

# **Any Sunday in April: The Rise of Sport in San Antonio and the Hispanic Borderlands**

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The precise location of the border between Texas (later the United States) and Mexico (earlier New Spain) was difficult to determine during most of the nineteenth century. A series of wars, battles, revolutions, disputes and treaties left the dividing line in a state of perpetual change and controversy. In some instances, individuals went to bed in one country and awoke in another without ever having rolled over. Therefore the writers have not attempted to limit the border to any specific geographic location, but have accepted the traditional Texas wisdom that the border is not a place, but a state of mind.

The region has comprised a cultural mosaic from its earliest settlement. It remained a frontier until roughly 1900, with all the natural and man-made dangers and opportunities that implies. The center of this Anglo-Hispanic area was the town of San Antonio, gateway to the hill country and plains beyond.

In the Alamo City developed many of the sports and amusements enjoyed by the varied, rough-and-tumble population. Naturally Hispanic recreations appeared first, followed by Anglo activities, but in both instances it was the frontier character and cattle economy that gave rise to the most distinctive and common activities. Men made their work into play.

The descriptions that reveal the merging of these traditions are symbolized by the Hispanic bullfight, the Anglo baseball game, and the horse and cattle contests of the rodeo and charreada.

Vestiges of the popular amusements of centuries past are still to be found in the border festivals today. The *jarabe tuptío* is still the dance of the charro at Brownsville's annual Charro Days, and the ten-day Fiesta San Antonio includes a charreada, Fiesta Charra and Rey Feo Fandango. While the jarabe and charreada are much like their nineteenth-century counterparts, today's fandango is a five-kilometer road race, taking its name from the colorful street

dances that once meant Saturday night in every town, village and rancho on the border.<sup>1</sup>

Fandangoes were also an integral part of important holiday celebrations. The newly-arrived Clopper family enjoyed many such dances in San Antonio in 1828. European Spaniards, Mexicans, and Anglo immigrants all danced the reels and waltzes. Most of these early fandangoes were held in the streets, and women, not men, selected partners for each dance. Independence Day, September 16, was marked by a day-long celebration on the town square. Clopper described the evening portion of the festivities as follows:

The square was then lighted up with lamps and candles and everything cleared off for the dearly loved Fandango five or six sets at once-never before did I witness so large a collection of such happy beings. Thus passed off their day of independence.<sup>2</sup>

Probably the first Anglo-American to enjoy a Spanish fandango was Lt. Zebulon Pike. When he and his troops strayed into Spanish territory during their western exploration in 1806-1807, they were taken captive by members of the Spanish Army and forced to march from Santa Fe to Chihuahua to San Antonio before being released. Nonetheless, they were treated well and entertained at several fandangoes, including one organized especially in their honor in Tausac.<sup>3</sup>

In larger communities such as Santa Fe and San Antonio, citizens did not have to wait for a holiday or even Saturday night to enjoy a fandango; they were an every night affair.<sup>4</sup> Gregg complained that the incessant fandango music made Santa Fe sound like there was a perpetual carnival in town, particularly since the same musicians, often playing the same tune, were also heard in the Sunday church services and in funeral processions.<sup>5</sup>

In San Antonio, as many as fifty fandango licenses were issued for a single night, and revenues from these one-dollar permits did much to keep the city treasury solvent during the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>6</sup> The classic description of the fandango of the early 1840s came from the French immigrant Fretelliere. Along with artist Theodore Gentilz, he walked over to the Military Plaza, and followed the sound of violin music to the scene of the fete:

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1. James G. Bell, "A Log of the Texas-California Cattle Trail, 1854," ed. J. Everetts Haley, *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 35 (1932): 208-237, 290-316; *ibid.*, 36 (1932): 47-66; John Crittenden Duval, "San Antonio in 1844 and My First Fandango," *The Gulf Messenger* (n.p. . n.d.): 652-54 (fragment ca. 1844, Clipping title, "San Antonio Development." Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library at the Alamo, San Antonio, Texas); Josiah Gregg, *Commerce of the Prairies*. 2 vols., ed Max L. Moorhead (Norman, 1954); James Wilson Nichols, *Now You Hear My Horn*. ed. Catherine W. McDowell (Austin, 1967); Zebulon Montgomery Pike, *Arkansas Journey-Mexican Tour. vol. 2 of The Expeditions of Zebulon Montgomery Pike*. ed Elliott Coues (New York, 1895); Noah Smithwick, *The Evolution of a State* (Austin, 1935); Kenneth W. Wheeler, *To Wear a City's Crown: The Beginning of Urban Growth in Texas 1836-1865* (Cambridge, 1968).

2. C. J. Clopper, "C.J. Clopper's Journal and Book of Memoranda for 1828." *Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association* 8 (1909): 73.

3. Pike, *Arkansas Journey*, 207, 229.

4. Nichols, *Now You Hear My Horn*, 83; Gregg, *Commerce*, I: 175; Duval, "Fandango." 652-654; Wheeler, *City's Crown*. 41.

5. Gregg, *Commerce*. 1:170. 185.

6. Wheeler, *City's Crown*. 41.

It was in a rather large room of an adobe house, earthen floored lighted by six tallow candles placed at equal distances from each other. At the back, a great chimney in which a fire of dry wood served to reheat the *cafe*, the *tamales* and *enchiladas*; opposite, some planks resting on frames, and covered with a cloth, formed a table on which cups and saucers were set out. A Mexican woman in the forties . . . was Dona Andrea Candelaria patroness of the *fandango*. At the upper end of the room, seated on a chair which had been placed on an empty box was the music, which was a violin. That violinist had not issued from a conservatory, but on the whole he played in a fairly good time. The airs, for the most part Mexican, were new to me. The women were seated on benches placed on each side of the room. The costumes were simple dresses of light colored printed calico, with some ribbons. All were brunettes. As for the men, they wore usually short jackets, wide-brimmed hats, and nearly all the Mexicans wore silk scarfs, red or blue or green, around their waists. The dance I like best was called a quadrille. The Mexicans are admirably graceful and supple. When the quadrille is finished, the cavalier accompanies his partner to the buffet, where they are served a cup of coffee and cakes. Then he conducts the young lady to her mother or chaperone to whom the girl delivers the cakes that she has taken care to reap at the buffet. The mother puts them in her handkerchief, and if the girl is pretty and has not missed a quadrille, the mama carries away an assortment of cakes to last the family more than a week.<sup>7</sup>

Probably no group enjoyed these fandangoes more than the famous Texas Ranger company commanded by the legendary Jack Hays. Although Hays and several of his officers were popular guests at balls held by the Mavericks and other elite members of the Anglo society in San Antonio, they also attended many fandangoes. At least some of Hays' company could be found at one every night they were in town.<sup>8</sup>

