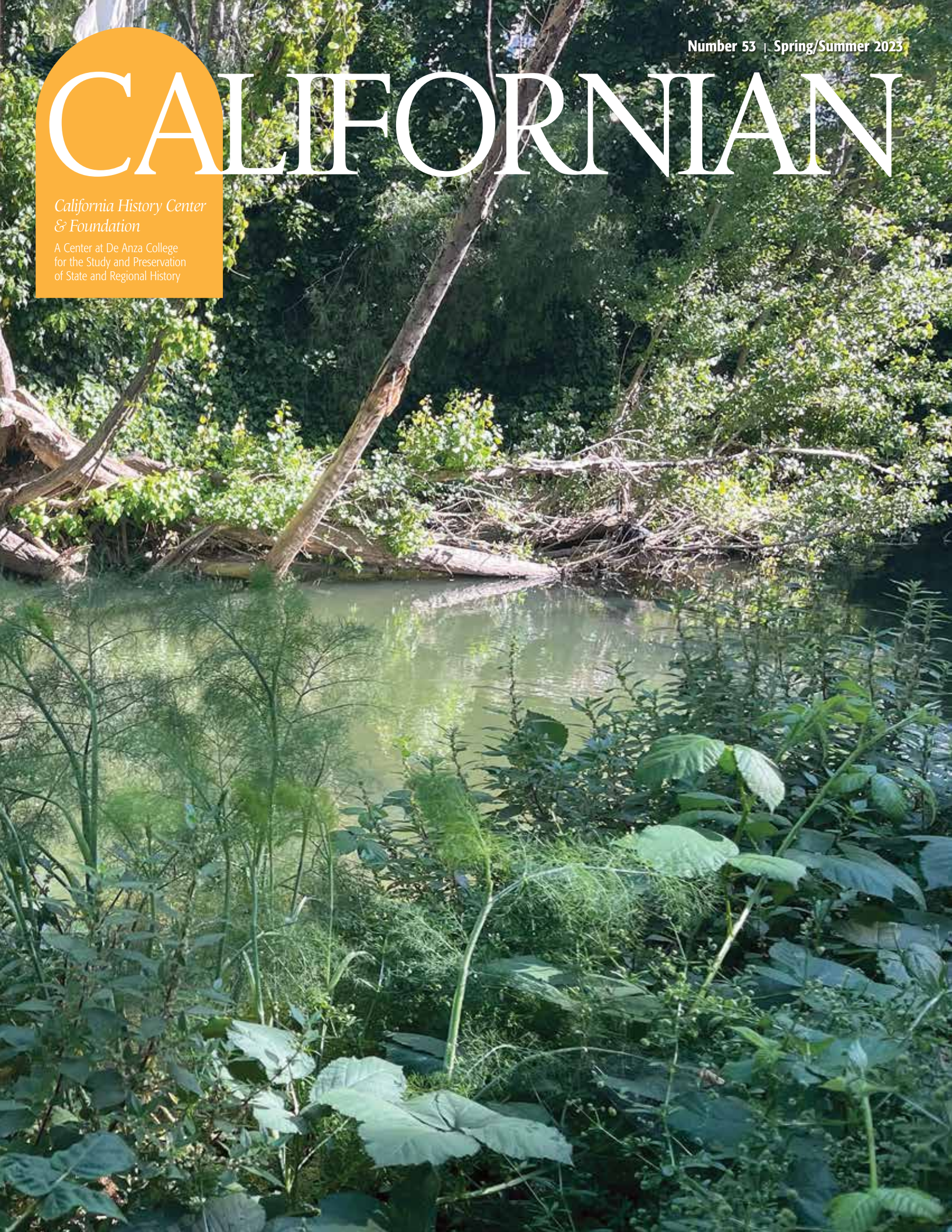


Number 53 | Spring/Summer 2023

# CALIFORNIAN

*California History Center  
& Foundation*

A Center at De Anza College  
for the Study and Preservation  
of State and Regional History



## Digitizing CHC Oral Histories

California History Center is embarking on an ambitious project to digitize its oral history collection in order to increase access and awareness of Santa Clara Valley's and California's past, present, and future. We encourage CHCF membership and donations in support of this and other valuable initiatives. *See QR code:*



## Faculty Opportunity: Storytelling Learning Community Cohort June 16; July 7 & 28 –

**9:30am-11:20am:** These Zoom sessions are for De Anza faculty interested in participating in a learning community cohort to develop ideas for incorporating oral history, stories and digital storytelling into the curriculum. We will explore ways to encourage storytelling and listening on campus and in the community. *See QR code:*



# Calendar

## Spring Quarter

### APRIL

- 27 Not Your Masi's Generation** – Art Exhibit Welcoming Reception; 5:00-7:00pm

### MAY

- 6 Beyond Silicon Valley: Civil Rights** – Speaker talk, mini-doc, and conversation
- 25 Not Your Masi's Generation** – Art Exhibit Closing Reception; 5:00-9:00pm

### JUNE

- 1 Ethnic Studies Summit: "Californian Counter-Narratives"** at CHC 11:45am-3:00pm; student exhibit will be available through end of Spring Quarter
- 19 Juneteenth Holiday**
- 30 End of Spring Quarter**

## Summer Quarter

### JULY

- 3 First day of Summer Session**
- 4 Independence Day holiday** – no classes; offices closed

### AUGUST

- 11 End of Summer Session**

### SEPTEMBER

- 2-4 Labor Day Holiday** – no classes, offices closed

## Fall Quarter

### SEPTEMBER

- 25 First day of Fall Quarter**

### NOVEMBER

- 10 Veterans Day**
- 23-24 Thanksgiving Holiday**

### DECEMBER

- 15 Last Day of Fall Quarter**



### California History Center & Foundation

A Center for the Study of State and Regional History  
De Anza College

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www.DeAnza.edu/CaliffHistory

Trianon Building Hours: Tuesday through Thursday 10:00am–4:00pm

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*Cover photo: Lori Clinchard captured this glimpse of the Guadalupe River as it winds through downtown San Jose, near the first site of El Pueblo de San José de Guadalupe, on May 27, 2023 at 4:27pm. The river is and will remain our witness to change.*

# Director's Report



Lori Clinchard

## Revitalizing History: Wonder, Evidence and New Perspectives

I recently took a class on digital storytelling, in which we had to first identify a story we wanted to tell. I thought back over my entire life, and I couldn't decide which moment or experience or phase of life to focus on. There were certain stories I had already told repeatedly throughout my life. For example, I liked sharing the story of climbing Half Dome with my father at age 10, of how I felt standing on the very edge of that massive granite mountain, looking down; how on the way back down, my father twisted his ankle, slowing our progress until we lost the trail in the dark and didn't arrive back at camp until after midnight; and how that journey has lived on in me all my life. But I felt uninspired at the thought of retelling that same story (as I sort of did just now). It might be a new story for someone else to hear — but for me, there was no novelty, no new insight. What would be the point, really?

Fortunately for me, during that first week of class, I was invited to a wonderful reading at Bookshop Santa Cruz. During the Q&A period after the reading, a child in the audience asked one of the authors, Ross Gay, how he decides what to write about. Gay told the child, "I write about what puzzles me. I write to understand something." This response lit a spark within me and changed the path of my work in the digital storytelling class. I returned to my assignment with energy, curiosity, and focus. I thought about the challenges I face, how I deal with loss and sadness when people I love die or are far away, and how hard it is to comprehend such changes. The story I eventually created, titled "Into the Woods," was a reflection on those unanswerable questions about love, loss and the passage of time, and was satisfying to me in ways that my old, familiar stories weren't. I also gained new appreciation for the power of wonder, and the value of staying open to new insights about old events.

This experience has been inspiring to me in my work at the California History Center, as I join with public historians and others in reconsidering the work and role of history in our lives. Like many people, I grew up thinking of history as a set of facts about the past — names and dates and causes and effects that were presented in history textbooks as settled truths. I have now come to recognize the importance of continual cu-

riosity and a willingness to incorporate new evidence, to see a situation with fresh eyes, and to listen to new stories from a wider array of voices. This approach strengthens historical analysis. When we pair this attitude of openness to new evidence with a commitment to critical analysis, we have a strong set of tools for evaluating and updating our perspectives on the past. We can then use this constantly renewed understanding to make good decisions about the present and to make progress toward a better future.

In this issue, we build on the recommendations of Anne Marie Todd, the author of last month's feature article, "Valley of Heart's Delight," to engage in heritage discourse, exploring and bringing to light stories of a person's or a community's past, with the intention of deepening our roots and strengthening our sense of belonging to the place we call home. We have invited local scholar, Dr. Gregorio Mora-Torres, to share the first of a three-part series on the history of Mexican Americans in the Santa Clara Valley around the turn of the 20th century, and we hope that this first piece, with its rich and detailed descriptions, will help to create a visceral sense of daily life for readers of every ancestry. When we read and listen with empathy, curiosity and a real willingness to hear others' experiences, we can take in their stories as our own, thus expanding our sense of self to include more of our community members and neighbors within our personal definitions of "us."

The article in this issue by sociologist Steve Nava describes a meaningful local example of heritage discourse, this time highlighting the experience and work of the local San Jose author of "Finding Familia & Ancestors," Alejandra Tlali-Miles, who researched her own ancestors in an effort to answer an internal call and deepen her sense of identity and belonging.

The California History Center has been at the center of both of these types of heritage discourse over the years — both personal story-telling and community history-making — often through the recording of oral histories, but also through the availability of its archival collections for researchers, who still come to the Center to access materials that can't be found anywhere else. We are currently initiating an ambitious project to digitize the CHC oral history recordings of the past fifty years.

*continued on page 20*

"What if wonder was the ground of our gathering?"

—Ross Gay,

*Inciting Joy: Essays*

# Audrey Edna Butcher Civil Liberties Education Initiative



Tom Izu

## Expanding Democracy by Defending Civil Liberties

While making my way through grade school I somehow got the idea that laws were etched in stone by a higher order, and the only people who did not follow them were the “bad guys.” Justice in this way was a pretty simple process with only a few kinks in the system appearing intermittently to make life more interesting: Someone might be wrongly accused, or “framed” for something they didn’t do, but our justice system would always correct itself and find the real villain in the end.

For you see, I was a product of TV shows and movies designed in the late 1950s that I watched in excess to my mother’s chagrin, including detective and “who done it” mysteries. Also, it did not help that my early schooling happened during a very rigid and authoritarian time that did not encourage much questioning of anything. However, now and then, real life stories from my family’s experiences intruded into this make-believe TV world and created a dissonance that would cause my brain to itch uncomfortably and ultimately, to wonder about things.

One such incident was when I watched “The FBI Story” starring Jimmy Stewart (the Tom Hanks of the 1950s). There is a scene in the movie where Stewart, playing a stalwart and squeaky-clean FBI agent recounts how he helped round-up dangerous enemy aliens during World War II, locking them up to keep our country safe. Some of these individuals were Japanese Americans, but his honest sounding voice-over monologue assured the audience that only the “bad guys” were targeted, and not one of them was a “law-abiding, loyal American.” This caused my brain to itch and my stomach to feel all knotted-up inside. I had a funny feeling that something was wrong with this characterization of people like my Grandparents and Parents, who I knew had been placed into some sort of “camps” during the War, but knew little about it. They sure didn’t seem very dangerous and I couldn’t imagine them as threat to National Security. I did not know enough history to understand just how wrong Jimmy Stewart’s FBI character was until many years later.

That time came during the 1970s when I became involved in the fight for Ethnic Studies and civil rights while in college. What I came to realize is that my grandparents and parents and all other Japanese Americans during World War II had been treated as if guilty en masse, due to race and ancestry without individual due process of law as spelled out by the Bill of Rights

in the US Constitution. I also learned that the highest law of the land did not stop my family from being put into American-style Concentration Camps. This was the beginning of my understanding of what civil liberties and rights were about: The Bill of Rights was not “self-enforcing,” but needed to be defended and made meaningful through direct social action. Most importantly, this meant that I needed to make a commitment to stand up for justice and not passively sit back and assume someone or something else would take care of everything.

