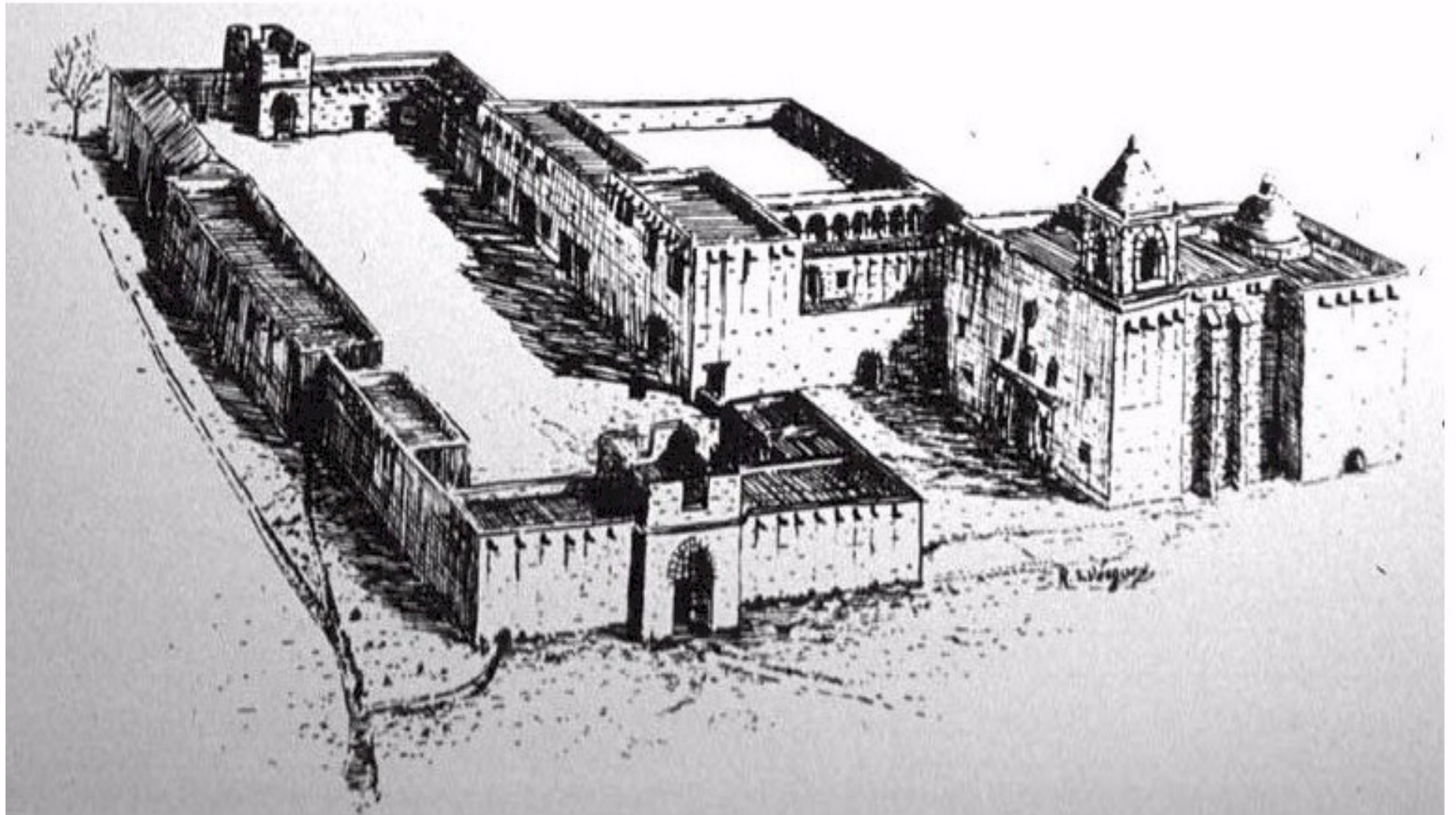


El Señor de Los Milagros

By Viviano Rodríguez (Oct 2005)



View of the Mission Valero Circa 1790 drawn by R. S. Vasquez

Forward

This story is based on events told to me, and based on historical facts. It is the story of how our Family is linked to a private chapel. This chapel is part of San Antonio, Texas and is visited by peoples from all over the world. It is known as the "Ximenes Chapel" or "El Señor de los Milagros". The events at the ranch are from my imagination. There is an oral history that Juan Francisco Ximenes did carry the Crucifix from the Mission back home. For years, the Icons were on the walls or leaning against the walls of the front room of the ranch house.

