Chapter Two: Aspiring Industrial Garden

"Salinas City Cannot Fail to Become a very important trade center, and one of the best business localities in the state"[1]

By the turn of the new century, Salinas's residents had settled in fully to the area they now claimed as an American space; a town that now resembled any other municipality in America in its homes, paved streets, sidewalks, power and light, schools and libraries. But Salinas's city leaders imagined something more than just another township. They wanted to create an "industrial garden"[2] and collectively pursued a strategy of town development economically dependent on agricultural productivity, tourism based on Salinas's status as county seat, and investments by finance and industry that might provide a solid tax base and offer employment for residents within the city and in its outlying areas. Salinas's city builders believed that industrial growth and tourism together with agricultural production might, in turn, support the development of the town itself--its schools, parks, recreation centers and transportation systems rather than rely solely on

[1] *Salinas Daily Index*, March 30, 1902, n.p. Jim and Jeri Gattis Collection

[2] Robert O. Self famously described the strategy behind Oakland's post-World War II regional development as an "industrial garden." Oakland's city leaders believed in placing their city at the center of a carefully constructed mosaic of business development and industry that would, in turn, support (and be supported by) suburbs made up of white single-family homeowners. In this scenario, Oakland would become a thriving commercial, industrial, and cultural center for the region. Things did not work out that way, however, as Self made clear. [2] Instead of supporting a thriving Oakland, industries such as Ford and General Motors abandoned the city along with business people, professionals and white middle classes. Industrial investment created flourishing suburbs instead. African Americans and other minority groups became the majority population in Oakland by the 1970s. The mostly white residents in towns surrounding Oakland such as San Leandro, Fremont, and Milpitas did not rely on Oakland as a center for either employment or social life. Instead of an increasing tax base and thriving center of business and culture, Oakland lost investment and became marginalized as a minority majority community, impoverished as a result, even as those suburbs prospered at its expense. San Francisco rather than Oakland became the destination for finance and culture in the region. Silicon Valley suburbs became the foundation for the innovation economy that flourished by the end of the century.

taxes from residents to do so. They had every reason to be optimistic. Agriculture thrived and new crops such as row crops (lettuce) and sugar beets promised great possibilities. The expanding population, 3,034 by 1900, 3,736 in 1910 and 4,308 by 1920 would more than double to 10,263 by 1930 when the production of lettuce pulled in new populations. Population increases verified Salinas's place as the economic, social and political focal point for the county and the entire region. The high end hotels and restaurants in Salinas's downtown could (and did) accommodate thousands of visitors throughout the state to attend important agricultural and political meetings and social and cultural events that happened regularly throughout first two decades of the new century. City leaders encouraged the development of elegant hotels on Main Street with just such a purpose in mind.

In the first twenty years of the new century Salinas's strategy of enticing tourists to visit Salinas, and for organizations to meet in their town coupled with collectively encouraging both industrial investment and agricultural production worked successfully to build their city into a regional centerpiece. We see evidence of all of this in the local newspapers accounts of the era and the continuous efforts of the City Council and the Chamber of Commerce to create regional transportation systems (with county funding) that went beyond the railroad and focused mainly on road building but also on the construction of an airport. City leaders became actively involved in any effort to connect Salinas to other towns in the region, and to the larger municipalities north and south, through a regional transportation network. Further, they vehemently resisted any effort to build roads linking San Francisco to Los Angeles that might bypass Salinas.

Most importantly, this effort brought Claus Spreckles to the area to develop the sugar beet industry. The establishment of multiple community banks, and the development of the lettuce industry with its multiplicity of small farms interconnected with packing plants and shipping

facilities all combined to encourage development and population growth throughout the 1920s. Some of the most committed city builders in this time joined forces in 1924 to form the Salinas Civics Women's Club. This group would champion everything from the building of the library and public school systems at the turn of the century to passage of Ordinances such as the 1921 "Little Wright Act," which made liquor sales illegal in the city. By 1926, Salinas had an active Chamber of Commerce and a city manager to bring the city into a more business-oriented model of governance.[3] The first two decades of the twentieth century were marked by a conscious effort to make Salinas into a regional center and focal point for tourists, local and state government agencies and businessmen.

They succeeded, as Minutes of the Meetings of the Chamber of Commerce in the 1920s attested. For example, in 1926 they reported the following:

> "Mr. Lawton of the Pacific Highway Association appeared to get the endorsement of the Chamber of Commerce to solicit funds for the Pacific Highway Association. Mr. Lawton explained that the association was now being run on a business basis; that they were getting out one hundred thousand new folders in which they were featuring Salinas."

In addition, the committee on Advertising sought visitors from Eastern and Midwestern states, encouraging them to make Salinas a stopover on any road trip West. One such example "reported that [the Chamber] purchase one page in the Michigan Tour pamphlet for $50.00" which the members voted to approve. It was a typical suggestion usually met with approval in meetings throughout the 1920s.[4] This note from the minutes showed both active involvement in soliciting funds to support transportation systems through Salinas and also efforts to advertise the town to prospective businesspeople and organizations seeking meeting venues.

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[4] Minutes from the Chamber of Commerce, February 23, 1926

The large Victorians that these early twentieth century settlers built in downtown Salinas and the infrastructure that they created to support their prosperous lives were shows of economic power, and also evidence of the stability, prosperity and aspiration for Salinas giving the city a significant place in the rapidly developing urban environment typical of California at the turn of the century. Economic development was a critical component to achieve all of this planned urban growth based on ideologies of corporate business and farm ownership.[5] It all required financing and credit that could only be obtained through the networks of community banks linked to San Francisco financial centers, which proliferated during this period and throughout the early years of the twentieth century, marking Salinas as the wealthiest city per capita in the United States by 1924.[6]

The farmland surrounding the city was some of the richest in the entire country and therefore a valuable lure for Americans who believed deeply in farmland ownership as a cornerstone of American values.[7] Salinas's leaders pursued a strategy of growing their city both through increased population and annexation of adjacent farmland for housing. They encouraged settlement for newcomers in the surrounding unincorporated areas and focused on developing the city within its late nineteenth century limits. They also wanted to professionalize governance and management of the city. At a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce on March 23, 1926, Exchange Club President Ralph Hughes reported that there were a series of discussions between his group and the Salinas Rotary Club about hiring a city manager for Salinas. In keeping with

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[5] David Vaught, *Cultivating California: Growers, Specialty Crops, and Labor, 1875-1920* (Baltimore and London: the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999)
[6] See Dorothy Vera, "Salinas Banking 90 Years Old," *Salinas Californian*, October 1963, n.p.
[7] Salinas's early settlers fell somewhere between the horticultural ideal Vaught described David Vaught, *Cultivating California: Growers, Specialty Crops, and Labor, 1875-1920* (Baltimore and London: the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999) and the colonial settler mentality described by James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo World, 1783-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

efforts to keep Salinas connected with the rest of the towns and emerging cities of San Francisco's hinterland, "several speakers [including] City Manager Eddy of Berkeley, City Manager Dorton of Monterey, Mayor Hudson of Monterey, and Mayor Clark of Salinas" were all invited to discuss "if a city manager was practical and needed for Salinas" with the community at public forums. It was decided to invite the city managers from Monterey and Berkeley to visit Salinas and "make a survey" paid for by the Chamber of Commerce to decide the matter. It was ultimately decided in favor of hiring a city manager as one more effort to bring Salinas into the community of cities run by professionals and city planners rather than by resident politicians.[8]

The 1890s had marked a critical turning point for the city of Salinas as it did for Californians generally. The Spanish-American War (1898) and industrialization in cities and in agriculture brought new working class populations into the region and the state, which included multiple Asian groups. The radical labor activism and anti-immigration, anti-Asian climate of the country in the 1910s, and the United States involvement in World War I created a sense that the country might be moving towards chaos and anarchy, which affected the development of the country, the state, and the city of Salinas in profound and important ways as well, altering settlement patterns and adding political, social, and cultural stresses but also new opportunities for growth. Salinas's agricultural development diversified significantly, which allowed residents of the entire area to avoid the most severe consequences of the Depressions of 1873 and 1893 that hit grain farmers in the mid-West hardest and gave rise to an increasingly ardent Populist movement.[9] It was this innovative approach to agricultural development made possible by the rich farmland of the Salinas Valley that contributed to Salinas becoming an orderly, protected space in

[8] Minutes, Salinas Chamber of Commerce, March 23, 1926.
[9] See Michael Magliari, "Populism, Steamboats and the Octopus: Transportation Rates and Monopoly in California's Wheat Regions, 1890-1896" *Pacific Historical Review*, vol 58, No 4, (November, 1989), 449-469.

contrast to the more chaotic and virulently nativist environments of larger municipalities such as San Francisco, Los Angeles and Oakland in the early years of the century. According to one historian writing about agricultural towns in this era, "In agricultural communities, traditions of nativism confronted…stability [so that] interdependence…tempered overt hostility [against immigrants]."[10]

That fundamental difference in intergroup relations between large urban centers in California and smaller, diversified, agricultural communities showed in the local reporting of a bombing in San Francisco on the eve of World War I. The San Francisco Chamber of Commerce organized a Preparedness Day Parade on July 22, 1916 to show support for the war raging in Europe. During the parade, anarchists against American involvement in the conflict in Europe exploded a bomb hidden in a suitcase in middle of the parade route killing ten people and wounding forty. It was the worst terrorist attack in San Francisco history. That attack was part of a widespread, increasingly radical politics in California in the first decades of the twentieth century, especially in cities undergoing rapid industrialization, economic volatility, and dramatic demographic change. It was designed to sow doubt and discord over the U.S. entry into World War I and create chaos and terror as well. Salinas's residents barely shrugged.

The Salinas newspapers minimized the bombing. It was sandwiched on the front pages of the local newspapers between headlines featuring Allied progress in the war with Germany and laudatory articles about the parade in San Francisco as a reflection of the patriotism of San Franciscans and all Californians:

> With bands playing national airs, fife and drum corps rendering martial numbers that never fail to make the blood tingle, and with thousands of flags floating in the breeze, San

[10] See Linda Ivey, "Ethnicity in the Land: Lost Stories in California Agriculture," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 81, No 1, (Winter, 2007), 112.

> Francisco went on record in favor of adequate preparedness in one of the biggest processions the West has ever held…represent[ing] every city and town [in the] entire bay section."

The article went on to document that a delegation from Monterey County participated in the event, coming on "special train" and that they were "wildly cheered." [11]

Although news about the perpetrators of the bombing regularly made the front pages, there was no indication in subsequent issues about a growing labor movement or radical activism as a widespread threat to order. Instead, editorials waxed eloquently about the need for preparedness for the European war on the horizon and generally focused on the more mundane aspects of city life such as deaths of prominent citizens, sporting events, and new developments in transportation systems or agricultural news.