This led to a journey during which I met many people who deeply influenced me in many ways, including in my understanding of civil liberties and eventually, democracy in general. I became active in the local movement to win redress and reparations for the Japanese American forced exclusion and mass incarceration during WWII. Through it I met Mits Koshiyama, who as a young second generation Japanese American or Nisei was imprisoned in the Heart Mountain Concentration Camp in Wyoming where many San Jose Japanese Americans ended up during World War II. When he turned 18 while in camp, he refused to be drafted into the US Army until his and his family’s Constitutional Rights were restored. For this he, along with 62 other Nisei were tried and convicted for draft evasion and moved from the prison camp to a Federal Penitentiary until released after being pardoned by President Truman in 1947. Mits had believed so strongly in the Bill of Rights, he felt he had to take a stand for his family and community. From him I learned that civil liberties was about being in it for the long haul, and that you might not win a fight but you had to keep going even if, in his case, some form of vindication didn’t come until 46 years later when redress legislation passed in 1988, asserting that the Constitutional rights of Japanese Americans had been violated during the war.

My activism during this period also led to an interested in the ACLU. I was fortunate to assist in an interview of Ernest Besig who had served as the head of the ACLU of Northern California and had recruited Fred Korematsu to challenge his wartime incarceration in the famous Supreme Court Case that bears his name. Besig later fought bravely against hate and fear mongering of the 1950s “Red Scare” period in his challenges against the House Committee on Un-American Activities. He

*continued on page 20*

“Equal rights,  
fair play,  
justice, are all  
like the air:  
we all have it,  
or none of us  
has it. That is  
the truth of it”

– Maya  
Angelou

# The Old POBLADORES of San Jose at the Dawn of the 20th Century



## Resistance, Resilience, and Adaption to a New World

The first in a 3-part series by Gregorio Mora-Torres



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Gregorio Mora-Torres has a BA from Santa Clara University and a Master's and Ph.D. from the University of California, Irvine. In 1989, Dr. Mora-Torres started working as a lecturer at San Jose State University in the Mexican American Studies Department and stayed until his retirement in the fall of 2020. In addition to teaching students, Professor Mora-Torres enjoyed giving tours of the first Mexican pueblo and the first Mexican neighborhood in Downtown San Jose.

In addition to teaching, Dr. Mora-Torres has done extensive research and writing on Northern Mexico and Chicano history. In 2005, he edited and translated *California Voices*—the Spanish language oral memoirs of a 19th-century Californio soldier, Don Jose Maria Amador, published by the University of North Texas Press. He finished editing the manuscript “A Californio at Santa Clara College: the 1861-62 Diaries of Jesus Maria Estudillo.” Estudillo was a native 19th-century Californio from San Leandro who studied at Santa Clara College. He has completed a two-volume history of Mexicans in the Santa Clara Valley during the 19th and 20th centuries. The first book deals with the creation of Mexican Colonias in the Santa Clara Valley. The second book analyses the rise and evolution of the Chicano Movement in the Santa Clara Valley from 1960 to 1975. Dr. Mora-Torres also serves as a resource for radio, television, and print media on Latinos in the United States and issues dealing with Latin America, particularly Mexico. Lastly, he is now an Emeritus Faculty and a founding board member of the La Raza Historical Society of Santa Clara Valley.



*Rancheros en Alta California*  
(Courtesy of Dr. Mora-Torres)

By the turn of the twentieth century, the Santa Clara Valley had undergone several phases in its agricultural history. The Franciscan missionaries and Mexican settlers established the livestock, farming, and orchardist traditions before the United States annexation of California in 1848. However, after 1850, white Americans, French and Italian immigrants shifted the Valley to commercial agriculture. Between 1850 and 1870, the Valley's white American farmers transformed it into a grain-growing region. Afterward, growers planted its fertile soil with a large variety of fruit trees and vineyards. By the early 1900s, prune, cherry, apricot, pear, and apple orchards covered most of the Valley. On the surrounding hillsides, European immigrants, mostly Italians, planted extensive vineyards. The thriving fruit industry received an additional boost with the introduction of canneries. By the late 1800s, the Santa Clara Valley had dozens of canneries that managed to process most of its fruit production. Because of the incredible agricultural production, its residents proudly began to call it the Valley of Heart's Delight.

Most writers of Santa Clara Valley's history suggested that transitioning from Mexican control of the region to Anglo-American was natural. The primitive pastoral world of the *Californio rancheros* would not compete with the modern capitalist system of Anglo-Americans, so it was cast aside to

die out. The writers also suggest that the Californios waned until becoming historically irrelevant. However, this article will argue that after 1850, the local Californios stubbornly resisted the persistent Anglo-Americans' attempts to dispossess them from their lands. After losing their ranchos through legal ways, but most often by illegal ones, the Californios, by now poor, retreated to the physical space of their old *Pueblo*, located east of the Guadalupe River. They felt safe from Anglo-American physical aggressions in the Pueblo while practicing Mexican customs and traditions. They continued speaking Spanish and socializing with friends and relatives, and occasionally, the entire community gathered for larger cultural celebrations. The Californios' resilience permitted them to survive physical, economic, and cultural attacks on them. However, they were sufficiently pragmatic to adapt to the new capitalist economy, emerging technologies, and cultural traditions introduced to the Valley by Anglo-Americans and immigrants.

### **The Santa Clara Californios Surviving in the New American World**

The decade of the 1850s was bittersweet for many Californio rancheros. Some rancheros made good profits by selling grains, beef, or other foods to hungry forty-niners trying to strike it rich in the gold fields. Antonio Coronel, a resident of Los Angeles, and Jose Maria Amador from San Jose, recounted how they made good money selling merchandise to hungry miners in the Sierras. The Peralta family and their neighbors, the Estudillos, were able to amass "respectable" wealth by selling their livestock and agricultural products in San Francisco. Their prosperity permitted many Californio families from the southern part of the state and San Francisco Bay to enroll their sons at Santa Clara College in the old mission to obtain a proper education. They also did the same for their daughters at the College of Notre Dame in San Jose. For most of the decade, the wealthy Californio rancheros felt optimistic that the expanding American nation would welcome them into society. However, they quickly became extremely disillusioned with American society and its capitalistic economic system by the next decade.

The Californios hoped that the United States authorities



*City of San Jose, 1875  
(Courtesy of  
Dr. Mora-Torres)*

would respect the protections the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the Protocol of Queretaro provided them, especially their property rights. Almost immediately, Anglo-Americans demonstrated that they had no intention of honoring the Mexicans' legal rights, their rights to U.S. citizenship, and their right to own property. As soon as California became a part of the United States, Anglo-Americans challenged the Mexicans' property rights. In their eyes, Mexicans had lost the war, and as conquered people, they had no rights to anything. They began to occupy the property of Mexicans, even if they had to take it by force. On the other hand, Mexicans experienced all kinds of legal obstacles to getting the U.S. authorities, including the courts, to recognize their legal ownership over their lands. Often, they spent considerable fortunes on lawyer fees and court expenses in futile attempts to keep them. After years of legal costs, many ended up landless and completely impoverished.

The Californios collectively lost other valuable properties. In the 1860s, the San Jose town council continued to appropriate Pueblo lands for the use of newly arrived white American settlers. It expanded Washington Square from Third Street in the west to Seventh Street in the east; in the north, the square stretched from San Fernando Street to San Carlos Street in the south. By the 1880s, the Anglo-American neighborhood reached east of the Coyote River. In addition

to taking Pueblo lands, Anglo-Americans grabbed the large ranch properties owned by the Californios. They either purchased them or took them by extraneous means. Hundreds of white Americans formed dozens of squatter leagues across the Santa Clara Valley to invade the rancho properties and frequently used physical violence against its lawful owners when they tried to evict them. It was also common for some Anglo-Americans to forge property titles and have the courts validate them.

While the Californio rancheros attempted to use the law and the courts to protect their properties, they were fighting a losing war. While the courts frequently recognized the validity of the Mexican property titles, the local authorities were often unwilling to remove Anglo-American squatters. Often,

it was left to rancheros to evict white American squatters, who outnumbered them by a large margin. In these physical confrontations, Mexicans never had a chance to be victorious. Anglo-American squatters killed several Berreyesa male members while they were defending their properties. The deadly encounters drove the family patriarch insane. Antonio Suñol, the well-known merchant from San Jose, experienced a similar fate. Squatters killed his only son while defending the family's property. In the case of the Chabolla family, it decided to sell some of their occupied property even when the court declared it the legal owner. In 1861, the Santa Clara sheriff wanted to carry out an eviction order on squatters sitting on the



*Bernal Family 1890s (Courtesy of Dr. Mora-Torres)-*



Chabolla ranch but then hesitated when hundreds of armed squatter supporters congregated at Washington Square and threatened to use force if the sheriff carried out the order. In the end, San Jose powerbrokers convinced the Chabollas to sell the contested land at below-market prices, and the Anglo-American squatters agreed to compensate them. After seeing the Anglo squatter violence and the authorities protecting the Californio property rights, the more practical rancheros sold off their properties. The Bernal family sold their huge Rancho de San Jose and large portions of the Santa Teresa Ranch. Considering the ceaseless attacks on the ranchero's properties, a pragmatic Jose Maria Amador also accepted an offer for his San Ramon Ranch. By the late 1870s, Jose Maria Amador and Juan Pablo Bernal, at one time highly successful ranchers, were living in desperate poverty. Notably, a few Californios kept remnants of their properties and subsisted as self-sufficient farmers.

With the end of the Gold Rush, thousands of Anglo-Americans poured into the San Francisco Bay, and the populations of its towns grew rather quickly. In San Jose, Anglo-Americans rapidly became the dominant population, and their numbers reduced Californios to political insignificance. While Mexicans lost their political influence, even though their population became smaller compared to Anglo Americans, their numbers grew. Many Sonorans, Chileans, and other Latin Americans came to reside in the Santa Clara Valley. They came to work in the New Almaden mercury mines, located a dozen miles southwest of San Jose. The New Almaden mines would become the sole provider in the American West of the liquid metal used in the tedious process of separating gold and silver from rock. By the 1850s, hundreds of Mexicans, Chileans, and other Latin Americans represented the largest workforce. Since 1845, the expertise and skills of these workers enabled the company to set up a successful mining operation. The Latin American workers not only labored in the mine but also in the processing facilities. Before long, the company produced large amounts of quicksilver. Despite the workers' contribution to running a successful business, the company mistreated them and paid them low wages. It did not take long before these workers began to take work action. Their protests continued for years until the company replaced them with immigrant miners from Cornwall in England. Despite Sonorans and other Mexicans making up most of the miners, local historians and county officials erroneously named their New Almaden settlement—Spanishtown.

