

Pictured below is Margaret Martinez, wife of Charles Martinez, long time resident of Alta Vista, and somewhat of an unsung hero, given all she did for her community. She was born on January 15, 1910, in New Mexico, near Las Vegas, to John Alvin and Sarah Salas.



Margaret Salas
Martinez
(1910-1992)

In a 1976 oral history interview, Charlene Tresner asks “Had your parents come from Old Mexico?” Margaret explains that no, her parents, grandparents, great grandparents and probably even her great great grandparents were all born in New Mexico. The Salas lineage was a very early arrival to what is now New Mexico, in the late 17th century.

Her family may have attended this church in Las Vegas, New Mexico, pictured below at left.

Margaret spoke Spanish first, because her parents did, and learned English when she went to school. She is pictured below, in the middle.

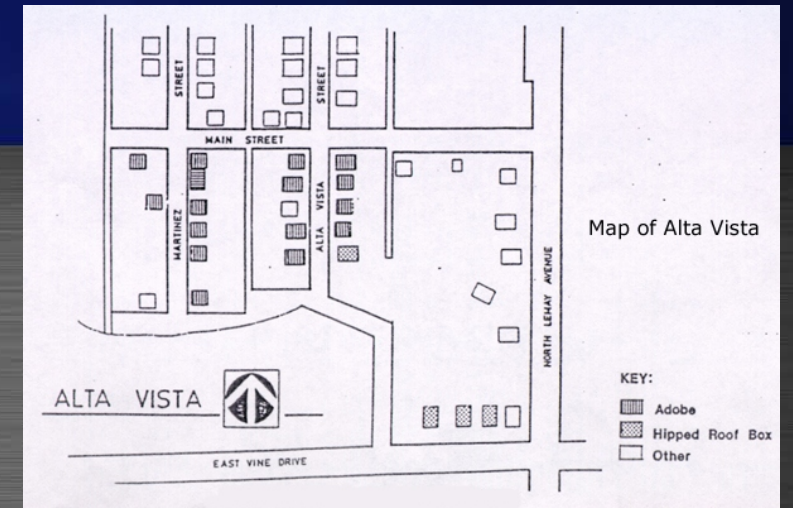
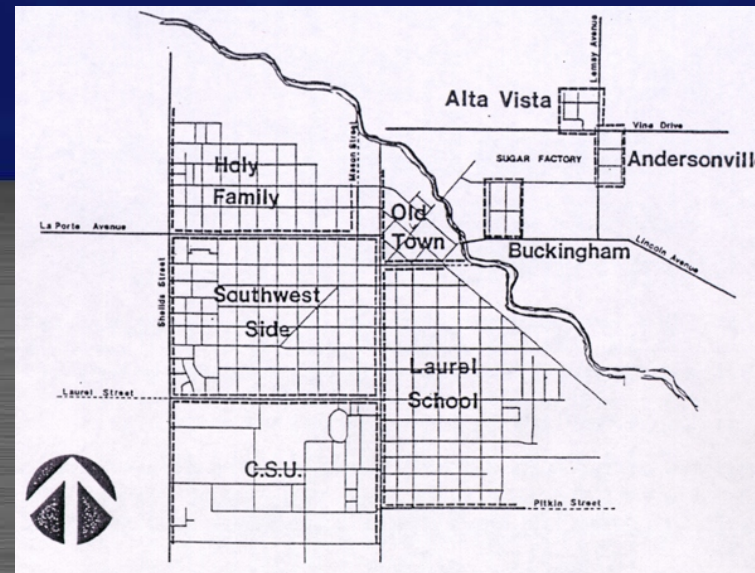
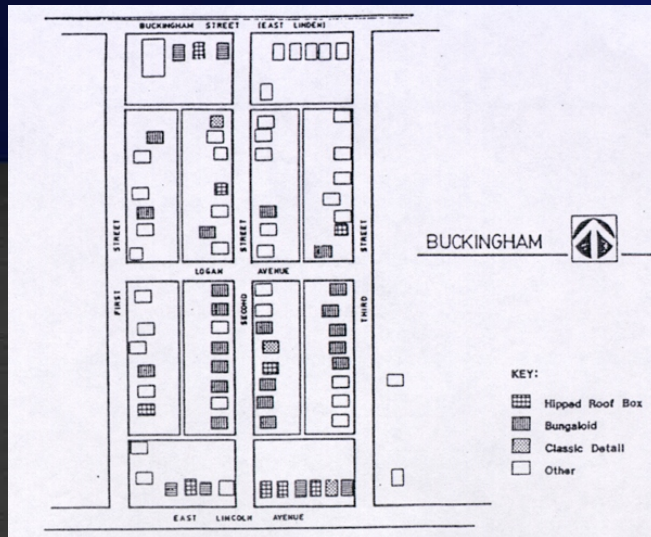