In the 1910s through the 1920s, cities and towns in California became destinations for millions of new immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe (who fled poverty and political repression in the teens and twenties), from many parts of Asia, (which suffered from widespread war and famine), and refugees from revolutionary Mexico (also undergoing political and economic turmoil). As a result of the new migrations, population in regions throughout the state markedly increased and diversified.[12] The cities themselves became congested as needs for housing and infrastructure could not keep pace with demand. As a result, we see a worrying context of poverty, disease, and waves of unemployment due to an unstable, unpredictable economy.

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[11] *Salinas Daily Index* July 22, 1916, p.1

[12] See Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); William Deverell and Tom Sitton, eds., *California Progressivism Revisited* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Charlotte Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends: Asian Americans, Housing and the Transformation of Urban California* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

The anarchist politics behind the San Francisco bombing were intertwined with a new international labor movement, which focused their organizing efforts on these immigrant groups in the United States who labored in factories under dangerous conditions for subsistence wages, leaving them impoverished and exploited. As a result, union activity became entwined with violence and radical politics in the minds of many Americans. That conflated thinking fueled a backlash against immigrants generally that, in turn, led to the passage of the most restrictive immigration legislation in American history, the National Origins Act also known as the Johnson Reed Act of 1924. This piece of legislation combined with the 1917 Asiatic Barred Zone Act effectively eliminated new immigration from the entire continent of Asia and severely limited immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe. Filipino and Mexican immigrant workers (mostly men) arrived in California in this period (1910s and 1920s), to fill labor shortages that occurred in the wake of this restrictive legislation that removed Japanese, Chinese, and most European immigrant groups from the labor pool. As a result, Filipinos and in some places Mexicans too, became new targets of the backlash against immigrants in California, and were victimized in towns throughout the hinterland surrounding San Francisco including in the city of Watsonville and Monterey, both next door to Salinas.

Salinas, on the other hand, experienced less of the violence or turmoil that large municipalities felt in these decades. Like other regions based on agriculture rather than manufacturing, immigrants who arrived in the 1910s, 1920s and into the 1930s to support the new developments in agriculture seemed to follow patterns begun in the late nineteenth century when new arrivals might start out as laborers but aspire to become managers and landowners too,

even with the constraining legislation that prohibited Asians from land ownership.[13] When they first arrived, immigrants usually lived in labor camps on the outskirts of town, moving into the unincorporated spaces surrounding the city as they could afford to in order to settle and raise families.

Residents of Salinas in the 1910s and 1920s remained predominantly white and native born, but not entirely so as is evident from the numerous pieces of local legislation that aimed to bring all newcomers into the mainstream. Like their Progressive era counterparts in other regions, Salinas's town builders created new schools and built libraries in order to speed assimilation of immigrants from every part of Europe and Asia and to encourage a responsible, patriotic, and educated citizenry. They continued to build infrastructure too, paving streets and ensuring the availability of safe drinking water and access to power supplies. They built sewer systems throughout the city. They paid attention to cultural needs, building an opera house and organizing cultural and educational events that were routinely advertised in the city's multiple local newspapers. They perceived themselves as an integral part of the mosaic of cities that would make up a network surrounding San Francisco. They promoted their city tirelessly as a destination for tourists and travelers. Its uniqueness as an agricultural town was also its selling point. Salinas boasted plenty of economic opportunities mostly connected in some way to the burgeoning agricultural economy.

SALINAS'S CHINATOWN: SEGREGATED SPACE OR SAFE HAVEN?

Salinas's Chinatown is a clear example of the ways in which Salinas's residents managed city space in the early twentieth century in ways that incorporated new immigrant populations

[13] Cecilia Tsu, *Garden of the World: Asian Immigrants and the Making of Agriculture in California's Santa Clara Valley* (Oxford University Press, 2013; Linda Ivey, "Ethnicity in the Land: Lost Stories in California Agriculture," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 81, No 1, (Winter, 2007).

without creating rigidly segregated spaces or descending into the consistent, overt hostility against Chinese people that San Franciscans were famous for. Unlike Chinatowns and barrios elsewhere, Salinas's Chinatown flowed into the unincorporated spaces on the east and north sides of the city. Racial boundaries remained fluid and porous in these emerging neighborhoods and inclusions in citywide cultural events such as Big Week (also known as the Rodeo), gave everyone a sense of community belonging.

Blanche Chin Ah Tye was the first Chinese woman to be born in Salinas on June 20, 1919.[14] Like almost all Chinese people she lived in Chinatown on Soledad Street in Salinas with her family, which included her Chinese born grandfather (a merchant originally from San Francisco), her parents and three brothers--all born in the United States. Her earliest memory of Salinas was the "big event" of Chinatowns' sidewalks being filled with concrete, an indication of the increasing infrastructural development happening throughout Salinas at the time that included the area known as Chinatown. By contrast, in cities such as San Jose, Los Angeles, and San Francisco barrios and Chinatowns were places notable for the absence of basic infrastructure such as sidewalks, streetlighting, or paved streets, with families living in tents and ramshackle housing rather than permanent homes.[15]

Tye described a community of merchants and retailers, which included her family who were herbalists, purchasing supplies from "Yen Ning Tong," of San Francisco. Tye noted that "a Chinese truck driver delivered to Salinas once a week." Chinese residents were poor but also infused with a community spirit and solidarity that did not allow anyone to fall completely into

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[14] Blanch Chin Ah Tye, *Full of Gold: Growing Up in Salinas Chinatown, Living in Post War America* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2015)
[15] See Steve Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003) for a comparison with East San Jose.

destitution. “We Chinese trusted one another,” she noted. Her mother frequently “took in” single Chinese men down on their luck from gambling or smoking too much opium, a habit her grandfather also engaged in, but Tye’s mother also embraced Chinese residents and newcomers who just felt alone in a new American environment: “Our door was always open,” she remembered:

> My mother was very kind-hearted…Some Chinese men…wanted a little family atmosphere…Whenever my mother made anything, it would be an all day affair because people would come and eat and leave as more friends came.”[16]

Yet, at the same time, her reflections also showed that Chinese people in Salinas felt a collective sense of being part of the Salinas social order, rather than standing apart from it. Blanche Chin Ay Tye attended both Chinese school and American public school. Her mother made apple pies and doung, which she called “Chinese tamales.” Her family celebrated American holidays such as Christmas as well as Chinese ones and loved visits to the Salinas rodeo in July, its carnivals, and sold Fourth of July fireworks to other Salinas residents. As with other Americans in the first years of the twentieth century, Chinese people believed deeply in home ownership: “For most Chinese families it was important to own your own home…no matter how poor you are, at least you have a roof over your head.”[17]

What was notable about her story was her awareness that she lived in a space segregated by race and class “the other side of the tracks” as she described it, but attended grammar and high schools that were integrated racially and socially, just like in other California agricultural

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[16] Blanch Chin Ah Tye, *Full of Gold: Growing Up in Salinas Chinatown, Living in Post War America* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2015), 17.
[17] Blanch Chin Ah Tye, *Full of Gold: Growing Up in Salinas Chinatown, Living in Post War America* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2015), 19.

communities, but in contrast to the racially segregated schools of nearby San Francisco. She was a keen observer, commenting on both distinctions and similarities between her Chinese family and friends and "the Caucasians" in everyday life in 1920s Salinas. Although she felt ashamed of some differences as a child, her experience showed how quickly families adapted to new cultural norms in an American environment without losing their own sense of identity: "For lunches we children didn't have sandwiches like our Caucasian classmates. My mother made rice balls filled with ham or Chinese sausage…Since we didn't like to seem different, we'd go to the baseball field to eat in privacy…As time went by we learned about bread, mayonnaise and lunch meat and started bringing sandwiches to school."[18]

Although this was an era of rabid anti-immigrant (particularly in California anti-Asian) sentiment, Tye described a public school environment that was free and fair and focused on learning not race or class. Her account supports a growing consensus among historians that Chinese and other Asian immigrants experienced life more freely in agriculturally based California towns than was possible in large urban centers where they faced hostility and violence as a matter of routine:

> All through my six years at Lincoln Grammar School, classes numbered thirty pupils or more. In most of my classes, there were a couple of Japanese children. Our principal was a Caucasian woman, Miss DeCarli, and her secretary was a young Japanese woman whose younger sister was in my class. We all respected our administrators and teachers and

[18] Blanch Chin Ah Tye, *Full of Gold: Growing Up in Salinas Chinatown, Living in Post War America* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2015), 20-21.

followed the rules. Many children were offspring of immigrants. There was no discrimination or bullying. In those days, we were all there to be educated.[19]

Blanche's young life was a typical American one that included sports "In baseball I always played shortstop, and in soccer, I played wing position."[20] Neither gender nor race kept her from active participation in school or recreational activities, suggesting that in small farming communities like Salinas with small but diverse Asian immigrant populations who were also integrated into the local economy, difference was normalized and everyone was incorporated into the fabric of town life.[21] Nowhere was this more apparent than in Salinas's celebration of the rodeo. Tye recalled:

> Rodeo Week was full of fun. Mae and Ada Chan, two female cousins from San Jose, came to stay with us for a few days. We enjoyed nightly visits to the carnival, which was set up by the train depot. Just to be in the crowd with bright night lights was exciting…My family looked forward to the Saturday night rodeo parade down Main Street.[22]

This passage showed how Salinas's residents and city leaders utilized new cultural celebrations in the creation of common purpose and communalism that crossed ethnic and racial lines and brought all residents in. It is also further evidence that Salinas as a community depended on Big Week (rodeo) to draw visitors and validate its significance as a focal point for the region.

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[19] Blanch Chin Ah Tye, *Full of Gold: Growing Up in Salinas Chinatown, Living in Post War America* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2015), 20.
[20] Blanch Chin Ah Tye, *Full of Gold: Growing Up in Salinas Chinatown, Living in Post War America* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2015), 20.
[21] For comparisons between Salinas and Asian experiences in Silicon Valley see Cecilia Tsu, *Garden of the World: Asian Immigrants and the Making of Agriculture in California's Santa Clara Valley* (Oxford University Press, 2013; Linda Ivey, "Ethnicity in the Land: Lost Stories in California Agriculture," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 81, No 1, (Winter, 2007).
[22] Blanch Chin Ah Tye, *Full of Gold: Growing Up in Salinas Chinatown, Living in Post War America* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2015), 20.

