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Andres Palacios

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South Colton Oral History Project

Interview Summary

Interviewee:

Andres Palacios

Interviewer:

Tom Rivera

Interview Date:

May 2, 2015

Interview Location:

Colton, CA

Length:

00:19:15

Interview Summary completed by:

M. Camacho Nuno, 2024

Description:

Tom Rivera interviews Andres Palacios, a man who moved to Colton in 2008 and is learning about the history of the South side. In this interview, Andres Palacio describes his living in Mexico and then his life in the United States after arriving in 1969. He speaks of his son and the buildings that Palacio helps with in the reconstruction. Rivera confirms information that Palacios had heard regarding the famous Panaderia Martinez, the family who ran it, and the fate of the local businesses before the year 2015. There is also discussion between the two men regarding zoning for buildings in South Colton and how fixing them would help. If buildings were fixed and open for those who would like to purchase it to run a business, it would be beneficial for the community. Local businesses will help the people of South Colton more than retail chains like Stater Bros. The interview ends with a lighthearted discussion about businesses that had come and gone as well as Rivera's indigenous heritage.

Subject Topic:**Keywords**

- Spanish-speaking
- Mexican Influence
- Small Business over Retail Companies in Colton
- Money for the Communities
- Panaderia Martinez and the role of the Martinez family in South Colton
- The Rehabilitation of Old Buildings
- Bring Back Buildings to Life to renew Local Businesses
- Indigenous Heritage
- Buildings Zoning

Spatial Coverage:

Name of Site (if relevant)	General Location/Address
Panaderia Martinez	Colton, California (Defunct)
South Gate	California
South Colton	California
Mexico City	State of Mexico, Mexico

Temporal Coverage:

1969 - 2015

Key Events:

- Andres Palacio came to live in the United States in 1969.
- Palacio started work in making trunks, then moved on to a body shop, then worked in LA County for more than 26 years.
- Palacio moved to Colton with his son to help with the rehabilitation of buildings.
-

Key Organizations:

- Martinez Family & Bakery
- LA County
- Small, Local Businesses

Interview Index:

Media Format	Time (hh:mm:ss)	Topic Discussed
Digital Video	00:00:35 - 00:01:47	Palacios discusses details of his move to Colton and the building his son had to rehabilitate.
Digital Video	00:01:47 - 00:04:00	Palacios and Rivera talk about the Panaderia Matinez, which was run by an important family but is now closed. They also discuss Mexican food in Colton in contrast to the lack of it in surrounding cities.
Digital Video	00:05:36 - 00:06:17	Palacios speaks about his indigenous heritage.
Digital Video	00:12:07 - 00:17:02	A discussion of zoning, building reconstruction, and local business which would benefit South Colton.

Digital Video	00:17:29 - 00:18:20	Both men reminisce and Rivera speaks about his indigenous heritage.
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Related Materials

Additional oral history interviews are available from the South Colton Oral History Project at CSUSB, <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/colton-history/>

Full interview transcript can be found below.

Interview Transcript

Start of Interview:

[00:00:00]

TOM RIVERA: Good morning. My name is Dr. Tom Rivera, and today is May 2, 2015. And we're at the Colton Museum, and we're interviewing -- this morning, we're interviewing -- tell me what your name is?

ANDRES PALACIOS: Andres Palacios.

TOM RIVERA: Andres Palacio [sic]. Now normally, we would interview somebody that was born and raised in Colton, but Andres is a newcomer -- is a newcomer to our area. And Andres, welcome to our interview session this morning. What I'd like to start the session, Andres -- te quiero preguntar, ¿cuándo llegaste aquí a Colton?

ANDRES PALACIOS: En el 2008, creo. 2009.

TOM RIVERA: Two thousand eight, 2009?

ANDRES PALACIOS: Two thousand eight, 2009.

TOM RIVERA: And what brought you to Colton, Andres?

ANDRES PALACIOS: The -- my son got a contract to rehabilitate a building that was completely run down on [00:01:00] Seventh Street and M Street. When I got there, the building obviously was semi-condemned, so the company that we work with gave us the funds to rehabilitate it. And as -- if anybody was -- were to drive by today, they will see what a beautiful building -- it has nothing -- it resembles nothing what it used to be. I didn't know none of this.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, y Andres, ¿qué era antes? What was it before?

ANDRES PALACIOS: Me dijeron que era una panadería primero.

