

Chapter One: Instant City

No part of this chapter may be reprinted without the permission of Carol Lynn McKibben ©

“Salinas is a central place for business in the whole valley and directly on the line of the great southern railroad”

Salinas was a powerhouse from the beginning, founded with all of the energy and purpose Progressive idealists promised in late nineteenth century America.¹ Most importantly, like so many other towns and cities established in Northern California in the aftermath of the Gold Rush, Salinas City provided a center from which the agricultural production of the Salinas Valley might access markets, thus expanding the economic reach of San Francisco in the process.²

Nineteenth century San Franciscans (and new arrivals to Monterey County) realized the advantages of establishing a city in the Salinas Valley as an important part of a strategy for the development of a regional hinterland based on Jeffersonian ideals that at once reinforced the growth and development of San Francisco, which had become the preeminent financial and marketing center of the West by the 1860s, and also gave resourceful Americans opportunity to prosper as landowning horticulturalists.³ *The San Francisco Chronicle* published news of city building throughout the region with breathless enthusiasm, encouraging settlement and urban

¹ Salinas’s early history supports the growing consensus among historians that the Progressive Era, thought to begin sometime in the 1890s, actually had roots in American urban life as early as the 1870s. See Rebecca Edwards, “Politics, Social Movements, and the Periodization of U.S. History,” *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, Vol 8., No. 4, (October 2009) 463-473.

²See David Vaught, *Cultivating California: Growers, Specialty Crops, and Labor, 1875-1920* (Baltimore and London: the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999) for an analysis of settlement patterns in Fresno, Stockton, Davis(ville), and Newcastle among other towns in proximity of San Francisco; Gray Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006) for an analysis of economic strategies to develop the hinterland region by San Francisco elites in the late nineteenth century.

³ David Vaught, *Cultivating California: Growers, Specialty Crops, and Labor, 1875-1920* (Baltimore and London: the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999);

growth, applauding every new development from farming settlements to the establishment of schools and infrastructure.⁴

San Francisco's elite leadership understood that the city needed two things to prosper in the 1860s. First, it needed critical links in the chain of railroad stops to Los Angeles. Second, it needed substantial resources (water and food) to sustain its population, which was expanding exponentially in the late nineteenth century.⁵ Therefore, in the aftermath of the War with Mexico (1846-1848), the Gold Rush (1849), and the Civil War (1861-1865) the Salinas Valley drew the attention and investment of people connected to San Francisco economically and politically who were on the lookout for potential sites of settlement that might lead to their own enrichment as well as support regional development. As a consequence, Salinas was one of those places in California that sprang up almost overnight as a fully formed city, rather than emerging organically over hundreds of years like Monterey, San Jose, Santa Barbara, San Juan Bautista and countless other communities that traced their origins to early Spanish settlement reaching as far back as the 1500s. From its inception in 1866, the historical trajectory of Salinas was defined by accelerated growth, Progressive idealism, and interwoven with San Francisco in everything from settlement to development.⁶

RAILROADS AND THE MAKING OF A CITY

William Cronon famously wrote in his analysis of late nineteenth century city building in Chicago that much of Chicago's greatness could be understood by looking at the development of the railroads that allowed surrounding environs to connect directly to markets in urban areas

⁴ The following is an example of many article published by the chronicle to document urban development throughout the Northern California region: "Monterey COUNTY." 1890.*San Francisco Chronicle (1869-Current File)*, Jun 08, 8. <https://search-proquest-com.stanford.idm.oclc.org/docview/572215626?accountid=14026>.

⁵ See Gray Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006).

⁶ Urban history scholars use the term "hinterland" to emphasize the need to include areas beyond the suburbs as a more accurate way of understanding municipal development. See Andrew Needham and Allen Dieterich-Ward, "Beyond the Metropolis: Metropolitan Growth and Regional Transformation in Post-War America," *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 35, No 7 (2009) 943-969.

without relying on bodies of water as transportation networks, as they had for centuries.

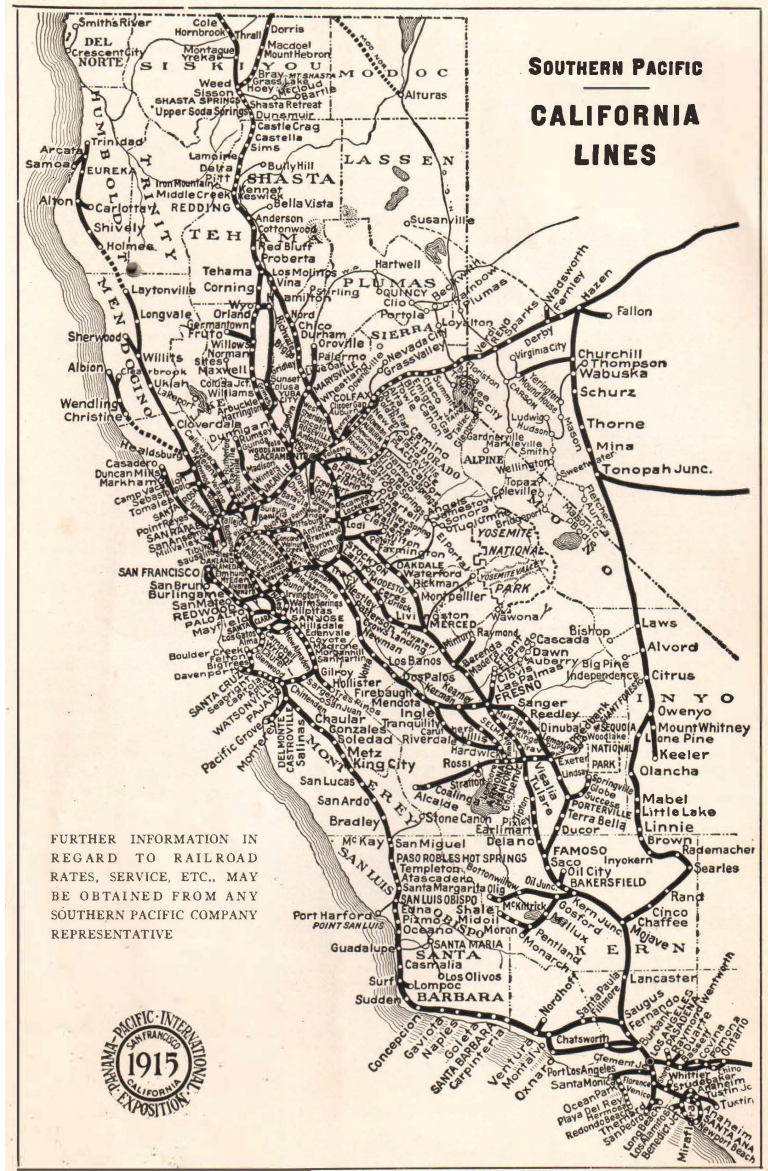
According to Cronon, “The train did not create the city by itself...[instead] the chief task [of the railroad] was to remake the boundary between city and country...opening a corridor between two worlds.”⁷

America generally experienced massive new industrialization, urbanization, and immigration in the late nineteenth century, overflowing Eastern cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Midwestern places like Chicago with Southern and Eastern European immigrants, and native born whites and blacks from rural America and the South. As Cronon and other scholars showed, railroads played a critical role in producing and reinforcing these drastic changes in American urban life. Most importantly, railroads had a dramatic impact on rural places as well, making it possible for increases in farm acreage by 44 percent in the 1870s alone as farmers and ranchers suddenly had access to markets far away from waterways. Farmers no longer had to rely on steamships or riverboats to get their beef or grain to processing plants and markets in industrializing urban centers, but could do so from interior places, opening up the Plains and inland California to new settlement and agricultural production.⁸

⁷ William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1991) 97.