Tye was elderly when she recollected these and other moments in her life and may have been influenced by nostalgia that limited or even erased negative events or hostility that derived from being of Chinese origin. Nonetheless, her views suggested a context in contrast to what most Chinese people experienced in large municipalities in California in the first two decades of the century, but one that was shared by Chinese people and other Asian groups in Silicon Valley and Pajaro Valley. Like Salinas, multiple agricultural communities included increasing populations of diverse groups of Asian immigrants by the early twentieth century who were both horticulturalists aiming to own land and city builders with the goal of being permanent stakeholders rather than transient workers in agricultural fields.[23]

Tye even explained neighborhood segregation of Chinese people in Salinas in positive terms: "The old days in Chinatown were called 'segregation,' but the Chinese were like one, big happy family and lasting bonds of love and affection were formed."[24] This suggested, once again, a nostalgic view that may have softened due to age and time, but it also reflected her sense of belonging at a time when most Chinese people felt completely marginalized in the bigger urban environments of Los Angeles and San Francisco but felt far more integrated in community life the in agricultural regions, not just in Salinas but also in Pajaro, Contra Costa, and Santa Clara too.[25]

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[23] See Cecilia Tsu, *Garden of the World: Asian Immigrants and the Making of Agriculture in California's Santa Clara Valley* (Oxford University Press, 2013; Linda Ivey, "Ethnicity in the Land: Lost Stories in California Agriculture," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 81, No 1, (Winter, 2007),

[24] Blanche Chin Ah Tye, *Full of Gold: Growing Up in Salinas Chinatown Living in Post War America* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015) frontpiece.

[25] For experiences of Chinese people in California cities see Charlotte Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends: Asian Americans, Housing, and the Transformation of Urban California* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009) 11-38. See Jean Pfaelzer, *Driven Out: The Forgotten War against Chinese Americans* (New York: Random House, 2007); Elmer Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1939); Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensible Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), Charles J. McClain, *In Search of Equality: The Chinese Struggle Against Discrimination in Nineteenth Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994);

Tye's perspective is valuable too for her focus on the women in her life and her awareness of gender. The Chinese women she knew and remembered--her mother, teachers and friends--were involved, active members of community life. They played significant roles in creating community. Tye's mother performed the important role of community support person for people in the neighborhood made desperate by economic circumstance. Her memory of her mother cooking for all and in utilizing a barter system to supplement the family's food supply point to the innovative ways families coped with marginalization and poverty. Moreover, it is a tribute to her mother's fortitude that Tye was protected, insulated from the harsher consequences of life in a neighborhood marginalized both by class and race, albeit a gentler one than those that existed in either San Francisco or Los Angeles. Chinese people in Salinas, like their counterparts in small, rural communities experienced life more fully with their white neighbors along the lines that Blanche Tye and her family story poignantly illustrated.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the Chinese Exclusion Acts (first passed in 1882 and renewed indefinitely in 1902) did not allow permanent immigration by Chinese origin people to the United States with exceptions made for elites, mostly merchants, and their immediate families. They were clear evidence of Americans' and particularly Californians' and other Westerners' deep hostility towards Chinese people generally who were viewed as unassimilable citizens and unwelcome residents. As a result of this legislation, immigration from China to California and the

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Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Diana L. Ahmad, *The Opium Debate and Chinese Exclusion Laws in the Nineteenth Century American West* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2007); Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); For the multiple ways in which Chinese people integrated in agricultural towns see Cecilia Tsu, *Garden of the World: Asian Immigrants and the Making of Agriculture in California's Santa Clara Valley* (Oxford University Press, 2013; Linda Ivey, "Ethnicity in the Land: Lost Stories in California Agriculture," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 81, No 1, (Winter, 2007), 98-124.

West slowed considerably, creating a significant labor shortage in the state in the early years of the twentieth century. Most large agriculturalists, railroad barons, and industrialists had depended on contract labor from China to cultivate crops, build infrastructure and toil in emerging industries. Moreover, the Chinese Exclusion Acts did not allow Chinese immigrants of any class the right to naturalize and become American citizens (as immigrants of European or Mexican origin were able to do after a short period of residency in the United States). By 1902 Chinese immigration was made permanently illegal in the U.S. Restrictions on entry and citizenship were subsequently extended to all people from the continent of Asia in 1917 culminating in the restrictive Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924 that based entry on national origin (race) with an eye to replicating the majority white population of the U.S. as of 1890.

All Asian people were swallowed up in popular sentiment that excluded them from neighborhoods, certain employment and educational opportunities, and most importantly from access to American citizenship regardless of class or qualifications. Beyond this, municipalities such as San Francisco and Los Angeles exploded with anti-Chinese violence throughout the late nineteenth century and which persisted in the early decades of the twentieth.[26]

Salinas (along with other towns in California located in the hinterlands of populous San Francisco) appeared to have functioned as one of the safety valves for San Francisco Chinese

[26] Charlotte Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends: Asian Americans, Housing, and the Transformation of Urban California* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009) 11-38. See Jean Pfaelzer, *Driven Out: The Forgotten War against Chinese Americans* (New York: Random House, 2007); Elmer Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1939); Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensible Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), Charles J. McClain, *In Search of Equality: The Chinese Struggle Against Discrimination in Nineteenth Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Diana L. Ahmad, *The Opium Debate and Chinese Exclusion Laws in the Nineteenth Century American West* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2007); Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

residents seeking new prospects and an escape from the virulent anti-Chinese violence, which marked San Francisco (and Los Angeles) in this period.[27] In the much smaller setting of Salinas and in other agricultural communities as well, Chinese people did not make up a critical mass and became integral to diverse regional economies. Chinese migrants from San Francisco found a reprieve from the worst assaults and discrimination largely inflicted by San Francisco's white ethnic working classes on them, and also found opportunity in employment and business ownership, just as they did in other emerging towns in the region surrounding San Francisco.[28] Like other smaller towns, Salinas's residents valued Chinese labor rather than considered Chinese immigrants a threat to white working class people. White workers were not looking for opportunities to drain sloughs or do stoop labor in the fields, although there were some exceptions.[29] But there was a positive side too. Chinese people appropriated land to produce labor-intensive crops such as strawberries and produce in this period, which supported the local

[27] For analyses of Chinatowns in smaller towns in San Francisco and L.A.'s hinterlands see Timothy Fong, *The First Suburban Chinatown: the Remaking of Monterey Park, California*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Connie Young Yu, *Chinatown, San Jose, USA* (San Jose: San Jose Historical Museum Association, 1994); Brian Tom, *Marysville Chinatown* (Arcadia Press, 2008); Michael Andrew Goldstein, "Truckee's Chinese Community: From Coexistence to Disintegration, 1870-1890", (unpublished Master's Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1988); Barbara Pricer, *The Chinese in Northern California* (Barbara Pricer: Quincy, California, 1996); Cecilia Tsu, *Garden of the World: Asian Immigrants and the Making of Agriculture in California's Santa Clara Valley* (Oxford University Press, 2013; Linda Ivey, "Ethnicity in the Land: Lost Stories in California Agriculture," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 81, No 1, (Winter, 2007), 98-124.

[28] Cecilia Tsu, *Garden of the World: Asian Immigrants and the Making of Agriculture in California's Santa Clara Valley* (Oxford University Press, 2013); Linda Ivey, "Ethnicity in the Land: Lost Stories in California Agriculture," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 81, No 1, (Winter, 2007), 98-124Blanch Chin Ah Tye, *Full of Gold: Growing Up in Salinas Chinatown, Living in Post War America* (North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2015).

[29] See *The Salinas Index,* which published articles from time to time in the 1910s on Italian and other Southern European immigrant laborers brought in to build brick walls or work in manual labor.

farm economy.[30] The Chinese who arrived in Salinas in the first two decades of the 1900s gradually built a strong community in Salinas, layered by class, and modeled on the one they remembered in San Francisco, which included establishing a network of tongs or extralegal gangs.[31]

Salinas's residents did not attack Chinese people in eruptions of mob violence, although the region experienced its share of anti-Chinese violence.[32] Like so many other Western communities, Salinas's residents generally expressed their anti-Chinese sentiments through ordinances controlling space and behavior rather than violent actions. Salinas's white residents may have shared the anti-Chinese sentiments of their time, but did not want Chinese immigrants to disappear. In fact, Chinese people were needed and wanted both as workers, business entrepreneurs, and horticulturalists.

Control over space focused on maintaining public health and morality including restrictions on gambling and the selling of liquor licenses. Just as in every other Progressive era municipality, the Salinas City Council passed numerous laws throughout the decades of the 1910s that penalized Chinese (and other) businesses for illicit activity, restricted the availability and location gambling houses, and limited the sale of liquor licenses in Chinatown. The city prohibited tobacco sales to minors and circumscribed both the establishment of saloons in the area of hours of operation.[33]

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[30] See Sucheng Chan, This Bittersweet Soil (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) and Cecilia Tsu *Garden of the World: Asian Immigrants and the Making of Agriculture in California's Santa Clara Valley* (Oxford University Press, 2013).
[31] See Sandy Lydon, *Chinese Gold: The Chinese in the Monterey Bay Region* (Capitola, California: Capitola Book Company, 1985).
[32] Carol McKibben, *Racial Beachhead: Diversity and Democracy in a Military Town* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 34-36.
[33] "The Movement in Sacramento, San Jose, Salinas, etc." 1874.*San Francisco Chronicle (1869-Current File)*, Jun 22, 3. https://search-proquest-

Taken together, all of these ordinances were efforts to control city space and enforce a version of morality women in late nineteenth and early twentieth century American towns and cities actively sought to establish. However, as in other agricultural communities, Salinas white residents did not require that Chinese people live only within the confines of just one neighborhood or regulate their dress or cultural practices.[34] Instead, Chinese horticulturalists lived all over the Salinas Valley. Chinese retail business owners set up shop throughout the city and especially in unincorporated areas.[35] They moved freely according to their own economic and social requirements, just like any other immigrant group.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the Salinas City Council was presented with a petition to move Chinatown--in entirety--from the city altogether following a fire there in 1892. Although the

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com.stanford.idm.oclc.org/docview/357207280?accountid=14026; Minutes of Salinas City Council Meetings : April 6 1886 Petition of J.R. Leese and others asking for an Ordinance removing washhouses outside of city limits was received and referred to the Ordinance Committee with instructions to report at next regular meeting (660)…Ordinance #134 prohibiting wash houses within certain limits was passed…ordinance no 135 regulating the issuance of liquor licenses was passed…Ordinance no.136 prohibiting houses of ill game was passed(662); Petition from Women's Temperance Union asking Council to pass an ordinance prohibiting the use of tobacco by minors and prohibiting the sale of tobacco to minors was received and action postponed (676). Requests for liquor licenses were routinely denied: Petition by China Lamorra for a liquor license and denied 706); and every request for establishment of entertainment oriented businesses were carefully scrutinized: J.D. Carr petitioned for regulating theatrical license and referred to Ordinance committee. April 5, 1888 mayors report city assessment $1,045,940. Biggest expense: school fund 24 cents…city collector fired for inability to collect license taxes By Dec 1887 it was $25,000. Not $15,000 and also passed by a two thirds margin (744) July 8, 1887 The proposition to incur a municipal indebtedness of $15,000. For public improvements within the corporate limits of Salinas City having received more than two-thirds votes…adopted as Ordinance 152 held July 5, 1887 Hughes, Tynan, Smith, tolman Trimmer…It was moved and carried that the mayor be authorized to procure the necessary bank bonds for the proposed indebtedness." (715). July 25 "The clerk was instructed to advertise sale of city bonds." This last was added in different ink.(716)

[34] See Beth Lew-Williams, "Chinamen" and "Delinquent Girls": Intimacy, Exclusion, and a Search for California's Color Line," *Journal of American History*, (Vol 104, Issue 3, 1 December 2017), 632–655.

