

FINAL SENT TO NMDOT (March 16, 2009)
Official Scenic Historic Marker Program



CPRC meeting: February 20, 2009

Name of Marker: Estella García (dates unknown)
Fabric Artists: Women of the WPA

Review: Original Text/Replacement Marker Revised Text
 Move of Existing Marker New Marker

NM County: Curry County

NMDOT District: District 2

NMDOT Highway:

Suggested Site for Installation: To be determined

Existing or Proposed Text: (two sides)

Side One: Estella Garcia (dates unknown)

Estella Garcia taught *colcha* embroidery at Melrose, New Mexico, for the Federal Arts Program (FAP). Anglo and Hispana women in García's class collaborated to design and produce embroidered theater curtains, wall hangings, and seat coverings for institutions across the state including the Albuquerque Little Theatre. García is one of the few Hispanic women artists recorded in FAP documents. Unfortunately, few examples of her work remain.

Word Count: 65

Side Two: Fabric Artists: Women of the Works Progress Administration

Under the umbrella of the WPA, the National Youth Administration, and the Federal Arts Program, instructors and students were recruited to work in community-based art centers that produced fabric arts, including weaving, *colcha* embroidery, and lace-making. While the artistic creativity of these mostly unrecognized women was considered "women's work for home use" by WPA administrators, this now popular New Mexican art form has been revitalized.

Word Count: 65

Estella García and Women in the WPA

Curry
Santibañez

Weaving, unlike embroidery and lace making, did not suffer a decline in the twentieth century. Until the WPA took on fabric arts, men were the traditional weavers of New Mexico's *jerga* and Rio Grande blankets.

Women embroidered cloth for table covers and coverlets or bedspreads in the house or altar cloths in the church. Along with lace making, *colcha* embroidery came to New Mexico with the first Spanish settlements and was an occupation for gentlewomen.

In an effort to train women and help them create income, the WPA and Federal Art Program developed a concept of community based art centers. These centers were housed in small places that were usually donated by the host town. New Mexico had centers in Gallup, Roswell, Melrose and Las Vegas, Costilla, and Taos among others. Along with other arts, hired artisans taught fabric arts to children and adults. The fabric arts were considered by WPA administrators as women's work. As a result of this attitude women became weavers and continue to do so in increasing numbers.

Melrose, where Estella García taught, is located between Ft. Sumner and Clovis. At the time the town had a population of five hundred people and was the smallest town in the United States to have an arts center. García

was hired to teach colcha embroidery. Her group of Anglo and Hispana students quickly developed a reputation for creating superior work. State and national officials praised their art. Their colcha embroidery was featured in numerous New Deal art exhibitions, including Bloomingdale's Department store in New York City. Along with the quality of their work, they were prolific. They became known for doing large theater curtains that were installed at Melrose High School, Carrie Tingley Hospital, and the Albuquerque Playhouse. They also created wall-hangings, seat and pillow covers. Most of their work has been lost and Rita Rodríguez Chávez is the only identified class member. García, herself, is one of a few Hispanic women mentioned in the FAP documents. The absence of the identities of her students as well as the paucity of identified examples of their work from the New Deal era records attests to the administrative perception that the work of women textile arts was considered a craft and not worthy of historical consideration as art. Nonetheless, the fact of their existence that refuses to disappear and a new generation of scholars have begun the necessary research to resurrect their names and art.

12 Estrella García, ~~dates unknown~~, taught colcha embroidery, a centuries
old tradition, for the Federal Arts Program at Melrose, NM. Her ^{artistic} ~~art~~ ^{genius}
* 12 ~~as well as~~ ^{and} her ability to teach her ~~students~~ resulted in
her being one of the very few Hispanic women mentioned in the FAP
documents. The work of her and her students received recognition
15 through exhibitions and requests that spread ~~from New Mexico~~
~~throughout~~ the country. Today, only one of her ~~few~~ pupils has
been identified and a precious few of ~~their~~ ^{her} art examples of their
art remain today.

68 Estrella García taught taught colcha embroidery, a centuries old
tradition, for the Federal Arts Program at Melrose, NM. Her ^{Because of}
artistic genius and her ability to teach, she became one of a few
Hispanic women mentioned in the FAP documents. The art of
her and her students received recognition through exhibitions
and ~~requests~~ commissions that spread throughout the country.
Only ^{one} ~~few~~ of her pupils has been identified and a precious few
examples of their art remains today.

~~One of the~~
Under the umbrella of the WPA and Federal Arts Program, instructors
and students were recruited to work community based art
centers producing fabric arts, which included weaving,
colcha embroidery and ^{lacemaking} ~~embroidery~~. Seen by WPA administrators
as merely as "women's work for home use," the artistic ^{Administration}
creativity of these mostly unrecognized women revitalized ^{to include}
an art for a traditional New Mexican art form that is popular
69 Today.