⁸ Jonathan Levy, *Freaks of Fortune: The Emerging World of Capitalism and Risk in America* (Harvard University Press, 2012) 156; William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1991)

The pattern of development along railroad lines led to the creation of towns that fed into larger cities, so that we see a gradual pattern of interconnection emerging in the aftermath of the Civil War that linked farm to town to market center in important ways. American life speeded up in the postbellum years and was transformed dramatically as these towns vied with one another for pride of place fusing rural farmlands and urban hubs to larger processing and market centers. The railroad did not create just one central city, a Chicago, a San Francisco, or even a Denver or St. Louis. Rather, places designated as railroad stops led to the establishment of critical new municipalities in the aftermath of the Civil War, smaller cities and towns that linked urban centers with rural zones, creating an interlocking web of agricultural production, processing centers, and market hubs for the nation and eventually, the world. This pattern played out in postbellum California too.⁹



In the eyes of American settlers who arrived in the context of late nineteenth century railroad building, California had potential as both a rural and an urban place; a land that was as

⁹ Local newspapers reported the web of interconnecting smaller railroad lines that linked farming regions with port towns. For example, *The Santa Cruz Weekly Sentinel* announced a new line in 1873 that connected Watsonville and the Pajaro Valley with Santa Cruz in a headline Santa Cruz Railroad Co. June 28, 1873, p.1.

ripe for city building as it was for agricultural development. Pioneers from the East (and from abroad) envisioned a land of cities surrounded by productive farms and ranches to support them with each vying for precedence. Los Angeles challenged San Francisco, while smaller towns competed with one another for predominance. Like Fresno, Stockton, Merced, and so many other places founded in late nineteenth century California, Salinas was a city deliberately constructed in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War and as a direct result of railroad development by people who believed deeply in order, class and caste, independence based on family farm ownership and community. Salinas's founders like their counterparts elsewhere in the state "firmly believed they were cultivating not only...crops, but California itself. Their mission was to promote small, virtuous communities and economic development."¹⁰ They knew that the key to success would be to entice the powers behind the Southern Pacific Railroad to locate a major railroad stop in Salinas, and in doing so, give this place primacy in linking northern California regions both to San Francisco and to Los Angeles.

Up and down the new state of California every little community considered the establishment of a railroad stop (along the southern Pacific route South or the Central Pacific route East), the pinnacle of success that would officially connect a given town or village to centers of commerce like San Francisco allowing access to regional and national markets for grain, specialty crops, and cattle. In California, a railroad connection also meant that one could create an actual town out of a conglomeration of rancheros and settlements and become an important and thriving place; a locale in which prospective new settlers might choose to build a home, invest in a business, create a ranch or farm, thereby increasing population and adding both economic and political clout to areas that had only been sparsely settled by the end of the nineteenth century. The possibilities seemed endless and the stakes high; so much so that "instant cities" were established to induce San Francisco railroad entrepreneurs Collis Huntington, Leland Stanford,

¹⁰ David Vaught, *Cultivating California: Growers, Specialty Crops, and Labor, 1875-1920* (Baltimore and London: the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 10.

and Mark Hopkins to select one's village or town as a stopping place for the trains; a focal point on the road to the booming financial and marketing centers of Chicago and San Francisco.¹¹

For example, in Monterey County, Juan Bautista Castro lobbied The Southern Pacific and compensated settlers from surrounding areas to populate his newly imagined town of Castroville. Elected to the Monterey County Board of Supervisors in 1872, Castro used county funds to build homes for anyone who would agree to settle there so that "the railroad people would see" Castroville as a viable community that deserved their attention and investment.¹² He failed. He built his town, but lost the battle for supremacy over other developing towns in the region. Castroville never achieved any significant status or population growth.

By contrast, the earliest settlers of Salinas gambled on the fact that it was already a crossroads of sorts, a place where mid nineteenth century stagecoach drivers raced to reach the halfway mark between San Francisco and Los Angeles as well as marking the half way point between Mission San Carlos Borroméo del río Carmelo and Mission San Juan Bautista.¹³ It was not a very enticing place to settle however--marshy, windy, without obvious attributes for development of industry or agriculture. In the early 1860s Salinas was not even a village, much less a community. It was a stagecoach stop, and not the most significant one amongst all the little villages between San Francisco and Los Angeles, which were founded as early as the sixteenth century Spanish occupation.

According to local historian Thom Taft, the area that would become the city of Salinas began as an "uninhabited valley floor, which was sided by two mountain ridges. The valley mostly bisected by waterways consisting of waist-deep marshes nearly covered in 10-foot tall Tule

¹¹ The term "instant city" was coined by Gunther Barth in his book of the same name, *Instant Cities: Urbanization and the Rise of San Francisco and Denver* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

¹² Anne B. Fisher, *The Salinas Upside Down River* (Fresno, California: Fresno Valley Publishers, 1977) 195

¹³ Dorothy Vera, "Salinas: From Halfway House to Bustling City," *Salinas Californian*, July, 1968 scrapbook collection Local History, 70117, np; Thom Taft, Salinas Chamber of Commerce, June 25, 2017.

[grass], extreme swamp-like conditions covered in native vegetation, wooded creeks, and mustard weed so tall and thick you couldn't see through it. Basically an intact landscape left undeveloped for hundreds of years." Moreover, Taft described a series of waterways, which "included interlocking reservoirs, tributaries, creeks, canals, ponds, and a few lakes all leading to large sloughs in the northwest, then on to the Monterey Bay of the Pacific Ocean. Thus, "managing the many waterways was a primary geographical hurdle in building a city here." ¹⁴

The embryonic city of Salinas centered on the "upside down" Salinas River. The river itself provided a continuous freshwater flow to Salinas but it flowed "south to north," rather than the normal north to south flow of most waterways, which created natural wetlands throughout the planned city center with brackish Tule ponds in broad low areas. Without changing the water presence, the salinity during the summer months could have made the soil unusable for agriculture.¹⁵

Thus, the early entrepreneurs began the process of city building by employing Chinese labor (migrants from both San Francisco and from Chinese fishing settlements in nearby Monterey and Pacific Grove) to divert the water from the proposed city center, eliminating the marsh and swampy areas, while at the same time, utilizing the Salinas River as a valuable source of transportation to the ocean. The ocean's proximity and access provided both importing and exporting opportunity for the region as it developed throughout the end of the nineteenth century, connecting Salinas to its larger surrounding communities and assisting in the expansion of the economy.¹⁶

Salinas's founders proceeded with urgency and determination in spite of the geographic limitations of their proposed city. Eugene Sherwood together with San Francisco merchants Alanson Riker and William Jackson hazarded everything to remake a stagecoach stop in the

¹⁴ Thom Taft, Finance Manager and Research Historian, Salinas Chamber of Commerce, June 25, 2017.