Margaret moved to Fort Collins when she was young. She first attended Laporte School, then Franklin School, which was later torn down and was home to a Steele's Market at the time of her oral history interview. Her family moved out to Arthur Seaman's farm, northeast of Fort Collins, where she went to #35 school, then moved back to Fort Collins where she went to Lincoln Junior High.



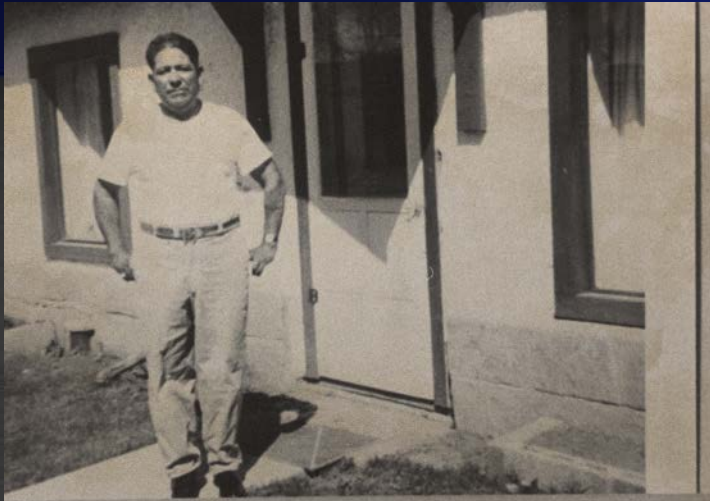
She spent her early years with her family in Buckingham, then the rest of her life in Alta Vista.

In her thesis *Beet Borderland: Hispanic Workers, the Sugar Beet, and the Making of a Northern Colorado Landscape*, author Sierra Standish states, "Right after they married, Margaret and Charles moved from place to place, working the beets; they purchased their house ten years later.



The sugar beet led them here, but then they formed a community.

Margaret married Charles Martinez on August 1, 1927, officiated by Father Trudell. They bought their house in Alta Vista in 1937, now 736 Martinez Street, originally a 2-room adobe home, from the sugar company for \$190.



Los Betabeleros

**“The sugar beet explains
why they came to northern Colorado,
their daily lifestyle,
and their status in Fort Collins.”**



The house was built around 1924 by Great Western for German Russian laborers. Charles and Margaret converted the flat roof to a peaked one, added a bedroom, dining room kitchen combo, bathroom, utility room and large picture windows.

From the Standish thesis: "Between 1937 and 1976, Margaret and Charles Martinez upgraded their house multiple times; at their interview in 1976, they had a suite of improvements to show off, from room partitions to a new kitchen and bathroom to Margaret's Maytags. For the Martinezes, Alta Vista was clearly not the simple site of a worker's camp. Through the years, they had raised their children - Tom, Richard, Chris, Frances, Rachel, Charlotte and Mary Louise - and seen them through school.

All the kids finished high school; several got college degrees, and at least one got a post-bac degree.