After being displaced from their jobs at the mines, the

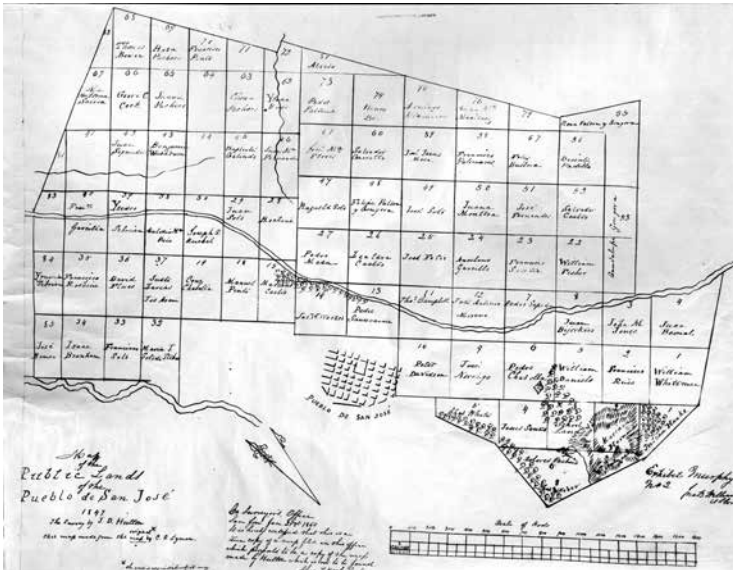
Mexican and other Latin American workers probably moved to other parts of the Valley; many of them joined the Californios of the old Pueblo of San Jose. In time, they merged with the Californio community, whose ancestors founded the town in 1777. Most Pueblo dwellers survived by farming their small plots along the Guadalupe River. Other dwellers worked as artisans, blacksmiths, construction workers, ropemakers, leather workers, carpenters, vaqueros, and agricultural workers. Interestingly, some women earned a living by serving as washerwomen, house servants, cooks, or seamstresses. A few people operated small businesses, such as restaurants and stores. While engaging in their economic activities, the Californios often experienced physical abuse, insults, and even acts of violence at the hands of white Americans. The lynchings of Mexicans and native peoples did not disappear in the Santa Clara Valley until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Undoubtedly, Anglo-Americans pressured the Californios into remaining on their side of town while they continued developing public spaces and residential communities east of Market Street. For several generations, Anglo-Americans made Washington Square the center of their public lives; they rarely ventured into Mexican Town. Similarly, Californios rarely left their Pueblo neighborhood unless to go to work or on special occasions. To them, the old Pueblo became a refuge from the frequent Anglo-American abuse and mistreatment they experienced outside of it. It was commonplace for friends and relatives to visit each other as in the past. This sanctuary also allowed them to continue their traditional links with Mexico. For example, within months of the French invasion of Mexico, Mexican emissaries traveled to California, requesting financial support for the Mexican liberals; it was through them that Californios followed events in Mexico until the French withdrawal and the execution of Emperor Maximilian I in 1867. Not surprisingly, by 1865, the Mexicans of the Pueblo of San Jose started celebrating the Mexican defeat of the French Legion at the Battle of Puebla on May 5, 1862. Along with celebrating Mexican Independence Day, September 16, 1810, the Pueblo residents continued these Mexican national holidays for the rest of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

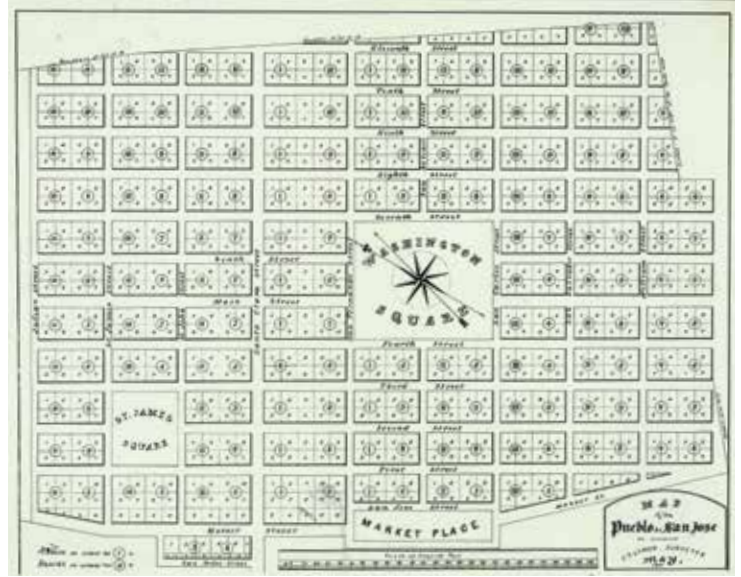
### **Transitioning to the New Capitalist Economy**

After Anglo-Americans acquired the Mexican ranches, they continued the Mexican tradition of raising cattle and producing tallows. Just like the rancheros, white Americans raised thousands of heads of cattle and managed to make a fine living.

...the Californios often experienced physical abuse, insults, and even acts of violence at the hands of white Americans. The lynchings of Mexicans and native peoples did not disappear in the Santa Clara Valley until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



Public Lands of the Pueblo de San Jose 1847. Survey by J.D. Hutton.  
(Courtesy of Dr. Mora-Torres)



Pueblo de San Jose. C.S. Lyman, Surveyor, 1848.  
(Courtesy of Dr. Mora-Torres)

## The old Californio families survived by adapting to the Santa Clara Valley's evolving economy.

They also started growing grains in large quantities. However, European immigrants that settled in the Santa Clara Valley followed the missions' tradition of planting grapes and producing wine. By the 1860s, several French vintners were making wine. Louis Pellier, a French immigrant, also introduced prunes from his homeland to the Valley, which later would become a huge export. By the 1880s, many people had established horticulture in the Santa Clara Valley. Fruit orchards benefitted from introducing new canning technology, which fruits to be preserved through the canning process and shipped to markets on the East Coast. By the 1910s and 1920s, dozens of canneries operated in the Santa Clara Valley, and they hired thousands of workers, mostly Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish immigrants. In addition to canneries, growers turned to sun-drying fruit like prunes and apricots. By the 1920s, the production of fruits and vegetables and the canning industries were Santa Clara Valley's largest wealth generators.

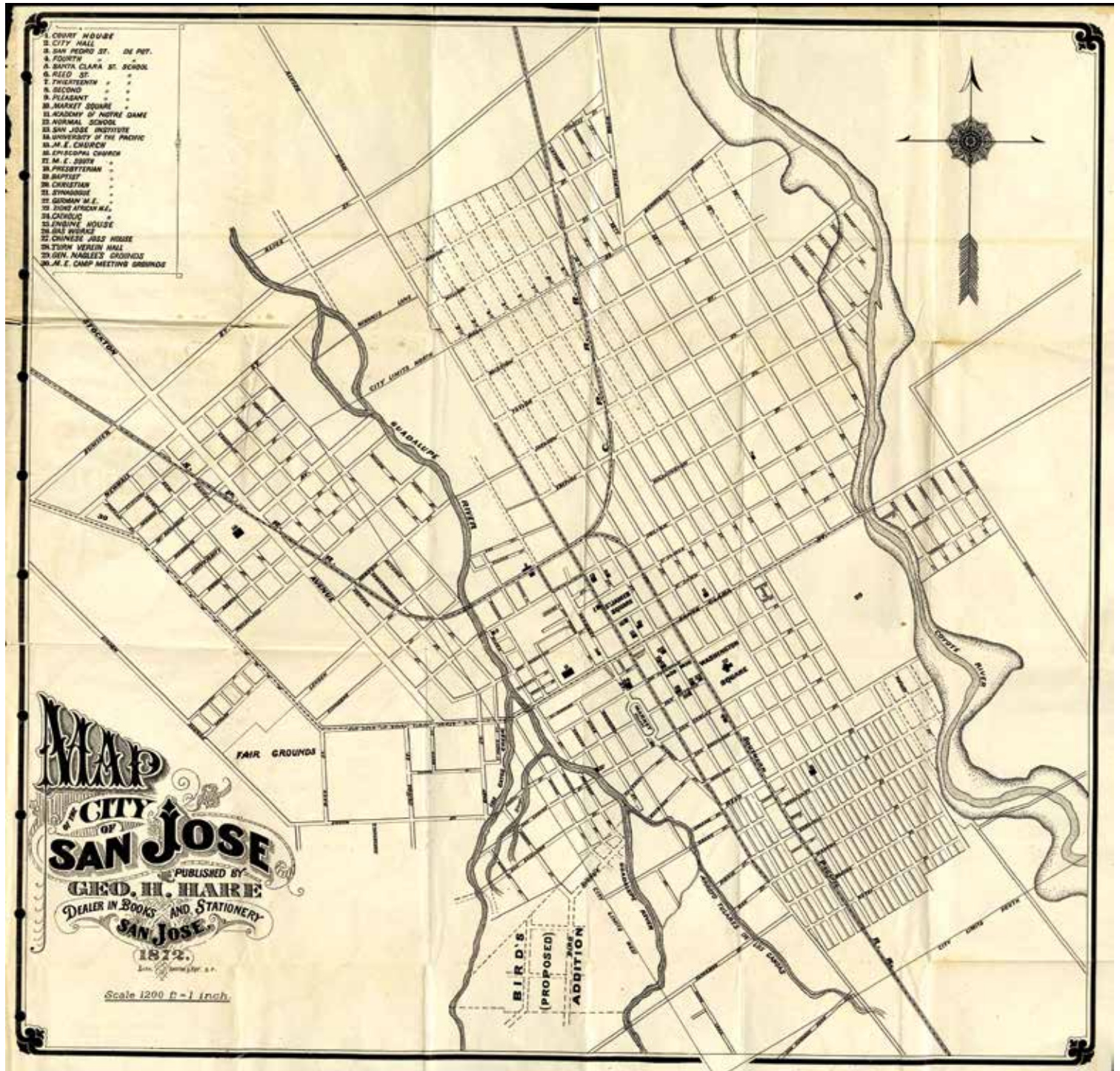
The old Californio families survived by adapting to the Santa Clara Valley's evolving economy. When Anglo-Americans took possession of their old ranches and continued to raise cattle, the Californios worked for them as ranch hands or as vaqueros. As the Valley turned to agriculture, some Californios worked as field hands or farm workers; they earned so little that they barely survived. A few Californio families managed to hold on to small pieces of their former ranches; they survived by becoming self-sufficient. In their Pueblo neighborhood, some Californios continued to work in traditional trades such as leatherwork, saddlemaking, ropemaking, blacksmithing, carpentry, and construction work. Notably, many found employment as store clerks, restaurant workers, streetcar op-

erators, water company workers, cement workers, and cannery workers. Some entered emerging jobs with new technologies, such as electricians, bicycle repairmen, and car mechanics. A few more established Californios found employment as police officers, teachers, nurses, business managers, and store managers. Not surprisingly, some of them owned small businesses.

## From Mexican Pueblo to Colonia

By 1900, San Jose was still a relatively small town, and its population would grow slowly during the next three decades. San Jose's population was 21,500 in 1900. It would grow to almost 29,000 by 1910, jumped to nearly 40,000 by 1920, reached 57,651 by 1930, and hit 68,457 by 1940. Most of the town's residents were white Americans but there were many recent Italian immigrants. The ethnic Mexican population was relatively small compared to white Americans, probably numbering a few thousand. Patricia Zavella claimed that Mexicans represented only two percent of Santa Clara's labor force in the late 1920s. Physically, San Jose occupied a small space. Its limits were Rosa Street (now Hedding) in the north, the Coyote River in the east, Keyes Street to the south, and Race Street to the west. Beyond the town's limits, numerous orchards and agricultural fields interspersed with small towns such as Santa Clara, Willow Glen, Campbell, Los Gatos, and Alviso covered the Valley's remaining parts. Although some San Jose areas remained strictly racially segregated, other parts were co-inhabited by people of diverse racial backgrounds. The white middle class and upper class reserved for themselves the community around Washington Square. Even by the 1930s, racist property covenants kept Mexicans, Italian immigrants, and other non-white residents from

City Map of San Jose, 1920 (Courtesy of Dr. Mora-Torres)





*The Old Mexican Colonia, aerial view, looking east, San Jose (Courtesy of Dr. Mora-Torres)*

Mexicans began to expand the Colonia to the south even during and after the Great Depression... Mexican families and Italian immigrants shared the neighborhoods west of Market Street, the former Mexican Pueblo site.

buying properties in the exclusive Naglee Park and Rose Garden areas of San Jose. For years, the local real estate industry practiced redlining in the Santa Clara Valley. Nonetheless, Mexicans began to expand the Colonia to the south even during and after the Great Depression. Hence, the ethnic Mexican families and Italian immigrants shared the neighborhoods west of Market Street (formerly Guadalupe Street), the former Mexican Pueblo site.<sup>1</sup>

Nonetheless, the rapidly growing Italian immigrant community drastically expanded south of San Carlos Street and west of the Guadalupe River after 1920 and continued growing into the 1940s. Goose Town, the new neighborhood south of downtown, remained mainly an Italian neighborhood. The portion east of First Street and north of Santa Clara Street was a diverse community comprising poor whites and Italian, Asian, and Portuguese immigrants. Notably, many native-born and Mexican immigrant families also built homes in this neighborhood.

