later in 1947, Maria del Refugio joined Rafael in Indiana Harbor. The following year in May they had their only child: a daughter, Sandra Godinez.

After Sandra's high school graduation from Bishop Noll Institute in 1967, the Godinez family moved to Ixtlan de los Hervores, Michoacán, Mexico, and later Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. Sandra had met her future husband, Roberto Valdes, prior to returning to Mexico. Roberto moved to Mexico as well. Sandra and Roberto returned to Indiana at the end of the 1960s. Sandra's parents remained in Mexico. After the death of her husband, Maria del Refugio returned to Indiana Harbor in the United States in the early 1990s and passed away in 2010 at the age of 104.

At the time of the interview Sandra is 69 years old.

Sources:

Information in Collection

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The following interview is one of a series devoted to collecting life stories from remarkable people who were involved in the Indiana Latino community.

This manuscript was transcribed from a digitally audio recorded interview conducted on November 14, 2017 at the East Chicago Public Library in East Chicago, Indiana, by Nicole Martinez-LeGrand, Indiana Historical Society's (IHS) Multicultural Collections Coordinator for the project. The transcription has been lightly edited, in February 2018. The interview, which includes the audio recording and the transcript, is housed at the William H. Smith Memorial Library, Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center, Indianapolis, Indiana. Readers of this oral history interview should bear in mind that it is a transcript of the spoken word. Although the transcript has been lightly edited, IHS has diligently sought to preserve its informal, conversational style, as well as the integrity of the interview's content. While some attempt has been taken to explain through footnotes some of the facts given by the interviewee, IHS is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the interview's content or for the views expressed within. The audio recording remains unedited. The interview may be used for private study, scholarship, or research. Permission to reproduce or publish this interview, whether in whole or in part, must be obtained from the William H. Smith Memorial Library, Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center, 450 West Ohio Street, Indianapolis, Indiana, 46202-3269

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Sandra Valdes, Oral History Transcript

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Sandra Valdes, Digital Images of Photographs

DVD 1448