¹⁵ Thom Taft, Salinas Chamber of Commerce, June 25, 2017

¹⁶ Thom Taft, Salinas Chamber of Commerce, June 25, 2017

middle of a swamp into a viable city that would convince San Francisco railroad barons to locate a major stopover there on the way to Los Angeles, expanding the economy of the region and adding value to their own property in the process. Sherwood's life was typical for nineteenth century Americans vulnerable to weather, economics, and political crisis. In 1860, Sherwood was a sheep rancher and father of seven young children. He owned a 24,000-acre ranch near King City. The years of droughts and floods that destroyed 90 percent of the Salinas Valley's cattle between 1861 and 1865 destroyed Sherwood's adobe home too and killed off most of his sheep.¹⁷

Sherwood and his two colleagues decided that if they could attract the attention of the railroad barons they might recoup their losses by creating a town to serve as a major stop on the Southern Pacific's planned route to Los Angeles. They laid out a town at the Halfway House Inn, which was first owned and operated by "Deacon" Elias Howe, then after 1865, by tinsmith and entrepreneur Albert Trescony of Monterey. Their "town" was a half-mile square, and Sherwood named it Salinas City. When we trace the development of Salinas City, we see that other business people and professionals shared Sherwood's vision of regional prosperity based on urban development and quickly supported the construction of a recognizable municipality in the Salinas Valley.

Samuel Conklin, William Vanderhurst, and Newman Day Sanborn were all prominent merchants, entrepreneurial capitalists from San Francisco who relocated to the new municipality of Salinas in hopes of prospering there. Michael Hughes set up a saddler and harness shop in 1866. On what is now Market Street, Joseph V. Lackey established a blacksmith and wheelwright shop. Jesse B. Iverson, James Henry McDougall and John B. Scott established blacksmith shops two years later. Henry Johnson opened a barbershop and John H. Menke opened the first brewery in town. The Abbott family opened a hotel, Abbott House, later called the Cominos Hotel, and Michael Tynan established three hotels: the Diamond Hotel, the Salinas Hotel and The Commercial Hotel--

¹⁷ Dorothy Vera, "Story of Salinas: Luck and a lot more" *Salinas Californian*, June 25, 1991, 2.

near the site of what is now Bataan Park across the street from the National Steinbeck Center--all established within the space of less than a decade. These business enterprises were designed with the railroad in mind, and with the idea of Salinas City as an up-and-coming, critical center for commerce and settlement that could be sustained. All of these businessmen became involved in local politics and city government. They encouraged population growth and city building by supporting a surfeit of infrastructural development that proceeded at a frenetic pace between 1866 and 1880. They also advertised widely for migrants to California to settle in Salinas. Under the headline **Salinas City** in the *Petaluma Weekly Argus*, September 1868, Sherwood induced settlers with promises of cheap, available land. He envisioned a town populated by farm folk:

Persons Desirous of farming the ensuing season in the well-established Farming District of Salinas Plains, Monterey County, Cal., are informed that Cheap Residential Building Lots may be purchased on this new town site and that First Class Farming Land may be leased at ruling rates.

The location of Salinas City is healthy and central; it is contiguous to the Best Farming Districts and affords good School facilities. A spacious (sic) Warehouse and Landing are of easy access.¹⁸

By 1870 the city had a population of 599. By 1873, a correspondent for *The San Francisco Chronicle* described Salinas City as a “pretty place” that had developed with “remarkable” speed, noting that only three years earlier 50 x100 lots were available for \$100.00 but now sold for \$100.00 per foot, making clear that the Southern Pacific choice of Salinas City as a point that “ties up” the railroad added great value to this place, just as Sherwood and the other founders intended.¹⁹ By the end of 1873, *The Santa Cruz Weekly Sentinel* reported in a humorous note “Salinas was lighted with gas for the first time on Saturday night. The rejoicings of the inhabitants will only be checked by the presentation of exorbitant monthly gas bills.”²⁰ The California state legislature granted Salinas City incorporation in 1874. It was an instant city indeed.

¹⁸ *Petaluma Weekly Argus*, September 3 1868, 3.

¹⁹ *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 22, 1873, 3.

²⁰ *The Santa Cruz Weekly Sentinel*, December 6, 1873, 3.

However, Salinas's founders wanted more than incorporation. They were determined that Salinas would become the county seat, which was located in Monterey in 1860. Appropriating the county seat from Monterey was a bold move as Monterey was historically considered the urban center not only of the region but also of the state since the eighteenth century. Nonetheless, advocates for Salinas succeeded in large part because by the 1870s Monterey appeared to be finished as a significant urban center in California.²¹

"A treacherous and tortuous roadway" separated Salinas from Monterey, and also prevented residents from Hollister and other towns and communities in Monterey County from ease of access to courts and administrative offices needed to conduct county business. County residents disliked making the arduous trek to Monterey over the Santa Lucia Mountains or, if they lived as far as Gilroy, over the Gabilan Mountains just to file a claim in court. Residents of these areas supported Salinas in its effort to wrest the county seat from Monterey, and in return, Salinas residents supported them in creating a county of their own, which they succeeded in doing by 1872.²² The success of early leaders of Salinas in taking the county seat from Monterey was also part of a strategy designed to elevate the importance of Salinas City in the eyes of the railroad giants.

In 1872, the Southern Pacific railroad bosses thus chose Salinas as a major railroad stop (rather than Castroville or any one of a number of small communities nearby) because Salinas was not only a logical geographic crossroads (despite its earlier unwelcoming natural environment) but also because Salinas had tenacious entrepreneurs who were prepared to create a genuine municipality as fast as possible and who lobbied hard for the privilege. These men and families who were mostly migrants from the rural, postbellum Confederate South arrived in California in

²¹ Major Rolin c. Watkins, ed., *History of Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties, California: Cradle of California's History and Romance* (Chicago: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1925), 379.