[35] See Wellington Lee, "Salinas Chinatown Memories", unpublished manuscript, Salinas Public Library

date is suspicious given that 1893 marked the beginning of one of the worst economic catastrophes of the new century, there was no evidence of arson or foul play: "Chinatown has had its share of fires. The first leveled 'old town' near Main Street and all the buildings a block around…Water was brought by the fire department from the corner of Sausal and Pajaro Streets but in the midst of it all the hoses burst. During the excitement firemen rescued a lame Chinese gentleman from the hospital [nearby].[36] Indeed, fire was routine in Salinas in this era of highly flammable wooden buildings, an all-volunteer fire department, and disputes over funding and equipment.[37]

Nonetheless, in the aftermath of the fire, "A petition asking for the removal of Chinatown beyond the city limits was received upon motion made and carried the petition was laid on the table…It was then moved and carried that the Sanitary Committee be instructed to investigate the matter of a nuisance now in houses of Chinese within the City Limits and report on same at the next regular meeting."[38] The Sanitary Committee reported back to the city council…that 'they have examined the premises occupied by the Chinese on Soledad Street and the same are a nuisance and a great menace to the health of the people in that locality…it was then moved and carried that the City Attorney be instructed to commence proceedings against the proper parties to abate said nuisance."[39] Thus, a proper investigation (rather than impromptu vigilantes) concluded that only problematic businesses should be penalized for violations deemed "nuisance" rather than all Chinese people or all Chinese enterprises as was the case when mobs randomly targeted Chinese neighborhoods in Monterey, Los Angeles and San Francisco in this period.

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[36] Dorothy Viera, "Old Slides Recall Early Chinatown Fire," *Salinas Californian*, nd. Vertical clipping file, Steinbeck Library, Salinas.
[37] Dorothy Viera, "Tempers Flared Hotly in Salinas in 1896 Over Fire Department," *Salinas Californian*, nd. Vertical clipping file, Steinbeck Library, Salinas
[38] Minutes Salinas City Council Meeting June 23 1893, vol 2 1889-1896, 211
[39] Minutes Salinas City Council Meeting July 3, 1893, vol 2 1889-1896, 212

Although many of the City Council Minutes from the early 1910s and 1920s have gone missing, other accounts of the era demonstrated that Chinese people found avenues for incorporation in the city in these decades in spite of that suspicious episode in 1893. Chinatown was not moved out of the city limits after all. The ordinance on "nuisance" focused on public health and is an example of typical Progressive era efforts to deal with fears of pandemics in marginalized and poor neighborhoods throughout California at a time when the causes of such outbreaks were not widely understood and considered the result of genetics rather than conditions on the ground. Still, Salinas's efforts were mild compared with punitive and cruel attacks on Chinese people, Mexican people, and other immigrant groups in larger cities like Los Angeles or San Francisco in this period. [40]

The restriction of residency for the Chinese residents of Salinas came in the context of a wave of racial segregation in the post-Reconstruction era, which gained authority from the highest level of the federal government with the *1896 Plessey v. Ferguson* Supreme Court ruling legitimizing racial separation in neighborhoods, towns, and cities throughout the country.[41] These

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[40] Charlotte Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends: Asian Americans, Housing, and the Transformation of Urban California* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009) 11-38. See Jean Pfaelzer, *Driven Out: The Forgotten War against Chinese Americans* (New York: Random House, 2007); Elmer Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1939); Saxton Alexander, *The Indispensible Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), Charles J. McClain, *In Search of Equality: The Chinese Struggle Against Discrimination in Nineteenth Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Diana L. Ahmad, *The Opium Debate and Chinese Exclusion Laws in the Nineteenth Century American West* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2007); Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Charlotte Brooks, Alien Neighbors Foreign Friends: *Asian Americans, Housing and the Transformation of Urban California* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[41] Sandy Lydon, *Chinese Gold: The Chinese in the Monterey Bay Region* (Capitola, California: Capitola Book Company, 1985; See also Linda L. Ivey, "Ethnicity in the Land: Lost Stories in California Agriculture," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 81, No. 1 (Winter, 2007), 98-124.

Chinatowns and barrios in California were the first of their kind in the United States, predating twentieth century black ghettoes in the East and mid-West or increasingly rigidly segregated spaces in the South.[42] In cities and towns throughout America after the turn of the last century, African Americans were increasingly relegated to these spaces along with poorer populations of new immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, and in California, from the Philippines, Korea, Japan, South Asia, and all over Central and South America. When Euro-Americans left the worst areas of cities as they gained wealth, middle class and professional Mexicans who identified as Spanish joined them. But even middle class Chinese, Black and Japanese people could not do so until well after the 1940s. Even after the 1960s, spatial boundaries were apparent for groups considered people of color in Salinas as elsewhere in the state and the nation.

Yet, just as in many other agricultural communities in regions across California, the lines were softened in Salinas because there was room on ranches, farms, and in the unincorporated spaces to the east and the north of the city in which people lived in multiracial, multicultural settings.[43] Salinas's residents made no effort to annex these spaces until they became more desirable socially and economically in the 1960s when white settlement from the Dust Bowl

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[42] Charlotte Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends: Asian Americans, Housing, and the Transformation of Urban California* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Steve Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003)

[43] See Linda Ivey, "Ethnicity in the Land: Lost Stories in California Agriculture," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 81, No 1, (Winter, 2007); Cecilia Tsu, *Garden of the World: Asian Immigrants and the Making of Agriculture in California's Santa Clara Valley* (Oxford University Press, 2013); See Beth Lew-Williams, "Chinamen" and "Delinquent Girls": Intimacy, Exclusion, and a Search for California's Color Line," *Journal of American History*, (Vol 104, Issue 3, 1 December 2017), 632–655.

migrations matured. By the 1960s it appeared that places like Alisal might make a significant economic contribution to the city as a subdivision.[44]

When we examine the life of another prominent Chinese resident and his family in Salinas we see how migration from San Francisco and patterns of settlement played out in Salinas, and set the stage for the treatment of other racially marginalized groups who arrived in the city over the course of the twentieth century. Like so many other Chinese youths with roots in Guangdong Province in China, Lee Yin (later known as Shorty Lee), arrived in San Francisco in 1897 at age 9 to "learn the mercantile trade" in a store owned by his uncle, Lee Kwok Doon.[45]

The Lees (an upper class merchant family) were able to move back and forth between China and the United States with relative ease compared to their contemporaries because of their class status as merchant elites. Unlike so many thousands of poorer Chinese people, the Lees did not face detention (sometimes for years) at Angel Island Immigration Station or experience the extreme hardship of being refused entry altogether and forced into imprisonment at Angel Island for years or returned to China. [46]

Thus, Lee Yin arrived in the United States somewhat unscathed. Collective family memories of San Francisco in particular, with its substantial Chinese population, showed routine violence that erupted into rioting, lynching and ordinances designed to keep Chinese impoverished and locked into an inescapable and over-crowded ghetto in one area of the city

[44] Chapter Three focuses on this new wave of migration from the Depression era, which includes refugees from the Dust Bowl.
[45] See Wellington Lee, "Salinas Chinatown Memories", unpublished manuscript, Salinas Public Library, 6.
[46] See Erika Lee and Judy Yung, *Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America* (Oxford; New York, 2010: Oxford University Press)

designated as Chinatown, which lacked basic sanitation or infrastructure and was purposefully mired in disease and filth by lack of intervention on the part of the city.[47]

Lee Yin returned to China twice and then managed to reenter the United States two times with little difficulty based on his class status, even in this hostile climate. He married in 1902 and escaped the violence and overcrowding of San Francisco's Chinatown to settle in Salinas in 1908, arriving shortly after the 1906 earthquake devastated both cities. He found employment in the Quong Chong Yuen general store on Soledad Street that was owned by an uncle. Lee thrived economically and socially. Besides managing small retail establishments, which were legal, he also engaged in gambling and other illegal enterprises. Like Lee, many Chinese people were forced to earn a living by getting involved in illegal activities just to survive, giving Chinatown a notorious reputation as a center for crime and violence by the early decades of the new century.[48]

By 1908 when Lee Yin settled in Salinas, the Chinese community was divided along class lines. It was not just a population of laborers, but might rather be described as follows:

> In those cluster of wooden structures in…Chinatown…the merchants provided products and services to the laborers and were able to maintain families and better living conditions than the camps and group housing that the laborers had. [Lee Yin] fit in well with the merchants and ended up with his own store with enough backrooms upstairs and

[47] Wellington Lee, "Salinas Chinatown Memories", unpublished manuscript, Salinas Public Library; Sandy Lydon, *Chinese Gold: the Chinese in the Monterey Bay Region* (Capitola California: Capitola Book Company, 1985); Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); *Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America* (Oxford; New York, 2010: Oxford University Press); Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Charlotte Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends: Asian Americans, Housing, and the Transformation of Urban California* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
[48] Wellington Lee, "Salinas Chinatown Memories", unpublished manuscript, Salinas Public Library; Sandy Lydon, *Chinese Gold: the Chinese in the Monterey Bay Region* (Capitola California: Capitola Book Company, 1985).

> downstairs to house three generations of his family…Chinatown was founded by merchants who were also leaders of the tongs and operators of the money making vices such as gambling and opium joints that beckoned the laborers. The merchants were just as important as the laborers in Chinatown history…This is how it went--Merchants, the Servants/cooks/vegetable peddlers/laundrymen, the Laborers, and the Lost Souls (mentally retarded, vagabonds, hobos, homeless in those days) in that order from top to bottom.[49]

We see in this description that the area designated as Chinatown included people of non-Chinese origin who were poor so that class overlapped with race in neighborhood settlement. Chinatown began to include other immigrant groups by the turn of the century, most importantly the Japanese, and by the 1920s, Filipinos and Mexicans who were also denied access to neighborhoods designated as white spaces. All of these groups settled throughout Alisal, and in neighborhoods in the north and east side Salinas as well as in the neighborhood designated as Chinatown.

