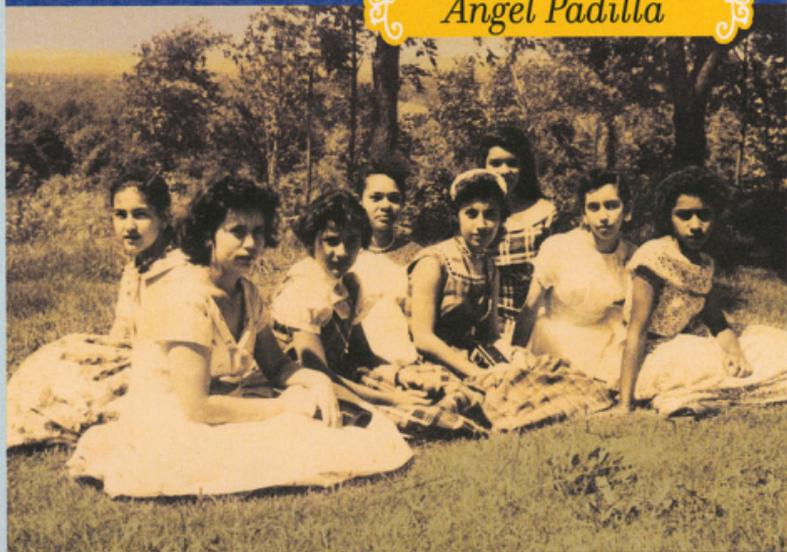


WE WERE NOT AS THEY THOUGHT

*Recollections of
Angel Padilla*





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A CHAPBOOK FROM THE "VANISHING HOBOKEN" SERIES
OF THE HOBOKEN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Vanishing Hoboken

The Hoboken Oral History Project

A Project of
The Hoboken Historical Museum
and the Friends of the Hoboken Public Library

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and its transcription.

The views expressed in this publication are those of
the interviewee and do not necessarily reflect the views
of the interviewer, the Hoboken Oral History Project
and its coordinators, the Hoboken Historical Museum,
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For more information or to purchase copies of
Hoboken Oral History Project chapbooks, contact:
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PHOTO CREDITS: Unless otherwise noted, all photos
are courtesy Padilla family scrapbooks.
Contemporary photos of Padilla family at
St. Joseph Church, Robert Foster 2010.
Angel Padilla photographed the weddings of many
friends from the Catholic Center. Several of these
portraits have been reprinted as endpapers, inside
the chapbook's covers.

*When we start[ed] working, I guess
people realize[d] that we were
not as they thought. You know, that
happens when you don't know
somebody. You meet this other
person. Sometimes people judge you
by the way you look until they
speak to you and learn about you,
and say, "Jeez, I was mistaken,
[this] person is the most lovely
person that [I've] ever met."
Because I have friends, even Puerto
Rican friends, that when I first
came, I see one with a slash maybe
here [indicating scar on cheek]
and I say, "maybe this guy's
tough." But [after] I talk[ed] to him,
we became friends. These things
happen all over, no matter where
you go.*

—ANGEL PADILLA,
JANUARY 26, 2010

San Juan Fiesta, Randall's Island, N.Y.



🌀

Paseo, St. Joseph's Shrine, Stirling, N.J.



🌀

La Gran Jira, Rye Beach, N.Y.



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Fiesta de Reyes, Seis de Enero



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The Hoboken Oral History Project

"Vanishing Hoboken," an oral history project, was initiated in 2000 by members of the Friends of the Hoboken Public Library and the Hoboken Historical Museum in response to dramatic physical, social, and economic changes in the city of Hoboken over the preceding twenty years, and to the consequent "vanishing" of certain aspects of public life.

For much of the last century, Hoboken was a working-class town, home to many waves of immigrant families, and to families who journeyed from the southern regions of the U.S. and from Puerto Rico—all looking for work. Hoboken, close to ports of entry in New Jersey and New York, offered a working waterfront and many factories, as well as inexpensive housing. Each new wave of arrivals—from Germany, Ireland, Italy, Yugoslavia, Cuba, and Puerto Rico—found work on the waterfront, at the Bethlehem Steel Shipyards, Lipton Tea, Tootsie Roll, Maxwell House, or in numerous, smaller garment factories. Then the docks closed in the 1960s; and factory jobs dwindled as Hoboken's industrial base relocated over the 1970s and '80s. Maxwell House, once the largest coffee roasting plant in the world, was the last to leave, in 1992. In the go-go economy of the 1980s, Hoboken's row houses, just across the river from Manhattan, were targeted by developers to young professionals seeking an easy commute to New York City. Historically home to ever-changing waves of struggling families—who often left when they became prosperous—Hoboken began in the mid-1980s to experience a kind of reverse migration, where affluent condominium-buyers replaced poor and working class tenants, many of whom had been forced out by fire, through condo-conversion buy-outs, or through rising rents. More recently, building construction has further altered the face of Hoboken, as modern towers are rising up alongside the late-19th century row houses that once spatially defined our densely populated, mile-square city and provided its human scale.