In his classic book, Leonard Pitt suggested that Californios experienced a sharp decline in population after the United States' takeover of California.<sup>2</sup> More recent historiography notes that California Mexicans did not decline drastically but were overwhelmed by Anglo Americans' massive growth. Historians also cited the increasing number of white immigrants to California. Albert Camarillo observed that Anglo-Americans encircled the old Pueblo of Santa Barbara and transformed it

into a haven for the small Mexican population.<sup>3</sup> In their books, George Sanchez and Douglas Monroy showed the Mexicans of Los Angeles experiencing a sharp drop in numbers compared to the ever-increasing Anglo-American population that grew dramatically after the 1890s.<sup>4</sup> Anglo-Americans from the Midwest or East European immigrants overtook the old Mexican neighborhoods.<sup>5</sup> Martha Menchaca wrote that even the Mexicans of Santa Paula lost much of their land to an ever-increasing Anglo-American population. White Americans forced Mexicans to live in segregated neighborhoods.<sup>6</sup> Anglo-Americans imposed the same pattern in San Jose.

An examination of the 1900 City Directory of San Jose revealed several patterns about the old Mexican residents of San Jose.<sup>7</sup> First, many of them were descendants of the Pueblo's founding families. Many members of the Alviso, Arguello, Bernal, Berryessa, Bojorquez, Castro, Pacheco, Chaboya, Espinoza, Higuera, Narváez, Ortega, Selaya, Sepulveda, Suñol, and Valencia families still resided in San Jose. Second, most Mexican residents lived in the old Pueblo enclaves, which stretched from First Street west to the Guadalupe River and Julian Street south to San Carlos Street. Mexicans heavily occupied Market Street, South First, San Fernando, Orchard, Delmas, Santa Teresa, El Dorado, Pleasant, and Locust Streets. The streets north of Santa Clara Street also had many Mexicans living there. The directory also showed that Mexicans lived in most of the city; some even retained small ranchos on the town's outskirts.

Many historians who have studied ethnic Mexicans in other parts of the United States and California assumed that they all labored in only a few industries. They noted that most of these Mexicans found employment in mining, railroads, and ranching. However, Mexicans followed an entirely different pattern in the Santa Clara Valley. The publishers of the 1900 City Directory categorized most Mexicans in an ambiguous category—laborers. Generally, laborers were employed in the construction industry or performed other manual work. Interestingly, the directory publishers also classified a relatively large number of individuals as “employees,” which meant individuals who worked for small businesses and engaged in various

<sup>1</sup> In some ways, the Mexican downtown San Jose neighborhood was following the same processes that Los Angeles experienced in the 1890s. In *Street Meeting*, Mark Wild described Los Angeles as a city that was absorbing immigrants from Asia, Europe, and Mexico as well as migrants from the Midwest. Wild observed that downtown Los Angeles neighborhoods were racially integrated and were multicultural communities.

<sup>2</sup> Leonard Pitt, *The Decline of the Californio: A Social History of Spanish Speaking Californians, 1856-1890*, (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1971.

<sup>3</sup> Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979.

<sup>4</sup> Douglas Monroy, *Thrown Among Strangers: The Making of Mexican Culture in Frontier California*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990; *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Wild, *Street Meeting: Multiethnic Neighborhoods in Early Twentieth Century Los Angeles*, Berkeley: University of California, 2005; William Devereil, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of its Mexican Past*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004; William David Estrada, *The Los Angeles Plaza: Sacred and Contested Places*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Martha Menchaca, *Mexican Outsiders: A History of Marginalization and Discrimination in California*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995.

<sup>7</sup> 1900 City Directory of San Jose.

tasks. Notably, many Spanish-surnamed persons found employment as clerks or performed white-collar work. Mexicans also worked various service jobs, including bootblacks, bicycle repairers, telephone operators, barbers, house painters, cooks, leather workers, and horseshoers. Some Californios held skilled positions, such as pressmen, cigar makers, dressmakers, cabinetmakers, jewelers, carpenters, and shoemakers. A few Mexicans held jobs unusual for them then—they found employment as attorneys, police officers, teachers, nurses, and engineers. Another small number of these Mexicans proudly referred to themselves as entrepreneurs or “capitalists.”<sup>8</sup> In contrast, Mexican women that worked outside of the home were engaged in making women’s garments. Lucy Valencia, for example, was regarded as a highly-skilled garment maker.<sup>9</sup>

In the 1920 San Jose City Directory, the publishers suggested that some changes in Mexicans’ demographic patterns had occurred.<sup>10</sup> Notably, it listed a much larger number of Spanish surnames than the earlier directories. It also displayed that most of these individuals still lived in the old neighborhood. However, some new patterns were emerging. The Mexican population seemed to be expanding south of San Carlos Street. Similarly, more and more Mexicans moved into the

neighborhoods north of Santa Clara Street, between First and 17<sup>th</sup> streets. Finally, the 1920 San Jose Directory indicated that some Mexicans and Puerto Rican immigrants were beginning to move into a new area in the eastern outer limits of San Jose, known as the Mayfair district, around San Antonio and 24<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>11</sup> The directory also suggested that Santa Clara County’s economy was undergoing marked changes, as reflected by the introduction of new technologies and industries. Like other residents, the Valley’s Mexicans were impacted to different degrees by these changes. While most Mexicans were still laborers, a good number of them found employment as clerks. A small number of them continued as small farmers. Some Mexicans worked in trades that were dying out—drivers, teamsters, dressmakers, tailors, milliners, and saddle makers.<sup>12</sup> Mexicans were aware of the new technologically-driven changes and deliberately chose to enter the fields of automobile mechanics, telephone operators, machinists, mechanics, electricians, and pipe makers. Although not in huge numbers, Mexican workers entered the food canning industry or related industries such as box-making, warehousing, or can-making. By the 1920s, the canning industry was already the largest employer in the Valley.

The 1920 San Jose Directory also revealed that some Mexican residents were establishing themselves in professional fields. For example, several Mexican women worked as nurses and teachers. On the other hand, a few Mexican men also found employment as firemen, optometrists, police officers, bookkeepers, lawyers, and business managers. Surprisingly, the Directory publishers did not list many individuals engaged

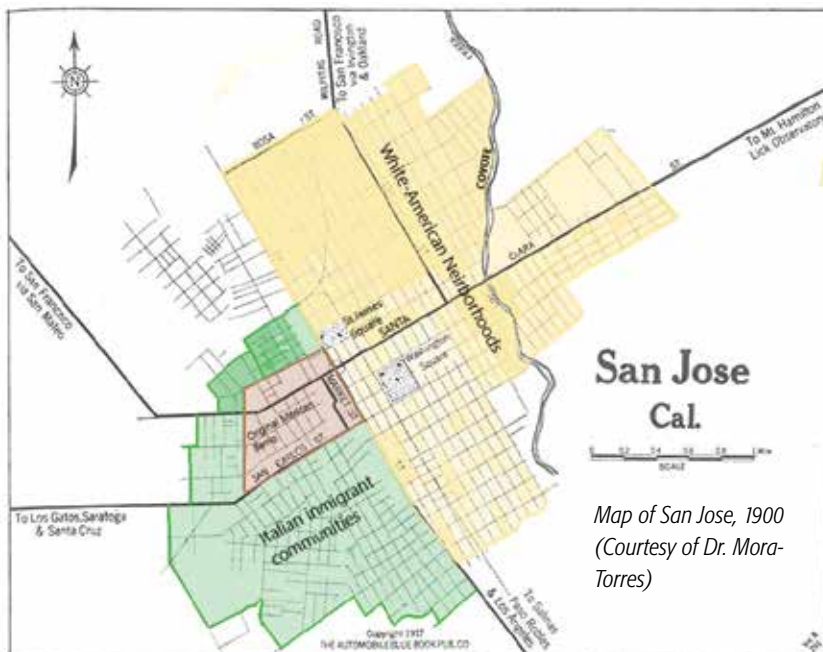
in farm labor.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, it was clear that during this decade, hundreds of Mexican migrants from Southern California, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and even Mexico began to arrive in the Santa Clara Valley to work in vast fruit orchards and agricultural fields. As individuals or families, Mexicans labored picking apricots, grapes, cherries, pears, walnuts, and prunes; they could also harvest tomatoes, onions, garlic, green beans, cucumber, and even strawber-

...it was clear that during this decade, hundreds of Mexican migrants from Southern California, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and even Mexico began to arrive in the Santa Clara Valley to work in vast fruit orchards and agricultural fields.

<sup>8</sup> Mario Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979). In this classic book, Mario Barrera postulates a theory of racial inequality in which he argues that Chicanos once they became a part of the American capitalist economy would be relegated to colonial labor system in which they would be mostly placed in a colonized sector. Hence, they would become an exploited and repressed work force. However, Barrera did predict the possibility that a minute number of Chicanos would be able to enter the integrated sector that would include skilled workers, professionals, and even some capitalists. In San Jose, by the early 1900s, the group of Mexicans in the integrated sector is already surprisingly large.

<sup>9</sup> 1900 San Jose City Directory

<sup>10</sup> 1920 San Jose City Directory.



<sup>11</sup> Armand J. Sanchez and Roland A. Wagner, “Continuity and Change in the Mayfair Barrios of East San Jose, *San Jose Studies* 5.2” (May 1979).

<sup>12</sup> This pattern confirms Barrera’s theory of racial inequality, where he argues that Chicano artisans involved in the marginalized sector were destined to be phased out by the expanding industrialization of the United States. The new technologies were also creating brand new jobs

<sup>13</sup> 1920 San Jose City Directory.

To increase sales, San Jose merchants began to organize the “Fiestas de las Rosas” to exploit the Anglo Californians’ fascination with California’s “Spanish past.”



ries. Local canneries or packinghouses processed most of these crops. Just as the gradual change occurred in the Valley’s demography, new technology, and employment patterns, cultural change also occurred. Anglo-Americans found ways to exploit the myth of the Californios’ roots in Spain.

### Pueblo Residents Preserving Mexican Traditions and Culture

Like in other places in California, by the 1890s, the Anglo-American elites and some of the old Californio families invented and began promoting the myth of California’s golden Spanish past. These individuals wanted to cultivate the image that California had a strong historical and cultural link to Spain—the “motherland.”<sup>14</sup> In the romanticization story, Spanish Dons and Senoritas founded and built an idyllic pastoral society in California. Hence, these elites refused to acknowledge the old Californios’ stronger connection to Mexico. For example, Manuel Selaya traced his family roots in San Jose to early settlers who moved from New Spain, present-day Mexico, to California during the Spanish Period.<sup>15</sup> Lucinda Flores, another San Jose resident, was a descendant of the

Amador family, whose founding members served as soldiers in California during the Spanish and Mexican periods.<sup>16</sup>

However, most early Californios’ descendants expressed pride and a longing for their Mexican past. For example, San Jose resident Mrs. Josefa Duckworth, daughter of California’s Mexican governor Don Jose Figueroa, acknowledged her Mexican roots.<sup>17</sup> Doña Josefa

proudly told how her father served as a Mexican general and governor of Sonora before moving to California to serve as its governor in the 1830s. In California, she observed the people who highly admired her father for his wise implementation of policies, especially those that facilitated granting mission land to the Californios. She was also immensely proud of her friendship with the famous California social bandit Tiburcio Vasquez. In her youth, Doña Josefa had been a close friend of Vasquez and insisted that he was a gentle and courteous

person; he was a true gentleman in her eyes. She claimed that Vasquez had been driven to a life of crime “because of Yankee insults to those he loved.”<sup>18</sup> She also believed that he had never shot a man in cold blood, so she did not hesitate to hide him in her own home while the local authorities were looking for him. Señora Duckworth always proclaimed that she was a Mexican even when Anglo-American society fully accepted her two sons as members. S. J. Duckworth represented Monterey County in the California Assembly. On the other hand, B. F. Duckworth served for many years as an Undersheriff of Monterey County and held the city clerk and assessor offices for the City of Monterey.<sup>19</sup> Like the old Californios, white American merchants found it advantageous to honor California’s Spanish heritage to promote their businesses. Despite the Californios’ pride in their Mexican history and culture, it did not keep Anglo-American merchants from exploiting their “mythical” connection with Spain.