REAL ESTATE APPRAISAL CARD—URBAN MASTER INDEX

Client: MARTINEZ, CHARLES & MARGARET
 P. O. BOX 314
 FT. COLLINS, COLO. 80501

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: LOT 15, ALTA VISTA

DEAD END

Map Reference: E 069 549C

LOT OR ACREAGE DESCRIPTION		LAND VALUE CALCULATION	
ZONING: RESIDENTIAL	STREET OR ROAD IMPROVEMENTS: PAVES, SIDEWALKS	BASE VALUE: 100	ADDITIONS: 0
APARTMENTS: 0	LAND SURFACE: GRASS, HIGH	NET DEDUCTIONS: 0	TOTAL LAND VALUE: 100
COMMERCIAL: 0	DRIVEWAY: 0		
LIGHT INDUSTRIAL: 0	CITY WATER: 0		
HEAVY INDUSTRIAL: 0	WELL OR SPRING: 0		
	SEWER: 0		
	ELECTRICITY: 0		
	PAVED ALLEY: 0		

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT		SUMMARY OF LAND AND BUILDINGS VALUES	
DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT	LAND	BUILDINGS AND IMPROVEMENTS
BUILDING PERMIT	0	100	500
ORIGINAL HOME IMPROVEMENTS	0		
ADDITIONS AND BETTERMENTS	0		
OWNER'S ESTIMATE OF VALUE	0		
PRIVATE APPRAISAL	0		
INSURANCE	0		
MORTGAGE	0		
MONTHLY RENTAL	0		
ADVERTISED FOR SALE	0		
DISAPPROVED	0		



We don't have many items in the Archive at FCMod about Margaret, but we do have some. The article on the left says that she was a member of Las Mujeres Activas (*Fort Collins Coloradoan*, May 6, 1976). She was certainly proud of cooking, and proud of their house.

We have her tortilla recipe in Archive. In this oral history excerpt, she talks about how to make them:

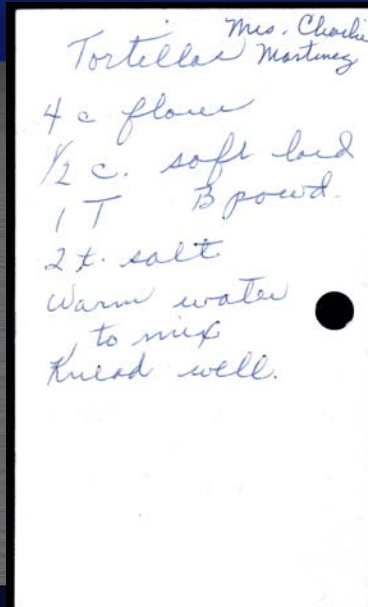
Tresner: What do you stir up to make a tortilla?

Martinez: My flour, my baking powder, my salt, little bit of lard. I use lard. And I just mix all this up and just put a little hot water and make my dough and then roll them out.

Tresner: I don't suppose you measure, do you? Probably never have.

Martinez: No, I don't. I never have. I make homemade bread right along. But I don't measure mine. I just dump in...and now I don't make as many tortillas as I used to.

In the oral history Margaret remembers the names and professions of the extended family, filling in the name of the college a niece went to, the company a son works for. She was the memory keeper of the family, the peace keeper of the family, a safe haven for the children in Alta Vista ... and, according to her grandson Mike, she always wore a dress.



In 1976, each household in Alta Vista submitted nominations for renaming "A" and "B" streets, and Charles Martinez's name was selected for "B" Street.

Alta Vista area under study for historic status

RICK HEREDIA
Of The Coloradoan

5-29-83 A visit last week by representatives of the Colorado Historical Society may mean the neighborhood of Alta Vista will be named to the National Register of Historic Places.

Merrill Wilson, a historical architect, and Karen Patterson, a compliance coordinator with the state agency, toured the neighborhood Thursday and said they believed they

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found what they were looking for.

"What we have here is a potential historical district," Wilson said.

That is because the area homes built by Mexican farmworkers in the 1920s are made of adobe and are more than 50 years old — two reasons that could put Alta Vista on the National Register.

The fact that they housed families of farm laborers who worked the sugar beet fields for the Great Western Sugar Company added to the area's historic promise.

"People just don't imagine adobe this far north," Wilson said of the homes she and

See, ADOBE, Page A1



Coloradoan photo by Carla Conti
Charlie, Margaret Martinez at home

“The Martinezes aren’t millionaires but there are probably very few millionaires who live on a street named after them.”

