

Manuela Sánchez Sotelo: the Mexican Mother of Tempe. Pioneer Homesteader, Goodwill Ambassador.

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By the 1860s, Mexican families came north from Mexico to the Arizona Territory's Salt River Valley, which was still a rough and unmanageable wilderness and subject to disputes between the Americans and the Native Americans. The Mexicans came to the farming region known today as Tempe, a town also recognized by frontier community historians as "Hayden's Ferry", or "Hayden's Mill", named after Charles Trumbull Hayden, an opportunistic, astute trader and a business promoter who, along with others, helped to settle the Tempe area in the 1870s. Mexicans built Hayden's blacksmith and wagon shops and his grist mill along the Salt River near his homestead, known as "La Casa Vieja", in the 1880's, where wheat and grain was milled into flour. It was the water from the river that generated the power to run the mill. In this early period, Mexicans constructed irrigation canals, cleared the harsh desert for water development projects, and helped construct the Hayden Ferry, which transported freighters across the Salt River. Hayden employed Mexicans to operate the ropes and pulleys to run his ferry. Soon, the enterprising and industrious Mexicans ranched and farmed along the Salt River. By 1872, they named their Mexican community "San Pablo", an 80-acre site located southeast of the Tempe Butte, where ASU's Sun Devil football stadium and the Desert Financial Arena currently stand. San Pablo also comprised the area on east University Drive, where ASU's women and co-ed dormitories form imposing structures of dominance. This distinguishable Tempe Butte was also known by an older generation of Tempeans as the "Hayden Butte". Today, it is known as the "A" Mountain by Arizona State University's students. The mountain, indeed, remains as Tempe's historic legacy and landmark and a symbol of Mexican ingenuity, and is a presence that is very much a part of Arizona's history.

Records show that the first Mexican family to settle in the Tempe community in 1870 was the Tiburcio and Manuela Sánchez Sotelo family, thereby establishing Manuela Sánchez Sotelo as the Mexican Mother of Tempe and a pioneer homesteader. According to the Arizona Territorial Census of 1870, Manuela Sánchez Sotelo was born in 1820 in Tubac. The Sotelo family records show that by 1846, she was the wife of Tiburcio Sotelo, whose father, Ignacio, served as the Spanish Commander of the Tubac *presidio* in 1813. Tubac was located approximately forty-five miles south of Tucson, and along the west bank of the Santa Cruz River. By 1870, it served as a pueblo and as a mission to Spanish and Mexican families, and to the Pima and Papago Indians nearby. Heeding the call for irrigation workers along the Salt River in Tempe, Tiburcio Sotelo and his two sons, José and Feliciano, and Tiburcio's nephew, Pedro, left the Tubac/Tucson area in 1870 to find work in Tempe, and they soon found much to do. The men helped the Mexican farmers who lived in the South Mountain area along the Salt River beneath the present-day 24th and 40th streets build the "Mexican Ditch", also known as the San Francisco Canal.

This ditch brought life-saving water to their farmlands in the valley. The head of the canal was located near what is now downtown Tempe. Its channel extended three and one-quarter miles in a southwesterly direction toward the foothills of present-day South Mountain. The Sotelo men also worked for William H. Kirkland and James B. McKinney and helped construct the first irrigation ditch on the south side of the Salt River in that same year of 1870. It wasn't long before Tiburcio Sotelo bought a small share in the Tempe Irrigating Canal Company for two-hundred dollars, money which he used to purchase 160 acres of land located on the southeast corner of present-day Rural Road and east University Drive. His share in the Kirkland-McKinney Ditch also enabled him to receive water from the canal to irrigate his fields. In 1871, the Sotelo men were hired as irrigation workers to help clear the Hardy Irrigation Canal in Tempe. . Within that same year, three Sotelo men died: Tiburcio succumbed to an illness and died in Florence; his eldest son, José, age 23, inadvertently rode his horse into the Salt River and drowned; and his second son, Feliciano, age 21, was killed by Apache Indians while carrying mail on the Tucson-Maricopa route for the Southern Overland Express that linked Tucson with Mesilla and the East. What would happen now to Tiburcio's wife, Manuela, and her family back in the Tubac/Tucson home?