During the Mexican War, a detachment of Rangers under the command of Lt. John McMullen, raided fandangoes in Reynoso and Punta Aguda in search of their elusive foe, General Antonio Canales. Both times, Canales escaped; the Rangers stayed to enjoy the dancing. They entertained their surprise hosts with steps like the double shuffle, Kentucky heel tap, and Virginny breakdown.<sup>9</sup>

Following the war, San Antonio became a multicultural city. The steady influx of German, French, and Anglo settlers, along with thousands of itinerate cowhands and soldiers, gradually changed the character of the fandangoes. Special fandango halls such as the Hole in the Wall and Veramedi Palace replaced the private home and public street; gambling tables and other amusements were added to the dancing, and the chaperones disappeared. Numerous restrictive laws were enacted by the City Council and efforts were made to outlaw the fandangoes completely.<sup>10</sup>

Gliddings described an evening at the Veramedi Palace where the fandango was held in one end of a long hall, while games of Monte and Faro were played in the other. An argument broke out among the many soldiers at the gaming

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7. Charles Ramsdell, *San Antonio: A Historical and Pictorial Guide* (Austin, 1959), 35, 38.

8. Mary A. Maverick, *Memoirs of Mary A. Maverick*, ed. Rena Maverick Green (San Antonio, 1921), 55-56; Duval, "Fandango," 652-654.

9. Samuel Reid, *Scouting Expeditions of McCollough's Texas Rangers* (Philadelphia, 1848, 56-58, 91-95).

10. San Antonio City Council, "Minutes, 1852-1858." Handwritten originals, Office of the City Clerk, San Antonio, Texas.

tables, and in the shootout that followed, two men were killed and three wounded. However, as soon as the blood had been washed away and the floor covered with sand, the harper and fiddler and girls returned, and the festivities resumed: “. . . the floor on which the dead and wounded had fallen and lain but a few moments before was filled with the dancers.”<sup>11</sup>

In 1858, John Earl and James Couch were indicted and subsequently convicted and fined one hundred and twenty-five dollars for “. . . unlawfully keeping a house as a common resort for prostitutes and vagabonds. . .” During the trial, the state proved that a house owned by them, and adjoining a grocery store kept by them, was the scene of fandangoes almost every other night.

At these fandangoes, the women were all prostitutes; indecent and obscene language was heard by the witnesses on these occasions; no decent women attended such situated in Alamo square.<sup>12</sup>

Ironically, the patroness, of the fandangoes cited in this case was the same Madame Candelario mentioned by Fretelliere nearly twenty years earlier.

Soon after the conclusion of the Couch Case, the San Antonio City Council passed an ordinance prohibiting fandangoes in all parts of the city except where the slaughter of beef was legal.<sup>13</sup> Although removed from Alamo Square, the dances continued. In 1859, a New York journalist visited the city and published his description of the fandango in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*. He found dances taking place every night, patronized by only “. . . the lowest order of people.” His sketch shows the changes that had taken place since the Clopper family arrived thirty years before.

A large hall or square room illuminated by a few lamps hung from the wall or lanterns suspended from the ceiling, a pair of negro fiddlers, and twenty or thirty couples in full enjoyment of a “bolero” or Mexican polka help make the scene. In the corners of the room are refreshment tables where coffee, frijoles, tortillas, boiled rice and other eatables may be obtained. At these fandangoes may be seen the muleteer. the United States soldier just from the barracks, abounding in oaths and tobacco; the herdsman with his blanket . . .; the disbanded ranger, rough bearded and armed dancing, drinking, swearing, and carousing. Among the women may be seen all colors and ages from ten to forty; the Creole, the Poblana, the Mexican, and rarely the American or German-generally in such cases, the dissipated widow or discarded mistress of some soldier or follower of the Army.<sup>14</sup>

While the San Antonio fandango hall had clearly become a honky tonk if not a disorderly house by the late 1850s, in other smaller border towns fandangoes retained their original character for many more years. The Fandango of one kind or another continued to flourish on both sides of the Rio Grande for most of the nineteenth century.

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11. Charles Merritt Barnes, “San Antonio in the Forties, An Interview with Col. Giddings,” *San Antonio Daily Express*, 1 June 1902.

12. James Couch vs. the State of Texas, 558 (1859).

13. City Council, 22 September 1858.

14. Richard Everett. “Things in and About San Antonio,” *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*. 15 January 1859.

These dances always caught the eye of travelers to the border, who never failed to describe them. Nor could these writers ignore the ever present horse races that often clamored down the main street of town.

Since residents in the borderlands owned little but livestock, great interest centered on owning a good horse, maybe even a fast thoroughbred. The people loved horses, and they craved action, so both combined to create a lively racing atmosphere. Contests ranged from impromptu challenges between two owners bragging on their ponies to challenges that received newspaper coverage and were run on tracks in a semiprofessional manner. With so many horses in the region, every man boasted about his. This inevitably led to a race with another equally proud owner.

Although promoters in Houston, Galveston and Velasco had attempted to organize thoroughbred horseracing into Texas in the early 1830s, organizing jockey clubs and constructing elaborate tracks patterned after those in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Louisiana, their ventures were shortlived. Economic downturns and unfavorable taxation rendered both the tracks and the attempts at raising thoroughbreds unprofitable. Consequently, the two-horse frontier match race, almost identical to the Mexican charro horserace, became the norm and soon spread throughout the frontier.<sup>15</sup>

These races usually occurred in the late morning or late afternoon, with the intervening time used to get the course ready, unless the main street of town was going to be used, and to allow time for townspeople to get a line on the horses and make their bets. One contemporary recalled how a course was prepared. They made “. . . the race course, two straight trails in the chapperal constructed by removing the mesquite and underbrush for a right of way and subsequently dragging a wash kettle bottomside up to knock off the bumps, fill in the holes and smooth the path and soften the soil so the ground would not burn the racers’ hoofs . . .”<sup>16</sup>

The decade of the 1850s opened the era of the “Steel Dust” breed of quarter horses. These tough, quick ponies were in great demand not just for racing, but for working horses because they were excellent cutters and easily trained for ranch needs. Steel Dust was one of the most famous horses of the time, with a great following until blindness cut short his racing career. His progeny kept the tradition alive, and brought high prices from ranchers and racing men throughout east and border Texas.<sup>17</sup>

Of course, gambling played a part in the excitement of the horse race. Riders bet on their own horses, putting up cash and often saddles, bridles, blankets, spurs, even the cowboy’s “plunder”-Swartz boots against twelve dollars, corduroy coats against five dollars and shirts against four dollars. Other bets had to be made in gold and silver. Of course, there was a good deal of drinking associated with the race, unless it was held out on a trail drive.