In 1830, Rafael Rodríguez and Sabia Hernandez had a son Jose María Rodríguez, (my great-great grandfather) who married Francisca Gonzalez in 1854 at San Fernando Church. They had several sons and two daughters. One of the sons (Clemente) married Candelaria Ximenes, the great-granddaughter of Juan Francisco Ximenes and María Mariana Losoya Musquiz.

A point of interest; Juan Ximenes (Born 1810, son of Juan Francisco) participated in the Battle of Bexar in December of 1835, driving General Cos (Brother-in-Law of Santa Anna) from San Antonio. This Battle setup the events that lead to the Battle of the Alamo, the Battle at San Jacinto and the liberation of Texas from Mexico. Both the Rodríguez's and the Ximenes were active in the Civil War and received compensation bonuses for their participation.

The descendants of Jose María and Francisca Rodríguez played and grew up around the Chapel. The Chapel became part of their lives. Today, the descendants of Carolina (Rodríguez) Cantu, daughter of Candelaria and Clemente Rodríguez, own and manage the Chapel. They are there each day to care for and make the Chapel available to the general public.

CHAPTER 1: The Ranch

The thunderclap woke Juan Francisco Ximenes! The room was dark except for the soft light of the candle in the corner and the flash of the distant lightning followed by the roll of thunder. It is a Sunday, the summer of 1793 just outside the town of San Antonio de Bexar on a ranch deeded to Juan's family. It is not a large ranch and extends from Alzazon creek to San Pedro Creek. The largest ranches are held by the system of missions that extended down the San Antonio River. The San Antonio river spring headwaters are a few miles east and north of the ranch, in what is today, the San Antonio zoo area of Breckenridge Park. The Ximenes ranch gets its water from Camaron and San Pedro creeks. These are formed by similar up-welling springs.

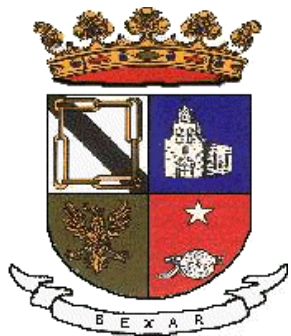
The “ranch” is a cross between a ranch and a vegetable farm. The family grows corn, wheat, vegetables, and cows, horses, and a few goats for milk and meat. There were trees with avocados, figs and a lone persimmon growing just outside the back porch.



The ranch was deeded in 1731, when land in the region was subdivided to accommodate the formation of the Missions and arrival of the first Canary Islanders.

The Mission Valero is the first of five Franciscan missions started in the region. It was built on lands that would become part of the Ximenes Ranch.

Father Antonio de Olivares established the mission in 1718 and



named it San Antonio de Valero in honor of Saint Anthony de Padua and the Duke of Valero, the Spanish viceroy. The Mission Valero moved several times. After a hurricane destroyed most of the existing buildings in 1724, the mission complex was

reestablished on the east bank of the San Antonio River. Hostile Lipan Apaches and allied tribes harassed the missions and surrounding ranches repeatedly, and an epidemic of smallpox and measles decimated the mission Indian population in 1739.

Juan got up. His wife, María Mariana, was still asleep. The children were asleep in the adjoining room. The dogs were roaming about and occasionally barked at a passing rabbit or deer or maybe an Indian. Indians had not been too much trouble for weeks. The last incident was in the town square where the garrison soldiers had killed several.



