

Review, History Department, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2029.

V.C.P.

LATIN AMERICAN POPULATION HISTORY

The most recent number of the *Latin American Population History Bulletin*, Number 25, Spring, 1994, contains a section of commentary that deserves some notice. The lead article, "Sociedad, Familia y Género en Santafé, Nueva Granada, a Finales de la Colonia," by Guiomar Dueñas, explores a variety of factors including the high cost of official marriage, migration and disease (especially smallpox), recorded by colonial officials. The data yield conclusions on family structure and socio-racial composition of the population. Under the heading "Comment and Controversy," the *Bulletin* also publishes an analysis by Francisco Guerra and M.C. Sánchez Téllez of the Faculty of Medicine of the Universidad de Alcalá de Henares, Madrid, of reports by Franciscan friars in mid-sixteenth-century Mexico on epidemic mortality. In brief, the reports lend weight to the idea that native population decline varied widely by region, the "lay of the land," population density and agricultural resources. Michael E. Smith, SUNY Albany, meanwhile enters the ongoing controversy on the size of Aztec cities.

V.C.P.

OBITUARIES

NETTIE LEE BENSON (JANUARY 15, 1905-JUNE 23, 1993)

Nettie Lee Benson grew up in Sinton, Texas, near Corpus Christi where she graduated from high school in 1922. She began her undergraduate studies at the Texas Presbyterian College for Girls, but transferred after two years to the University of Texas in Austin in fall 1924, beginning what would become a lifelong relationship with that institution. Fascinated by Mexico even as a young girl, she enrolled in Spanish courses and embarked on her study of Mexico. The following year, she accepted a position at the Instituto Inglés-Español in Monterrey, Nuevo León, where she taught for two years and observed the Cristero Revolt first-hand. In 1928 she returned to the University of Texas and earned her Bachelor of Arts degree. While there she played tennis as well as the clarinet, flute, and mandolin. She taught school for the next dozen years, completing her M.A. degree with a thesis on the Presidency of Venustiano Carranza. During that time, she served as the girls' tennis and basketball coach and as an assistant football coach for the boys team, keeping statistics, of course. She would maintain a love for sports for the rest of her life.

In 1941 Nettie Lee Benson left Ingleside High School for the University of Texas and never returned. In 1942 she accepted a position in the Latin American Collection of the library, a few years later she became its director, a position she held until her retirement in 1975. Despite working over fifty hours per week at the library, she

earned her Ph.D. in 1949 with a dissertation on the Provincial Deputation in Mexico.

In 1955 she published her classic work *La Diputación Provincial y el federalismo mexicano*, showing that Mexican federalism had emerged from Spanish and Mexican traditions rather than as a mere copy of the U.S. variety. She continued to publish until the end; in fact shortly before she died she had submitted a monograph to the Texas A & M University Press, "Texas Viewed from Mexico."

In 1962 she became a Professor of History and continued in that position until 1989 as well as Professor in the Graduate School of Library Science (1964-1975). During those years numbers of today's most eminent scholars benefitted from her vigorous teaching methods, standards, and generosity, as did the hoards of researchers who passed her way at the Latin American Collection that was named for her in 1975.

She received many honors including the Casa de las Americas Prize from Cuba, the Distinguished Alumnus Award from the University of Texas in 1981, and the Outstanding Graduate Teaching Award in 1984. The Conference on Latin American History presented her with its Distinguished Service Award in 1976 and the American Historical Association recognized her Distinguished Service in 1989. In 1979 she received the Order of the Aztec Eagle, the highest honor granted by the Mexican government to foreigners. In addition to these, she greatly cherished her warm friendships with numerous Latin Americans including Don Daniel Cosío Villegas.

Barbara Tenenbaum
Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.

A STUDENT REMEMBRANCE

We history students of Nettie Lee Benson admired and respected, loved and feared her all at the same time. How could we not admire and respect her for her knowledge and dedication to Mexican history and the energy she poured into making the Latin American collection at the University of Texas among the best in the world. How could we not love her for the personal attention and respect she showered upon us. How could we not fear her for the "do it, or else" demands she placed upon us. We all pretty much agreed that she was a tough-minded, no nonsense lady riven with affection for Mexican history and those who studied it. What more could a graduate student ask for in a mentor?

Of course, we all had our Nettie Lee Benson stories. I remember my first reading seminar with her. The previous semester our professor had assigned a reasonable book a week in English or maybe a couple of articles in Spanish. Nettie Lee roared in commanding at least twice that amount; I caught the first volume of one of her favorites, *Historia moderna de México*. Ugh! "Just the "Vida Política of La República Restaurada," she said, but that was 925 pages of text. A couple of seminars later one of my colleagues fell behind the pace but still tried to impress Miss Benson with his erudition. She listened patiently with tightened lips, an occasional tilt of the