²² Dorothy Vera, "Salinas: From Halfway House to Bustling City" *Salinas Californian*, July, 1968, 4.; Major Rolin c. Watkins, ed., *History of Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties, California: Cradle of California's History and Romance* (Chicago: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1925), 379.

order to pursue dreams of wealth in the Gold Rush era.²³ They usually began their California odyssey in San Francisco, and some of them became well connected financially and socially to San Francisco's business elites.²⁴ They were more than willing to accommodate the needs of the railroad giants for retail shops, hotels and restaurants, and repair shops such as blacksmiths. Minutes of Salinas City council meetings going back to the 1860s attest to the founders' vision of rapid city building as a strategy for creating prosperity and predominance in the region. The 1870s through the early 1900s has become known as the Gilded Age in America, but it was also the beginning of a long era of urbanization throughout California and the nation. In Salinas we see this pattern in the emergence of a very typical middle class city with all of the concerns over morality, public health, good governance, organizing, and zoning of city space that the Progressive Era connotes.²⁵

Deep and complex social, economic and political connections linked Salinas to the larger region and made this city (along with Fresno, Stockton, Merced and other agricultural towns within the San Francisco region) integral to the growth and development of major metropolitan centers such as San Francisco, but also Oakland, and San Jose.²⁶ By September 1872 Salinas City became a critical stop on the Southern Pacific's main line. The first train from San Francisco officially arrived in 1873. The successful establishment of Salinas as the county seat, which happened in February 1872 was every bit as important as Salinas becoming a Southern Pacific Railroad stop.

²³ Robert B. Johnston, "Salinas 1875-1950: From Village to City," (pamphlet published by Fidelity Savings and Loan Association, 1980),1

²⁴ See a biographical sketches of individuals deemed prominent circa 1880s in *Monterey County*, pamphlet published by Salinas Board of Trade, n.d. Salinas Public Library, Local History Pamphlets vertical file, 50-88.

²⁵ See Rebecca Edwards, "Politics, Social Movements, and the Periodization of U.S. History," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, Vol 8., No. 4, (October 2009) 463-473.

²⁶ See Gray Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006).

Thus in gaining both the county seat and a major railroad outpost we see two important strategies at work in Salinas. First, the early pioneers demonstrated a collective willingness to take a risk by establishing their city in a hostile geographical environment, and at the same time, they went to great lengths to ensure that their labor and investment were protected. They understood that by including the railroad giants in the development of Salinas City and in designating the incipient municipality as the county seat they might guarantee its success as a permanently important urban center and crossroads, rather than a boomtown that might evaporate with the next economic downturn.²⁷

With the selection of Salinas as the county seat came a coterie of professionals, including lawyers and judges, newspapermen, and physicians as well as a host of entrepreneurs. Among the extensive biographies of male elites of Salinas printed by a booster publication in 1889, Dr. May C. E. Gydison was featured as a prominent physician “of Danish extraction” who attended Omaha Medical College and trained in Germany and Denmark before graduating from Women’s Medical College in Chicago. She came to Salinas City in 1884 with her parents, who founded the Danish Lutheran Church to support the increasingly large population of Danish immigrant horticulturalists and dairy farmers who arrived in the Salinas Valley in the late nineteenth century. Dr. Gydison was described as a “lady of fine intellectual capacity and womanly sympathy, and thoroughly enthused with her profession.” She founded a “ladies hospital...paying particular attention to the diseases of women...the only institution of its kind in the county...it supplies a great necessity.”²⁸ Dr. Gydison was a widow when she arrived in Salinas but later remarried and returned to Denmark. Her parents remained as leaders in the quickly expanding Danish immigrant community of the Salinas Valley.²⁹

²⁷ See Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011).

²⁸ Harrison’s Series of Pacific Coast pamphlets, Monterey County, nd, 54.

²⁹ “Mrs. P.W. Gydison Enters into Rest Was Widow of Founder of Danish Lutheran Church,” *Salinas Daily Index*, October 21, 1914, 1

By the 1880s, Salinas was described as “the largest and most flourishing town in the county,” according to an assessment in the local newspaper, *The Salinas Standard*.³⁰ Local boosters writing about the growing metropolis in *The Bulletin* referred to Salinas in 1870 as “a rising place” and “a bustling agricultural town.”³¹ The flow of residents from San Francisco to Salinas and back again sustained the connections between the cities and throughout the region during this period. Salinas was perceived by Californians (both new immigrants and native born arrivals) as an up-and-coming place with the promise to be one of the centerpieces of an increasingly urban California that included Fresno, Stockton, Merced, and many other towns made up of Progressive era horticulturalists pursuing the Jeffersonian ideal of building towns and cities based on communal spirit, farming and landownership, and orderly growth.³²

The back and forth movement of people is exemplified again in Eugene Sherwood who moved his family out of Salinas to San Francisco in the 1880s, but retained his land in the Salinas Valley. Many Sherwood family members remained there or returned over time and live in Salinas in the present day.³³ Thus, this original stagecoach stop between Monterey and San Juan Bautista (rather than Castro’s town of Castroville or the city of Monterey) became the important intersection on the Southern Pacific route to Los Angeles by the 1870s with a population of about 700, which increased significantly to 1,865 ten years later. By 1880, Salinas’s population was comprised of 973 white men, 782 white women, 97 Chinese men, 5 Chinese women and 8 “colored persons.”³⁴

³⁰ *Salinas Standard*, February, 1870, n.p. taken from manuscript notes 94.501C170, Robert Johnston, MCHS.

³¹ *San Francisco Bulletin*, 1870, n.p. taken from manuscript notes 94.501C170, Robert Johnston, MCHS.

³² David Vaught, *Cultivating California: Growers, Specialty Crops, and Labor, 1875-1920* (Baltimore and London: the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999)

³³ Howard Darington, May 16, 2001,

³⁴ Salinas Local History Packet, official census data, 1880.

One description of the city in 1880 described Main Street as “admirably macadamized [paved] built up on both sides in fine *city* fashion,”[emphasis mine], and that the entire town had adequate supplies of both power (gas) and fresh water. Moreover, Salinas already created such “facilities for arts and culture” that might be available only in a more established city: “Its county buildings, churches, schools, hotels, stores, shops, and residences cause it to rank among the first of its size in the State. The town is embowered in trees and adorned with pleasant gardens and lovely flowers. **The aspect of the whole is that of a true, enterprising, progressive, permanent American city.**”³⁵[emphasis mine] A Salinas baseball club was organized in this period.

The entrepreneurs and professional men and women who arrived in Salinas in the 1870s and 1880s shared a vision that was reflected in Minutes of Salinas City Council meetings showing a preoccupation with establishing schools, issuing business licenses, street building and providing water and both electrical and gas power for the growing population. Committees were formed to deal with schools, police, fire, sanitation, and general ordinances and the laying of pipes of very specific size and depth, providing “pure fresh water for the accommodation of the people” and sidewalks of specific size and placement.³⁶ Subsequent meetings focused on elections and the establishment of poll taxes. City expenditures were mainly dedicated to engineers surveying the town (\$33.00 was the biggest expense in 1872 to pay for the work of a surveyor, Francis Logan Ripley).³⁷ By July of that year Salinas had a bowling alley.³⁸ The city spent \$175.00 for paving and grading a street near the railroad.³⁹ Revenues for the General Fund came from liquor license taxes, road taxes and dog taxes (wandering dogs seemed to be a big problem brought up repeatedly at council meetings). Salinas’s City Council members advocated new taxes frequently justified by the

³⁵Harrison’s Series of Pacific Coast pamphlets, Monterey County, 1889.