Lipan Apache Indians

The Apache Indians quickly learned that once a week, the ranches surrounding San Antonio were unguarded as all gathered for weekly Mass at San Fernando Church (it was not a cathedral yet) or at one of the other missions down the river. Because of this, Juan and the other ranchers had permission to worship at home rather than risk the loss of livestock or the buildings to the maundering Indians.

The families generally provided a meal and refreshment for the visiting Priest. Last month, The Priest had mentioned there might be news of some importance coming. Juan was curious and excited about the impending news, as there was so little real news. Most of the information was rumor and unreliable.

After feeding the horses and milking the goats, Juan came back to the main house to find his plump wife Maria with a smile that filled her face, busy with breakfast. Breakfast consisted mostly of eggs, rice, tortillas de harina (Flour), beans and hot tea. After a slaughter of a goat, breakfast would include a little 'barbacoa' (barbequed goat) to go with the eggs.



Hijos (sons) and Hijas (daughters) then as now, seem to have trouble getting up. Everybody would have to get up and into their Sunday best for the services later in the morning.

Juan started to eat, invited his wife to join him. She laughed and told him she did not have time to waste sitting down, as she had to get the children, especially the littlest, ready for Mass.

It seemed it was going to be a typical Sunday, the same as all the other Sundays.

After Mass, held on the veranda, the Family, the Priest and the few ranch hands sat down for a hardy afternoon meal. When the meal was over, the children were dismissed and the table cleared.

With all others gone, Juan and María Mariana sat down with the visiting Priest to get the news.

"There is an ill wind blowing from the east" the Priest began, "There is trouble coming. It is getting harder to minister to the needs of the people. It seems the Misión Valero can not be sustained and is to be closed."

This was not good news.

"What will happen to the people of the Misión?" asked María.

"The Lord always provides" was the answer.

Juan was more worried the Misión Indians may revert to their wild ways of stealing and killing. "What is going to happen to the lands of the Misión and all the live stock?" asked Juan. "It is unclear but most will go to the Misión Indians," responded the Priest. María was very quiet for a long time and then asked, "What about our Sunday services, "Who will come to bless and give us the Sacraments?" All the Priest could say was, "That is still to be decided" with a not too hopeful sigh.

Juan did not like this at all.

All this was very much unexpected. He had heard a rumor the villa was to be fortified and that many more people were coming from the Canary Islands. Juan was not sure bringing more people was a good idea, but fortifying the villa seemed like the thing to do. Now, with more Indians on the loose, there would be more Indians to worry about.

"Who will marry or Christen our children?", María was still carrying on. The Priest was silent.

"What is going to happen to the vestments and the Crucifix?" Juan suddenly asked. "The vestments and the other church property will go to San Fernando though I am not sure of the Crucifix as there is already one there." Replied the Priest.

"Father Xavier," Juan said, "I would like to bring the Crucifix, here, to our ranch, after all, this ranch is where the mission began". It was almost a plea.

The priest looked at Juan for a few moments and began to move his head not quite a no, not quite a yes. "Let me write to the Bishop and see what he wants to do and then I can get back to you." With that said, Father Xavier got up, thanked Juan and María Mariana for the hospitality and rode off on his donkey. Juan never really understood why the priests used donkeys instead of horses. He guessed, it was because they needed to get to wherever they needed to get...slowly.

On Thursday, Juan saddled his best horse and rode to San Fernando church. Juan wanted to find out if there had been any decision on his request. There was none. Juan rode back home. Several Sundays went by. Each Sunday, after Mass at the ranch, Juan would ask about the Bishop's decision to Father Xavier or his substitute. The answer was the same, "Patience my son, the Bishop will decide soon."

Bishops make decisions the same way they travel...slowly.

Juan wondered how the Church had survived with centuries of indecision. Indecision seemed to be a way of life for the church on just about everything.