Fort Collins Coloradoan, May 29, 1983

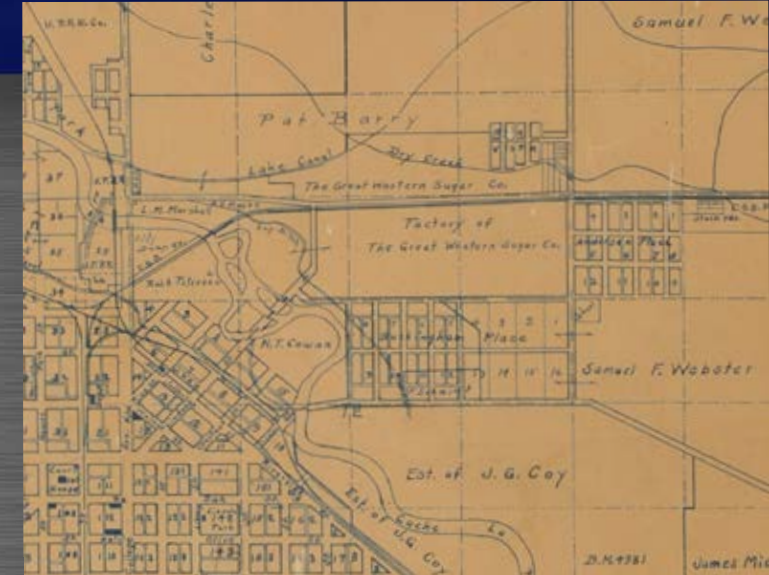
Margaret and Charles - Maggie and Charlie - spent most of their lives within the borders of this neighborhood, not just adding to the community, but creating it. Maggie was a fierce defender of her kids and grandkids, and used whatever she could to keep them connected to the family, to their community, and to their heritage.

Maggie and Charlie loved sharing the fruits of their labor. In this oral history excerpt, Margaret tells about taking her granddaughter Robin to Disneyland:

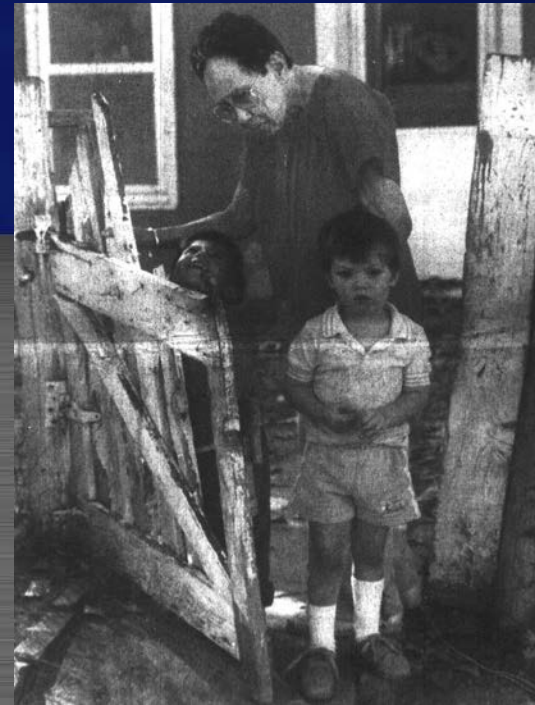
But I think of all the vacations we've taken, well, like I say, since we've been retired, we've been on the go all the time. But the most beautiful vacation I had, was last year. We took our granddaughter to Disneyland. We had been there before and I'm telling you, we had a ball. It was so beautiful to travel with her. And she had never seen anything like this.



Maggie's story, and the stories of other BAVA (Buckingham, Andersonville, Alta Vista) women like her, are at the heart of Fort Collins history, and vitally important to understanding Fort Collins' identity: the Great Western Sugar factory, beet fields and the beet workers; the migration in the 1920s of people from southern Colorado and northern New Mexico to Fort Collins; the decline of the sugar beet industry in Northern Colorado; working the stone quarries; and that age old theme of building a better life for oneself and one's children in the face of prejudice and financial hardship.



From the thesis by Sierra Standish: "The Martinez lineage ... represents the progression of pioneers through Mexico, and through New Mexico, to northern Colorado. In each particular place, members of the Martinez clan confronted the realities of the physical environment, the labor involved in earning a living, and the development of the local community."



Learn more about local history by visiting the Archive at Fort Collins Museum of Discovery, visiting the Poudre River Public Library District, and by checking us out online at the Fort Collins History Connection.