³⁶ Minutes, Salinas City Council, April 7, 1873, 48.

³⁷ Minutes, Salinas City Council, May 7, 1873, 58.

³⁸ Minutes, Salinas City Council, July 17, 1873 79.

³⁹ Minutes, Salinas City Council, July 22, 1873, 80.

need for both infrastructure but also and more importantly for the establishment of a school system. Schools were built and supported early on in Salinas's history, evidence of the idealism of an era that valued an educated citizenry literate in English. Salinas's residents did not begrudge taxation as the best way of accomplishing this.⁴⁰

The Panic of 1873 that led to global depression and economic collapse lasting until 1879 did not immediately affect the city, but a series of city council meetings in the 1870s focused both on assessment of property and the unpaid property taxes that might have been related to the economic downturn.⁴¹ A map of the town was requisitioned. This cost the city \$200.00 and was completed by February 1874.⁴² After the city was officially incorporated on March 4, 1874,⁴³ a flurry of road building and infrastructure development was initiated and a local newspaper, *The Salinas Index*, was established.⁴⁴ On April 20, 1874, the Salinas Common Council voted to tax residents a total of \$1485 to fund a public school.⁴⁵ City council meetings in July and August of 1874 were almost wholly dedicated to street paving and sidewalk construction.⁴⁶ On August 10th a bond was issued by the California State Legislature to support the "build[ing of] a School House and to provide for a Fire Department."⁴⁷ Following the bond trails throughout the 1880s and 1890s, it was clear that funding for the city often passed through San Francisco.⁴⁸

⁴⁰ Cite *Index, Democrat*

⁴¹ Minutes, Salinas City Council, October 9 & 20, 1873, 85-101.

⁴² Minutes, Salinas City Council, February 2, 1874, 109.

⁴³ Minutes, Salinas City Council, March 4, 1874, 111.

⁴⁴ Minutes, Salinas City Council, 122

⁴⁵ Minutes, Salinas City Council, 141.

⁴⁶ Minutes, Salinas City Council, 182-188.

⁴⁷ Minutes, Salinas City Council, August 10, 1874, 188. Original Bond.

⁴⁸ Minutes, Salinas City Council August 10, 1874, 189-190 One bond The mayor sign (sic) the bonds ...and give them to the city-treasurer [who] will sign the bonds and coupons and give them to the city clerk and the city clerk sign the bonds and coupons and completely make said bonds and coupons and where so made out to deliver them to the Salinas City Bank with instructions to forward them (the bonds) to Donohue, Kelly and Co. Bankers in San Francisco and there to collect said bonds upon delivering to Woods and Freeborn the bonds (\$14,137.50) and to return the same to Salinas City and that the Salinas City Bank be allowed for so collecting and delivering the said money and to keep back said amount (\$21.21).

In a remarkably short span of time, Salinas City residents demonstrated a vision for a full-fledged city along the lines that they already knew existed in San Francisco and that were emerging everywhere in the state. They were good planners and organizers, predominantly white, Protestant and adherents of Progressive era moral codes (including efforts at maintaining public health through strict regulation of space), which they enforced by hiring a Marshall and policeman and forming a Sanitation Committee to report on problems with waste and sewage, often targeted at Chinatown. Women were at the center of Progressive era policy making. In 1874, *The San Francisco Chronicle* noted that the Women's Christian Temperance Union was active in shaping the city of Salinas into a model of Progressivism that supported the Prohibition movement among other efforts to control morality:

Miss Cassie S. Ritchie addressed the Common Council of Salinas City recently in favor of raising the license of saloons from \$60 per month to \$150. This was a strategic move of the Prohibitionists 'who [sought] to circumscribe so far, at least, as our young and growing city is concerned the baneful influence of this desolating evil by compelling those who are engaged in the sale of intoxicating liquors to pay at least a moiety [sic] of the expense entailed upon the community in consequence of their business.⁴⁹

Committees formed to deal with the urgent need for fresh water not just for consumption, but also as a means to control any fires that might break out, a common occurrence in nineteenth century town life: "[The] Committee on Water Works was directed to write a contract between James Hagan & Enright and Salinas City for supplying the city with water to introduce within three months of this date into Salinas City from wells capable of supplying at least three hundred thousand gallons of water per day a supply of good, pure, fresh, water for the use of Salinas City for public city purposes...[furthermore this firm was legally responsible for] to build, erect and construct upon some convenient site of their own within the limits of Salinas city a suitable,

⁴⁹ "The Movement in Sacramento, San Jose, Salinas, etc. (1874, Jun 22)", *San Francisco Chronicle (1869-Current File)* Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.stanford.idm.oclc.org/docview/357207280?accountid=14026>

substantial reservoir of sufficient capacity to contain not less than one hundred thousand gallons of water...specs included here...to be used in case of fire in the city.”⁵⁰

By November 1874 ordinances were passed by the city council to create sewers, streetlights, and to clean up sloughs in order to fill in streets that were quickly becoming residential and commercial zones. On November 16, 1874, Eugene Sherwood donated “sixty acres of land for a park and city clerk was ordered to notify Mr. Sherwood of said acceptance.” By December 7, 1874, the mayor and city council had authorized the purchase of a “suitable lot” for a fire department to be established and also authorized the purchase of a hook and ladder truck. By May 1875 Salinas had a jail and employed both a police officer and a Marshall. ⁵¹

The mayor and city council, in a reflection of their Progressive Era concern for morality, tasked the city Marshall and Night Watchman to “arrest Boys under eighteen years of age that were found on the Streets or Alleys between the hours of Eight o’clock P.M. and Five o’clock A.M. without a reasonable excuse, or are with their parents or proper guardians.”⁵² The problem with boys and young men might have been due to the long recession that left so many of them unemployed and without family support or supervision.

Furthermore, as part of the Progressive Era public health initiatives of the day that fused genetics with disease, The Sanitary Committee investigated Salinas’s emerging Chinatown as a potential threat to public health.⁵³ They suggested removal, at first, but subsequently reported to the Salinas City Council: “The petition... to have the Chinese removed from the city be indefinitely postponed.”⁵⁴ The Sanitary Commission regularly reported on conditions of sloughs and

⁵⁰ Minutes of Salinas City Council Meetings, August 10, 1874, 189-190

⁵¹ Minutes of Salinas City Council Meetings, vol 1, 1872-1889.

⁵² Minutes of Salinas City Council March 14, 1876, 299.