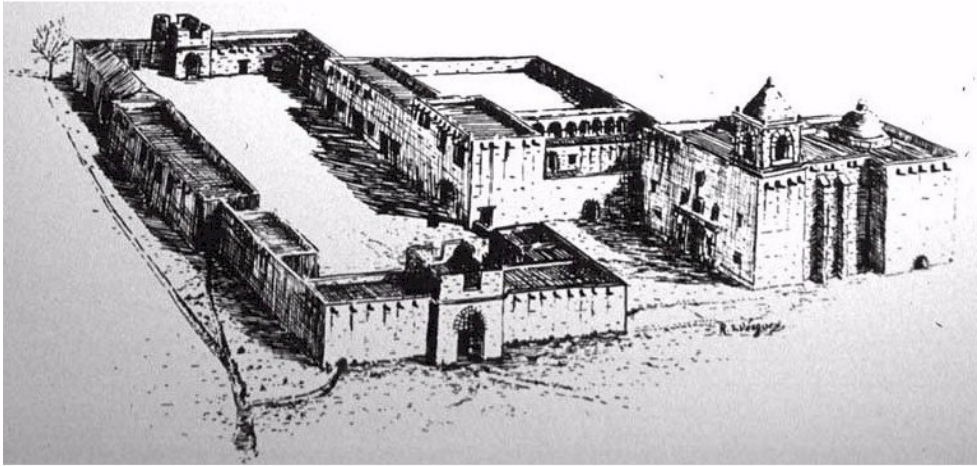
There was an exception. Indecision did not extend to money. Bishops seemed to make decisions on money very quickly.

CHAPTER II: The Decisión, In-Decisión

Juan learned the lands around the Valero Mission were being divided among the Mission Indians and most of the stored grain had already gone to the Presidio for the soldiers and their horses. Services were still being held at the Mission, so the vestments and the Crucifix were still inside. The bell had been moved, somewhere, but no one seemed to know or would not say, where.

The mission system was ending and all missions were to close. This included the four other missions on the San Antonio river: Mission Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción, San Jose y San Miguel de Aguayo, San Juan Capistrano, and Mission San Francisco de la Espada.

Juan did not know it would take 30 years to put into full effect. Church plans, like Donkeys the priests ride, move very slowly.



View of the Mission Valero Circa 1790 drawn by R. S. Vasquez

The Bishop, however, did need to show that good progress was being made. With great fanfare, He closed the Mission Valero.

Juan wanted some part of the Mission. He was not sure why he wanted it so badly. He guessed it was that the Mission Valero was part of the ground he walked on each day and felt it was part of his soul.

The Priests did not want to see him any more as Juan had become a real irritation as his repeated request became more of a frustrating demand.

Juan walked to the Mission Valero one Tuesday morning.

When he arrived, furniture and other items were being removed from the sanctuary. He walked in to find Father Xavier moving his arms, pointing and giving directions to several of the Mission Indians milling about.

Out of the corner of his eye, Father Xavier spotted Juan and with a quick motion, turned to Juan and said, "Juan you have become a pain, a faithful servant with no patience. Look about and take what ever you can carry and bother me no more."

Hanging above the altar was the Crucifix. The altar cloth had not been removed and the pictures of the Holy Mother and Child and others were on the altar. Juan was excited and unprepared for what had just happened.

"What ever I can carry", Juan mulled in his mind. To Father Xavier he spouted, "Thank you Father, I will do my best to not be troublesome."

It dawned on Juan he had walked and would have to carry everything back to the ranch. No horse, no cart only his arms and legs, not to mention his back. He would have to make do.

Juan wanted the Crucifix and anything else he could get his hands on.

With determination and help from a couple of Indians he took the Crucifix from its supporting chains, gathered a few of the pictures he wanted and sat on the cool tile floor of the sanctuary. He found some skins and wrapped the pictures. Using a wicker chair, skins, and leather thongs, he formed a backpack.

He placed the pictures and the other items on the seat of the chair. These he secured with more leather. He leaned the Crucifix against the chair and secured this as well.

He looked a strange sight coming out of the sanctuary into the bright sun; a man stooped, a chair strapped on his back, the crossbeam of the cross over his head. The Crucifix made the 'chair pack' top heavy and each step caused him to sway, first to the left, then to the right.