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15. Anne J. Bailey, “Horseracing in Early Texas” (Paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Texas State Historical Association, Austin, Texas, March, 1986), 1-10.

16. “Racing at Junction in 1888,” *Frontier Times* 4 (April, 1926):14.

17. Harold V. Ratliff, *Paths to Glory* (Waco, 1972), 7.

In a country where there were so many horses, it is not surprising that the people developed an interest in pitching horseshoes. On the shady side of the street or in the vicinity of the blacksmith shop, which was one of the favorite places to congregate while the horses were being shod, a horseshoe game could be found in full swing in almost any town in Texas. Those who had a few dollars on payday, might put aside the horseshoes and pitch silver dollars. The rules for tossing silver dollars were the same as for horseshoes.<sup>18</sup>

Another popular equestrian game, of unknown origin, but brought to the border from Mexico had the unusual name of *correr el gallo* or chicken race. In Hispanic regions this sport was extremely popular with gauchos and vaqueros and became an integral part of the celebrations during the Feast of San Juan, which had marked the beginning of the *rodeo* or roundup season in sixteenth-century Mexico. By the nineteenth century, the Feast of San Juan was celebrated with *correr el gallo* and other equestrian games in the towns on both sides of the Rio Grande.<sup>19</sup>

This game began by suspending a chicken or rooster or duck from a tree limb or burying it neck deep in sand. Horsemen rode by at full speed and attempted to grasp the bird. When one succeeded, he sped away and the others gave chase. Gregg described the conclusion as follows:

The first who overtakes him tries to get possession of the fowl, when a strife ensues, during which the poor chicken is torn to atoms. Should the holder of the trophy be able to outstrip his pursuers, he carries it into the crowd of fair spectators and presents it to his mistress, who takes it to the fandango as testimony of the prowess of her lover.<sup>20</sup>

Theodore Gentilz, the Parisian artist who immigrated to San Antonio in the 1840s, depicted a more humane version of the game played on the Main Plaza. In Gentilz' sketch, a watermelon was used in place of the chicken, creating what has been called a kind of "basketball" on horseback.<sup>21</sup>

The Texas Rangers stationed in San Antonio were quite familiar with the original game. During the war between the United States and Mexico, McCulloch's company of rangers was encamped near Reynosa. On San Juan's Day, several of the group rode into town for the celebration and soon received a challenge in the local version of a chicken race. Reid reported:

The conditions of the race were these-the chicken was to be given to some man mounted on a good horse; the rest of the party, both Mexicans and Americans, were to remain in the plaza, while the man was to have about a hundred yards start; at a given signal he was to run, by a designated course which led about two miles round town to our camp. If he reached camp in safety, the chicken was his prize: but if he were intercepted or overtaken by any of the Mexicans who were going to

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18. Catherine Ikard Carrow. "The Amusements of Texas from 1880-1890" (M.A. Thesis. University of Texas, 1943). 22. 23.

19. Gregg, *Commerce*, 1:79; William H. Dusenberry, *The Mexican Mesta: The Administration of Ranching in Colonial Mexico* (Urbana. 1963). 67; Edward Laroque Tinker. *The Horsemen of the Americas and the Literature They Inspired* (Austin. 1967). 25 and 26.

20. Gregg, *Commerce*. 1: 169-170.

21. Dorothy S. Kendall. *Gentilz: Artist of the Old Southwest* (Austin. 1974). 27.

take short cuts through the town for the purpose, and the bird taken away from him, then he was to be laughed at, and suffer the mortification of defeat.<sup>22</sup>

The first race was won by a "wild young Texan" named Clinton Dewit. The contests continued most of the day, until Reid noted the Rangers were pretty well supplied with poultry and finally ". . . the Mexicans ruefully acknowledged that there were 'no mas gallinas in Reynoso' . . ." <sup>23</sup>

Still another equestrian sport soon developed around San Antonio. James Gordon Bennett, Jr., world traveler, newspaper publisher, and sportsman, saw polo being played in England by army officers from India. He decided to introduce the game to his cronies in New York. In 1876, he brought a polo-playing English captain and polo equipment to the United States. He and his friends ordered a train carload of Texas ponies, took lessons at the Dickel Riding Academy, and soon began playing.<sup>24</sup>

The purchase of the cow ponies sparked interest in San Antonio and polo soon became an informal favorite of local cowboys. The game spread from New York City up the Hudson River to West Point, where prospective cavalrymen took it up as one of the accomplishments of an officer and gentleman. By the mid-1880s, West Pointers stationed across Texas, including those at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio played regular matches against other military teams and local civilian squads. Breeders and trainers continued to play on an informal basis until 1902 when three English brothers named Savage immigrated to south Texas. The Savage boys organized a civilian circuit, introducing the game throughout the state. In Midland, H. G. Coyle and Henry Halfp enjoyed the sport so much after they learned it from the Savages, that they even formed a women's team.<sup>25</sup>

Texas cowboys had become so adept at polo by 1933 that they defeated the Eastern country club players in the East-West Match. With this victory, the center of polo shifted from the Atlantic coast to the Texas plains, especially to San Antonio and Forth Worth. San Antonio, because of the combined military and civilian interest, continues today as the polo capital of the nation.<sup>26</sup>

Hunting was another popular border sport and it was done almost exclusively from horseback. By the 1870s, the buffalo had all but disappeared, but hunters could still ride after deer, wolves, an occasional bear, prairie chickens, wild turkeys, ducks and rabbits. Along the border if a man owned anything more than a horse and gun, it was most certainly a dog. Taking the dogs out to run down foxes and 'coons had a high place on the list of popular recreations. Besides hunting the animal, much of the fun was the chase which required expert riding as the horses jumped small mesquite trees or swerved to avoid bushes and stumps. Of course, these hunts had a serious side as wolves and coyotes threatened young stock, and rabbits destroyed crops. Settlers viewed

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22. Reid, *Scouting Expedition*, 59-60.

23. *Ibid.*, 60.

24. John A. Lucas and Ronald A. Smith, *Saga of American Sport* (Philadelphia, 1978), 165.

25. Dallas News, 2 November 1930.

26. *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 8 June, 1980; *San Antonio Light*, 14 May 1978

hunting as both recreation and an important way of ridding the country of vermin. Occasionally, someone would get up a bear hunt, especially in the San Jacinto thicket in southeast Texas.