New Mexico Historic Women Marker Initiative — Nominations

Name Estella R. Garcia

Categories

County/Tribe Curry

Birth Dates

Status

Other suggested names

Nominating Party Lucinda Lucero Saeghs

Suggested Marker Text

History

Estella Garcia worked as a colcha embroidery instructor for the Federal Art Program (FAP) at the Fine Arts Center in Melrose, NM. Colcha is characterized by long, thick stitches that can be used to create floral motifs, bird, animal and zigzag designs. Given the historical associations of embroidery with gentility and Spanish nobility, colcha benefited from a somewhat elevated status in the realm of fiber arts. Estella Garcia's students designed and created stage curtains, seat covers, upholstered seat cushions and other items to enhance government buildings throughout New Mexico during the New Deal era. Colcha was highly praised by the state and national officials of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and featured in numerous national New Deal art exhibitions. Unfortunately, however, Estella Garcia's Anglo and Hispana pupils were not recognized in the Works Progress Administration documents and remain largely unidentified.

Sources

9/17/2008

Fringley Hospital, and the Albuquerque Playhouse. They also created wall-painting, seat coverings, pillow covers. Most of their work has been lost and only one class member has been identified. Rita Rodriguez Chavez of Santa Fe enjoys that distinction.

The absence of Garcia, herself, is one of a few Hispanic women mentioned in the FNP documents. The absence of her and her students as well as identified examples of their art from the New Deal era records attests to the administrative perception that the work of women textile arts was considered a craft and not worthy of historical consideration as art. Nonetheless, the fact of their existence refuses to disappear and a new generation of scholars has begun the necessary research to resurrect their names and art.

1 - Juli Herrera + Colcha Embroidery
one side WPA
Research

Will
Ruth
Marina
for Hispanics
Sin
Sin

Weaving, unlike embroidery and lace-making, did not suffer a decline in the twentieth century. Embroidery until the WPA took on fabric arts men were the traditional weavers of New Mexico's "piques" and Rio Grande Blankets. Women embroidered cloth for coverlets or bedspreads in the house or altar cloths and table covers. Along with lace making, colored embroidery came to New Mexico with the first Spanish settlers and was an occupation for gentlewomen.

In an effort to create training and create income the WPA and Federal Art Program developed a concept of community based art centers. ~~In the 1930s~~ these centers were housed in small places that were usually donated by the host town. New Mexico had centers in Gallup, Roswell, Mesquite and Los Vegas, with the ~~along with other arts, fabric arts classes were taught~~ ^{artisans taught} fabric arts to children and adults. The fabric arts were considered by WPA administrators and women's work. As a result, of this attitude, women became weavers and continue to do so in increasing numbers.

Mesquite, where Estrella García Trujillo, is located between St. Sumner and Clovis. At the time the town had a population of 500 people and was the smallest town in the United States to have an arts center. García was hired to teach colored embroidery. Her group of Anglo and Hispanic students quickly developed a reputation for creating ~~high~~ ^{highly} superior works. ~~State and national officials~~ ^{State and national officials} highly praised their art. Their colored embroidery was featured in numerous New Deal art exhibitions, including in Bloomingdale Department store in New York City. Along with their quality García's group were prolific. They became known for doing long theater curtains that were installed at Mesquite High School, Carrie

Estrella Garcia + Women in the WPA

William Wroth *Hispanic Crafts of the Southwest*: FAP Federal Art Project
An Exhibition Catalogue (Colorado Springs; Taylor Museum of the Colorado Springs

p. 3 Weaving was one of the few Hispanic crafts which did not experience a decline in the early 20th century. (1977)

Chenango blanket 1890s (before gerga; Rio Grande blankets)

Colcha embroidery is another distinctive NM textile art (colcha: coverlet or bedspread).

Wool - consists of backing of loosely woven white material called Sabanilla that is covered by hand-stitching in a long couching stitch

Early Colcha - covered with wool stitching, usually in geometric + floral patterns

Late Colcha - commercial fine spun cotton material used as the backing + isolated motifs were embroidered leaving large expanses of the white background.

Both utilize highly folk traditions of Sp motifs

Embroidery came with formal settlement of gentlemen

earliest most outstanding examples Colchas - Altar cloths + Table covers

Manzanita
Tay, Nunn

Sin Nombre: Hispanic and Hispanic artists of the New Deal Era, (MBC; UMN press, 2001)

Federal Art Centers

p 11

Concept of community-based art centers. By 1940 there were over 100 centers + galleries in US. under WPA/FAP