Juan muttered to himself, "I should have brought my cart".

Juan had plenty of time to think on the way home about what had just happened. "No one can make a decision", he grumbled. "You ask the Priest, He tells you no, or he has to think about it. You ask the Priest, He tells you he has to talk to the Bishop. Then, You are ignored. Then what happens? The Priest tells you to take whatever you want."

It was a slow walk back. There were many stops to rest.

Juan almost fell three times. First, when he crossed the San Antonio River Bridge; the second time, when he crossed Camaron Creek. The third time was when he almost tripped on the path leading out from the villa towards the ranch. Juan plodded, swayed on, first to the left, then to the right.

At least, there was a bridge on the San Antonio river. It was not always the case.

Several years ago, the soldiers of the Presidio built a bridge over the river so they could move their carts and horses more quickly. The mission priests tore it down to keep the Mission Indians from the villa.

The Priests treated the Indians as if they were children. They feared the villa would be a bad influence on them.

The Soldiers rebuilt the bridge, and then the Priests destroyed the bridge and the cycle continued; build, destroy. With the closure of Valero, this in fighting would end. The bridge would stay.

CHAPTER III: The Chapel

María was washing Paco's hair. Paco was five, so far, the youngest of the boys. Little Juan Ximenes would not be born until 1810. Paco or Pancho is a nick name for Francisco. He was having fun splashing in the water. She was more concerned with wasting expensive soap. Animal fat to make the soap was plentiful but the soda ash was difficult to get. Paco got soap in his eyes, started yelling, and began splashing water on his face. Water was everywhere. María wiped the water from her face using her apron and suddenly found she was looking at something coming down the trail, swaying this way and that. Being a little near-sighted did not help. "Paco, go inside and get your big brother", she sternly whispered into Paco's ear. Paco stopped thrashing, as he knew that voice. It was his Mother's voice of danger. He ran inside and returned with his older

brother Antonio. Antonio was 14, tall and lanky. Antonio looked out across the field to see his Father coming with a large load on his back. "It's only Papa" he remarked in the, 'why did you bother me tone.' He ran out to help his Father. It had taken Juan slightly over 2 hours of slowly plodding to get home.

"I have it Mama", he told María Mariana. "I have the Cross from the Misión Valero. Father Xavier gave it to me."

"What are you going to do with it now that you have it?" was her reply. Juan was not sure, but he did have the Crucifix as well as other things. He put all he had brought home in the main room, leaning the Crucifix in one corner. The paintings and other icons he hung on the wall. *And that was that!*

Years came and went. The year is 1813 and 20 years have gone by since Juan carried the Crucifix from the Mission Valero



to the ranch. The Mission was in disrepair and so was Juan. Juan felt old. María seemed to lose her strength and Juan knew his time was short. People should not live past 60 he thought to himself. His sons were managing the

ranch. How long it would remain was unclear, as San Antonio was growing and would soon encroach the ranch.

The Crucifix was still in the corner where he had placed it long ago. Juan had felt that something needed to be done but he was unsure of what to do.

"This land is the Mission Valero", he would say to María, when she would listen. "This land is our land", she would reply.

The lands around the misión Valero had been divided and distributed to the Indians of the misión. Some had been subsequently purchased by larger land owners and some by the Pueblo.

After the departure of the Franciscans, the seventy-five-year-old misión entered a long period of rather haphazard use. The site's subsequent functions included quarters for both Spanish and Mexican frontier troops; housing for local Indians, Tejanos, and itinerant squatters; hospital; army supply depot; Masonic lodge; jail; commercial store and warehouse.

It is not known, when the change came. Nevertheless, in time, the name Valero was dropped.

Alamo is the Spanish word for the Poplar tree. These trees surrounded the mission complex. In time, the complex took the name "Alamo".