Strong-willed Manuela knew what to do. She chose to go forward, to come to Tempe. Her husband had filed their 160-acre land claim, and to not continue meant that his death would have been without sacrifice and meaning. She was ready to become a woman of substance in a new frontier. Manuela Sánchez Sotelo, came to Tempe in 1872 from Tucson with her eight (8) daughters, whose ages ranged from age 4 to age 20, and her five-year-old son, Antonio, and settled on the land acquired by her husband. The Sotelo family planted wheat as a cash crop. With the seeds Manuela brought with her, she planted a garden and grew beans, squash, corn and herbs and sold or traded their crops with the American farmers in the area, forging new and cordial American-Mexican relationships in Tempe. The Sotelo name was quickly becoming known and respected among the Americans who found Manuela to be a woman of honor and financial worth and a woman who knew how to manage her ranch. At the same time, Manuela developed important entrepreneurial skills and used them to control the ownership of her property. She learned that American farmers were using water from the Tempe Irrigating Canal Company to irrigate their farmlands, and that she had to protect her property, as it was growing in value.

In the period of the 1870s, Manuela Sánchez Sotelo became a shareholder in the Tempe Irrigating Canal Company, becoming one of the few Mexican women in the Salt River Valley to hold water rights to her property. On July 3, 1890, Manuela filed a homestead claim on her 160 acres of land and received a patent on her property. It was surveyed by A.M. Jones on August 6, 1890 and subdivided and became known as the "Sotelo Addition". The property consisted of twenty-five parcels of land located between the Tempe-Mesa road (now known as University Drive and Rural Road), and the Hayden branch of the Tempe Canal. Manuela allowed her friend and neighbor, Charles Trumbull Hayden, establish his canal through her property so that her water could get to Hayden's flour mill. Manuela subdivided her land and began sharing it with her children and their spouses. She also sold parcels of her land to other Mexican families arriving in Tempe for settlement. For example, Manuela sold a lot 143 feet by 25 feet to Jesus Arros for seventy-five dollars. Manuela also held two of fifty shares (valued at \$200 each) issued to the original founders of the Tempe Irrigating Canal Company, shares originally owned by her husband.

Over time, Manuela acquired additional property of value in Mesa, Gilbert, and in Queen Creek. She became a good-will ambassador to the Mexican and American families in Tempe, assisting those in need of care and family support. She taught women how to survive and make a home in the frontier region. Sotelo family records suggest that Manuela often taught the younger American women how to can peaches and apricots and how to preserve dry fruits and cure meats. She taught them how to administer first-aid care, and how to use herbs from gardens for medicinal purposes. In essence, Manuela Sotelo became their friend for life. Her home became a haven for Father Andrew and Father Edward Gerard of the Florence Catholic parish who came to Tempe in 1873 to administer to the needs of the Mexican and American Catholic families in the Salt River Valley. Father Andrew often provided religious services in the Sotelo home.

When Arizona Governor F.A. Tritle signed House Bill 164 on March 12, 1885, the bill to establish the Territorial Normal School in Tempe, Manuela Sánchez Sotelo was among its early supporters. Prior to the passage of the bill, Manuela participated in a town meeting at the request of her friend, Charles Trumbull Hayden, to discuss the location for this new teaching school in Tempe. Those gathered agreed to raise \$500 in exchange for land on which the new Territorial Normal School would be built. Manuela Sánchez Sotelo made financial contributions for the purchase of property for the school. Her neighbors, George and Martha Wilson, agreed to donate 20-acres of land in exchange for funds to establish the school. It is clear that Manuela was a strong advocate of public education and realized the importance of maintaining a teaching school in Tempe, their community. It is clear that Manuela Sánchez Sotelo valued education and believed that education should be used in some way to help others.

In her early support of the establishment of the new Territorial Normal School in Tempe, Manuela Sánchez Sotelo provided the economic, cultural and educational underpinnings for the growing frontier range and the

community that grew and prospered along the Salt River: Tempe, Arizona. Look at what the community of Tempe has now become in the 21st century: a modern, thriving metropolis that attracts visitors and entrepreneurs and scholars from around the world. And consider what Manuela Sánchez Sotelo has contributed to the Mexican and American history and development of Tempe. Her entrepreneurial skills and sharp business sense enabled her to become a woman of importance and recognition in a frontier region dominated by men. She used her resourcefulness and knowledge of how to live in the open range and shared that knowledge with her family, friends and neighbors. She protected her water rights within the Sotelo Addition and managed her properties well. Her land grew in value and she shared its prosperity with her children and with the Mexican and American families of Tempe, her neighbors and friends.

Manuela Sánchez Sotelo maintained a solid business, educational, and work ethic among Tempeans and helped to strengthen a Mexican-American relationship that began in the 1870s and one that continues to grow today. Her historical legacy and dedication to the improvement of Tempe and to its educational leadership remains today as evidence of her moral strength and courage and insight into our future.

Manuela Sánchez Sotelo died of pneumonia in her home in Tempe at the age of 82 in 1902.

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