To increase sales, San Jose merchants began to organize the “Fiestas de las Rosas” to exploit the Anglo Californians’ fascination with California’s “Spanish past.” In 1926, downtown merchants organized the first Fiestas as a flower festival. They invited Camila Arguello Fisher, a descendant of Mexican Governor Luis Arguello, to ride in a float dressed in Spanish costume.<sup>20</sup> In 1927, the Fiesta de las Rosas organizers celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Pueblo de San José de Guadalupe’s founding. In 1930, the Fiestas experienced some controversy. While the intent of commemorating Las Fiestas de las Rosas was supposed to be to remember the city’s Spanish past, the organizing committee did not include a single Spanish-surnamed person.<sup>21</sup> Still, the Fiesta de las Rosas parade plans were well underway until Spanish War Veterans protested the day of the event because it conflicted with Memorial Day. The Fiesta de las Rosas Planning Committee accepted the veterans’ claim that Memorial Day honored genuine American heroes. It also concurred with the Spanish War veterans that Memorial Day was too sacred to hold any other celebration.<sup>22</sup> After the Fiesta de las Rosas parade organizers rescheduled their event, they expanded their original program to include other groups. Some local ranchers joined the Fiesta celebrations to organize an old fashion “Spanish Rodeo.” The ranchers planned their post-Fiesta event — *Fiesta de Vaqueros* — at the San Jose Speedway, consisting of a barbecue and an old-fashioned rodeo.<sup>23</sup> The Fiesta de Las Rosas organizers held their

<sup>14</sup> William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) is an excellent analysis of the Anglo-American attempts to connect California to Spain.

<sup>15</sup> San Jose Mercury Herald, February 1, 1941.

<sup>16</sup> San Jose Mercury, Obituary, July 21, 1951. One of Mrs. Flores’ relatives was Jose Maria Amador who served as a soldier at the Presidio of San Francisco in the early 1800s. In his memoirs, Jose Maria implied that his father, Don Pedro, had been born in Spain, hoping to establish for his family, a connection to Spain. His memoirs have been published as *California Voices: The Oral Memoirs of Jose Maria Amador and Lorenzo Asisara* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2005), edited by Gregorio Mora Torres.

<sup>17</sup> San Jose Mercury Herald, Obituary, June 19, 1931.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Marjorie Pierce, *San Jose’s First Cathedral*, (Santa Cruz, CA, Western Tanager Press, 1990), pg 152.

<sup>21</sup> San Jose Mercury Herald, January 26, 1930.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> San Jose Mercury Herald, March 1, 1930.

event annually until 1932, when the Great Depression killed it.

The residents of San Jose were not the only ones seeking to revive the mythical old Spanish past. In 1930, the Maryknoll Fathers of Mission San Juan Bautista officiated a mass for the soul of Maria Antonia Castro Anzar McDougall of “The Rose of the Rancho” fame.<sup>24</sup> A fiesta followed a Catholic mass. In April 1930, San Jose State College’s Spanish Club performed a play in Spanish which dealt with two American women visiting Spain, and one of them fell in love with a local man. The play “Mi Novio Español” was unashamedly stereotypical.<sup>25</sup> The main Spanish character, “Preciosa,” was the typical unfaithful dancer with a husband called “El Guapo,”— the handsome. In 1939, Monterey residents promoted harmony between the old Californio families and Anglo-Americans by organizing a *merienda* — supper — celebration.<sup>26</sup> By choosing a representative beauty from each of the two communities, the people of Monterey wanted to promote good relations between the two peoples. Joan Sanches, a great-granddaughter of Gil Sanches, one of the first Mexican students to attend Santa Clara College, reigned as “La Favorita” during the *merienda*. Anne Martin took the title of “La Americana.” The Mercury Herald wrote: “Miss Sanches was acclaimed by the assembled 400 in gay costumes, mantillas, and sombreros. She represented the sixth generation of “Spanish Americans.” Anne Martin, as *La Americana*, shared the honors of the day as a descendant of early pioneers of American stock. Her ancestors had come to California by a route down the Mississippi River and the overland march across Nicaragua.”<sup>27</sup>

Despite the Anglo-Americans’ desire to remember the golden days of “Spanish culture” in California, they also wanted to commemorate the U.S. annexation of that territory from Mexico. On July 7, 1936, the patriotic people of Monterey re-enacted the first raising of the American flag over Monterey in 1846. A military parade comprising a cavalry band, marines from the U.S.S. Minneapolis, and two detachments of sailors reminded the port’s residents that U.S. forces took California through conquest.<sup>28</sup>

Some local Mexicans attempted to immerse themselves more fully into mainstream Anglo-California society. In 1910, the San Jose Mercury Herald reported that Hortense Corral, the daughter of the vice-president of Mexico, displayed her musical talents at a concert held at her College of Notre

Dame.<sup>29</sup> Other persons of Mexican heritage participated in social, political, and cultural organizations. In 1936, Mrs. Ray Narvaez was president of the Willow Glen unit of the American Legion Auxiliary.<sup>30</sup>

Anglo-Californians typically believed that Californios, like immigrants, were caught in an irreversible acculturation process into the dominant culture. Yet, while it was accurate that some people of Mexican ancestry were becoming acculturated, many others still sought to preserve and maintain their ancestral culture and connections to Mexico. While it is challenging to demonstrate it, San Jose’s Mexicans continued their sense of community well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As stated earlier, many of them kept their homes within the confines of the old Pueblo. Californio business owners tended to locate their businesses on Market and Santa Clara streets while their compatriots loyally patronized them. These Mexicans also managed to preserve their old traditions. Stephen Pitti noted that the Mexicans of New Almaden Quicksilver Mines celebrated September 16 and *Cinco de Mayo* fiestas as early as the mid-1860s.<sup>31</sup> Their brethren in nearby San Jose also adopted these traditions. Since then, they would faithfully celebrate the Mexican *Fiestas Patrias*. In addition to *Cinco de Mayo*, the Mexican residents of San Jose also took great pride in celebrating Mexican Independence Day, September 16.

Some of the *Fiesta Patrias* events were truly remarkable and memorable. In August 1910, the San Jose Mercury Herald reported that the Mexican community of San Jose was busy planning the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mexico’s Independence. A “Boosting Committee” began traveling across Santa Clara County, seeking to invite all Mexican organizations to participate in the upcoming September 16 celebrations.<sup>32</sup> The parade organizers selected Charles Alva, a top community leader, as the Grand Marshall. They also planned a traditional military-style parade comprising two “divisions.” On September 15, the Mercury Herald observed completing all preparations for the September 16 celebrations. Grand Marshall Charles Alva, dressed in an “appropriate” costume and riding a handsome horse, led the First Division.<sup>33</sup> It comprised the Young Men’s Institute’s Band members, the Sociedad Filantropica of New Almaden, and Sociedad Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. Odilon

...it was clear that during this decade, hundreds of Mexican migrants from Southern California, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and even Mexico began to arrive in the Santa Clara Valley to work in vast fruit orchards and agricultural fields.

<sup>24</sup> San Jose Mercury Herald, June 3, 1930.

<sup>25</sup> San Jose Mercury Herald, April 30, 1930.

<sup>26</sup> San Jose Mercury Herald, June 4, 1939, “Merienda Celebration Observes 169th Year of City’s Life.”

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> San Jose Mercury Herald, July 9, 1936, “Monterey Relives Historic Flag Raising 90 Years Ago.”

<sup>29</sup> San Jose Mercury Herald, April 24, 1910. Hortencia, her birth name, was continuing the tradition by many wealthy people from northern Mexico, especially Sonora and Sinaloa, of sending their sons and daughters to Santa Clara College and the College of Notre Dame, respectively. The parents of these students thought that their children were getting a quality education as well as learning American culture, which included mastering the English language. Notably, Hortencia’s stay at Notre Dame became uncertain when the Diaz regime collapsed in 1911, which caused her father to lose his job as Diaz’ only vice-president.

<sup>30</sup> San Jose Mercury Herald, August 31, 1936.

<sup>31</sup> Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley*, pg. 68.

<sup>32</sup> San Jose Mercury Herald, August 29, 1910

<sup>33</sup> San Jose Mercury Herald, September 15, 1910.

The Mexicans of San Jose were also genuinely interested in what was happening in Mexico after the outbreak of the 1910 Mexican Revolution.

Carrasco commanded the Second Division. The two divisions paraded throughout downtown San Jose, and after the event ended, all participants and the crowds retreated to Cedarbrook Park, where they enjoyed a tremendous barbecue. The barbecue organizers included Grand Marshall Charles Alva, its chairman, and N. Sepulveda, P. Figueroa, J. Bernal, P. Miranda, C. Martinelli, and de Vega.<sup>34</sup> Notably, the Californios continued to lead in organizing the Cinco de Mayo and the *Diesiseis de Septiembre* celebrations for the next two decades until immigrants from Mexico replaced them in the late 1930s.

Besides organizing events honoring Mexican national holidays, local Mexicans were also active in establishing social organizations. During an elaborate banquet in 1911, according to the *San Jose Mercury Herald*, the installation of new officers was held by the Mexican Benevolent Society, a mutual aid group.<sup>35</sup> Again, Charles Alva became the president, and F. A. Corbal assumed the vice president's duties while J.E. Montijo became a recording secretary. William Chaboya, G.J. Arredondo, Fred Hernandez, Ed del Maestro, and Clemente Deras took on the post of directors.<sup>36</sup>

In October 1911, the *San Jose Mercury Herald* reported that the Mexican Benevolent Society had organized a banquet to discuss plans to create a ladies' auxiliary.<sup>37</sup> Present at the dinner were many members of the old Mexican families, such as Frank Corral, Charles Alva, Frank de la Piedra, Charles Lightston, Charles Chaboya, Cecile Carrera, John Selaya, J.E. Montijo, Louis Sepulveda, L. Deras, Theo Aceves, Daniel Navarro, Reyes Herman, Filbert B. Chaboya, and Wilfred Guerrero. On December 31, the Mexican Benevolent Society held another officer's installation, attended by over 150 people.<sup>38</sup> In addition to the Mexican Benevolent Society, local Mexicans formed other societies. In August 1911, the *Sociedad Filantropica de Beneficencia Mutua* of New Almaden met in San Jose to initiate new members.<sup>39</sup> At this luncheon, the group elected Lorenzo Herrera as its president and chose Jose Moreno as vice president. At the same time, Cayetano Norma became financial secretary, Hilario Gonzales became recording secretary, Roberto Moreno assumed treasurer duties, and Francisco de la Piedra those of Marshall.<sup>40</sup> The residents of the Mexican Colonia never lost interest in Mexico, although they had become physically disconnected from it for more than sixty years.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> *San Jose Mercury Herald*, January 1, 1911.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> *San Jose Mercury Herald*, October 29, 1911.

<sup>38</sup> *San Jose Mercury Herald*, January 1, 1912.