TOM RIVERA: ¿Y cómo se llamaba la panadería?

ANDRES PALACIOS: La Martínez. Y bueno, yo no supe nunca el nombre porque todo el mundo me decía la panadería de los Martínez. La panadería de los Martínez.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, en la esquina de la calle M y la siete.

ANDRES PALACIOS: En la esquina. Ándale.

TOM RIVERA: Okay, sí era la Martínez Bakery.

ANDRES PALACIOS: ¿Se llamaba Martínez?

TOM RIVERA: Martinez Bakery, toda la familia vivía allí. Y también eran familia grande. Big family. Y también eran muy [00:02:00] -- personas que participaban en toda la comunidad de Colton. También apoyaban las fiestas patrias. La bakery Martinez Bakery, apoyaban las fiestas patrias. Y creo que el papá era parte del comité de las fiestas patrias. So eran muy activos en la ciudad de Colton.

ANDRES PALACIOS: Qué sua-- There's a -- I didn't know none of this, and one of the things that struck me -- the first thing that struck me is that everybody keeps telling me that he -- they were -- he was selling cabezas. He was selling menudo.

TOM RIVERA: Todo.

ANDRES PALACIOS: -- tortillas. The reason I -- that's important to me -- because in 1969, when I came to this country, I lived in the city of South Gate. And if I wanted any good Mexican food, I had to go to East Los Angeles. And even there, you didn't find the cabezas, and you had to really look around [00:03:00] to get good menudo. And everybody tells me that, "Señor Martinez in the '30s and '40s -- he was selling menudo and cabezas." Can you believe that?

TOM RIVERA: When do you think he started the bakery, then?

ANDRES PALACIOS: I don't know, man, but --

TOM RIVERA: Más o menos, ¿qué te dicen?

ANDRES PALACIOS: Me dicen que --

TOM RIVERA: Nineteen twenty-eight or something?

ANDRES PALACIOS: Nineteen twenty-eight.

TOM RIVERA: Nineteen twenty-eight?

ANDRES PALACIOS: And it's amazing that somebody this far away from East LA -- see, you would think that in East LA, you find everything Mexican, no?

TOM RIVERA: Sí.

ANDRES PALACIOS: And any time I came out -- I came one time to Chino, and I came to Ontario. Nothing but white food. Very, very few Mexican restaurants, and then I found out when I come to -- all the way to Colton that -- real Mexican food. Cabezas. How many people know that Mex-- we -- us Mexicans like cabezas de borrego, cabezas de chivo?

TOM RIVERA: And [00:04:00] tell me [if they?] -- how do they prepare las cabezas?

ANDRES PALACIOS: (laughs) It's very easy --

TOM RIVERA: A ver.

ANDRES PALACIOS: -- actually. When I was a young kid, my father used to feed seven of us with one cabeza, believe it or not. A lot of tortillas; very little meat. All you do is -- back then, they prepared the --

TOM RIVERA: What is the livestock -- what is the animal that...?

ANDRES PALACIOS: Usually, borrego, lamb.

M1: Sheep?

TOM RIVERA: Sheep?

ANDRES PALACIOS: Sheep. Usually, sheep, but it -- so it can also be chivo, goat, because they actually don't taste very different once you cook them. You

marinate them -- you marinate the head. It's -- of course, skin it completely, marinate -- wash it really good, marinate it, and let it marinate with dry -- a dry rub if you want. The dry rub is always at your taste. You may like 30 different chiles, or you may like a lot of pepper. Whatever you like, rub your cabeza like that. The way I [00:05:00] do it? I -- after I rub it or I marinate it, I put it in -- I wrap it with aluminum foil twice, and then I cook it in the tamalera, in the steamer, for four or five hours, or even six hours. Just steam it. Let it steam for at least three hours. You know, sácala. Man. Ah, espec-- I start with the cachetes and then the tongue, of course.

TOM RIVERA: Uh-huh. What about the eyes?

ANDRES PALACIOS: Of course.

TOM RIVERA: ¿Sí, también?

ANDRES PALACIOS: Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Todo.

ANDRES PALACIOS: Salsa roja, every single thing.

TOM RIVERA: And you said your father fed seven of you?

ANDRES PALACIOS: Yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Yeah. This was where, in Mexico?

ANDRES PALACIOS: In Mexico City, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: ¿Qué parte de México?