The Hoboken Oral History Project was inaugurated with the goal of capturing, through the recollections of longtime residents, "Vanishing Hoboken"—especially its disappearing identity as a working-class city and its tradition of multi-ethnic living. In 2001, with the support of the New Jersey Historical Commission, a division of the Department of State, the Hoboken Oral History Project transcribed and edited several oral histories to produce a series of "Vanishing

Hoboken" chapbooks. Since 2002, twenty-one chapbooks have been published in the series, with the support of the Historical Commission, the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, a state partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and, more recently, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Vanishing Hoboken Chapbooks

The editor of this series chose to call these small booklets "chapbooks," a now rarely heard term for a once-common object. And so, a brief explanation is now required: A chapbook, states the most recent edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, is a

...small, inexpensive, stitched tract formerly sold by itinerant dealers, or chapmen, in Western Europe and in North America. Most chapbooks were 5 x 4 inches in size and were made up of four pages (or multiples of four), illustrated with woodcuts. They contained tales of popular heroes, legends and folklore, jests, reports of notorious crimes, ballads, almanacs, nursery rhymes, school lessons, farces, biblical tales, dream lore, and other popular matter. The texts were mostly rough and anonymous, but they formed the major parts of secular reading and now serve as a guide to the manners and morals of their times.

Chapbooks began to appear in France at the end of the 15th century. Colonial America imported them from England but also produced them locally. These small booklets of mostly secular material continued to be popular until inexpensive magazines began to appear during the early 19th century.

Although some of the chapbooks in the Vanishing Hoboken series are considerably longer than their earlier counterparts, others are nearly as brief. They are larger in size, to allow us to use a reader-friendly type size. But all resemble the chapbooks of yesteryear, as they contain the legends, dreams, crime reports, jokes, and folklore of our contemporaries. One day, perhaps, they might even serve as guides to the "manners and morals" of our city, during the 20th and early 21st centuries.

Photo Pages



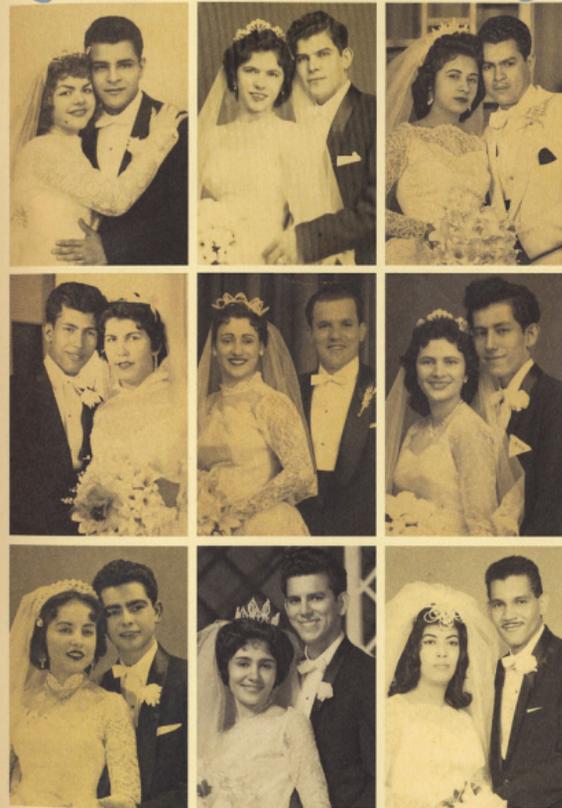
PAGE 12—Angel Padilla documented many events attended by Hoboken's Spanish-speaking Catholic community, including the participation of the Daughters of St. Mary in the San Juan Fiesta on Randall's Island, New York, June 21, 1959. Photos courtesy of the Padilla family.

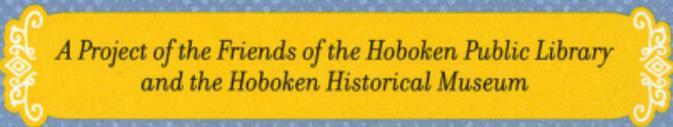
PAGE 13—From the Padilla family scrapbooks: A visit to St. Joseph's Shrine, Stirling, New Jersey, July 20, 1958. TOP PHOTO, LEFT TO RIGHT: Juan Caraballo, Providencia Vargas, Ana Crespo. BOTTOM PHOTO: Mr. Crespo (playing the guitar), Jose Rivera, Virgilio Martinez, Ivan Caraballo, Lucy Crespo, Norma Ortiz.

PAGE 14—A visit to Rye Beach, New York, August 30, 1958. TOP PHOTO: Angel Padilla, Jose Ruiz; at right: Aurora Cabrera. MIDDLE PHOTO: (left to right, as identified in the Padilla family scrapbook) Carmen Classen, Elizabeth, Gloria Padilla, Avilda, Hilda Perez, Virginia Villafane, Lucy Prieto. BOTTOM PHOTO: Estella and Ortiz family.

PAGE 15—Three Kings Feast, January 6th, 1959, at St. Joseph School, Hoboken. From the Padilla family scrapbooks.

PAGE 19—All kinds of events were held at the Spanish Center. TOP PHOTO: Easter Party, April 12, 1958. MIDDLE PHOTO: Children's party, December 15, 1957. BOTTOM PHOTO: First Communion, May 25, 1958.





*A Project of the Friends of the Hoboken Public Library
and the Hoboken Historical Museum*