<sup>39</sup> *San Jose Mercury Herald*, August 14, 1911.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

The Mexicans of San Jose were also genuinely interested in what was happening in Mexico after the outbreak of the 1910 Mexican Revolution. They followed the war's events since the *San Jose Mercury Herald* covered it extensively. For example, on January 29, 1910, it reported that a well-known critic of Mexican President Porfirio Diaz, Lazaro Gutierrez de Lara, had just delivered a speech in Spokane, Washington, where he denounced the slavery that existed in Mexico under the Diaz government.<sup>41</sup> Gutierrez de Lara pointed out that the term "barbarous Mexico" was too mild in describing the conditions in the Mexican "Plantation" system.<sup>42</sup> The recently arrived immigrants kept abreast of what was happening in their homeland by corresponding with family members back home, talking to friends who visited the country, or reading Mexican newspapers. Mexico was still close to their hearts for Californios and Mexican nationals, albeit a remote and somewhat distant place. During the 1910 Mexican Revolution, San Jose residents, including local Mexicans, followed its happenings by steadily reading stories in the Mercury Herald or other newspapers. The Mexican Revolution would last nearly a decade, leading to thousands of its citizens leaving their homeland. Many war refugees resettled in California, and some migrated to the Santa Clara Valley.

## Conclusion

Like other Californios, after 1850, the Pobladores of San Jose suffered a deeply painful trauma resulting from white Americans rendering them politically powerless, from their constant violent attacks, and from the theft of most of their properties. Nonetheless, they resiliently withstood the Anglo-American campaigns against them and held on in the safety of their old Pueblo. The Pobladores stubbornly stuck to their Mexican culture—fiestas, Spanish language, foods, music, social relations, networks—yet were sufficiently pragmatic to adapt to the new technologies and peoples that entered the Santa Clara Valley. By the early 1900s, they had become bilingual and bicultural. In the next decades, the Pobladores population will grow rather dramatically. After 1910, a small flow of Mexicans fleeing the Mexican Revolution of 1910 will gradually make their way to the Santa Clara Valley. By the 1920s, hundreds and, later on, thousands of ethnic Mexicans from Southern California, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and even the Midwest would pour into the Valley looking for a new life.

The Pobladores and the new arrivals would coalesce to comprise the Mexican Colonia of the Santa Clara Valley.

<sup>41</sup> *San Jose Mercury Herald*, January 29, 1910.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.



# Affect in the Historical Archive

## Alejandra Tlalli-Miles's Search for Indigenous Rootedness

by Steve Nava  
with contributions from Naxely Belmont



Steve Nava



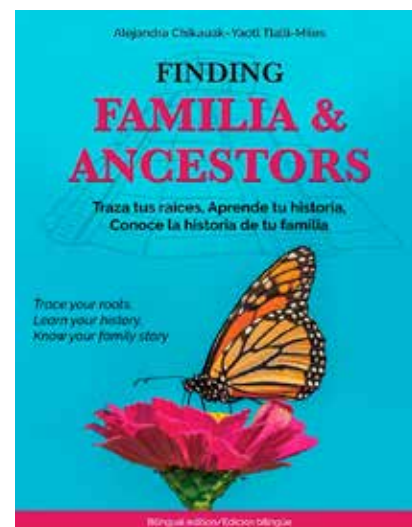
Naxely Belmont

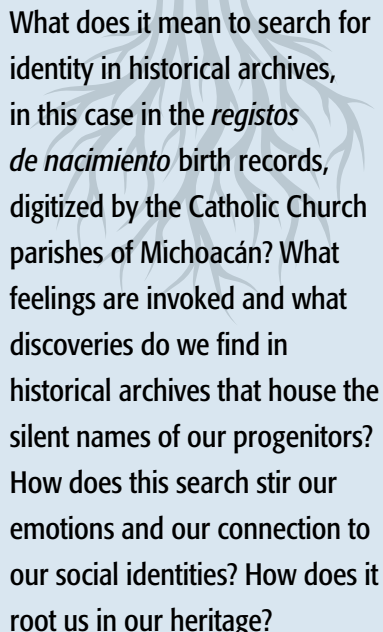
On April 11 I opened an email from Alejandra Tlalli-Miles, sent to a handful of De Anza College faculty, explaining that she had published a history of her family tree dating back to 1650 in Michoacán. In the email, she encouraged us to use her book as a teaching tool for our Mexican-origin students as a way for them to learn about their origins. Her book, *Finding Family and Ancestors: Trace Your Roots, Learn Your History, Know Your Family Story*, can be purchased in three language formats: Spanish, English and a third binding that is a mix of both languages. She offered it to us educators as a model for how to guide students in finding their roots, and encouraged anyone to follow the model she created. Though it was another busy week, I had an intuition that Tlalli-Miles's search was somehow related to a current crisis of identity I've been noticing in students today. I had a feeling in my gut that my displeasure and anxiety with the current state of affairs was somehow bound up with what Tlalli-Miles's project was moving towards: an understanding of the modern self as "rooted" and not just "connected." I had recently read an article in *Californian* by SJSU researcher Anne Marie Todd which is a treatment of the thesis of her book entitled, *The Valley of Heart's Delight: Environment and Sense of Place in the Santa Clara Valley*. In the article, Todd makes the distinction between a culture of immediate digital connection which is currently being celebrated in the Silicon Valley, contrasted with a sense of rootedness in our immediate environment which is being steadily diminished in the name of capital- and innovation-focused growth. What does it mean to be meaningfully "rooted"? In our daily routines of economic survival, have we become de-rooted? Maybe the answer, or part of the answer, was in the pages of Tlalli-Miles's family genealogy book.

Born and raised in Watsonville, California, Alejandra Tlalli-Miles came to San Jose thirty years ago. She has been

working for the City of San Jose for 25 years. While enjoying a fruitful career and raising her two sons, she began to experience that something was missing in her life. She began to feel a calling to find out about her origins—her ancestral roots. Tlalli-Miles described this stirring as a spiritual calling. It was in 2018 when she began this journey into the archives of history in search of a more authentic origin story. She first filled this missing piece of identity by learning about her Mexican roots, learning Nahuatl (the language of the *Aztecas*, later known as *Mexicas*), and celebrated indigenous cultural practices at Centro Aztlán Chicomoztoc in San Jose, where she enjoys a sense of community and learns from respected teachers. But even with the support of the Centro community, this ancestral connection only seemed to touch the surface of the kind of knowledge she was seeking. In addition to cultural practices, she wanted to learn about her connection to history: her ancestors and their geographical origins in México.

In an interview with Tlalli-Miles that De Anza College's California History Center volunteer Naxely Belmont and I conducted on April 29, Tlalli-Miles noted that in this first step in her search she felt a change, "a feeling happening," which made her feel "like letting go her colonizer last name." She embraced the name 'Tlalli' which means 'land/soil/mother earth.' She changed her Spanish last name to an indigenous name that matched how she felt inside. She ended up hyphen-





What does it mean to search for identity in historical archives, in this case in the *registros de nacimiento* birth records, digitized by the Catholic Church parishes of Michoacán? What feelings are invoked and what discoveries do we find in historical archives that house the silent names of our progenitors? How does this search stir our emotions and our connection to our social identities? How does it root us in our heritage?

choacán? What feelings are invoked and what discoveries do we find in historical archives that house the silent names of our progenitors? How does this search stir our emotions and our connection to our social identities? How does it root us in our heritage?

### Emotional Travails of Searching Historical Archives

Tlalli-Miles made it clear, “I identify as Native American, and my ethnicity, I used to say ‘Mexican’ but that’s so broad, now I see myself as I’m a descendant of many First Nations...and probably other nations that have gone on without being identified in the past.” When Tlalli-Miles felt this calling to search for her racial and ethnic heritage, some of her family members were not supportive of her venture into the past; but this was a personal search. This search through the historical archives was an emotional process for her, and the resistance of her family may have been tied to their commitment to their Spanish heritage. Tlalli-Miles reported one family member’s response, “These are your parents and grandparents and that’s all you need to know....” The feeling that there are unknown people in one’s family could awaken fear of the unknown. *What if our shared story isn’t supported by historical evidence? What does that mean for our current identities and statuses? What if our ancestors are not extraordinary? What if they are? What does this say about us?*

ating her name at her son’s request to include his last name, Miles: Tlalli-Miles. She described this change as arising from a calling to reconnect and to understand where her people came from and who she truly is. This spiritual journey for a more authentically rooted identity made me think about the relationship between history and *the present* as both personal and collective. As a sociologist, I work in the space of connecting personal experiences to socio-economic and cultural patterns, and I view such patterns as historical formations, both of our own making and at the same time as things happening *to* us. But what does it mean to search for identity in historical archives, in this case in the *registros de nacimiento* birth records, digitized by the Catholic Church parishes of Mi-

Although Tlalli-Miles’s family discouraged her at first, a few family members nudged her forward. Some family members wanted her to be content with knowing her grandparents and to stop the search right there. But she persisted, encountering more hurdles – namely, deciphering the language and the written words on the Catholic birth and death records themselves. With zeal and anticipation, as she reported to us, she struggled to read poor penmanship in some cases, or the challenges of multiple people having very similar names and origins. One reason for this was the homogenization and dehumanization of indigenous people in México. As she noted, “and when you go into the records, you have other barriers with that, and that is that a lot of the documents are written in Castilian Spanish; you have to really wrap your mind around what they are saying and try to put yourself as much as you can into that time period.”

The Catholic archives, much of which is now owned by the Mexican national archive, have limited information on birth, marriage, and death dates as well as on causes of death. Tlalli-Miles’s book chronicles these dates with as much known information as possible, cross-referenced with historical facts and regional maps to fill in the missing information. It reads as a reflection on one’s lineage within a brief historical testimony. Tlalli-Miles was quick to note that the Catholic Church did not mix the records, separating “los indios” from “los españoles.” Archived information about indigenous people was glossed over in the Catholic Church archives while people of Spanish ancestry were treated more substantively by archivists, detailing their family businesses and community affiliations.

Indeed, colonization is as much a story being imposed as it is a political act of erasure of indigenous histories, as the Catholic Church played a central role in colonizing Mesoamerica. “So many indigenous people in the archives were named Jose and Maria,” Tlalli-Miles noted, which caused the search to be difficult at times.

What happens when a genealogical strand frays? For example, she found two *Jose Ignacios* within the same location and only a year apart in their birthdays, so she couldn’t decipher which was her ancestor. In fact, one was a twin, and the other was not, but which was her ancestor? Sometimes she had to just allow it to be left alone and not pursue the strand of her genealogy any further. She had to let go, to pacify the yearning for truer rootedness to her people’s past. But in this case, a clue in her current family came to fore: twins currently run in her family. Was this the needed clue to root the true *Jose Ignacio* in her family tree?

## Spanish Colonialism and Nostalgia in the Archive

In our interview, we asked Tlalli-Miles a difficult question: whether she felt any tension between her search into the past as a potentially grounding, satisfying and nostalgic pursuit and on the other hand, a stare into the face of the hard reality of Spanish colonial oppression. In today's over-rationalized society, people question such ancestral searching as a distraction or a nostalgic escape. When we seek ancestral rootedness, the late capitalist mindset is suspicious. *Why spend time in the past when growth points toward the future?* When we veer off life's routinized path, we must account for our transgression of pre-defined paths. Tlalli-Miles appeared to wince a bit as she reflected on this feeling, then went on to say, "it paints a picture....there is some nostalgia but there's a lot of harsh truth in what you find and it wasn't easy for [my ancestors]. You can tell just from that glimpse...a snapshot of the relative at that time." There weren't a lot of actual pictures of her ancestors, because folks in poverty did not have much access to cameras. Only wealthier families or families that might have had a photographer in their family had photos taken before the advancement of camera technology democratized access. She had to connect the historical archival dots, filling in the details from what she knew from the history books and maps and indeed from her intuition and historical imagination.