ANDRES PALACIOS: Mexico City.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, la capital.

ANDRES PALACIOS: I was born and raised in Mexico City, but my mom and dad were from different states, from different parts, and both of them are full-blooded Mexican Indians.

TOM RIVERA: Uh-huh. ¿Qué tribu?

ANDRES PALACIOS: I believe my mother is from Aztec lineage. Not royalty, okay? Peasants all the way, so they don't know how to read [00:06:00] or write. They only know that they were born, and they lived, and they died. That's all they know. My father? The same thing. My father was born and raised in an area that was occupied by the Chichimeca, so I believe that I am part Chichimeca and part Aztec. It doesn't mean very much because I'm still what I am. It doesn't mean -- is that true? Am I assuming? If I ask my mom, my mom doesn't know anything. My mom only knows that she was born in Capula -- that's the name of her town -- and that's where she was raised, and then she went to the city -- to the big city to become a servant. And then she got kidnapped by my father. That's how poor people used to marry. You like the girl, you go take her to your home, you make her yours, and she's not going back.

TOM RIVERA: Te la robabas.

ANDRES PALACIOS: Sí, te la robabas. That's -- and that's the way my father -- they got -- married my mom. Se la robó and that's it. [00:07:00] Sixteen kids later...

TOM RIVERA: Sixteen kids?

ANDRES PALACIOS: (laughs) No, 12.

TOM RIVERA: Twelve.

ANDRES PALACIOS: Twelve kids later, he -- she left him. She said, "ya estuvo." (laughter)

TOM RIVERA: Y, ¿cuándo llegaste a Estados Unidos?

ANDRES PALACIOS: In 1969 of --

TOM RIVERA: Nineteen sixty-nine?

ANDRES PALACIOS: September of 1969, I came here because a friend told me that there was a lot of good times, good music, and good women. (laughs)

TOM RIVERA: So the wine, women --

ANDRES PALACIOS: And I believed that --

TOM RIVERA: -- and song brought you here, eh?

ANDRES PALACIOS: That's right. Wine, women, and song, and good times. I never even thought that I had to work, and I did. As soon as I got here --

TOM RIVERA: Y, ¿qué trabajaste?

ANDRES PALACIOS: Trabajé in a factory that were making trunks in LA on First Street. They were making luggage trunks, and every size that you can imagine from foot luggage to huge trunks, and that's -- that was my first job [over there?]. And then I worked in the automotive industry in body shops, and then after that, I got a job with the LA County. And I started working there, and I worked there for 26 and -- years and [00:08:00] four months.

TOM RIVERA: Now, you -- we started with mentioning that you're a newcomer to Colton. When did you get to Colton?

ANDRES PALACIOS: I got here in 2008, 2009, and like I told you, I was living in Ontario. And I came here to help my son supervise the work that was being done. It was a lot of work on that particular property, and this is what he has been doing in LA.

TOM RIVERA: What did you have to do for the property? ¿Qué le hiciste?

ANDRES PALACIOS: ¿Yo? I helped --

TOM RIVERA: Or you son. What did he --

ANDRES PALACIOS: At the end, I painted it. That property was lopsided. The foundation was broken.

TOM RIVERA: Ya está viejito, ¿verdad? It's an old property.

ANDRES PALACIOS: Yeah, and the entire house was lopsided by seven, eight inches, so the guys had to go and dig underneath the house and jack it up and level

it, and reinforce the entire foundation. That was the first thing they did, then they took down all of the walls inside. The whole plaster inside was taken out; all the fixtures was taken out. The floors were stripped [00:09:00] completely, and then everything was insulated and redone inside, so basically --

TOM RIVERA: Y, ¿cómo es el proyecto? How did the project come out?

ANDRES PALACIOS: It came out beautiful.

TOM RIVERA: Beautiful?

ANDRES PALACIOS: The house looks gorgeous. Of course, the more important thing is to -- what they did inside. They put central air conditioning. They ev-- the other -- they -- it was all repiped in copper. The electrical -- everything was redone, and because the electrician was kind of cuckoo, he used nothing but 12 gauge wiring on that property when you don't have to.

TOM RIVERA: So heavy-duty.

ANDRES PALACIOS: Heavy-duty stuff. Every single piece of wire on that house is 12 gauge.

TOM RIVERA: Y la familia -- are they part --

ANDRES PALACIOS: Martinez?

