



Curious Unions: Mexican American Workers and Resistance in Oxnard, California, 1898-1961 (Race and Ethnicity in the American West)

Frank P. Barajas

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César E. Chávez came to Oxnard, California, in 1958, twenty years after he lived briefly in the city as a child with his migrant farmworker family during the Great Depression. This time Chávez returned as the organizer of the Community Service Organization to support the unionization campaign of the United Packinghouse Workers of America. Together the two groups challenged the agricultural industry's use of braceros (imported contract laborers) who displaced resident farmworkers.

The Mexican and Mexican American populations in Oxnard were involved in cultural struggles and negotiations long before Chávez led them in marches and active protests. *Curious Unions* explores the ways in which the Mexican community forged intriguing partnerships with other ethnic groups within Oxnard in the first half of the twentieth century and the resulting economic exchanges, cultural practices, and labor and community activism. Frank P. Barajas examines how the Oxnard ethnic Mexican population exercised its agency in alliance with other groups and organizations to meet their needs before large-scale protests and labor unions were engaged. *Curious Unions* charts how the cultural negotiations that took place in the Oxnard ethnic Mexican community helped shape and empower farm labor organizing.

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