Unlike larger municipalities such as Los Angeles or San Francisco that tightly restricted neighborhoods by race, Salinas had a built-in safety valve in the subdivisions and unincorporated areas of the city to the north and east that were multiracial enclaves. In addition, multiple and diverse racial groups settled onto the farms and ranches around the Salinas Valley. As a result, the increasing numbers of Japanese, Mexicans and Filipinos lived throughout the Salinas Valley and among whites rather than only being isolated in certain city blocks within the city of Salinas itself,

[49] Email from Wellington Lee to Carol McKibben, June 10, 2017.

just like in so many other agricultural regions in California.[50] Like Chinese people, these other Asian immigrant groups did not make up a critical mass in city space in smaller agricultural towns and perhaps as a result, did not constitute the threat to the city's white population that Mexicans seemed to have done in San Jose, or that Filipinos did in Stockton or that Japanese, Mexicans and Chinese residents presented in San Francisco and Los Angeles during this period.[51]

By the beginning of the new century Salinas already contained a rapidly expanding population that resembled other, longer established California communities such as Monterey, San Jose, or Santa Barbara yet also diverged from them. Like those places, Salinas included a majority of native-born whites and Asians (almost all Chinese) who were somewhat segregated from white neighborhoods but also lived among whites in the unincorporated spaces of north and east Salinas and in surrounding farms and ranches. We see in Salinas a population of whites (many native born but also recent immigrants from Northern European countries) who formed a business and governing class of Salinas that remained in place until the 1980s, a population of Mexican people from the Spanish and Mexican eras, and a scattered smaller population of Asians (mostly Chinese but also Japanese and Filipinos) and working class whites both in the area designated as Chinatown and also scattered in the north Salinas subdivision and throughout Alisal. City boundaries did not change drastically but city wealth increased noticeably in these years as

[50] See Linda Ivey, "Ethnicity in the Land: Lost Stories in California Agriculture," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 81, No 1, (Winter, 2007); Cecilia Tsu, *Garden of the World: Asian Immigrants and the Making of Agriculture in California's Santa Clara Valley* (Oxford University Press, 2013)

[51] See George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Stephen J. Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americans* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003); Dawn Bohulano Mabalon, *Little Manila is in the Heart: The Making of the Filipina/o Community in Stockton, California* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013); Charlotte Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends: Asian Americans, Housing, and the Transformation of Urban California* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of MultiEthnic Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

agricultural growth intermeshed with business development. In Salinas the two became inseparable.

SUGAR BEETS AND ECONOMIC PROMISE

Before Salinas was known for its lettuce production ("green gold") in the 1930s, and discussed in full in Chapter 3, this region became a center for sugar beet production. As part of their strategy for city-building and industrial development, Jesse Carr, J. B. Iverson, William Vanderhurst, and several other local business leaders organized the first Monterey District Agricultural Fair Association in 1890 in order to bring Claus Spreckels to Salinas. Spreckels had become known as "The Sugar King" for his success in processing Hawaiian sugar cane for market. Carr and his partners wanted Spreckels to build a beet sugar manufacturing plant in the Salinas Valley with the idea of bringing greater wealth and employment to the city, and in so doing, solidify Salinas as a metropolitan center of significance in California, ensuring their own continued place as leaders of an important urban center.[52] They wanted personal gain to be sure, but they were also looking for opportunities to create the kind of ideal community that exemplified American Progressive values. A beet sugar factory not only meant more revenue to build schools, parks, and infrastructure for Salinas but might also create new opportunities for long-term employment for Salinas's residents both in and around the city. A sugar beet factory also might bring in a new population of farmers to grow the beets for processing, thus expanding a city population founded on the ideal of landowning small farmers.

Carr and the others had little understanding of the kinds of farmers that Spreckles would bring, however, or appreciate that Spreckles did not share their collective (and ambitious) goals for city building and city progress. Unlike Carr and his late nineteenth century contemporaries,

[52] *Monterey County*, pamphlet published by Salinas Board of Trade, n.d. Salinas Public Library, Local History Pamphlets vertical file, 24, 52-54.

Spreckles, an immigrant himself, had a background as a Hawaiian sugar plantation owner who supported importing contract laborers (many of whom were diverse groups of Asian workers), as a strategy for the creation of a malleable labor force restrained from collective action due to language and cultural differences among them.

The result was that the establishment of his factory in 1898 did not so much provide employment for residents of Salinas as it complicated Salinas's racial picture by bringing in a new labor force of Japanese, Mexicans, and Filipinos; the very populations that would challenge everything in California from ideals of white land ownership to fair labor practices to the very concept of citizenship. However, unlike the Chinese migrants from San Francisco who preceded them, the Mexican, Filipino and Japanese newcomers began their lives in Salinas as members of the working class and arrived specifically to work in the Spreckles's sugar beet fields along with a new population of working class whites.[53] According to an assessment in *The Pacific Rural Press* "90 to 95 per cent of beet growers are either American citizens or capable of becoming so [perhaps referring to immigrants either from Latin America or Europe. Both groups would have been considered Caucasian and as such eligible for naturalization and citizenship]. Orientals do most of the hand labor**,** white folks the rest. About 10,000 acres in the Salinas district are operated by the company or leased to tenants. Another official of the company estimates that about 200 private outside growers are producing the rest."[54] According to Jim Conway's exhaustive analysis of the history of Spreckles's factory:

> The color of one's skin relegated the Chinese, Japanese, Hindu, Mexican, and Filipino to the difficult work of stooping at the end of a short handled hoe, while white European

[53] Robert B. Johnston, "Salinas 1875-1950: From Village to City," (pamphlet published by Fidelity Savings and Loan Association, 1980) 1.
[54] *Pacific Rural Press*, Vol 94, No 7 August 18, 1917

immigrants found work inside the factory. European immigrants were employed both as skilled and unskilled laborers. Factory wages were better than field worker wages, working conditions were better and living conditions were much improved for those who worked in the factory operations.[55]

Salinas's population rose from 3,034 in 1900 (3,500 by 1902)[56] to 10,263 by 1930, but the city itself remained mostly white and European origin in racial and ethnic identity and kept its small footprint. Groups who arrived to work for Spreckles generally lived in north Salinas neighborhoods or in multiracial spaces in east Salinas and in surrounding farms and ranches. Nonetheless, Salinas was proud of the impact Claus Spreckels had on the city. The proximity of this factory, located less than five miles from Salinas city center, not only drove population growth but also contributed to the establishment of new business enterprises in the city.

Spreckles had long used his political connections to advocate for tariff protections from competition from sugar producers in Europe, which succeeded most notably with the passage of the Dingley Tariff in 1898. At this point, his plant was completed with enthusiastic coverage in the local press. *The Salinas Daily Index* boasted in 1898 that the Spreckles plant "[was] the largest in the world." [57] The report then gave dimensions of all the buildings with the comment that the main office (not yet constructed) promised to be a "magnificent structure" that would produce 450 tons of sugar daily from 3,000 tons of processed beets. An entire issue of *The Salinas Daily Index* in September 1899 was devoted to details about the Spreckle's factory that included an

[55] See Jimmie Don Conway, "Spreckels Sugar Company: The First fifty Years," unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of History, San Jose State University, 1999, p. 85.
[56] *Salinas Daily Index*, March 30, 1902 n.p. Jim and Jeri Gattis Collection
[57] *Salinas Daily Index,* January 4, 1898, n.p., Jim and Jeri Gattis Collection.

entire page of drawings of equipment and the step-by-step process of "how sugar is made from beets."[58]

Ken Dursa, a former Spreckels employee, succinctly explained the value of the Spreckels factory to the political economy of the entire region. Spreckles provided employment opportunity for residents, transients, and immigrants alike, and also was a promoter of new technologies that would transform agriculture in the Salinas Valley dramatically: "You can imagine the small population of Salinas at the time [1900], the factory itself employed 1,300 people, that's just within the grounds of the factory, not including all the agricultural operations," he explained. Furthermore, according to Dursa, "It [sugar beet production] brought the technology and skills. With agriculture it brought irrigation. That opened the way for green gold: lettuce."[59]

Like Jesse D. Carr, Claus Spreckels personified entrepreneurial capitalism at the turn of the last century. But unlike Carr, Spreckels was not a Progressive city builder. He was interested in building an economic empire to benefit himself and his family rather than in promoting town building in California. The distinction is important because latter day historians and journalists, (beginning with Cary McWilliams), used industrial agriculturalists such as Spreckles to define the nature of corporate agriculture in twentieth century California. According to McWilliams and the historians who followed in his path, growers were people who owned vast tracts of land, which they leased to smaller farmers, disdained workers, and themselves had little or no connections to the communities adjacent to their respective fields. These elite corporate agriculturalists attained great wealth at the expense of both people and environment. This was only partly true of

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[58] *Salinas Daily Index,* September 26, 1899, page 1, Jim and Jeri Gattis Collection.
[59] Juan Villa, "Remembering the Spreckels Sugar Factory," *Salinas Californian*, March 19, 2015 http://www.thecalifornian.com/story/news/education/2015/03/19/remembering-spreckels-sugar-factory/25056149/

Spreckles and others like him because it does not account for myriad of small and medium sized farms, sometimes leased from Spreckles but often owned in their own right that also made up the majority of agricultural enterprises in California, or the packers and shippers who often began farming careers as small-scale family businesses. These horticulturalists and businessmen and women did indeed have a stake in their communities, in city building, and had deep and persistent connections to those who worked for them and with them, which lasted over the course of several generations and into the present day.[60]

Claus Spreckles was born in Lamstedt, Germany in 1828. He arrived in the United States as a teenager fleeing military service and worked as a grocery clerk first in South Carolina, then New York City before and finally settled in San Francisco in 1863. There, he and his brother Peter co-owned and operated the Bay Sugar Refining Company, utilizing cane sugar from Hawaii for production. Ebenezer Herrick Dyer was one of California's first and most successful growers and producers of beet sugar, but his efforts soon paled in comparison to the success of Claus Spreckels and the Spreckels family, however.

Spreckels had observed a beet sugar plant in Soquel owned by Dyer and became interested enough to return to Germany to learn firsthand about the closely guarded secrets of beet sugar processing. It had been a flourishing industry in Europe throughout the early nineteenth century that only increased at midcentury with innovations in agriculture. In Europe, factory owners and farmers were one and the same so that growing beets and processing them into sugar were all one enterprise under single ownership, expediting the entire process. Moreover, the leftover beet pulp fed cattle so that every part of the beet was utilized completely by these farmer-processors.

[60] See David Vaught, "Factories in the Field Revisited," *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol 66, No.2 (May, 1997), 149-184; Cecilia Tsu, *Garden of the World: Asian Immigrants and the Making of Agriculture in California's Santa Clara Valley* (Oxford University Press, 2013; Linda Ivey, "Ethnicity in the Land: Lost Stories in California Agriculture," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 81, No 1, (Winter, 2007),

Returning to Germany in 1867 and pretending to be a common laborer working at a beet sugar processing plant in Magdeburg, Spreckels gained enough knowledge about sugar production to create his own processing plant when he returned to San Francisco.