TOM RIVERA: Sí, are they part of the family there, or are they --

ANDRES PALACIOS: No, they --

TOM RIVERA: ¿Viven o vendieron la propiedad?

ANDRES PALACIOS: I have no idea. One of the ladies -- I forgot her name. Rach-- I think her name is Rachel. She lives in Grand Terrace, and [00:10:00] she was not very happy with the property. She didn't really -- didn't want to come over very much. She said that there was too many sad memories for her, and at the same time, the re-- also, Hank was always around the property.

TOM RIVERA: Tell me who Hank was.

ANDRES PALACIOS: Hank, at one time, was one of the best mechanics, auto mechanics, in the -- in town, but little by little, he sta-- he went into drugs, they tell me. And he lost his mind a little bit to where he's not working as a mechanic anymore. Right now, he just walks the streets and...

TOM RIVERA: Oh, pobrecito.

ANDRES PALACIOS: Yeah, but he kee-- he's still a strong guy.

TOM RIVERA: Good. Pero nadie de la familia --

ANDRES PALACIOS: Nadie viene para acá. No, no, no, the only people that come is people who used to live there. [You can see?] -- if you live there, you come around and you go, "Wow, this is the Martinez tortilleria? There's nothing [00:11:00] left over there, man. What's the matter with you?"

TOM RIVERA: Well, it was one of the centers of Colton back then.

ANDRES PALACIOS: Yeah, it looks nice. I like -- and Linda had the Seventh Street store across the way after -- across the street from the -- on the east side of Seventh Street, and she was telling me that the --

TOM RIVERA: Now, who was this?

ANDRES PALACIOS: Linda -- her name's Linda Black. She is the granddaughter of the lady that started that tortille-- there was another tortilleria.

TOM RIVERA: Next to Martinez?

ANDRES PALACIOS: Next to Martinez, yeah.

TOM RIVERA: Fernandez -- Hernandez, yeah.

ANDRES PALACIOS: And she is the granddaughter of the lady that started that tortilleria, and she still owned -- and now, she owns that property. Chuy, her tío o primo, ran it until about a year ago.

TOM RIVERA: Oh, Morales.

ANDRES PALACIOS: Morales, that's the name.

TOM RIVERA: Morales Seventh Street Market.

ANDRES PALACIOS: Jesus Morales, exactly. And the store -- the house that this girl lives in, directly across from the house on Seventh Street and M?

[00:12:00] Linda tells me it was the candy store. You remember that?

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

ANDRES PALACIOS: Holy Jesus. Okay, this is what I wa-- the idea that we have been playing with, and Linda -- basically, Linda and I, and a couple of other residents in the south, that if they bring back the resi-- the zoning that was there before, all of those empty commercial buildings -- because they're all empty and dilapidated, all of those could come back alive. Nicholas lives behind the Martinez tortilleria, and he wants to open a place to sell birria.

TOM RIVERA: That's Nick Martinez?

ANDRES PALACIOS: Behind the bui-- behind the Martinez, he lives there. He owns that house, but he wants -- he needs a commercial building. Either he rents the Martinez tortilleria or the Morales' tortilleria because he wants to make birria.

[00:13:00] There's a lot of good, beautiful ideas, but anyway, lo más importante es to be able to bring back the zoning, the mixed-use zoning, so that those buildings are not empty anymore. Right now, the problem is that those buildings have very little value, so if you try to open up a business, insurance will not be able to cover you.

TOM RIVERA: So the idea now is to rehabilitate that whole area?

ANDRES PALACIOS: Exactly. And the other day, we went to a meeting with -- a town meeting, and they're talking about the -- developing the entire downtown area, Downtown Colton, but no mention of the south, which is okay. But I think the south does not need all that money that they put -- that they are planning to put into the downtown area. I don't think it needs it. I don't think -- it would be nice to have

some -- a grant of some kind, but I don't think it needs it as long as they change the zoning [00:14:00] and that gives the owners the ability to rehab those commercial structures. Now, you can use them. Vendiendo Tacos -- I don't know what it is, that -- on O Street?

TOM RIVERA: Sí.

ANDRES PALACIOS: Did you see that picture on O Street? What was that? That's a beautiful place, man. People -- locals could walk and get whatever this little business -- and another thing. Small business are, to me, more important than Stater Brothers -- the Stater Brothers' or this big pizza -- Shakey's Pizza and all that. Small businesses, and I'm going to give you an example real quick: on the cor-- on this -- on the northeast corner of Valley and Ninth, there's three that I've seen. Three different businesses have invested a lot of money trying to make money, right?

