

ALONZO, VENTURA (1904–2000)

“This little girl does not go by [music] notes, but it's here in her head.” Music teacher speaking about Ventura Alonzo. *Latinas in the United States: A Historical Encyclopedia*.

Ventura Alonzo was only five when her family fled the Mexican Revolution and settled in Texas. When her older brother ordered a piano from New York City, Alonzo wanted to play and did not want lessons, thus began a life-long dedication to music. In the mid-1930s she and her second husband, Francisco Alonzo formed their own orchestra, Alonzo y sus Rancheros, which was comprised of family members, including Ventura as the singer and accordion player. She soon became known as the “Queen of the Accordion” or “La Reina del Acordéon.” Alonzo wrote several of the songs recorded by the group, including “Magnolia Park.” The couple opened a ballroom, La Terraza, in 1956, and thirteen years later they retired from the nightclub business and from performing with the orchestra. In retirement, Alonzo dedicated her time to playing the piano for senior citizens at the Centro Alegre. A mural dedicated to Alonzo was painted by local art teacher Teodoro Estrada in 1996 that is located on the side of a Houston Firestone store.