Between 1888 and 1913 processing beets into sugar became a successful industry in the United States. Over the course of the 1890s, the sugar beet was improved for quality and quantity and production methods upgraded dramatically: "The diffusion process of manufacture was introduced. Originally, the beets were ground or sliced and the juice was extracted by pressing, or by centrifugal force. By the diffusion process… sliced beets or "cossettes" were submerged in hot water so that the sugar (and certain other substances) passed through the cell walls, leaving behind the exhausted cossettes or pulp. The new process was not only more efficient, but extracted a far higher quantity of sugar."[61]

The Civil War (and with it the end of slavery as a labor force) cut off importation of cane sugar and molasses from the South. The U.S. government under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture intervened, providing new supports for growing beets for sugar through protective tariffs, and for developing processing plants based on the European model.[62] As a result of federal subsidies, American entrepreneurs (including Mormons in Utah) were able to grow beets for sugar and build new processing plants, counting on limited competition from European producers. In the United States beets grown for processing into sugar became big business, and like other corporate enterprises at the turn of the century this quickly became a fiercely competitive industry. The Sugar Refining Trust was a monopoly that controlled price and production by

[61] Leonard J. Arrington, "Science government and Enterprise in Economic Development: The Western Beet Sugar Industry," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 41, No.1 (January, 1967) 2.
[62] The two most important protections for the development of this industry at the turn of the last century were the McKinley Tariff (1890) and the Dingley Tariff (1897), which allowed American sugar beet manufacturers to remain competitive with their European counterparts in spite of higher labor costs.

organizing producers in Utah, Idaho and throughout the Midwest and Hawaii to control prices, utilizing the railroads as part of a powerful conglomerate. Spreckels challenged the Sugar Refining Trust and the railroad giants. He built his own factory in Philadelphia then another in San Francisco. He then built the *Pajaro Valley Consolidated Railroad* and subsequently became President of the *San Francisco and San Joaquin Valley Railway* (sold to the Santa Fe Railway by 1901) that paralleled the route of the Southern Pacific to markets in Los Angeles and allowed him to undercut the Southern Pacific in getting his sugar to market. Spreckels had created the Western Beet Sugar Company and bought land in Watsonville in 1888. He brought in "experienced beet growers, builders, operators, and machinery from Germany, and erected a $400,000 factory [there]". [63]

It was in this context that Spreckels negotiated with Jesse D. Carr and other Salinas Valley business leaders to abandon his Watsonville plant in order to build a factory near Salinas, with the critical provision that Salinas's farmers would sign contracts at guaranteed prices to provide Spreckels with sufficient product in sugar beets to make the enterprise profitable for all. In 1896, the city of Salinas pledged the requisite number of local farmers to commit to Spreckles to grow the beets in close proximity to Spreckels plant, guaranteeing Spreckels a steady flow of produce to supply his production plant.

By 1911, it seemed that dreams of Salinas's residents for a thriving city based on agricultural production were being fulfilled. The local newspaper, *The Salinas Daily Index*, reported enthusiastically on its front page under the headline, "More Big Ranches Being Cut Up Into Small Farms" that "Things are coming our way… The time for cutting up some of the large tracts in this valley…has arrived…With small farms well tilled taking the place of large land

[63] Leonard J. Arrington, "Science, Government and Enterprise in Economic Development: The Western Beet Sugar Industry," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 41, No.1 (January, 1967) 6-7.

holdings…Salinas will experience a growth as phenomenal as that which has marked the progress of cities of southern California…sustaining in comfort a population of many thousands where hundreds are now existing." The article concluded "If this liberal policy continues the trading populations tributary to Salinas will be increased tenfold in as many years."[64]

Salinas's residents recognized Spreckles's impact on the local economy in bringing new technology to the area in the form of modern irrigation practices that might improve farmer's production and economic standing as they transitioned from Wheat, barley, and oats to the production of sugar beets followed in the same years by the production of berries led by Chinese and Japanese tenant farmers and following that, lettuce and other row crops in the 1920s. The local newspapers encouraged these new practices and highlighted increasing yields for those who irrigated along the lines Spreckles advocated. On November 25, 1903 *The Salinas Daily Index* promoted irrigation, "The results shown in another column by the Spreckles Sugar company as to yield of beets through its system of irrigation should convince farmers and those who have lands suitable for beet raising that irrigation is the one thing necessary …to insure good yields." The editorial gave examples of those who irrigated with stunning results.[65] The deep wells that Spreckles dug to supply water also made the production of row crops possible. Beans, corn, tomatoes, celery, asparagus, carrots, and most importantly for the local economy, lettuce, came to dominate agricultural production throughout the Salinas Valley, which thrived throughout the 1920s. The *Salinas Index* reported with enthusiasm that "great things for Salinas and its suburbs" would come about as a result of Spreckles's investment.[66]

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[64] *Salinas Daily Index*, May 17, 1911, p.1 Jim and Jeri Gattis Collection
[65] *Salinas Daily Index*, November 25, 1903, p.2 Jim and Jeri Gattis Collection
[66] *Salinas Daily Index*, April 27, 1899, taken from Jimmie Don Conway, "Spreckels Sugar Company: The First fifty Years," unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of History, San Jose State University, 1999, p. 30.

However, it did not quite work out in the long term. The paucity of farmers able and willing to fulfill the obligations for farming sugar beets promised by city leaders led Spreckels into some innovative ways of accomplishing his goals of supply, namely by convincing the Salvation Army to buy hundreds of acres of land that they, in turn, sold to unemployed families from San Francisco with very favorable long term mortgages. Named Fort Romie, this "colony" of former city dwellers acquired between ten to twenty acres of land apiece. At first, they succeeded somewhat in their efforts at farming, but most sold off their land by the 1910s when land values increased significantly as a result of the new irrigation practices that gave rise to lettuce and a variety valuable row crops, attracting the interest and investment of actual farmers. Spreckles then attempted to solve his labor problem by bringing immigrants in to work as tenant farmers, as field workers, and in his factory. These included white Northern Europeans (Danes), Japanese, Filipinos, "Hindus", and Mexicans, many of who came by way of the sugar cane fields of Hawaii. Race determined job assignments with whites working in the factories and Asians and Mexicans working in the fields.[67]

Demand for beets increased during World War I, but blight (which diminished the amount of sugar in the beets), severely damaged the sugar beet harvest in the 1920s forcing Spreckles to sell off much of the 66,000 acres he had acquired to grow beets in favor of "contracting for beets [for his factory] and providing farmers with the most up-to-date technical information."[68] Coupled with wild fluctuations in sugar prices, and tariff reforms in the Progressive Era that took away Spreckles's competitive edge both domestically and in the world market, the sugar beet industry

[67] Jimmie Don Conway, "Spreckels Sugar Company: The First fifty Years," unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of History, San Jose State University, 1999, pp. 61-63,78-80, 85.
[68] Jimmie Don Conway, "Spreckels Sugar Company: The First fifty Years," unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of History, San Jose State University, 1999, 120.

appeared to have failed by the time the stock market crashed in 1929. 16,222 acres of sugar beets had been planted in the Salinas Valley in 1925, but only 197 acres were planted four years later.[69]

New Deal legislation in the form of farm subsidies saved sugar beets. By 1934, Spreckles recouped his losses and became the fifth largest producer of sugar beets in the United States.[70] The Smoot-Hawley Tariff in particular helped stimulate beet production, but because consumer prices continued to drop significantly in the 1930s, the tariffs were roundly condemned as wrongheaded approaches to the problem farmers faced in the Depression Era. Low prices for lettuce and beans in 1931 and 1932 incentivized farmers to return to beet growing, but the selling price of sugar did not increase.[71]

Claus Spreckles died in 1908, but his family retained control of his operations in the region and profited handsomely from its extensive sugar beet operation. Along with Spreckles family investments and land holdings in California, the Spreckles family became important philanthropists, however, not in the Salinas Valley where they acquired much of their wealth. Unlike Jesse D. Carr, William Vanderhurst or other entrepreneurial capitalists who moved from San Francisco to Salinas, not only establishing businesses in the area but also homes, and investing their own fortunes in the city, Spreckels was not interested in Salinas. He was focused on turning his company into an international economic force that would challenge the hegemony of the monopolists of his day, from the Sugar Conglomerates in Hawaii to the Southern Pacific Railroad. Salinas's residents benefited from Spreckels decision to locate his biggest sugar processing plant nearby in terms of employment opportunities for its citizens and incoming immigrant groups, but

[69] Jimmie Don Conway, "Spreckels Sugar Company: The First fifty Years," unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of History, San Jose State University, 1999, 118.
[70] Jimmie Don Conway, "Spreckels Sugar Company: The First fifty Years," unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of History, San Jose State University, 1999, 124.
[71] Jimmie Don Conway, "Spreckels Sugar Company: The First fifty Years," unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of History, San Jose State University, 1999, 130.

Salinas did not benefit from any effort on the part of Spreckels to improve the lives of its residents through public service or public works as the city did in the person of Jesse Carr or Eugene Sherwood, for instance. Instead, Spreckels built a new town near Salinas (named after himself), to serve the needs his workers in terms of food, housing, recreation and infrastructure.[72] Thus, there was a clear difference between the women and men who formed Salinas's leadership in the first decades of the twentieth century and agricultural capitalists like Spreckels who became the model of a brutal corporate agriculturalist for journalists and historians such as Carey McWilliams.

The separate and sometimes conflicting goals of Salinas's city leaders and that of agricultural and railroad corporate interests manifested in the way the city developed during the course of the new century. Between 1890 and 1930, city leaders were mainly interested in building everything from libraries to schools and in developing a community culture that could reflect the ideals of a Progressive era American city. As shown in Chapter One, Salinas City Council meetings and newspapers of the day reflected collective efforts on the part of city leaders to install electricity and gas power grids throughout the city, to build and pave streets and build sidewalks, to develop sewer lines and pass ordinances to provide clean water and protect public health. With support from the Salinas Women's Civic Club and the Women's Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U.) Salinas utilized Jesse Carr's donation of $5,000 (supplemented by a grant he solicited from the Carnegie Corporation) to create a public library which opened officially in 1909. The Rodeo was incorporated in 1913.

City leaders created a "Freeholders Charter" in 1919 to fund needed city services and infrastructure, which relied on property taxes from the multiple new hotels and businesses in town more than from residents. The industrial garden idea did not work when industry was

[72] See Jimmie Don Conway, "Spreckels Sugar Company: The First fifty Years," unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of History, San Jose State University, 1999.

located outside of the city limits as evidenced by Spreckles factory. Also in 1919, the city council decided that the mayor ought to be elected by city council members, who in turn were reduced from an eight person to a five person council and elected at large rather than from districts, something that would change only with the political challenges of the 1980s when demographic shifts forcing the city to acknowledge a new Mexican population who mainly lived in Alisal (annexed in 1963 after a decade of contentious battles). Leaders prioritized establishing schools, and fire and police for public safety. They used zoning ordinances to separate residential spaces from commercial and industrial ones. City building meant cultural development too. It meant supporting multiple newspapers and creating events such as the Salinas Rodeo or Big Week as it came to be called. The front pages of the city's many newspapers are filled with information about Church meetings, organizations formed, and events supporting community culture almost all based on a population of white, European origin people who were (or would become) American citizens.