An account of one such hunt in the Devil's Den, three thousand acres of thicket along the San Jacinto river, appeared in the *Galveston Daily News*.<sup>27</sup> Riding full tilt through the brush to keep as close as possible to the dogs, the hunters heard a fight break out between the bear and the pack. Then, the reporter continues,

We force our way into the thicket and there in fifteen feet of us he is turning fiercely round, facing the dogs at every point, with ears lying flat on his neck and his lips turned up, displaying enormous teeth. Instantly the gun is pressed to the shoulder, aimed and fired. It scarcely cracks before he runs, the dogs close in and we follow, loading as we go. He falls, catches a dog and holds on with a death grip. The gun is placed to his head, fired, and the lead goes crashing through his brain. Slowly his mouth opens and the dog is released.<sup>28</sup>

Hunting prompted men in the 1880s to form gun clubs. Nearly every border town had one. These organizations regularly sponsored shooting matches for beeves, turkeys, and almost anything else. They existed for sporting, not social purposes, and held annual shooting tournaments as well as having a picked team to challenge neighboring clubs. These shooting matches entertained the community. In Brownsville, the only events scheduled for the Fourth of July, 1884, were an ice cream party for the children and a shooting match between two picked teams for the adults.<sup>29</sup>

Along the border, still in its frontier stage, horses, guns and liquor mixed freely in the recreations of the men. Boxing fit well with these amusements. In fact, boxing is too grand a term for the more common fights that broke out at fandangoes, in bars or any other gathering. Many baseball games before the advent of the Texas League ended in a brawl between the players, and sometimes the umpire. *The Galveston News* in 1880 reported another cause for fisticuffs.

A religious discussion near Houghts' store in this country, terminated in a private knockdown and gouging match. One of the disputants held that the mother of the other, having died a Baptist, was roasting in hell. At this point the discussion was cut short by the accusing party being knocked out.<sup>30</sup>

The legislature outlawed all prize fights in 1891, but this did not prevent a thirteen-round donnybrook at the Taylor Opera House in May, 1892.<sup>31</sup> Governor Charles A. Culberson had the laws strengthened in 1895, successfully blocking a fight of national interest between James J. Corbett and Bob Fitzsimmons. Even out beyond the Pecos, Judge Roy Bean had to bend to this statute. Bean took advantage of the nearby border, built a pontoon bridge, and held his

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27. *Galveston Daily News*, 28 June 1886.

28. Carrow, "Amusements," 30.

29. *Brownsville American Flag*, 4 July 1884

30. Carrow, "Amusements," 41.

31. *Taylor County News*, 6 May 1892.

prize fight on a sandbar on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande. Fitzsimmons knocked out Peter Maher, while Judge Bean made a tidy profit from the two carloads of beer he had shipped to town for the event.

Although illegal, boxing did continue around the docks of Galveston. Here one of the world's greatest boxers learned his craft, working in a gym and building his reputation. Jack Johnson won the World Championship in 1908 and became the most cordially hated black man in the United States. Johnson's success after leaving the smoke-filled temporary arenas of Galveston prompted the search for the Great White Hope that would end his dominance over other heavyweights. Meanwhile Texas fight fans and promoters had shifted their interest from the Lone Star state to the border towns. Regular fight cards were promoted in Matamoros, Nuevo Laredo and, especially Ciudad Juarez. The only successful White Hope, Jess Willard, contracted to fight Johnson in April 1915 for the world title. It was scheduled for a rock promontory on the Juarez side of the river, that would allow spectators to sit in grandstand seats on the El Paso side. This scheme failed when Pancho Villa's rebel troops were driven back into Chihuahua by the advancing armies of Álvaro Obregón. The borderlands thus lost one of the most controversial fights in boxing history. The match was rescheduled in Havana, and went 26 rounds under the boiling tropical sun, before Willard landed a knockout punch.<sup>32</sup> Johnson later claimed he had taken a dive.

Another sport that had become illegal north of the river by 1900 was the Fiesta Brava. Until its proscription, this spectacle represented a longstanding Hispanic tradition in Texas, for bullfighting came to Mexico almost simultaneously with the Spaniards. The conquistadors acted with astonishing speed, appearing in Mexico in 1519 and destroying the Aztec Empire in less than two years. This conquest phase passed quickly as government and church bureaucrats arrived in 1535. These colonial officials tried to recreate as much of Spanish life as possible in Mexico, including sport and amusements.

The first public bullfight was staged in the main plaza in Mexico City in 1535. Skilled amateurs fought bulls on foot and on horseback, aristocrats competed in *Juegos de cañas* (jousting with bamboo canes), and the commoners climbed greased poles for the prizes of food placed on top.

During the next 250 years, bullfighting spread throughout Mexico, supported by church and civil authorities to celebrate events of all kinds. The *juegos de cañas* and greased poles disappeared from the program in the late eighteenth century, and professional matadors such as the legendary Bernardo, replaced amateurs in the early nineteenth century. Bullfights in the municipal plazas de toros came to resemble the form known today.<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile, hacienda owners began staging their own countryside bullfights on their huge estates. They employed the same matadors who fought in the city,

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32. Ratliff, *Paths*. 8; Lucas and Smith, *Saga*. 284

33. Enrique Guarnier, *Historia del Torreo en Mexico* (Mexico. 1979). 31-34; Irving A. Leonard, *Baroque Times in Old Mexico* (Ann Arbor, 1959), 14-17.

including Bernardo. But in country corridas, no animals were killed and new events, *colear* and *jaripeo*, became standard.<sup>34</sup>

In *colear*, several bulls were driven into the plaza and pursued by horsemen until one of them could catch a bull by the tail. The rider then passed the tail under his own right leg and turned it around the pommel of his saddle. By suddenly wheeling his horse around at right angles, he would then flip the bull over on his side or back. Calderon reported boys as young as ten years old participating in *colear*.<sup>35</sup> This sport was especially popular in the borderlands. In Santa Fe, for example, it was preferred to *correr el gallo* during such celebrations as the Feast of St. John.

In *jaripeo*, \* the bull was either lassoed or grasped by the horns and thrown to the ground where he was mounted and ridden until either the rider was thrown or the animal was exhausted. In one nineteenth-century description, a "powerful black bull" was lassoed and thrown to the ground. The judge of the corrida "then announced that any spectator who could ride the captive would receive a handsome prize in money." After a daring peon climbed on, the bull, when released, "attempted to gore him with a side motion of the horns, and then started to run making enormous buck jumps and roaring like a mad creation as he circled around the arena." The bull threw the first rider, but the peon, with the seat of his pants ripped by a horn, remounted and this time managed to keep his seat until the bull became demoralized and stood completely still, "like a broken spirited burro."<sup>36</sup>

In the San Antonio region the first sport involving bulls came about in the eighteenth century as early settlers hunted the wild cattle roaming the plains. The hunters would herd some of the bulls, running them for sport, and then slaughtering those that became exhausted and collapsed. They ate only the choicest portions of the slaughtered animals, leaving the carcasses to the wolves.<sup>37</sup>

This practice had soon been formalized into regular bullfights. The Spanish governor, Manuel de Salcedo, issued regulations for the 1810 celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe and Our Lady of Conception. His decrees established the hours for bazaars, authorized games, named feast day committees and directed the city attorney to select the plaza to be used for the bullfight. No other Texas laws pertaining to bullfighting were enacted until 1891 when the legislature outlawed both prize fighting and bullfighting.<sup>38</sup>

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34. W. Bullock. *Six Months Residence and Travels in Mexico* (London, 1824), 57-61; Guarner. *Historia del Torreo*, 42-47.

