

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

NOV 14 1980

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

The Mass Grave of the Mexican Miners

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Mount Calvary Cemetery, Carl Albert Parkway

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

McAlester

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

\_\_ VICINITY OF

006

STATE

Oklahoma

CODE

40

COUNTY

Pittsburg

CODE

121

**3 CLASSIFICATION****CATEGORY** DISTRICT BUILDING(S) STRUCTURE SITE OBJECT**OWNERSHIP** PUBLIC PRIVATE BOTH**PUBLIC ACQUISITION** IN PROCESS BEING CONSIDERED**STATUS** OCCUPIED UNOCCUPIED WORK IN PROGRESS**ACCESSIBLE** YES: RESTRICTED YES: UNRESTRICTED NO**PRESENT USE** AGRICULTURE COMMERCIAL EDUCATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT GOVERNMENT INDUSTRIAL MILITARY MUSEUM PARK PRIVATE RESIDENCE RELIGIOUS SCIENTIFIC TRANSPORTATION OTHER: cemetery**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Catholic Diocese of Tulsa

STREET &amp; NUMBER

824 S. Boulder

CITY, TOWN

Tulsa

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

OK

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

County Clerk's Office

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Pittsburg County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

McAlester

STATE

OK

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Oklahoma Comprehensive Survey

DATE

1979

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Oklahoma Historical Society, Preservation Office

CITY, TOWN

Oklahoma City

STATE

OK

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The present site consists of a plot 70 feet long and 10 feet wide running north to south in Mount Calvary Cemetery, McAlester. The line of headstones runs from south to north and the monuments carry the following inscriptions in this order:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Memorias<br>Francisco Moreno, 1890-1929<br>Alverto ( <u>sic</u> ) Moreno, 1905-1929                         | 6. Frank Medena ( <u>sic</u> )<br>Husband of<br>Ines Medena ( <u>sic</u> )<br>1901-1929     |
| 2. Juan M-P Chavez<br>Nacio 6 Marzo 1910<br>Fallecio 17 Dec. 1929<br>N. McAlister Okla                         | 7. Manuel Huerta<br>Husb. of<br>Aurora Huerta<br>1909-1929                                  |
| 3. Gregorio Chavez<br>Nacio 9 Mayo 1905<br>Fallecio 17 Dec 1929<br>N. McAlister Okla                           | 8. Anasato Numez ( <u>sic</u> )<br>Mar. 17, 1896<br>Dec. 17, 1929<br>Gone but not forgotten |
| 4. Alberto Chavez<br>Nacio 7 Augusto 1909<br>Fallecio 17 Dec 1929<br>N. McAlester Okla                         | 9. Emilio Gonzales<br>1898-1929   |
| 5. Ignacio Castillo<br>Nacio 1882<br>Fallecio Dec. 17, 1929<br>N. McAlester<br>Antonia R. Castillo<br>Recuerdo |   |

The Chavez monuments are grouped together, but the other stones are separated by irregular intervals.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

## PERIOD AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Ethnic History
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1929

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Mexican miners played a heroic role in the coal mining industry of southeastern Oklahoma. At its height between about 1910 and 1930, some 1200 Mexicans worked in the mines of the district. Most had immigrated to the area from Mexico after having been miners in Texas or Colorado. The Oklahoma mines were very attractive to these men because wages were comparatively high for the time--about \$3.60 per day in 1917 and \$5.00 per day by 1931. But the mines were also the most dangerous in the country; coal mining had the highest fatality rate of any industry in the state. Major disasters took scores of lives at a time.

On February 22, 1912, for example, a fire broke out about 100 feet from the bottom of the shaft in the Number Five Mine at Lehigh. On this occasion, 22 year old Rufino Rodriguez, an illiterate Mexican miner, saved 190 fellow workers from certain death. He sounded the alarm throughout the mine, almost losing his own life in the process. In May, 1914, Rodriguez received a medal for heroism from the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission.

Other disasters ended on a more tragic note. On December 17, 1929, a gas explosion in the Old Town Company Little Bolen Mine in North McAlester resulted in the death of 61 of the 66 men working below. Among them were 32 Mexicans, including five sets of brothers who worked together and died together in the mine. In all, this disaster left more than 250 destitute and grieving relatives to face a dismal future without their men. Since there were neither death benefits for dependents nor even enough money to bury the dead, a public subscription was mounted. After an appeal by Will Rogers, donors from around the country pledged more than \$70,000. The Mexican government alone contributed \$10,000 to the destitute families, and the Red Cross coordinated the relief effort.

Three days after the explosion, the victims were interred in several nearby cemeteries. Twenty-four of the Mexican miners were laid to rest side by side in a huge grave dug by convicts from the Oklahoma State Penitentiary. Though a representative of the Governor placed a wreath on the grave, and the Mexican consul led the funeral cortege, the mass grave itself was marked only by a single wooden cross. Subsequently, families of ten of the victims erected stone monuments commemorating their loved ones. These headstones are the only monuments to the Mexican miners who died in the disaster of 1929.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Smith, Michael M. Mexicans in Oklahoma. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980. (In manuscript.)

McAlester News Capital, December 20, 1929, p. 1.

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY under 1 acre

QUADRANGLE NAME McAlester, OK

QUADRANGLE SCALE 7.5'

UTM REFERENCES

A 15 249500 3868245

B        
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The mass grave lies approximately 100 feet north of the central entrance of Mount Calvary Cemetery and 150 feet south southwest of the central crucifix monument of the cemetery.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES Cemeteries.

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Dr. Douglas Hale Directed by Dr. Annetta L. Cheek July, 1979

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey

405/624-5678

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

Oklahoma State University

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Stillwater

OK

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*J. Glenn Jordan*

TITLE

DATE

4/10/80

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

for *Beth Grosvenor*  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

11/14/80

ATTEST:  
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10

PAGE 1

Verbal boundary description

From bench mark 728 in section 8 proceed at a 355° bearing for 140 meters. Observe the mass grave on the right and establish point A at the SW corner of the site, proceed north 70 feet, turn east 10 feet, turn south 70 feet and finally turn west 10 feet to the starting point A.