On the other hand, big agriculturalists like Claus Spreckels were not interested in any of this. He supported the establishment of public amenities in his own nearby company town, which was similar in its make-up to company towns established by Pullman and other industrialists in the Progressive Era. But Spreckels was less concerned about preserving a white native-born American population in California than in finding and maintaining a manageable workforce of any race or ethnicity in order to supply their respective fields and factories with manpower needed to meet demand and make profits. Spreckels himself opposed immigration restrictions and especially anti-Chinese legislation at both the federal and state levels. He was not concerned about the racial or ethnic origins of his labor force any more than he was concerned about developing the city of Salinas, as long as he could rely on laborers to do the work he needed when he needed it

at the lowest cost (and highest profit) to himself. That meant inviting a diverse population of laborers to the area, preferably divided by culture, race, religion, and language so as to make solidarity by class and organizing into unions as difficult as possible. [73]Many of these workers found living space either in housing provided by Spreckles or in nearby Alisal.

Spreckels was aided in his endeavor by international events. The 1898 Treaty of Paris, which ended the Spanish American War made the United States into an imperial power giving America hegemony over The Philippines, the Caribbean and Hawaii where laborers from all over Asia had been contracted to work on the rapidly expanding sugar plantations. In a strategy designed to control the massive labor force needed to produce the sugar, Hawaiian planters contracted laborers from a variety of countries around the globe suffering widespread poverty such as China, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Korea, the Philippines, and most importantly, Japan.

In the wake of the Treaty of Paris these new U.S. territories generated a wave of immigration to the United States mainland, particularly to California, that would alter the demographics of the state dramatically and also challenge agriculture over wages and working conditions both in the field and in production sheds.[74] By 1914 there were over 75,000 migrant farm laborers in the state of California originating from twenty-six different countries of origin.[75] In Monterey County, this played out sometimes in dramatic fashion. In February, 1904, "a

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[73] See Leonard J. Arrington, "Science government and Enterprise in Economic Development: The Western Beet Sugar Industry," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 41, No.1 (January, 1967).
[74] See Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (Santa Barbara and Salt Lake City, 1971 edition); Richard Steven Street, *Beasts of the Field: A Narrative History of California Farmworkers, 1769-1913* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); Daniel Cornford, ed., *Working People of California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Cletus E. Daniel, *Bitter Harvest: A History of California Farmworkers, 1870-1941* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).
[75] Annual Report, Commission on Immigration and Housing in California, 1914, cited in Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (Peregrine Publishers, Inc.: Santa Barbara and Salt Lake City, 1971 edition), 163.

disgruntled Italian" exploded a stick of dynamite under the house of Japanese workers who had been hired as replacements by the Southern Pacific Railroad, displacing the Italian and white workers from their jobs. The effort to "commit wholesale murder" against the Japanese was duly reported by the Salinas press in sympathy with the Japanese workers. The individual who was responsible, Pietro Farino, was prosecuted and jailed and described as "uncommunative [sic] and morose" as he awaited trial.[76]

JAPANESE SETTLEMENT

The Japanese were arguably the most important new immigrant population during the period 1890 and 1920 in terms of the impact they had on California's politics, social dynamics, and economic life. As a result of their collective successes in agricultural production and marketing, Japanese immigrants were also deeply resented according to most scholarly accounts.[77]

A combination of high taxes and environmental catastrophes led to widespread poverty in Japan in the 1880s. According to an 1888 report in *The Japanese Weekly Mail*, "the distress among the agricultural class has reached a point never attained." This led to an out migration of over 200,000 Japanese people (180,000 to Hawaii alone) between 1885 and 1924.[78] Between 1885 and 1910 over thirty thousand Japanese workers (mostly men) came to California, and in so doing

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[76] *Salinas Daily Index,* March, 1904, p. 3, Jim and Jeri Gattis Collection.

[77] See Charlotte Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends: Asian Americans, Housing, and the Transformation of Urban California* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of MultiEthnic Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MASS: The MIT Press, 1995), 210-225; Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[78] See Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (Peregrine Publishers, Inc.: Santa Barbara and Salt Lake City, 1971 edition); David Vaught, *Cultivating California: Growers, Specialty Crops, and Labor, 1875-1920* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 77-78;

replaced the Chinese as the main targets for anti-Asian backlash in the state.[79] An aggressive and newly empowered Japanese government protested fiercely against the mistreatment of Japanese immigrants in California, focusing specifically on the segregation of Japanese in San Francisco schools, which led to an international incident that required the direct intervention by U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt and ended in the famous Gentleman's Agreement of 1907. The agreement negotiated by Roosevelt between the U.S. and Japan ended further immigration from Japan, but allowed Japanese children into American public schools and prohibited racial segregation in other public settings. However, this agreement did not prevent the 1913 Alien Land Act in California that prohibited Japanese and other Asians from owning land, a critical marker of belonging especially in agricultural environments such as the Salinas Valley.

Immigrant Japanese men who came to Salinas in this era were mostly teenagers and young adults who originated predominantly from the island of Kyuushuu in the southern part of Japan. They were also entrepreneurial capitalists just like their native born American predecessors in Salinas. Like so many others, including Jesse Carr, they embarked on picaresque journeys before making their way to the Salinas Valley.[80] Unlike Carr, however, these young men would not benefit from friendships with American presidents to acquire wealth or social and political influence. After stretches in Mexico or Hawaii, they often arrived in San Francisco or Los Angeles working their way through the Imperial Valley as migrant farm laborers, sometimes traveling to Alaska, Seattle, and other parts of the Pacific Northwest and northern California, performing any labor they could find in order to survive before finally landing in Salinas Valley, which was one of

[79] See Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) 157-158; Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), 81.

[80] *The Issei of the Salinas Valley: Japanese Pioneer Families Family Stories and Photos From the late 1800s to 1942* (Salinas Valley Japanese American Citizens League 2010).

the important destinations for them as a direct result of Spreckels and the growth of the sugar beet industry. According to activist historian and journalist Carey McWilliams:

> In 1882 there were 132,300 Chinese in California but only 86 Japanese resided in the state…the importation of the Japanese [was due to] the development of sugar beet production. Here was a new farm industry, requiring an extremely arduous variety of hand labor, in connection with which the Japanese could be quietly and unobtrusively imported…Japanese farm laborers appeared in Fresno in 1890, Pajaro Valley in 1893 (in the sugar beet fields)…by 1904 they were to be found in every part of the state. There were 2,039 Japanese in California in 1890; by 1900 this figure had increased to 24,326, and by 1910 when the Chinese and Japanese populations were approximately equal, there were 72,156 Japanese in the state. [81]

McWilliams used the sugar beet (and cotton industries) to argue that agricultural production in California was modeled on the industrialized East, in which laborers were little more than cogs in the industrial machine. However, he overlooked distinctions between industrialists like Spreckles and, in places like Salinas, people like Jesse Carr (farmer, business entrepreneur, civic leader), and smaller farmers (including the Japanese) who produced beets for sugar, like their counterparts in fruits, nuts, grapes, and specialty produce and who were land owners themselves (or aspiring land owners). Tenant farmers of all ethnicities did not necessarily perceive themselves to be part of a permanent, transient, exploited working class. They may have worked temporarily as farm laborers and labor contractors, but these were families who shared a deep belief in landownership as a means to socioeconomic mobility and political acceptance; the same values and dreams other Americans of their era had. They were horticulturalists at heart,

[81] Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (Peregrine Publishers, Inc.: Santa Barbara and Salt Lake City, 1971), 105-106.

deeply connected to the land and their specific crops and just as deeply bound to an ideal of civic life exemplified in the growth and development of Salinas. [82]

As Japanese farmworkers established themselves economically in California, they often returned to Japan to marry women chosen for them by their families, or were sent picture brides, women also selected by families and sent to America on behalf of the young men. Thus, as in other parts of the state, the first Japanese laborers arrived in the Salinas Valley to work as laborers or sharecroppers on farms (mostly connected with the Spreckels factory) soon after 1898. Many of them were young men whose presence led to the establishment of a boarding house in Salinas in 1898. The Japanese Mission Hall was created that year too, which soon became the Japanese Presbyterian Church, and a focal point of a significant and growing Japanese presence in Salinas Valley.[83] The Asian population was clearly underreported by early census takers, but showed an increase between 1890 and 1920, from 112 to 350. This included Chinese as well as Japanese, but was limited to the city of Salinas and did not factor in the increasingly large numbers of Japanese and other Asian families who lived on farms and ranches outside the city limits.

The Salinas Valley Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) published a chronicle of biographical sketches, *The Issei of Salinas Valley: Japanese Pioneer Families* in 2010 that documented in vivid detail the migration experiences of Japanese Issei in Salinas. Kichita Higashi, born in 1880, arrived in the United States via Mexico in 1913, where he worked in the silver mines, returning to Japan to marry Yaye Higashi, as arranged by his family and hers in 1919. He spent the 1920s in and around Hollister and Alisal, farming grapes, peas, and lettuce as a

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[82] See David Vaught, "Factories in the Field Revisited," Pacific Historical Review, Vol 66, No.2 (May, 1997), 149-184; Cecilia Tsu, *Garden of the World: Asian Immigrants and the Making of Agriculture in California's Santa Clara Valley* (Oxford University Press, 2013).
[83] *The Issei of the Salinas Valley: Japanese Pioneer Families Family Stories and Photos From the late 1800s to 1942* (Salinas Valley Japanese American Citizens League 2010).

sharecropper before leasing land to grow lettuce on his own in North Salinas. He was the father of four children.

Heishiro Frank Hirozawa, born in 1877, apprenticed as a blacksmith in Japan but joined a circus troupe at age eighteen as a way of reaching Vancouver, B.C., and from there America. He worked as a crewman for the railroad, which landed him in San Francisco where he sought aid from the Japanese Mission. The Mission connected him to the Spreckels family who employed him first as a stable boy, then kitchen aid, then labor contractor in the Salinas Valley. He helped plant the rows of eucalyptus and walnut trees which still line Abbott Street linking the town of Spreckels to Salinas. His stepmother's niece, Yoshi Teraji, arrived from Japan to marry him in 1913 as arranged by their respective families. He and his young family embarked on a life of farming throughout the Salinas Valley, first as a sharecropper then as a tenant farmer leasing his land to grow his own crop. An ambitious innovator, he was the first farmer in Salinas to grow celery. Heishiro and Yoshi had eight children, three of whom died in childhood.