35. Frances Calderon de la Barca, *Life in Mexico* (New York, 1931), 476-77.

36. Wilbert H. Timmons, ed., *John R. Finerty Reports Porfirian Mexico, 1879* (El Paso, 1974), 151-152.

37. Pierre-Marie Francois de Pages, *Travels Round the World in the Years 1767, 1768, 1769, 1770, 1771, 2* vols. (London, 1791), 1:82-83.

38. Walter Prescott Webb, "Christmas and New Year in Texas." *Southwestern Historical/Quarterly* 44 (1941). 358-9; General Laws of Texas [22nd Leg. 1891] Chap, 50 [S.H.B. no 24-167: An Act to Prohibit Prizefighting and Pugilism], H. P. N. Gammel, comp., *The Laws of Texas 1822-1879*, 10 vols. (Austin, 1898), 10:56-57.

\* Today *Jaripeo* is the word often used for the charreada, the Mexican styled equestrian competition or rodeo. Bareback riding on a wild bull or steer is now called *Jineteo de novilla jinereo de toros*.

The most famous of all Texas bullfights took place on two days during the first state fair, held in Corpus Christi in 1852. The acclaimed Mexican matador Don Camerena was the featured toreador. Reporters flocked to the event from across Texas and neighboring states.

The first day's corrida was disappointing. Camerena barely escaped being severely gored several times before the contest was declared a draw. The second day of the fiesta was more successful. According to the *Marshall (Texas) Republican*<sup>39</sup> riders picked up a dollar off the sand while galloping at top speed across the arena. At nearly the same speed, they lassoed animals by the forelegs. Reporters expressed delight with the colear and jaripeo. The *New Orleans Daily Delta* described the latter event.

The feat is effected by a sudden spring from the ground, and many a hard fall did the competitors receive before any met with success. At last, however, a Mexican Triumphed and such running and roaring and pitching even made the mules laugh.<sup>40</sup>

These sports spread quickly to other Texas towns.

San Pedro Park in San Antonio was selected for many corridas between 1854 and 1874, although for a brief period the plaza de toros was moved closer to the center of town because of Indian raids.<sup>41</sup> A regular season seems to have developed during the summer months, with the bull fights most often occurring on Sunday afternoons. In 1854, matadors from Texas, Mexico and Spain drew crowds ranging from 400 to 500 spectators at San Pedro.

Not everyone applauded. The *Alamo Star* crusaded against the brave bulls, using ridicule and moral indignation to influence the city council. The newspaperman reported, "an 'old work bull' was tormented" then released, later a "tame steer" was "half scared to death" by a toreador, and at the last fight of the season, "the Mexicans were ferocious, but the old 'ox' did not care about fighting."<sup>42</sup> This newspaper campaign succeeded in 1855 when the councilmen first declared bullfighting a public nuisance, and then barred the sport. Three years later, the prohibition was rescinded by the city fathers and the toros returned.<sup>43</sup>

The council once again turned a jaundiced eye on bullfighting in 1874 and again declared it a public nuisance. Anyone convicted of exhibiting bulls for fighting faced a fine of from \$2 to \$50 and costs, or two to three days in jail.<sup>44</sup> The original prohibition was scheduled to begin July 15, but the council received a petition from Juan Garza Martinez that caused a delay. He claimed that he had gone to great expense to construct a new plaza de toros. So the councilmen decided to delay the ban until September 30, so Garza Martinez could hold a series of corridas to recover his investment.<sup>45</sup> Although bullfight-

39. "Spirit of the Texas Press," *Marshall (Texas) Republican*, 6 June 1852.

40. "Letters from Texas," *New Orleans Daily Delta*, 20 May 1852.

41. Boyce House. *San Antonio. City of Flaming Adventure* (San Antonio, 1968), 109; "Life in Brawling San Antonio Was Seldom Dull," *San Antonio Light*, 18 June 1968

42. *Alamo Star* (San Antonio), 15 July, 5 August, 1854.

43. San Antonio City Council, 1854.

44. *Ibid.*, 15 July 1874

45. *Ibid.*, 26 November 1880

ing itself was outlawed, many of the events continued as part of cowboy contests, wild west shows, and charreadas, which are still called “bloodless” bullfights.

Rodeo did not develop into an organized sport until the twentieth century, but its antecedents were visible in a variety of contests and pastimes popular among many racial, ethnic and economic groups during the preceding centuries. Contrary to popular belief, rodeo is not a direct outgrowth of the cattle business. Riding bucking horses and wild bulls became popular contests among the Spanish elite in sixteenth-century Mexico, and both bull riding and bull wrestling were seen by thousands of spectators in the Mexican plazas de toros from the early nineteenth century.<sup>46</sup> Anglos, Hispanics, blacks and Indians from both sides of the border witnessed breath-taking feats of roping, and riding, as well as bull wrestling and bull riding during the first state fair of Texas in Corpus Christi in 1852. All of these events were included in the bullfight which was the feature of the fair.<sup>47</sup> Since bullfights were common along both sides of the border during the nineteenth century, how many more such rodeo-like contests and exhibits took place may only be guessed.

Roping was one of the few children’s activities mentioned by nineteenth-century chroniclers of border life. Roping farm animals and household pets was a universal pastime of the young from San Antonio to Sante Fe, while roping wild bulls and mustangs was equally popular among adults.<sup>48</sup> Precisely when the first public roping contest for prizes took place will probably never be known; impromptu roping contests and betting on roping were so commonplace that little public attention was attracted. The first roping contest to gain widespread publicity was in fact a publicity stunt. In 1872, a barbed wire salesman recruited a group of San Antonio cowhands to stage a roping and steer throwing contest on the Main Plaza. Following this, the steers were stampeded into the barbed wire fence; fortunately for the salesman, the fence held.<sup>49</sup>

San Antonio ropers and riders gained wider media attention when professional cowboys from touring wild west shows performed in the city. Local writers usually claimed that the professionals would be no match for “. . . hundreds of boys on the San Antonio streets . . .” When local talent challenged a touring group called Grady’s Cowboys in 1883, the locals were victorious and the event gained national publicity. On another occasion, journalists watching an impromptu roping and riding exhibition at the Stockyards commented that they were seeing a much better show than the one Buffalo Bill was exhibiting in the capitals of Europe.<sup>50</sup>

At the first International Fair in San Antonio in 1888, the first roping

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46. Stan Steiner, *Dark and Dashing Horsemen* (San Francisco, 1981), 122-24; Calderon, *Life in Mexico*, 160; Bullock, *Travel in Mexico*, 246-48, 463-64.