The correspondence of the time reflects this. For example: In January of 1807, Antonio Cordero, in his letter to the commandant at Trinidad wrote:

...Among the 25 men from the Alamo, who in compliance with orders of the day, must go from that post to Atascosito, you will send the gunsmith of that company with his anvil and other implements...

Again in February of 1807, Nemesio Salcedo writes,

"...Your Lordship, should give heed to the necessity of furnishing horses to the troops at Bejar, Bahia, and Alamo..."

And so, the buildings of the Mission Valero came to be known as the Alamo.

It began with his eldest son Antonio. "We need the space, Papa", he began, "My wife and I just need the space." "They need the space", chimed María Mariana.

"I will not desecrate the things that belong to God", responded Juan Francisco with a little anger and disappointment over all he had done so long ago. "What do you want to do, Juan, rebuild the Mission?" taunted María. "Why not?" thought Juan. He did not say anything to María or to his son; he just went outside to think. He watched the sun go down, he mulled over what María had said. "Maybe not the mission", He pondered "but a place to hold and honor that which belongs to God. A little mission, a chapel". And so, in 1813, Juan with help from his sons, designed and built the Chapel to house the icons he had brought home, to the ranch, from the mission Valero some 20 years earlier. Little Juan Ximenes was 2 and half years old.

CHAPTER IV: El Señor de Los Milagros

"Get off at Santa Rosa", my Father said, "and stay to the right." I was on my way to visit El Señor de Los Milagros for the first time. I am not sure why I had not visited before. I had heard many stories about the Chapel. My Mother Margaret and my Father Vivian Q. Rodríguez had spoken of it.

I continued East on Interstate 10 towards downtown San Antonio. My Father had told me he played around (and sometimes in) the Chapel. He and his Cousins particularly "Cuca" were close. Cuca is a nickname for Refugia. My Father's Uncle Inocencio had several children one named "Cuca". My Father and Cuca were both the same age, both born in 1917.

Vivian was not really his real name. It was just the name that became attached to him, living in a split world. The split world of Spanish and English.

His Birth Certificate has him as Severo Rodríguez. Named after his Grandfather, Severo: the brother of Clemente, husband of Candelaria.

My name is Viviano. On my Birth Certificate, prepared by my Grandfather, my Name is Viviano. My Father is also listed as Viviano. Could my Grandfather be wrong?

I do not think my Grandmother got along well with my Great-Grandfather Severo. In 1943, my Grandmother went to the Bexar County Hall of Records and revised my Father's name. As a kid, my Mother called me "vív-yawn", the familiar, for Viviano.

My Grandmother changed his name using the familiar. The clerk entered the name as he heard it. "vív-yawn" became Vivian with the stroke of a pen.

El Señor de Los Milagros was not always the name of the Chapel. It was known in the area as the Ximenes Chapel, at least before the miracle.

I do not know the following to be true. However, it is a story told to me by my Father.

The story is that of a young man condemned to die for some crime, circa 1920-1930 and the resulting events.

His Mother came, prayed, and made a pact with the Almighty at the Ximenes chapel.

In a scene reminiscent of a movie; her son was pardoned at the last minute. There was great joy from the Mother. She told people a great miracle had occurred. She had prayed for her son at the Chapel and asked he be saved from the gallows. She also promised God, if her Mother's plea was granted, she would perform an act of piety, to thank God, before the world.

The day came for this contract with God to be fulfilled. People lined the streets. As she had promised, she walked on her knees from San Fernando Cathedral to the Ximenes Chapel.

People lined the streets. Mothers stepped from the sidewalks with rugs to place before this woman of faith.

With this miracle, the Ximenes Chapel became El Señor de Los Milagros (Lord of Miracles).

Each day, people come to pray and ask God to help them overcome an illness or some bad event in their lives or even to win the lotto. Some people come from other parts of the country or from other parts of the world. A WWII pilot promised to come and pray once a year at the chapel, if he survived the war. His aviator wings hang within the chapel to this day.

We got off on Santa Rosa, stayed to the right, made a right turn on to Martín and then Frío Streets. We made a right turn on the second right. The Chapel appeared on the left at the end of the block.