Heizuchi Yamamoto and Unosuke Shikuma, both born in Japan in the 1880s, became partners with two native-born Americans, Henry Hyde and Orrin Eaton. The two Japanese men needed American citizens as partners and official titleholders after the 1913 law to grow berries. Their enterprise, The Oak Grove Berry Farm, was subsequently deemed "the largest and most productive strawberry operation in the world" by 1921 with approximately twenty families employed as sharecroppers to produce over three million baskets of strawberries per year by 1919. Moreover, they were responsible for a critical innovation in marketing and transporting their berry crop, inventing a pre-cooling van that allowed them to utilize ice "on the chassis of a

Pierce Arrow truck to haul their berries to San Jose for shipment to the East Coast in refrigerated rail cars."[84]

The Hibino family in Salinas represented this model too. Frank Kosaku Hibino arrived in San Francisco sometime in the 1910s at the age of sixteen. His older brother and father had lived and worked in San Francisco and its hinterland towns for a decade prior to his arrival, but his father returned to Japan just as Kosaku arrived in America, where he passed away. Kosaku nonetheless remained in the United States attending San Francisco public schools, learning English, and absorbing American customs and culture. He also spent time with his brother and extended family members working on farms in Vacaville during school breaks. In 1923, Kosaku returned to Japan, married a younger daughter of a large Japanese farming family, Sen Kobayashi, and subsequently moved with her to Vacaville to start a family. In Vacaville, Kosaku deviated from the pattern of farm labor that most Japanese immigrants followed and apprenticed himself to a shoe repairman. He moved to Salinas where he opened a small repair shop on West Alisal Street between Main and Salinas streets. His family lived above the store in downtown Salinas and raised three children, Chiyeko, Henry, and Mary until the 1930s when the family moved onto a farm in nearby Soledad having suffered from losses due to the impact of the Great Depression in the 1930s. Henry would become Salinas's first Japanese American mayor in 1973.[85]

The early Hibino family story illustrated the ways Japanese immigrants in Salinas and in other towns in Northern California agricultural regions experienced life differently than their

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[84] *The Issei of the Salinas Valley: Japanese Pioneer Families Family Stories and Photos From the late 1800s to 1942* (Salinas Valley Japanese American Citizens League 2010).
[85] Interview by Carol Lynn McKibben with Henry and Kent Hibino, March 6 2018, Salinas California.

cohorts in San Francisco (or Los Angeles).[86] Japanese people comprised only a tiny percentage of the population in smaller agriculturally based municipalities and were counted in the racial category "Asian" along with Chinese, Sikhs, and increasingly, Filipinos. Although the Asian population increased in Salinas from 350 in 1920 to 834 in 1930, they held steady as 8.1 percent of the total population of Salinas. By contrast, in San Francisco and Los Angeles, Japanese migrants formed a significant enough minority that they were forced into separate and rigidly controlled sections of the city known in San Francisco as "Japantown" and in Los Angeles as "Little Tokyo."[87]

Yet, Salinas's residents expressed similar fears mixed with admiration for Japanese presence and work ethic in the city and in the surrounding agricultural areas. According to one observer in Salinas admonishing teenagers at a public forum in 1921: "Another important point we must lose is that it is a disgrace to labor with ones hands…We let the Japanese come in and do the constructive work of this nature and then howl about more production when our own people will not produce to the limit…[referring to] two Japanese topping beets last year who were graduates of the University of Tokyo…we shall need to look to our laurels or the Japanese will get ahead of us," he cautioned.[88]

Japanese families were determined to acquire land and property like other Americans rather than remain as permanent members of the non-landowning working class. They were able to accomplish their goals of proprietorship before the 1913 Alien Land Act that disallowed land

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[86] Linda Ivey, "Ethnicity in the Land: Lost Stories in California Agriculture," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 81, No 1, (Winter, 2007).
[87]See Charlotte Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends: Asian Americans, Housing, and the Transformation of Urban California* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of MultiEthnic Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).
[88] *Salinas Daily Journal* Tuesday March 1, 1921, front page Steinbeck Library Collection.

ownership for aliens deemed unassimilable, which included all Asians. After that legislation passed in California and in other states throughout the West where Asians were immigrating in growing numbers, Japanese people felt distinct hostility to their presence by native-born white Americans. There is little evidence of overt anti-Japanese feeling in Salinas however, at least before Pearl Harbor, although like other rural communities in California, Salinas's residents generally supported the 1920 initiative that strengthened the Alien Land Law of 1913. When mentioned in the pages of Salinas's daily newspapers, Japanese people were referred to with respect and even deference. In July, 1911 for example, *The Salinas Daily Index* reported as front-page news the death of one Mrs. Sei Nishi, "wife of H. Nishi, a well to do Japanese farmer" who had just passed away from cancer, in the same way that the paper routinely reported deaths of other prominent members of Salinas's white community.[89]

Japanese residents of California nonetheless found ingenious ways to survive and even thrive in the oppressive environment of the 1910s and 1920s, such as leasing land or putting titles in the names of their children who were United States citizens by virtue of being born in America, according to the birthright citizenship clause under the Fourteenth Amendment. They made strenuous efforts to show that they could fit into American society through education in American schools, mastering English, adopting Christianity, and dressing in Western attire. All of these strategies made for a successful immigration experiences in the early years of the century and were clearly evident in the chronicle of the Issei produced by the Salinas JACL, which showed photographs of families usually dressed in western clothing, smiling, successful, with numerous children. Most importantly, the Japanese families in the Salinas Valley did not necessarily live in Salinas's Chinatown, but in north Salinas, or in Alisal or on the farms and ranches throughout the

[89] *The Salinas Daily Index,* July, 1911, Jim and Jeri Gattis Collection

valley. They developed positive working relationships with native-born Americans that remained so until the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the subsequent internment of the entire population of Japanese Californians in 1941, which came as a brutal shock to them.

Japanese children were as fully integrated into Salinas's schools as other immigrant children, including other Asian groups, as photographs and school records showed. In one school photograph taken in 1923 there are 8 Japanese students pictured out of a class of 23, a significant percentage of the class.[90]

In the early decades of the twentieth century, Japanese residents of Salinas contributed to the transformation of agriculture in the Salinas Valley and also occupied city space in neighborhoods in the north and east, which always remained multiracial and multicultural. They were business owners, farmworkers, labor contractors, supervisors, keepers of boarding houses. They worked most often as tenant farmers who leased land from Spreckels (and others) in order to grow beets for processing in Spreckels plant or to plant and lettuce, celery, and berries for markets nearby. Moreover, Spreckels depended on the Japanese as managers to supervise the increasingly multiracial workforce he imported and needed to grow beets and transform them into sugar.

Spreckels' enterprise also intertwined with another development connected to international relations on the heels of the Spanish American War and following that, World War I. The Spanish American War was fought primarily in the Pacific. It meant an expansion of the nearby military base of Fort Ord and federal investment and interest in the region. The aftermath of the war created a new stream of Filipino immigration to all parts of California now that the Philippines had become a U.S. possession and Filipinos "insular subjects" of the United States with

[90] *The Issei of the Salinas Valley: Japanese Pioneer Families Family Stories and Photos From the late 1800s to 1942* (Salinas Valley Japanese American Citizens League 2010).

free access to immigration in contrast to other excluded Asian groups.[91] These migrants included a new and more diverse contingent of workers, students and elites who sought better economic conditions and education in America than they might have in their countries of origin. Filipinos who came to the Salinas Valley in the first years of the century formed a complex community made up of unskilled workers in the fields, but also an important contingent of labor contractors, educated professionals who made a strong, stable, middle class presence in the city throughout the 1920s and after, as discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

The new demographic in Salinas (just as in other parts of California and the rest of urban America) coincided with the height of so-called scientific racism in American thought. The greatest intellectual and political leaders of the day espoused and championed it. This pseudo science divided the human species into specific, measurable and definable categories with Northern Europeans occupying the highest rung of the human ladder and blacks at the bottom, but with multiple spaces in between for Asians, Southern Europeans and Eastern Europeans. An individual's physical characteristics were used to determine everything from intelligence to character. Conclusions about groups of people based on size and shape of heads, skin color, facial features, even stature and size drove politics and policymaking on everything from zoning to immigration in the years between 1880 and until the end of World War II. This ideology was fundamental to what became known as the Eugenics Movement in American society and was integral to the Progressivism that dominated American life and legislation in the 1890s through the 1940s. For many Progressives, citizenship status, opportunities for housing, employment, education, and any kind of upward mobility depended upon race more than class or gender or any other characteristic or consideration. One's skin color and facial features signified one's place in

[91] Rick Baldoz, *The Third Asiatic Invasion: Empire and Migration in Filipino America, 1898-1946* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2011), 32-33.

society. In this, Salinas's residents were no different than any other metropolis in California or in America. However, and like other regional rural centers in California, its smaller size and the increasing multiplicity of groups that had room to spread out beyond the city center in addition to its dependence on agriculture as its economic base created a far more inclusive environment than that of larger municipalities or smaller towns that had less diversity of population or less space to accommodate newcomers.[92]

Thus, between 1898 when the Spreckels factory went into operation and 1920s when it was at full production and benefiting from needs brought on by World War I, a confluence of factors transformed Salinas into a commercial center populated by white Midwesterners, European immigrants, Asians, and Mexicans. Salinas depended on the beet sugar industry as its economic base and driving force, but lettuce was emerging as a new giant in agriculture by the 1920s. Salinas's city leaders worked on infrastructure and gradually expanded the city footprint, focusing on meeting the needs of a growing middle class population. Salinas's residents at the turn of the new century like their counterparts elsewhere in the state and the nation shared a strong middle class politics, hostile to monopolies and big corporations, but just as hostile to radical labor unions such as the increasingly popular I.W.W. (Industrial Workers of the World) and the growing Communist Party.

At the turn of the nineteenth century and throughout the early years of the twentieth Salinas could be described as a California urban community aiming to create an industrial

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[92] See Stephen J. Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americans* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003); Dawn Bohulano Mabalon, *Little Manila is in the Heart: The Making of the Filipina/o Community in Stockton, California* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013); Charlotte Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends: Asian Americans, Housing, and the Transformation of Urban California* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of MultiEthnic Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008)

agricultural garden with itself as the center. It was a place clearly dependent on a farming economy and subscribing to an ideal of life that depended on a majority white, landowning population but also on a flexible, plentiful labor force that hailed from all corners of the globe and increasingly from many parts of Asia. By the 1920s Salinas's future looked both promising and challenging as a principal location for a new version of rural America in the twentieth century. Its reliance on a farming economy combined by an equivalent dependence on urban life and centerpiece of a region.

Salinas's founders and residents may have believed in ideals of communalism and local landownership but understood that they needed the power of the state and federal governments to support their growth and infrastructure, access to national and international markets, a flexible and large labor force, and increasingly sophisticated transportation systems to sustain their existence. They relied on the liminal space of north and east Salinas, the Alisal, and the surrounding farms and ranches to smooth the way, to offer a transitional landscape between new arrivals that labored in the factories, the packing sheds and the fields but sought the social and economic opportunities that only a city might offer.