47. Hortense Warner Ward, “The First State Fair of Texas,” *Southern Historical Quarterly* 57 (1953): 163-74; *Marshall Republican*, 6 June 1852; *Daily Delta*, 20 May 1852.

48. Pages, *Travels*, 1:97; Gregg, *Commerce*, I: 131-32; Robert S. Gray, ed., *A Visit to Texas in 1831* (Houston, 1975), 39-40; William W. Carpenter, *Travels and Adventures in Mexico* (New York, 1851), 39-40; Everett, “Things About San Antonio.”

49. Wayne Gard, *The Chisholm Trail* (Norman, 1954), 233

50. Clifford P. Westermeir, *Trailing the Cowboy* (Caldwell, 1955), 251, 349-351.

competition in which times were recorded and prizes awarded, was held in the border area. Most of the contestants were from San Antonio, and several were also veterans of the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show. This event also attracted national attention, and added to San Antonio's growing reputation as the home of the "True Texas Cowboy."<sup>51</sup>

Zebulon Pike wrote as early as 1808 that the Spaniards of Texas were the world's best at breaking and riding wild mustangs.<sup>52</sup> In the succeeding decades, other Anglo writers would say many times that Mexicans, particularly the dragoons, were the finest horsemen in the world.<sup>53</sup> Skills such as breaking and riding wild mustangs and general feats of horsemanship became essential for all nineteenth-century Texans, and equestrian contests or riding matches between Anglo and Hispanic Texans became common in the 1830s and 1840s.

One Anglo group whose skills soon equalled those of the Hispanics was Hays' company of Texas Rangers. Between 1842 and 1848, their exploits and feats of horsemanship became legendary. To a large extent, these Rangers were the prototype of the typical Texas cowboy.

A famous riding match took place in 1844 in San Pedro Park in San Antonio. According to Duval, the contestants included ". . . Comanche braves, Mexican rancheros, and Texas Rangers . . ."<sup>54</sup> The Rangers included several men from Hays' company, and H. L. Kinney, a Ranger captain from Corpus Christi who was also one of the first successful Anglo ranchers in the Nueces Strip.

Competition was held in many forms of trick riding and shooting from horseback and concluded with breaking and riding ". . . several 'wild steeds of the desert' that had never been backed by man . . ."<sup>55</sup> The winner of this competition was Ranger McMullen. Duval's description remains a classic:

Young McMullen, one of the rangers who had already been voted the most daring and graceful rider was the first to perform this dangerous feat. Approaching cautiously the most perfectly formed and powerful of these unbroken steeds, he succeeded in slipping a blind over its eyes, and instantly as if transfixed the horse ceased struggling McMullen then forced the bit in his mouth, girted the saddle securely upon him, and placing his foot in the stirrup, sprang upon his back McMullen fixed himself firmly in his seat, and grasping the reins in his left hand, he leaned forward and quickly drew off the blind The instant it was drawn up, the wild horse snorting and absolutely screaming in its rage and terror, gave one tremendous bound, and then darted off across the prairie . McMullen urged him on with whip and spurs until he had gone perhaps a mile, when he reined him round and brought him back within fifty yards of the point he had started the horse began to "pitch" or plunge in such a violent manner that none but the most perfect rider could possibly have kept his seat But McMullen stuck to him and the horse in vain attempted in this way to get rid of his unwelcome burden.

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51. Westemeir, *Trailing*, 369; Willard H. Porter, *Roping and Riding* (Cranbury, 1975), 168; William Corner, *Sun Antonio de Bexar* (San Antonio, 1890), 142.

52. Pike, *Arkansaw Journey*, 32.

53. Clopper, "Journal," 72; Gray, Visit, 75, William B. DeWees, *Letters From an Early Settler of Texas to a Friend* (Louisville, 1852), 60.

54. John Crittenden Duval, *Early Timer in Texas* (Austin, 1892), 72-73.

55. *Ibid.*

Again the horse darted off at the top of his speed, and again McMullen urged him on. In a few moments he came galloping up and, after cantering slowly around the arena, he drew up his panting and foaming steed at the place he had started from. The wild steed of the desert had been effectually subdued.<sup>56</sup>

This account of what has been called the first rodeo in Texas would remain in many ways an accurate description of bronco busting competition as it was conducted in cowboy contests and rodeos through the early twentieth century.

Community and ranch celebrations that included contests in bronc busting and steer roping became widespread along the border and through the Southwest between 1880 and 1920. Most were local in character and produced no real headliners or stars. Simultaneously, the Wild West shows developed into one of the most popular forms of outdoor amusement, attracting millions of spectators in the United States and Europe. Wild west stars such as “Buffalo Bill” Cody and Annie Oakley became international celebrities.<sup>57</sup>

A feature of these Wild West shows that Cody called “Cowboy Fun” played a significant role in the history of the rodeo. It included bronc riding, bull riding, trick riding, and trick roping. Two San Antonio natives were among those who became international stars of this act. One of the best known was trick roper Jose Berrara, or “Mexican Joe,” who was a star with Pawnee Bill and Buffalo Bill for over eighteen years.<sup>58</sup>

“Champion Vaquero Rider” Antonio Esquivel, who starred with Buffalo Bill from 1883 to 1893, and from 1902 to 1905, was probably the greatest rider in Wild West show history, and well known in both the United States and abroad. Many other ropers and riders from San Antonio and the border area were also top performers in these shows and on the early rodeo circuits.<sup>59</sup>

These diverse events (from the bull ring, ranch, rancho and hacienda, from the Wild West shows, Fourth of July celebrations and fairs) spawned two twentieth-century sports: the Mexican charreada and the American rodeo. The San Antonio Charro Club, first chartered in 1947, holds a charreada every Sunday from the beginning of Fiesta in April through September 16. Since 1949, the San Antonio rodeo has enjoyed a two-week run in February. In April, the rodeo in Del Rio features the “Super Bull,” offering the richest purse for bull riding on the American rodeo circuit. These cowboy events also appeared at local Fourth of July celebrations and fairs.