## Cause of Death and Revolution Brewing

Reading through some of her ancestors' causes of death was sometimes painful to read about. For example, one of her ancestors, a teacher named Jose Eulogio Fernandez Malfabon, born in 1836 in a town called Tingüindín, Michoacán, was reported to have been shot and his body dragged throughout the town of Santa Ines. Jose Eulogio was then hanged outside of town in an area called Los Pinos for allegedly inciting a land rights uprising, as he was one of the many pre-Mexican land-rights revolutionaries who worked for large wealthy landowners. The area where he was killed is a common spot where you'll see families having picnics today. Unknowingly, her own family had previously, on occasion, picnicked in this same nature area called La Cruz near Los Pinos. When she told her cousins about this ancestor's death, it changed the meaning of the space to them too. We had to pause for a brief emotional moment during this portion of the interview as a flow of emotions rose.

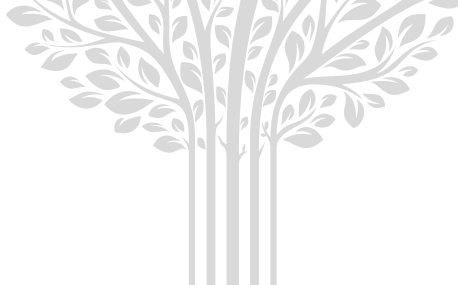
As people with Mexican origins — Naxely, Tlalli-Miles

and myself — we all shared a similar sentiment. By uncovering her roots and sharing her findings, Tlalli-Miles awakened a desire in both Naxely and me to seek our own history through our roots. She is setting an example for how others can discover their roots and experience the feeling of wholeness she found through her research.

## Beauty and White Spanishness: Pain that Sends Us Searching

In our interview, Tlalli-Miles noted, "even when you're a young child — and I'm on the browner side — [my family was] indirectly telling me that my sister is more beautiful because she is fairer than I am. I felt a strong sense of validation from writing this book." She knew in her mind that she had indigenous roots, but doing an ancestry DNA test and seeing the genealogy data validated that her intuition and her eyes were not deceiving her: she was in fact from indigenous people. The historical archive and DNA science supported her need to prove that her indigeneity is real. She ended with a smile and quipped, "I'm 46% native, indigenous to the Americas, which contradicts everything my family would ever say; so, DNA don't lie, I guess."

If Tlalli-Miles's uncle Ramon had never come to Watsonville on a train at age 18 for economic reasons, her story might have been very different. In the late 1940s, Ramon walked into a government office and received a work pass and started working immediately. Side by side with African American and Asian American workers, he toiled in agriculture and would later bring his family from México to join him. History is at least one part chronicle, one part myth, and another part made up of the stories of regular people making big decisions that appear epic because of the distancing effect of time. Their decisions reverberate and still affect us now. The complexity of our ancestry holds more wonder and harrowing stories than any ethnic identification — or stereotype for that matter — can ever capture. One way out of our ignorance is within the historical archives and within the stories we find there. The intuitive drive that tells us where to start our search often comes from within that trembling part of our selves that craves to be more deeply rooted in places and times where we finally see a truer image of ourselves.



As people with Mexican origins — Naxely, Tlalli-Miles and myself — we all shared a similar sentiment. By uncovering her roots and sharing her findings, Tlalli-Miles awakened a desire in both Naxely and me to seek our own history through our roots. She is setting an example for how others can discover their roots and experience the feeling of wholeness she found through her research.

Let us come together as often as possible, to tell our stories, to listen to each other, and to learn from the past in ways that create possibility.

Today, we face unprecedented inequities and discrimination in income, housing, education, and health care, which directly threaten basic democratic functioning.

## Director's Report *continued from page 4*

Of some 600 recordings, over 60% still need to be digitized. Our current student employee, Kevin Candra, describes, in an article in this issue, his own experience with the project and his interest in all aspects of oral history gathering.

While we are making efforts to increase access and availability to the oral history portion of CHC archives, we are simultaneously developing ideas and applying for grants to expand our oral history collection through initiating new programs. With sufficient funding and support, we intend to develop three institutional histories of marginalized communities at the De Anza campus and surrounding areas: 1) "Asian American Story-Telling in the Santa Clara Valley," 2) "The Pride Project," and 3) "Spaces of Belonging." Each of these projects will engage the passionate commitment and hard work of De Anza staff, faculty, students and volunteers to

craft new historical narratives that better reflect and promote an authentic identity for the people of this valley.

I'd like to invite all CHC friends and supporters to gather in wonder with us, as we grapple with the exponential rates of change in so many areas of life today: the increasing size and frequency of extreme weather events; the unknown challenges of artificial intelligence (AI) as it learns to program itself, with or without alignment to human intentions; the social and political tensions among people who seem increasingly willing to dehumanize the other; the growing wealth gap and the struggle of our youth to see and build a hopeful and sustainable future for themselves. We really do have choices in how we respond to these challenges. Let us come together as often as possible, to tell our stories, to listen to each other, and to learn from the past in ways that create possibility.

## Civil Liberties *continued from page 5*

asserted in 1961, "If you're to be called a communist every time you stand up for basic American rights and freedoms, what's likely to happen? Will you be silent? And if so, is this what the House Committee on Un-American Activities is really after – a silent, submissive, un-protesting America?" From his example and those of other ACLU leaders I got to meet, I came to understand that "dissent is patriotic," and that it along with acts of protest have always been key components in the fighting to defend and expand democracy throughout our nation's history.

Today, we face unprecedented inequities and discrimination in income, housing, education, and health care, which directly threaten basic democratic functioning. I say this because I don't see how it is possible for people to participate in a democracy if their basic needs are not being met. For example, it is difficult to vote, let alone think about voting if you are un-housed, unfed, and with health needs uncared for. In order to protect democracy in the context of the multi-racial reality we now have in our country, I believe we will need to expand and broaden our notions of what civil liberties are and create new tactics to fight for them over the long haul.

We will all need to stay in the game for as long as it takes and no matter how rough it gets. While this might seem daunting, I know there are many stories to hear and people to meet and learn from to help us in this endeavor. In future issues of our magazine, I would like to share some of these stories and introduce you to people who have lived them.



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# At the Center

## RECENT EVENTS

### Taste of History '23: "Spaces of Belonging"

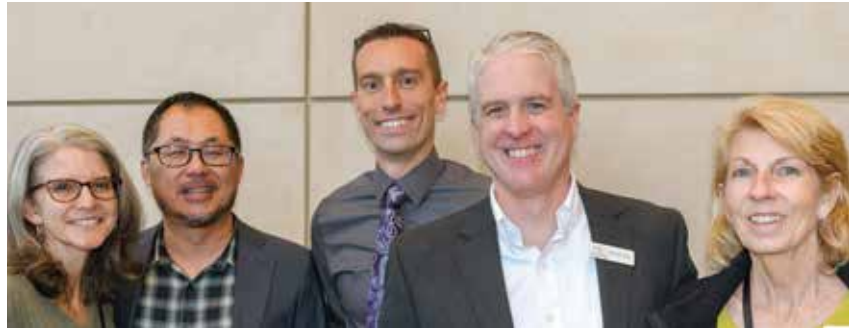
March 25, 2023, 4–7pm

This annual event was co-hosted by the California History Center and the Euphrat Museum of Art. Proceeds from the event support after-school art classes for at-risk youth, and De Anza student multimedia projects that preserve and share our local history. Guests enjoyed delicious snacks, desserts and wines from exceptional local producers (Cooper-Garrod Estate Vineyards, House Family Vineyards, Kings Mountain Vineyards, Neely Wine, Wrights Station Vineyard and Winery); and some navigated to the De Anza College Planetarium for a special showing of "Wayfinders: Waves, Winds, and Stars."

We give special thanks to our event partners: California History Center Foundation, Community Education Division, De Anza Commission, Euphrat Museum of Art, Foothill-De Anza Foundation, Social Sciences and Humanities Division; and to our generous sponsors and patrons: Platinum: Hugh Stuart Center Charitable Trust; Silver: Judy C. Miner; Bronze: Tom Izu and Susan Hayase, Lloyd A. Holmes, Elvin T. Ramos; Patron: Diana Argabrite, Hugh Argabrite, Christina G. Espinosa-Pieb and Wolfgang Pieb, Karen and Alex Hall, Mary and Laury Smith, Jim and Sharon Walker, Gilbert Wong; and Corporate: Blach Construction, Mark Cavagnero Associates, Star One Credit Union.



Singer/songwriter Jackie Gage wowed the crowd with her beautiful vocals and engaging lyrics.



Attendees and organizers: Ellen and John Fung of Blach Construction; Community Education Dean Sam Bliss; Foothill-De Anza Foundation Executive Director Dennis Cima; and Jennifer Miranda.



Author and Speaker Anne Marie Todd, with Tom Izu.



Patrons Jim and Sharon Walker



De Anza President Lloyd Holmes with Awardees Shirley Sparks-Greif and Dick Greif.



De Anza College President Lloyd Holmes; Vice-President of Instruction and Awardee Christina Espinosa-Pieb; Foothill-De Anza Community College District Chancellor Judy Miner, and Patrick Ahrens, FHDA Board of Trustees President

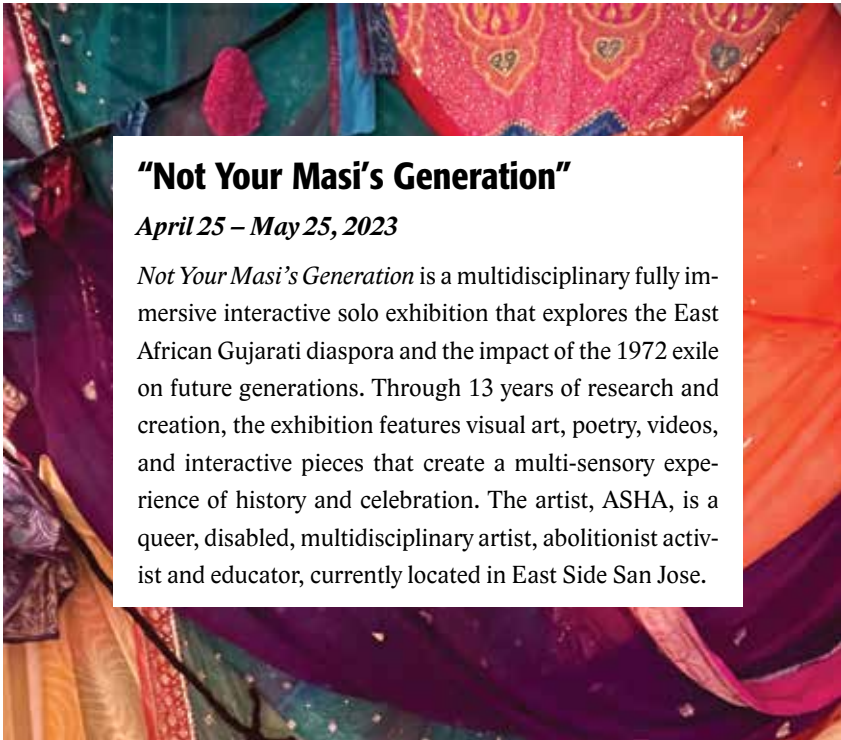
Tom Izu and Susan Hayase identifying spaces on a Santa Clara County map.



CHCF Board Members Carolyn Wilkins-Santos and Purba Fernandez, and Susan Hayase.

# At the Center

RECENT EVENTS



## “Not Your Masi’s Generation”

April 25 – May 25, 2023

*Not Your Masi’s Generation* is a multidisciplinary fully immersive interactive solo exhibition that explores the East African Gujarati diaspora and the impact of the 1972 exile on future generations. Through 13 years of research and creation, the exhibition features visual art, poetry, videos, and interactive pieces that create a multi-sensory experience of history and celebration. The artist, ASHA, is a queer, disabled, multidisciplinary artist, abolitionist activist and educator, currently located in East Side San Jose.