Vivian Q. Rodríguez approaches the Chapel.



There is a parking lot to accommodate the visitors. We pulled in. I hardly stopped, when my Father got out of the car. He walked on ahead, while I closed the car.

He walked, not into the chapel, but into the adjoining house.

This house and the Chapel are all that is left of the Ximenes

ranch. Greetings and laughter came from within. I opened the screen door and there sitting in a chair was Carolina, Daughter of Clemente and Candelaria Rodríguez.

My grandfather, Viviano Deleon Rodríguez is a first cousin of Carolina ('Carrie').

Viviano Deleon is the son of Severo, brother of Clemente.



Because of the large families, there are Aunts and Uncles younger than nephews and nieces. Because of the proximity of the families, cousins become "sons" and "daughters". Because of the proximity, most members of the family just knew each other as family.

Carolina told me how my Father used to play around the church. She told me how they used to go to the movies on Saturday and how they used to get money to go. I do not want to go into a lot of detail, but there was a stick, chewing gum, and the coin box of the Chapel. Somehow, a dime or quarter would wind up in hands of those wanting to go to the movies, with enough left over for popcorn.

I was left with the impression my Father was instrumental in 'fishing' for the coins.

Time past too quickly. We said our goodbyes. We left. I had a new appreciation for the history that surrounded me. I also wished someone in the past had written down what actually took place.

Little Juan Ximenes (Son of Juan Francisco Ximenes) grew up and became part of the heroes of early Texas. He was part of Ben Milam's Company driving General Cos (Brother-in-law of Santa Ana) from San Antonio de Bexar in December 5, 1835. His brother, Damacio Ximenes, died in February 1836, defending the Alamo from Santa Ana. He was 13 or 14 years of age at the time. In 1839, Juan married Teodora de Jesus Rodriguez, had several daughters and two sons. One of the sons, Wenseslado married Gertrudes Flores. One of their daughters, Candelaria then married Clemente Rodriguez and so our Rodriguez family became part of El Senor de Los Milagros.

This story is an attempt to present a sense of that history. Some is true; some has to be filled in. Perhaps in time, we can really find out what took place, when it took place and why.

For more information on the family, visit www.poblar.com

The Chapel is on the National Historical registry.



**Ximenes Chapel (added
1980 - Building - #80004080)
Also known as Chapel of the
Miracles
113 Ruiz St., San Antonio**



The interior of the Chapel.



Note the Crucifix and Icons. These are from the Misión Valero; The Alamo.

The Alamo today!



Other missions of San Antonio

San Jose y San Migújel de Aguayo

San



San Juan Capistrano



Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción

San Francisco de la
Espada



Family Rodriguez



Jose Maria
Rodriguez
b: 1832 San Antonio, Tx



Francisca
Gonzales
b: 1841

Antonio Severo Felix Jose M Clemente Rafael Luis Guillermo Sabina Soledad
b: 06-13-1857 b: 11-12-1859 b: 7-29-62 b: 05-01-1866 b: 1865 b: 1869 b: 1869 b: 09-24-1871 b: 1873 b: 1873



Clemente
Rodriguez
b: 1865
San Antonio, Tx

Candellaria
Ximenes
b: 1875

Peta Perrita Manulea

Vicente Tules Candellaria Isabella Carrie Clemente





Severo Rodriguez Timotea Deleon

b: 11.12.1859 SanAntonio,Tx b: 1862 SanAntonio,Tx



Viviano b:08-07-1885	Inocencio b:05-21-1889	Refugia b:06-15-1887	Francisco b:08-18-1891	Juan de Dios "Johnny Favella" b:10-01-1893 d:Feb73	Soledad b:11-12-1895 d:04-08-1994	Alphonso b:01-23-1898 d:Jun1983
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Viviano Deleon
Rodriguez

Angela Quinones

Joel

Albert
Bio

Viviano
Bio

Daniel
Bio

Henry
Bio

Josefine
Bio

George Q
Bio