Fairs became popular in colonial Mexico and continued in popularity through the twentieth century. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, one of the major social and festive events for the citizens of Sante Fe was the annual caravan to the fair in Chihuahua.<sup>60</sup> During the 1840s, some of the major fairs in Mexico attracted as many as two hundred thousand spectators from Spain,

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56. Ibid.

57. Don Russell, *The Wild West* (Fort Worth, 1970); Don Russell, *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill* (Norman, 1960); Foghorn Clancy, *My Fifty Years in Rodeo* (San Antonio, 1952), 22-23.

58. Russell, *Wild West*, 46, 60, and 91; Don Russell, letter to Mary Lou LeCompte, 1 February 1981.

59. Russell, letter to LeCompte; Frank H. Bushick, *Glamorous Days in Old San Antonio* (San Antonio, 1934), 153-154.

60. Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The History of Arizona and New Mexico, 1530-1888* (San Francisco, 1889), 277.

France, Germany and the United States. Goods from around the world were available for sale and a variety of amusements including cock fighting, bull-fighting, and fireworks were offered.<sup>61</sup>

Early fairs in Texas had much in common with their Mexican counterparts. Col. H. L. Kinney, rancher, land promoter and former Texas Ranger, arranged the first state fair of Texas. As mentioned earlier, the fair attracted a multiracial, multinational audience. One of the chief attractions was a bull fight which included exhibitions of roping, trick riding, bull riding and bull wrestling. There were also horse races, cock fights, a circus, regatta and stock show.<sup>62</sup>

A number of Texas fairs took place during the next five years, but it was not until 1888, that another attracted international attention. During that year, San Antonio staged the First International Fair. President Porfirio Diaz of Mexico participated in the ceremonies, and both exhibitors and spectators came from many parts of Mexico and the United States. One special attraction was the aforementioned roping contest for cowboys, but there were also nine days of horse races, as well as bicycle races and fireworks. Bands from the United States and Mexico performed daily, and on the midway visitors could purchase such culinary delights as hokey pokey (ice cream), tamales, and Weiner wurst.<sup>63</sup>

The weiner wurst sold at the 1888 fair was no doubt produced by another group that had a strong influence on sport and amusements in the San Antonio area, the Germans. In 1854, the Germans organized the Casino Association that was responsible for bringing some of the first cultural entertainment to the city. By 1875, the Association had over two hundred fifty members, and it continued to be a powerful force in the community for the rest of the century.

The *Turnverein*, a German gymnastic and social club, was founded in 1853.<sup>64</sup> Germans had been prime movers in organizing Fourth of July celebrations in San Antonio since that time and in 1867, the *Turners* (turnverein members) participated in the parade as an organized unit. They also formed the town's first volunteer fire department.<sup>65</sup>

By the 1870s, the Turners were holding *turnfests* (gymnastics meets and exhibitions) in San Antonio's parks, and in April, 1871, hosted the first Texas District Turnfest. This three-day event included not only gymnastics exhibitions and competitions, but speeches, fireworks displays, dinners, and balls. Similar fests were held throughout the 1870s, and in 1882 the turners organized a volksfest for the enjoyment of all San Antonians. So successful was the endeavor that in 1885 the turners joined with the Casino club and other German groups to produce a four-day volksfest at San Pedro Park. There, locals from diverse national and ethnic groups could enjoy track and field competition,

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61. James F. Hobbs, *Wild Life in the Far West; Personal Adventures of a Border Mountain Man* (Hartford, 1872), 78-79; Joseph W. Revere. *Keel and Saddle* (Boston, 1872), 201-205.

62. Ward "State Fair," 163-174.

63. San Antonio Express 21 April 1876.

64. *San Antonio Zeitung*, 17 September, 8 October 1853.

65. *San Antonio Express*. 1 July 1867; Ramsdell, *San Antonio* 150.

cricket, baseball, horse and boat races, shooting contests and cowboy tournaments.<sup>66</sup>

The Turners in 1884 sponsored two days of boxing exhibitions by heavy-weight champion John L. Sullivan. This event was publicized as far away as Brownsville and brought large numbers of spectators to the Turnhalle. Finally, the Bexars, founded in 1869, and one of the first baseball teams in San Antonio, was composed entirely of members of the turnverein.<sup>67</sup>

This team of German-American baseball players was not organized by Abner Doubleday, but his ghost lurks in the outfield of every baseball field in the borderland. Doubleday admirers have insisted that he not only devised the modern game at Cooperstown, New York, in 1839, but that he personally introduced the game into both Mexico and Texas. The Cooperstown story has long since been proven false, but the other tales are worth examining.

Doubleday was a West Point graduate who served in the United States Army in both the Mexican and the Civil Wars. In the former conflict, U.S. troops, including young officer Doubleday, occupied Mexico City for ten months in 1847 and 1848. The troops with little to do soon organized various entertainments, including sports and dances. According to legend, Doubleday promoted baseball games among the various companies and militia units stationed in the Halls of Montezuma. Even if this story were true, there is no record of Mexicans learning and playing anything resembling baseball until the 1890s when a mining engineer from the United States, working near Monterey, taught his workers the game. Then he gave them the Fourth of July as a holiday and sponsored a ball game to celebrate. Baseball was certainly being played in several Mexican towns during the first decade of the twentieth century, by the flood of United States businessmen, mining engineers, and the United States consul in Durango. Perhaps the most important boost to the game came from the tour made by the Chicago White Sox through Mexico in 1906. Organization was slow, but in 1925 the Mexican League was born.<sup>68</sup>

Doubleday's shade haunts the Texas side of the border as well. During the years of post-Civil War Reconstruction, the United States Army occupied the former Confederacy. General Doubleday commanded the troop in Galveston, Texas, and was commissioner of the Freedmen's Bureau there in December, 1866. Avid mythmakers claim Doubleday there organized the first baseball games in Texas. William B. Ruggles, historian and one-time president of the Texas League, on the other hand, argues that the game more likely was already known in South Texas. Many Texans had gone east to college during the 1850s where they could have learned it. Moreover, the game was introduced in Yankee

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66. *Freie Presse für Texas*, May 1871, 1873, 1876. October-November 1885: *San Antonio Express*, 21 April 1876, 6 October 1886.

67. *San Antonio Express*, 28 September 1875; *Brownsville American Flag*, 12 April 1884.