The depth of meaning and variety of expressions kept visitors engaged.



Artist ASHA Sudra performed original spoken word poetry at the Opening Reception.



Visitors took their time to enjoy the multi-sensory exhibit.



CHC Board member Purba Fernandez took time to contemplate the beauty and complexity of ASHA’s work.



ASHA’s multimedia art exhibit transformed the CHC Exhibit Hall. Many of the poems and images had an accompanying QR code that visitors could use to access supplementary video materials.

## “Mexican American Civil Rights”

May 6, 2023 – 1:30–3:30pm

CHC hosted a full house for the viewing of a mini-documentary and a scholar talk with Dr. Gregorio Mora-Torres Ph.D. Emeritus in Chicano and Chicana Studies at SJSU, and author. This event was part of a larger project entitled Before Silicon Valley: Mexican Agricultural and Cannery Workers of Santa Clara County, 1920-1960.



*Dr. Gregorio Mora-Torres captivated the audience with his talk on Mexican American Civil Rights.*



*Guests enjoyed socializing with Dr. Mora-Torres before the event.*



*CHC student volunteer Ofa Pahulu helped make the day a success.*



## CHCF Board members visit Los Altos History Museum

March 10, 2023

CHCF Board members Cecilie Vaughters-Johnson, Carolyn Wilkins-Santos, and Ulysses Pichon, along with CHC Faculty Director Lori Clinchard, visited Los Altos History Museum.



*CHC volunteer Maggie Sepeda welcomed guests into the salon.*

# At the Center

HUMANITIES MELLON SCHOLARS

## Oral History at CHC

by Kevin Candra



Kevin Candra

The California History Center holds many oral history interviews, done over a long period of time, with a variety of people. The first oral history recordings start with stories of the early settlers and the mining industry.

My name is Kevin Candra, and I am a student employee at De Anza's California History Center (CHC). I was first introduced to the CHC by sociology instructor Steve Nava, through the Spaces of Belonging pilot oral history project. During the Winter '23 quarter, I contacted Prof. Lori Clinchard to ask if I could continue to help with and learn about oral histories. Through a connection with previous CHC director Tom Izu, I was able to do an oral history interview with Steve Fugita, a retired Emeritus Professor of Psychology and Ethnic Studies at Santa Clara University who was born in a World War II concentration camp for Japanese Americans. Dr. Fugita shared his experiences with me, and helped me see the effects that the concentration camps had on the Japanese American community. I was especially interested to see how some Japanese Americans bounced back from being oppressed during that period of incarceration to become activists, in a relatively short period of time.

From this one-time involvement, I got to know Prof. Lori, the current CHC director, who then offered me a job opportunity at the California History Center for Spring quarter. Currently, I am helping set up a system to digitize the past oral history recordings that are stored on cassette tapes (around 250 tapes) and on VHS (around 150 tapes), and to then make them available to students and community members.

### The Importance of the CHC Archives

I am personally interested in cultures, and how groups of people evolve to overcome difficulties. As such, the oral histories of Santa Clara County are interesting to study: this region evolved from being an agricultural society to a nest of high-tech companies. This drastic change in conditions brought about changes in many aspects of society.

Aptly, the California History Center holds many oral history interviews, done over a long period of time, with a variety of people. The first oral history recordings start with stories of the early settlers and the mining industry. They then focus on Santa Clara's agricultural businesses and the infrastructure used to support it (PG&E, and Santa Clara Water district). As Lockheed Martin moved its headquarters to the Bay Area, which marks the start of the transition to a more technology-based economy, the interview topics shift to aviation; and finally, the interviews start covering more technology companies' CEOs and Founders. Aside from these, there are also interviews covering daily life in the Valley of Heart's Delight,

on topics such as education, labor, and the story of diverse cultural groups that settle in Santa Clara County.

These primary sources are valuable for multiple reasons. Despite history often being described as a set of facts, it is actually a collage of opinions. As such, having multiple sources from different viewpoints is important in order to understand the full picture of history. For this reason, primary sources will give you multiple biased stories which, when combined, will present a story in a more holistic manner.

Furthermore, in history lessons, only momentous events are presented; they rarely delve into the daily lives of the people. This representation of history makes it less relatable to us. However, many of these oral histories and interviews give us insight into the more day-to-day lives of people from different periods of time. I find this information valuable because these are the lives that people live. By learning about their habits, struggles, and hopes, we can learn about the dreams that drive the changes in this ever-changing area.

The California History Center also houses around 2,000 student research papers, which cover many niche topics about the local history of the City of Cupertino, and Santa Clara County. Despite being written by students, many of these papers explore topics that are often overlooked. These papers often portray an especially authentic picture of a certain period, from the observations of an average person.

### Future of California History Center

Many of the CHC oral histories are stored on VHS and cassette tapes. These media will deteriorate over time and, soon, may not be readable at all. Moreover, VHS and cassette tape readers are no longer in production. If we delay this project any further, these tape readers will no longer be obtainable, and these oral histories will be inaccessible. Therefore, CHC is trying to complete the digitization project as soon as possible. After finishing the digitization project, the video or audio recordings will be uploaded to a repository that can be accessed by community members, and the transcripts will also be made available to the public, according to the stipulations of the original release forms.

In closing, I encourage everyone to visit the CHC at De Anza to admire its beautiful architecture and to explore the unending information kept at the Stockmeir library. I believe that one visit to Le Petit Trianon will make you want to keep coming back to this quaint old building so full of history and knowledge.



# Pets and Japanese American Incarceration

by Vivian Doss



Vivian Doss

For many people, pets are an integral part of life. They serve as best friends and family members and fuzzy little space heaters. We open our homes to them and, in return, they give us their unconditional love, helping us through life's highs and lows. This is especially true of the pets whose families were forced into Japanese American incarceration camps. Left behind, snuck around in secrecy, and adopted along the way, pets suffered through history alongside their owners.

In 1942, General John L. DeWitt released a series of civilian exclusion orders, ripping Japanese Americans across the West Coast from their homes. The orders specified that they could only take what they could carry, that they must abandon their homes, and that they must find storage for their things

in a span of days. Though it seems like a footnote, the orders also stated that "No pets of any kind will be permitted." In practice, this separated thousands of pets from their owners. Families scrambled to find someone, anyone, to take in their furry friends. One Caucasian teacher who had a class that was sixty-percent Japanese American recalls running "auctions" for her students' pets. The children would hold up their pets in front of a crowd and hope for a kind soul to take them in. Those who failed to find a caretaker had to take tearful trips to the vet. Even if they could find someone, they were not always reliable. Some lost contact during the war, never to be found again. There is at least one recorded case of a family turning their beloved dog over to a neighbor, only for that neighbor to shoot it immediately. Even if a family did find a loving caretaker who kept in contact, some pets still died of heartbreak. This happened to a man named David Sakura and his family dog Puggie. The family that took Puggie in wrote that he would always run down to the end of the driveway. There, he waited, day and night, for his family to come, but they never did. He passed away before they could be reunited. Puggie was just one of many pets who sat in strangers' homes or in many cases, the empty shells where their families used to live, wondering where everyone went. Another such pet was a dog named Sunny, almost.

Though he is not sure of the logistics, Mas Hashimoto recalls a family friend taking Sunny in and writing about how she was not eating well. Their friend worried the dog would die under her care, so she hatched a plan: send Sunny to the incarceration camp at Poston via the Greyhound bus. Sunny, unaware of the laws she just broke and the danger she was in, took a road trip from Watsonville to Arizona before being snuck behind barbed wire and reunited with her family. There, she became the camp "petting zoo." Since they were in the middle of the desert, people were excited to see an animal devoid of scales and exoskeletons. However, Sunny was not the only dog in Poston. A man by the name of Robert Wada also remembers family friends bringing his dog up to camp and smuggling it inside. In fact, dogs and cats were so plentiful that in January of 1944, Poston's council had to create an ordinance requiring each pet owner to register their animals. Of course, people outside of Poston found ways to hold onto their pets too. Topaz had to create a "Dog Committee," an offshoot of their larger "Pet Committee," to regulate the dogs and dog



Mr. and Mrs. Moji (inside truck) with their dog King. The Mojis had to leave King behind during mass removal since pets were not allowed in the concentration camps, March 30, 1942. Bainbridge Island Japanese American Community Collection. Bainbridge Island, Washington. Densho Digital Repository.

# At the Center

HUMANITIES MELLON SCHOLARS

owners of Topaz. In Heart Mountain, a woman named Estelle Ishigo created a pet census, recording the number of cats and dogs in the camp as well as who owned them. These pets were either smuggled Sunny-style or found along the way. One issue of the Topaz Times details the journey of a cat found in Topaz. This matched the description of a “lost cat” ad from a couple in California that also made its way to Topaz. When Topaz responded to the ad, they found out that the couple had originally lived nearby and lost the cat in the move. The cat, along with a litter of kittens, continued to live out its days in Utah. This, along with the sheer number of pets in the camps, suggests that a not-insignificant number of people were able to keep their families together, down to the last cat.

For those who could not smuggle their pets into the camps, or who never had pets in the first place, they had to get creative. Many took to befriending the local fauna. The camp administration in Minidoka could not stop people from keeping jackrabbits in cages. In Topaz, the council discouraged the keeping of “badgers, chipmunks, marmots, squirrels, rabbits, and rats for pets” to no avail. Meanwhile, in Robert Saito’s book, *My Life in the Camps During the War and More*, he spends an entire chapter trying to find a pet, stating that “several guys already have chipmunks, and I feel left out.” Eventually, he ends up with his own toad after trying and failing to capture a chipmunk. Another man by the name of Yoshio Sagina earned himself a headline in the Heart Mountain Sentinel by caring for a small army of horned toads. At any given time, Sagina had roughly twenty toads and their spawn under his care, but the number was in constant flux since he lent them out as pets. He spent six hours a day collecting enough black ants to feed them all. At the same time, Clarence Matsuyama, who was also incarcerated in Heart Mountain, orchestrated a miniature zoo. He, along with members of the recreation field crew, rounded up various rodents, snakes, and even bats to put on display in the camp’s recreation center. Though technically against camp policy, Matsuyama and the others trapped inside Heart Mountain must have derived great joy from watching chipmunks scampering around inside the makeshift zoo. In the middle of the desert, he and Sagina managed to find the time to care for something beyond themselves, and in turn, the animals returned the favor.

When the camps shut down, people once again faced the dilemma of what to do with their pets. Again, they had to pack up their things and head to destinations unknown. They scrambled to arrange housing, jobs, and transportation on top of everything else. While the WRA did allow the transport of

pets such as “dogs, canaries, and even cats if they are bona fide family pets of the evacuee,” other types of pets were not allowed. As a result of this, the more exotic incarcerated pets would have had to be abandoned. Those who did not have the time to make arrangements for their pets were forced to abandon them too. In Gila River, their Chief of Internal Security estimated that “the number of pets left in the canal as about 40 dogs and between 150 to 200 cats.”

However, the stories were not all sad. A few of the previously incarcerated families came home to find their pets safe and sound. A man by the name of John Nakada remembers returning to his home in California. His family had entrusted their farm to the bank, and when they came back, they were greeted with broken windows and missing furniture. Luckily, they had given their pets to the neighbors, so when Nakada’s family went to see them, they found their dogs and cat alive and well.

Overall, those camp pets brought comfort by becoming prisoners alongside their human families. Their stories, from heartbreaking to heartwarming, are a largely untold part of the incarceration experience. Though resources were tight and their very existence was against camp policy, the incarcerated Japanese Americans still took them in and cared for them. In this way, they rebelled, seizing back a small portion of the control over their lives that they never should have lost in the first place.

Overall, those camp pets brought comfort by becoming prisoners alongside their human families. Their stories, from heartbreaking to heartwarming, are a largely untold part of the incarceration experience.

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