⁵³ It was suggested by the Sanitary Commission that the council look into the Chinese as a health threat in the wake of smallpox epidemic that the commission believed “been brought here from abroad” meaning from Chinese immigrants from San Francisco, which had experienced a similar epidemic. See Nayan Shah,

⁵⁴ Minutes of Salinas City Council, June 12, 1876, 314.

recommended assessments of city land and taxation to provide revenue to fund schools, sewers, drainage, and sustain the fire department.⁵⁵

Community spirit depended on thoughtful purpose because almost all of the early residents were from somewhere else. Salinas needed to create traditions to bring its disparate population together. A Fireman's Tournament was proposed in 1886 that the city supported: "A petition from citizens and taxpayers asking Council to appropriate \$500 towards defraying the expenses of the Fireman's Tournament to be held here in May. Was received and upon motion was made and carried."⁵⁶ Ranchers organized Big Week, which became increasingly important as a marker of the city's cultural history. Separate communities formed based either on occupation (farming, ranching, related business enterprises) or race/ethnicity, but regardless of ethnicity or occupation, citizens of Salinas overwhelmingly shared a Jeffersonian belief system celebrating land ownership, community and in the establishment of a well run city of mainly white Protestants.

Thus, Chinese of all socioeconomic classes shared space in Chinatown (soon home to other laborers and other Asian immigrants too), while immigrants from Denmark, Switzerland, Portugal, and Germany all created separate communities and developed their own enclaves in the city but eventually became integral members of the community as a whole, especially as these immigrants naturalized and became U.S. citizens and as subsequent generations acquired citizenship by birth right, as established by the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868. By way of showing a distinction by race, the city passed laws restricting the availability and location of laundries, gambling houses, liquor licenses and saloons and prohibited tobacco sales to minors, almost all of which were run

⁵⁵ Minutes of Salinas City Council August 7 1876, 323 and September 3, 1877, 376.

⁵⁶ Minutes of Salinas City Council, January 11 1886, 652

by Chinese people who were increasingly becoming a significant minority in the population by 1880.⁵⁷

By April 1887 Salinas had Committees on Gas and Water, Schools, Police, Fire, Licenses, and Ordinances. The City Council supported a petition for special election to issue bonds for “public improvements” signed by 123 resident voters.⁵⁸ In August 1888 a franchise was granted to Salinas City Gas and Water Company for the furnishing of electric lights. The city fixed the rates for the service.⁵⁹ As Minutes of the Salinas City Council meetings made clear, just twenty years after its initial founding, Salinas showed every sign of being a full-fledged municipality. Salinas’s residents shared little history as a community, however. Salinas was founded not by the remnants of the Californio population but by entrepreneurial Yankees and Southerners who were deeply connected to San Francisco financiers and who had a vision for Salinas as a Progressive Era city that would rival San Jose in importance in the region. As such, Salinas needed streets, lights,

⁵⁷ "The Movement in Sacramento, San Jose, Salinas, etc." 1874. *San Francisco Chronicle (1869-Current File)*, Jun 22, 3. <https://search-proquest-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)

⁵⁸ Minutes of Salinas City Council Meetings, April 4 and 16 1887, 698 and 702.

⁵⁹ Robert Johnston, unpublished mss, March 7, 1976, , Monterey County Historical Association, Johnston Papers, 9

schools, and even built an opera house, which was constructed in 1901. On April 7 1890 the Salinas City Council overwhelmingly passed an ordinance for closing saloons from 11pm until 5am⁶⁰

The story of one of Salinas's most prominent citizens, Jesse Douglas Carr, revealed the significance of early Salinas's leaders' migration patterns from Confederate South to California and the debate over slavery in the state, deep connections to sophisticated financial powers in San Francisco and also how the city emerged into an urban center as the nineteenth century came to a close.

Jesse Carr arrived in Salinas in 1866 and by 1890 was described by historian Hubert Howe Bancroft in glowing terms: "In the Salinas Valley one of the largest agriculturalists is Jesse D. Carr!"⁶¹ The mansion he built in downtown Salinas became a showplace and a landmark.⁶² In local history chronicles, Carr was considered one of Salinas's elites, but he didn't start out that way. He was born a poor farmer's son in rural Tennessee in 1814. At age sixteen, he left home to work as a store clerk, first in the small town of Cairo and then in Nashville, Tennessee. With \$1,000 in savings he opened his own store in Memphis in 1834. At that time, Carr's business partner "lost his mind" and incurred a \$20,000 debt, which Carr took responsibility for paying off over a two-year period. By 1840 Carr had made a \$40,000 profit in part because Memphis had, by that time, become an important trading center as a result of the Indian Wars in that area. Tennessee was also a state in which southern cotton growers hoped to expand the institution of slavery into new states in the West and North.⁶³

⁶⁰. Minutes of Salinas City Council Meetings

⁶¹ Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, 1890, IV, 741 cited in manuscript notes 94.501C170, Robert Johnston, MCHS.

⁶² Salinas Board of Trade Publication, 1888, *Monterey County*, archives, Salinas Public Library, 24, 52-54.

⁶³ See Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 337.

Carr married and built the first brick house in the city of Memphis in 1842. Like so many other young men of his generation Jesse Carr traveled widely in search of fortune, engaging in multiple new businesses along the way. He moved to New Orleans in 1843 and became a cotton commissioner, also as part of the ongoing effort to expand this industry and the reach of a very profitable slave-based economy. But because of some undetermined bad luck he once again lost everything he had.

When the War with Mexico broke out in 1846, Carr became a supplier for American troops stationed in the Southwest. However, shortly thereafter, three thousand Mexican troops under General Urrea captured the train carrying Carr's supplies. Summoned to give testimony to General Zachary Taylor (who was livid about the train robbery), Carr bonded with the general, who would become the 12th President of the United States in 1849. Carr stayed in Mexico for the duration of the war engaging in trade and recovering some of the investment that he had lost in the train robbery. Returning to New Orleans in 1849, he contracted cholera (for the second time). He recovered from his illness in time to attend General Zachary Taylor's inauguration ceremony in Washington D.C. Taylor was deeply involved in the debates over the expansion of slavery into the territories and advocated (in a bitter battle with Henry Clay) for California's admission to the union as a free state. It was in his interest to have allies in positions of power in California.

For his part, Carr's friendship with a United States President gave him an opportunity to benefit from government service. He was appointed Deputy Collector of the Port of San Francisco and arrived in California August 18, 1849, right in the midst of the Gold Rush—an event that would bring over 300,000 people to the state over the next seven years. Carr used his political connections to run successfully for the California State Assembly where he served as chairman of both the Committee on Commerce and Navigation and Ways and Means. He helped introduce and pass a funding bill for San Francisco, became involved in mining and real estate development, and bought a ranch in the Pajaro Valley in 1853. He was elected to the Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors

in 1859 and engaged in grain farming and cattle ranching before moving to Salinas that year, all the while an advocate for creating new California communities based on Jeffersonian ideals of horticulture and landownership, rather than on large scale industrial agriculture, which had depended on slavery.