68. William J. Miller, "The American Sports Empire," in *Sports in Modern America*, ed., William J. Baker and John M. Carroll (St. Louis, 1981), 150; for the myth of Abner Doubleday see: Harold Peterson, *The Man Who Invented Baseball* (New York, 1969); Interview with Victor Niemeyer, former United States Consul, Monterrey, Mexico, 24 February 1982; *Terry's Guide to Mexico*, 8th ed., (New York, 1972), 145n.

prison camps as exercise for rebel prisoners during the war. More evidence comes from Texas' first known baseball game, played on April 21, 1867 (San Jacinto Day) in Galveston. The hometown R. E. Lees (a popular amateur team name in the South), unsuccessfully battled Houston's Stonewalls, losing 35-2. How unlikely that General Abner Doubleday would organize a contest between teams honoring two of the Confederacy's greatest generals.<sup>69</sup>

The same day, San Antonio residents organized a Base-Ball Club in the Alamo City, but President J. S. Lockwood and Secretary Russell Norton could not arrange a match for them until November 2, 1867.<sup>70</sup> The game quickly became popular in the town, with several clubs appearing and disappearing in the next decade.

By early February, 1869, two city teams, the Frontier and Bexar Clubs met in a matched contest. The Frontiers won by a whopping 80-run margin (90-10), and then published a challenge to any baseball team in Texas.<sup>71</sup>

Until 1877 only amateur teams played in Texas. Throughout the southern part of the state, strong rivalries developed and, at least according to reporters, high standards of play appeared. Several teams emerged in San Antonio, including the Lone Stars, but there were three better known clubs. The Ben Milam Baseball Club apparently succeeded the Frontiers as the dominant city team. The Bexar club continued playing all its city rivals, even though it took several severe drubbings. The 10th Infantry, U.S. Army, stationed in the Mission City competed against the Bexars, Lone Stars, and Milams, and the foot soldiers were reputed to be in the same class as Houston's Robert E. Lees. But the Ben Milams ruled San Antonio, defeating the infantry, 37-11, and other local teams by similar scores, losing only to the Houston squad.<sup>72</sup>

Special exhibitions drew spectators who often paid a quarter for admission in the pre-professional era. The Milams faced picked squads in several contests. Of greater interest was a match, promoted by the *San Antonio Express*, between the Leans and the Fats. Well-known politician Sam Maverick joined the chubby squad. Despite Maverick's "heavy" contribution, the Fats lost the four-inning struggle 11-16 to the Leans.<sup>73</sup>

These community teams drew on all the men and boys in town. When they played another community, fraternal order or volunteer fire company, everyone supported his team and was usually ready to gamble a little to prove this commitment.<sup>74</sup>

Professional baseball came to Texas in 1877 when an Indianapolis club, barnstorming through the South, came to Galveston to play a local nine. Intercity rivalry and the Indianapolis team's example prompted efforts to organize a semi-professional league. After several years of trying, Samuel L.

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69. William B. Ruggles, *The History of the Texas League of Professional Baseball Clubs: 1888-1951* (n.p., 1951), 18.

70. *Corner, Bexar*, 141-161.

71. *San Antonio Express*, 2, 4 February 1869.

72. *Ibid.*, 20, 24, 29 September, 2, 6 October 1877.

73. *San Antonio Daily Express*, 21 September 1875.

74. Carrow, "Amusements," 48.

Hain of Houston in 1884 formed the Texas League. Teams represented Houston, Galveston, Waco, Forth Worth, Dallas and San Antonio. Each club had a few paid players, most often the pitchers and catchers, and played a 15-game season.<sup>75</sup>

The first fully professional loop, also called the Texas League, began play in 1887. The father of professional baseball in the state, John J. McCloskey, told the story of the league's formation in a 1931 interview. McCloskey put together a Western League All-Star team in 1887 to represent Joplin, Missouri, and decided to take the squad to the West Coast, by way of Texas. The "Joplin" squad defeated Ft. Worth and Waco, and a team of professional "ringers" representing Austin. The Capital City promoters decided a series between Joplin and the New York Giants, also barnstorming through the Lone Star State, would draw large crowds. After negotiations, a three-game series was set, with the winners taking eighty-five percent of the one thousand dollar guarantee. McCloskey's team won the first game, so the Giants quickly and quietly slipped out of Austin.<sup>76</sup>

Austin residents responded so ardently to the game that McCloskey organized a league, with his Joplin All-Stars becoming the Capital City entry against five other Texas communities. The constitution limited player salaries to a maximum of one thousand dollars, and fixed admission at twenty-five cents. The Dallas team, called the Hams, held late afternoon games (as late as 5 p.m.) to attract larger crowds and even designated every Wednesday game as "Ladies Day" with free admission for women. This first league was shaky and reached the apogee of instability when San Antonio withdrew, leaving players unpaid. Fort Worth folded shortly afterward, followed by Houston, and Austin tottered. While the league crumbled, the Hams held first place. Emergency action resulted in a merger with surviving teams from the collapsing Southern League. San Antonio appeared again in this second half season, but the team in reality was McCloskey and his mates who had abandoned Austin and begun playing as the Alamos. The Hams again dominated play, although no league pennant was ever awarded for this first season.<sup>77</sup>

The league limped along until some stability was achieved in 1892. McCloskey explained the problem:

Our Chief trouble was inability to keep the ball clubs in the best of physical condition. The state was new to baseball. People were enthusiastic. The saloons, the poolrooms were open to the players, free of charge. They were young for the most part. Naturally they fell for the diversions offered, but it was difficult for the men who were seriously trying to make a go of baseball.<sup>78</sup>

With the turn of the century, the saloon and poolroom abated to the point that the Texas League grew in stature.

Along the border, residents were not content to watch others play. Matched

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75. Ruggles, *Texas League*, 18, 19, 21.

76. *Ibid.*, 25.

77. *Ibid.*, 25; Harry Jebson, "The Dallas Hams of 1885," *Baseball Research Quarterly* (1979): 104-108.

78. Ruggles, *Texas League*, 25.

games were often arranged between neighboring towns, and amateur, semi-professional and professional leagues were organized. The Class D Southwest Texas League included such teams as the Victoria Rose Buds, the Beeville Orange Growers, as well as teams from Brownsville and San Antonio. A surviving example of international baseball is the Mexican American League, headquartered in San Antonio, that includes teams from both the United States and Mexico.

While both the fandango and the bullfight are of Hispanic origin, and baseball has Anglo roots, most of the nineteenth-century amusements of the Texas-Mexican border were products of the heterogeneous population of that unique area. It was not only an international boundary, but also the western frontier. A transient population that included troops involved in the incessant armed conflicts, and thousands of cowhands heading for the Chisholm trail drives, also left its mark. Today, the frontier and the cattle trails are closed, and the battles have subsided, but the diversity remains, along with twentieth-century refinements of most of the nineteenth-century sports and amusements. In towns and cities along both sides of the Rio Grande, these traditions are continued in fairs, fiestas, and street dances; rodeos, roundups and charreadas; horseraces, bullfights, polo matches and baseball games. On any Sunday in April, one can enjoy some if not all of these activities within twenty miles of San Antonio.