

POSTWAR MIGRANTS

Families who arrived in Philadelphia from Puerto Rico in the late 1940s and early 1950s met a “Latino Philadelphia” that was much different from the “Latino Philadelphia” of today. With limited resources, they began to create distinct communities, and many are still active in these communities today.

Tomasita Romero moved to Philadelphia in 1948 immediately after finishing school. Her father had died a year earlier, leaving behind Tomasita’s mother and five children, and Tomasita migrated so that she could help support her family. After her first year in Philadelphia, she married, started a family, and eventually settled in the Norris Square neighborhood. Señora Romero spent 22 years working in a garment factory, sewing by hand, but eventually became a bilingual teacher’s aid. She is now a leader in the Norris Square Neighborhood Project’s women’s organization, Grupo Motivos. A pillar of Norris Square, she works to improve conditions in this challenged community.

Tomasita Romero cooking at a Grupo Motivos fundraiser. Photograph by Tony Rocco.



Tomasita Romero in the Las Parcelas garden. Photograph by Tony Rocco.



(Left) Parranda at the Negrón Family home, c. 1963. Negrón Family Papers, Balch Collection.

(Right) May procession at St. Edward’s parochial school, 1965. Negrón Family Papers, Balch Collection.



(Left) Catalina Román Negrón with her children and grandchildren, 1966. Negrón Family Papers, Balch Collection.



(Left) Negrón family at Christmas, 1970. Negrón Family Papers, Balch Collection.



(Right) Domingo Negrón at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, 1966. Negrón Family Papers, Balch Collection.

Flor Negrón and his oldest sons, Flor and Natividad, came from Maunabo, Puerto Rico, to work in the United States in the early 1950s. They labored in factories and on farms between Maine and Chicago before finding stable work in The Bucks Hotel in Bucks County. In 1959, Catalina Román Negrón arrived in Philadelphia with the rest of their children. They first settled in South Philadelphia, but eventually moved to 5th and Lehigh, where the family became active in community development over the next decades.

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Luis and Naomi Alvarez and their children arrived in Philadelphia from Santurce, Puerto Rico, in January of 1951. The family had been business owners in Puerto Rico, and by 1953 they had managed to open a *bodega*, or corner grocery store, on South 8th Street near Lombard. The presence of the Bodega Alvarez El Tropical reflected the substantial number of Puerto Ricans who lived in that neighborhood at the time. The Alvarez *bodega* remained in operation until 1984.



Luis Antonio Alvarez and his Aunt Melly, Bodega Alvarez El Tropical, 1959. Courtesy of the Alvarez Family.



Luis Alvarez with his nephew Eric, Bodega Alvarez El Tropical, 1959. Courtesy of the Alvarez Family.