Carr's friendship with an American president gave him the chance to make a lucrative and powerful life for himself and his family on the West Coast. It was from the vantage point of a wealthy San Franciscan that Carr set his sights on the Salinas Valley as an ideal place to create a new urban community. He went into the stagecoach business in the 1860s and became the largest stage contractor on the Pacific Coast from 1866-1870. He bought 20,000 acres of land in Modoc County and controlled the water rights for over 150,000 acres. He acquired 5,000 cattle and 500 horses. He organized the Salinas Bank in 1873 and served as President for the next two decades. He endowed the first library in Salinas with a \$5,000 donation (\$100,000 in today's currency). In 1883 Carr "sank a well on the bank of the [Salinas] slough" built a windmill and 14,000 gallon water tank and his very own gas works to supply power and water to his newly built "cabin" as *The Salinas Index* termed it somewhat tongue in cheek. It was a mansion compared to other homes of the day. According to the *Index*, "There is no stately or pretentious private dwelling like the residence of the Honorable J. D. Carr being the nearest approach to this class of home."⁶⁴ Carr also purchased Central Hall in Salinas for \$16,000 and established offices there, which included the Salinas Post Office. Carr became an increasingly powerful figure in the Democratic Party in California. He assisted in getting the town Marshall, Christian Franks, appointed to the position of United States Marshall for Northern California. "A strong and often successful contender for control of patronage by the conservative forces in central and northern California," Carr was instrumental in selecting the site for the San Francisco Post Office and Federal Court Building at 7th and Mission Streets: "It may not be generally known in San Francisco, yet it is a peculiar fact

⁶⁴ Robert Johnston, unpublished manuscript, March 7, 1976, Monterey County Historical Association, Johnston Papers, 4.

that Jesse D. Carr of Salinas is the colossus that constantly bestrides the Pacific Coast Postal Service...while administrations come and go, Jesse D. Carr 'goes on forever.'⁶⁵ Carr became an important conservative leader, not just in Salinas but also in California as a whole. He attended both of Grover Cleveland's inaugurations in 1885 and 1893 and was a close enough ally that when President William McKinley visited California in 1901 Carr made sure he stopped in Salinas. He never ran for office himself, but was often mentioned as a candidate for U.S. Senator and Governor and served as President of the California State Board of Agriculture.

Most importantly, by 1890, Jesse Carr along with J. B. Iverson, William Vanderhurst, and several other local business leaders organized the first Monterey District Agricultural Fair Association 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, helping to solidify Salinas as a metropolitan center of significance in California, which ensured their own continued place as leaders of that important urban center.⁶⁶ They wanted investment to be sure, but they were also looking for opportunities to create the kind of ideal community that exemplified Progressive values. A beet sugar factory not only ensured employment for its workers and for workers in Salinas, but also needed a new population of farmers to grow the beets for processing, thus expanding a city population founded on the ideal of landowning small farmers.

Jesse Carr aimed to enrich himself and gain power, but also worked to benefit Salinas, helping to propel the city into the orbit of San Francisco's business elite and make it a permanent and prosperous urban center in its own right in the region. An ambitious young man with a view from San Francisco, Carr saw enormous opportunity in Salinas that included elevating Salinas as a

⁶⁵ *San Francisco Wasp*, clipping file, MCHA

⁶⁶ *Monterey County*, pamphlet published by Salinas Board of Trade, n.d. Salinas Public Library, Local History Pamphlets vertical file, 24, 52-54.

city of note in California. He was the personification of elite Progressives who were, above all else, city builders. As the nineteenth century came to a close, these women and men envisioned themselves as leaders of a modern and above all, urban, California.

Salinas came into being because entrepreneurial capitalists like Sherwood, Vanderhurst and Carr built networks among the wealthy and influential men of their day and utilized those connections to construct an urban center that would dominate the region, socially, economically and politically. Salinas became a safety valve of sorts for men (and women) on the make in the aftermath of the Gold Rush era. San Francisco overflowed with ambitious entrepreneurs like themselves by the end of the Gold Rush and then the Civil War, and the Salinas Valley was still wide open with opportunity. The large Victorians that the founders built in downtown Salinas at the turn of the new century 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 that made up late nineteenth century California.

CHINATOWN AND THE ROOTS OF RACIAL SEGREGATION IN SALINAS

The 1890s marked a critical turning point for the city of Salinas as it did for Californians generally in several key areas. Economically the city transformed from one dependent on small-scale retail enterprises to one counting on the advantages that new developments in agriculture promised to bring. Politically, Salinas was thrust into the chaos and conflict of radical Populism versus more conservative Progressivism, with Progressives winning out by the end of the century, but with the more radical populists confronting the established elite order over social and economic justice issues. International events affected Salinas too, with the Spanish-American War (1896-1898) and the Gentleman's Agreement with Japan (1906) bringing new Asian populations into the city and its environs. The anti-immigration, anti-Asian climate of the country in the 1910s, and the United States involvement in World War I affected the development of the city in profound

and important ways as well, altering the population and adding both social and cultural stresses and new opportunities for economic growth.

Salinas was increasingly acknowledged in California as a city of note. By 1903 a new city charter was put in place and the future of Salinas as an up and coming Chicago or San Francisco seemed assured. News about Salinas was routinely reported throughout the state and the nation, and there was much talk of Salinas as competitor to San Jose for predominance in the region. When the 1906 earthquake destroyed most of San Francisco, *The Washington Post* reported losses in property in Salinas of upwards of \$2.5 million and listed every building that had been destroyed. Further, *The Post* noted "every window in town" had been broken and although there were no reported deaths, one man broke his leg jumping out of a second story window to escape the destruction. The high school was also severely damaged as a result of the quake.⁶⁷

Salinas functioned as one of the safety valves for San Franciscans seeking new opportunities in the 1890s, and that included its Chinese population, who were feeling the severe effects of anti-Chinese hostility throughout the state. In San Francisco and elsewhere, Chinese people were blamed for everything from the epidemics of smallpox, bubonic plague and typhoid that affected the city to high rates of unemployment on the part of white laborers.⁶⁸ A Workingman's Party dedicated to the removal of Chinese people from American soil thrived in Salinas just as it did elsewhere in California in these years. Nonetheless, Chinese migrants from San Francisco found opportunity in employment and business ownership in the much smaller setting of Salinas, just as they did in other emerging cities in the region surrounding San Francisco. The Chinese gradually built a strong community in Salinas, layered by class, and modeled on the

⁶⁷ "Damage at Salina \$2,500,000." 1906. *The Washington Post (1877-1922)*, Apr 19, 1. <https://search-proquest-com.stanford.idm.oclc.org/docview/144658062?accountid=14026>.