Melrose Federal Art Center one of these

Usually small places - donated

12

Centers - NM Gallup, Roswell, Melrose + Las Vegas

KUNM				
	Auction	Voices?	Book Festival	
	\$50.00	20	20	
	\$35.00	10	10	
	\$25.00	0	0	
	\$15.00	0	0	
		30	30	
	\$1,350.00		\$1,350.00	\$2,700.00
KHFM				
	\$30.00	20	20	
	\$641.26		\$641.26	\$1,282.52
KSFR				
	\$20.00	15	15	
	\$300.00		\$300.00	\$600.00
			RADIO TOTAL	\$4,582.52
Alibi 1/4	\$399.00		\$399.00	\$798.00
Pasatiempo 1/8	\$402.00		\$402.00	\$804.00
			PRINT TOTAL	\$1,602.00
KNME				
	\$3,744 52 Saturdays, 15 sec. before BBC World News and 15 sec. after			
			TV TOTAL	\$3,744.00
			AD TOTAL	\$9,928.52

SUBMITTED BY: _____
 (Department Head)
 3/5/08

Estrella Garcia + Women in the WPA

p 111 Melrose Federal Art Center Located between Ft. Sumner + Clovis. POP is 300. Smallest town in U.S. to have an art center

Opened in old storefront on Main St. moved into the courthouse bldg.

~~Teach~~ Classes in painting, muralism, weaving, Colcha (embroidery) woodworking etc

Estrella Garcia taught colcha classes

103 Crisóstoma "Chris" Luna (1902-1997)

wore hand-dyed Rio Grande Blueprints in geometric designs + yergos, Embroidered

Olivera Beronett Montoya (date unknown)

Teach in New Deal - Fabric artist + weaver

Teach in 1902. Edited the Vegetable Dyes Bulletin

p 102 Willie Habalton (Stark) (1919-1979)

Colcha

Learned in working in the Water Market a store that employed a lot of weavers + embroiders

p 106-07 Weaving in southern Colorado + WPA taught to both children + adults

Majority were women

"All of the fabric arts, including colcha... were seen by WPA administrators merely as 'women's work' for home use

Thomas Chavez

From: "Karren Sahler" <k.sahler@comcast.net>
To: "Tom Chavez" <chavez.22@comcast.net>
Sent: Wednesday, November 19, 2008 11:18 AM
Subject: Re: rewrite midwives

I tweaked the midwives a bit.

I have the forms for both Ada and Emma that I can put this into. Send me an updated form if you have additional sources, etc. Otherwise I will use what I have.

Thanks,

Karren

Historically, the practice of midwifery played an integral role in the birthing process in New Mexico. In a large rural state with few doctors, midwives, called *parteras* in Spanish, helped give birth to thousands of babies. With the inception of the University of New Mexico's medical school, the State began to train and certify midwives. Today, licensed midwives still work with doctors and hospitals.

Word count: 64

On 11/12/08 12:15 PM, "Thomas Chavez" <chavez.22@comcast.net> wrote:

Dear Karren:

I have attached two drafts for your and Pat's consideration. The drafts are a stronger narrative on Ada McPherson Morley and a narrative on *parteras* that will go on the flip side of the sign for Emma Estrada. Also, I have made a couple of contacts to get some solid information and sources Estella Garcia and the Wommen Colcha makers of the WPA.

When I hear back from you regarding the two attachments, I will incorporate them in the proper nomination forms and send them back.

Tom

P. 107 Mary Sedillo - WPA Weaving Project Supervisor in
Castilla, NM

Beatriz Valdez, Balboa-Liz de Herrera + Ramoncita Quintana in Castilla, NM members of WPA Weaving Project

NM girls' camp - Capitan, NM

taught fabric arts. Girls created a catalog of art works with pieces that could be ordered

NM National Youth Administration

Girls for NM - Rosewell ^{Coordinated} created the staff center for the Rosewell Federal Prob Center. Class instructor was Amalea Bacia Martinez

#110

Art of Colcha embroidery received great attention in the WPA art program. Examples were exhibited in many shops stores + Fed Prob Center across the country in N. D. ex.

Perception as a measure of gentility + Spanish nobility

Estelle R. Garcia (dates unknown)

one of a few Hispanics mentioned in the FNP documents
Artist, teaching + supervisory ~~skills~~ skills
worthy of note

Hard to teach embroidery.

#111-12

Taught Anglo + Hispanic students - work highly praised by state + national officials. Featured in numerous national N. D. art exhibitions, including Bloomington, Ind. + Dept Store in N.Y. art

p. 112 Melrose cabinet project very prolific
Large theater curtains for Melrose High School,
Carrie Trujillo Hospital, Albuquerque Community Playhouse
Highly popular sent on loan for exhibition some
mummy (Albuquerque Playhouse)

Created wall hangings, seat covers
Only one class member has been I.O. Rita Rodriguez
Chavez of Santa Fe attended Melrose classes

p. 114 The absence of Garcia's her students as well as
ind. samples of their works from N.D. era records
attests to the perception that the work of women
textile artists was considered - like "crafts" &
thus not worthy of art historical consideration

The Women's + Professional Division of the WPA
in New Mexico also held classes in color. Followed
designs in the system's "Blue Book"

p. 115 Darning work Mexico's drawn work. lace making