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

ANDRES PALACIOS: El Pilar Bakery, block away behind Stater Brothers, have been there all these years making money selling good Mexican [00:15:00] food and pan dulce. Chiquitos. A small business, but they keep the money in Colton, and Colton becomes self-sufficient, self-sustainable. Don't have to be bringing in big businesses. Of course, we have enough space in Colton for big businesses, but I think if they change the zoning back in the southside, now Colton is going to make more money if everybody -- if every one of those buildings reopens.

TOM RIVERA: Or it gives the kind of...

ANDRES PALACIOS: Small community feel like a family.

TOM RIVERA: Or announcing to the businesspeople that, "We have zoning that's available. Would you be interested in setting up your business?"

ANDRES PALACIOS: Exactly. Like I sa-- like I was telling you, Nicholas lives [00:16:00] ri-- in town. This little girl's mom? She lives in the building -- in another building also, and she would like to open up a taco stand. And -- but --

TOM RIVERA: So, Andres, that's the future, then.

ANDRES PALACIOS: That's the future, and this is what I think. It would be beneficial to the city of Colton to do everything that they can to facilitate to their -- the way to -- for people to make money. And another thing is aesthetics. If all of these buildings are rehabbed and brought back to life as wa-- as a small business regardless of what it is, a secondhand store or a candy store or a microbrewery like we were talking about -- microbrewery --

TOM RIVERA: Yeah, or fixing appliances.

ANDRES PALACIOS: Television appliances, exactly. You bring back life. This place right now is empty. The commercial buildings are empty. [00:17:00] All of those commercial buildings are empty. She's using it as storage, as -- not even as a garage because it doesn't have a driveway, but it looks like a garage. But it used to be a candy store, and then the other building on O Street? I don't know what it was, but it's empty. They are probably using it only as storage.

TOM RIVERA: Y, ¿dónde queda eso? Where is that located?

ANDRES PALACIOS: En la O. En la N, M, O. -- on the other side of the puente. You know how there's a puente.

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

ANDRES PALACIOS: Okay, on the other side of O Street, si te vas to the right, going towards the railroad tracks? Ahí está. That's what it used to be. Look at that beautiful picture right there. There was life. I don't know what they were selling, pero sí -- you can tell that they were selling cerveza. The building across the street

from the Seventh Street Market? Linda tells me that before it wa-- before they made it into a furniture store, it used to be a hall. You remember it too?

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

ANDRES PALACIOS: You're that [00:18:00] old?

TOM RIVERA: Yes.

ANDRES PALACIOS: Come on, you don't look it.

TOM RIVERA: I'm 75.

ANDRES PALACIOS: No. Carajo.

TOM RIVERA: Sí.

ANDRES PALACIOS: ¿Puro indio?

TOM RIVERA: Sí. Caxcán. Soy caxcán.

ANDRES PALACIOS: ¿De veras?

TOM RIVERA: Soy indio caxcán.

ANDRES PALACIOS: Wow, ¿y en dónde estaban los caxcanes?

TOM RIVERA: Al norte del estado de Jalisco cerca de Zacatecas, Zacatecas.

ANDRES PALACIOS: Wow, interesante.

TOM RIVERA: Well, Andres, I'm delighted that you were here, and I'm delighted that you were able to talk with us and also share your future plans about what we -- what would happen in Colton if we got some good modification and changed La Cadena -- the zoning back to what it was before. They could -- we could revitalize Colton and have Colton rebuild itself again.

ANDRES PALACIOS: Yeah, that would look beautiful. Can you imagine if the -
- South Colton would look like the stores como estaban before?

TOM RIVERA: Sí.

ANDRES PALACIOS: Of course, aquí -- digo -- the Martinezes -- they needed to put [00:19:00] a little bit of paint at that time. We would make it look the same pero bonito.

TOM RIVERA: Bueno, muchísimas gracias, Andres. Very good, thank you so much.

ANDRES PALACIOS: Muchas gracias.

TOM RIVERA: Thank you.

ANDRES PALACIOS: Vamos a escuchar la música.

TOM RIVERA: Okay.

End of Interview:

[00:19:15]