⁶⁸ See Erika Lee, *At America's Gate: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1923* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); 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).

one they remembered in San Francisco, which included establishing a network of tongs or extralegal gangs.⁶⁹

One of the most significant pieces of legislation that came from the Salinas City Council was an ordinance to move Chinatown--in entirety--from the city altogether following a fire there in 1893: "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."⁷⁰ 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."⁷¹

To be clear, the segregation of Chinese was based solely on race, not class, as Chinese merchants and other elites moved out of the city along with much poorer Chinese workers. The restriction of residency for Chinese people into one area outside Salinas's city limits came in the context of a wave of racial segregation in the post-Reconstruction era, which then gained authority from the highest level of the federal government with the 1896 Plessey v. Ferguson Supreme Court ruling making racial segregation legal throughout the country. It is interesting to note that the Chinese in Salinas, like the population in nearby Watsonville, were only removed a short distance away from the city.⁷²

⁶⁹ See Sandy Lydon, *Chinese Gold: The Chinese in the Monterey Bay Region* (Capitola, California: Capitola Book Company, 1985).

⁷⁰ Minutes Salinas City Council Meeting June 23 1893, vol 2 1889-1896, 211

⁷¹ Minutes Salinas City Council Meeting July 3, 1893, vol 2 1889-1896, 212

⁷² 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.

The story of neighborhood segregation by race in Salinas was an imitation of the San Francisco model, just like in so many other incipient municipalities in California, all of which had Chinatowns and Mexican barrios designed to keep the living spaces of Caucasians separated from people perceived to be of races deemed inferior and therefore unassimilable.⁷³ These Chinatowns and barrios in California were the first of their kind in the United States, predating twentieth century black ghettos in the East and mid-West.⁷⁴

When we examine the life of one prominent Chinese resident and his family in Salinas we see how migration from San Francisco and patterns of neighborhood segregation played out for the Chinese in Salinas, and set the stage for the treatment of other racial minority groups that arrived in the city over the course of the first years 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.⁷⁵

The Chinese Exclusion Acts (first passed in 1882 and renewed indefinitely in 1892) did not allow permanent immigration by Chinese origin people to the United States with exceptions made for elites, mostly merchants, and their immediate families. Thus immigration from China to California and the West slowed considerably in the aftermath of this legislation, creating a significant labor shortage in the state in the early years of the twentieth century. Moreover, the Chinese Exclusion Acts did not allow Chinese immigrants of any class the right to naturalize and become American citizens like other immigrants of European origin were able to do after a short

⁷³ 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.

⁷⁴ 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)

⁷⁵ See Wellington Lee, “Salinas Chinatown Memories”, unpublished manuscript, Salinas Public Library, 6

period of residency in the United States. By 1902 Chinese immigration was made permanently illegal in the U.S. and restrictions on entry and citizenship were subsequently extended to all people from the continent of Asia as part of the Johnson Reed Immigration Act of 1924. 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.

The Lee's (an upper class merchant family) were able to move back and forth between China and the United States with relative ease compared to their compatriots because of their class status as elites, although those who were not born in America shared exclusions from citizenship like their Asian counterparts of any class. Unlike so many thousands of poorer contemporaries the Lees did not face detention (sometimes for years) at Angel Island Immigration Station or experience the extreme hardship of being refused entry altogether.⁷⁶

Thus, Lee Yin arrived in the United States somewhat unscathed, but nonetheless right in the thick of the very worst anti-Chinese, anti-Asian movement in American history. San Francisco in particular, with its substantial Chinese population, was the site of routine violence against Chinese people that erupted into rioting, lynching and ordinances designed to keep Chinese people impoverished and locked into an impenetrable and over-crowded ghetto in one area of the city designated as Chinatown, which lacked basic sanitation or infrastructure and was mired in disease and filth.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ See Erika Lee and Judy Yung, *Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America* (Oxford; New York, 2010: Oxford University Press)

⁷⁷ 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).

Lee Yin returned to China twice and managed to enter the United States both 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 the slightly more welcoming city of 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 owned by an uncle. Lee thrived economically and socially. As a Chinese man just getting here was significant, but more than that he was not allowed to become part of the American mainstream economy that was rapidly growing in Salinas. Therefore, besides managing small retail establishments, which were legal, he also had to engage in gambling and other enterprises that were illegal in order to prosper. Thus, like Lee, many Chinese people who had been excluded from the mainstream economy were forced to earn a living by getting involved in illegal activities just to survive giving Chinatown a reputation for notoriety as a center for crime and violence by the early decades of the new century.⁷⁸

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 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 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 [Salinas Chinatown] history...[Class division were as follows:] 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.⁷⁹

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

⁷⁸ 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).

⁷⁹ Email from Wellington Lee to Carol McKibben, June 10, 2017.

began to include all other Asian immigrant groups by the turn of the century, most importantly the Japanese, and by the 1920s, Filipinos who were also denied access to neighborhoods designated as white spaces.

By the 1890s, Salinas already contained a rapidly expanding population that both resembled other, longer established California communities such as Monterey, San Jose, or Santa Barbara and also diverged from them. Like those places, Salinas included a population of native-born whites and Asians who were segregated from white neighborhoods. Unlike other cities in California, however, Salinas was founded largely by recent arrivals--most came to California to participate in the Gold Rush, and arrived by way of San Francisco. As we see, Salinas was created almost as an economic outpost of that city. Thus, in Salinas we do not see a large population of Mexican origin people whose histories derived from the days of Spanish and Mexican dominance. Nor do we see the influx of Southern and Eastern Europeans who were beginning to make homes in Monterey and other cities in the state to take advantage of the burgeoning fishing and farming industries. Instead, we see a population of Northern European origin whites (many native born but also recent immigrants from Northern European countries) who formed the elites of Salinas and a small (but growing) population of Asians who dominated the working class and lived apart from white people.⁸⁰ The city's population, 2,339 by 1890, would undergo drastic changes in the wake of the Spanish American War, new developments in agriculture, and World War I that brought groups from America's Midwest, Japan, Mexico, and the Philippines to the city and its agricultural environs in an historical moment notable both for extremist politics and the triumph of the Progressives.

SUGAR BEETS AND NEW IMMIGRANT POPULATIONS

Between 1900 and 1930 Salinas's population jumped from 3,034 in 1900 to 10,263 by 1930. Salinas also became much more diverse, especially regarding Asian settlement. Claus

⁸⁰ Robert B. Johnston, "Salinas 1875-1950: From Village to City," (pamphlet published by Fidelity Savings and Loan Association, 1980) 1.

Spreckels was central to this complex process of population growth by encouraging new labor migrations to support his beet sugar factory, which *The Salinas Index* boasted in 1898 “[was] the largest in the world.”⁸¹ The report then proceeded to give 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.

Ken Dursa, a former Spreckels employee, succinctly explained the value of the Spreckels factory to Salinas both as an employer in the region for residents, transients, and immigrants alike, and also as 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 ground 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.”⁸²

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 in California rather than in promoting urbanization in the state. Born in Lamstedt Germany in 1828 he arrived in the United States as a teenager fleeing military service. He worked as a grocery clerk first in South Carolina, then New York City before settling 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. His efforts paled in comparison to the success of Claus Spreckels and the Spreckels family, however.

⁸¹ *Salinas Index*, January 4, 1898.

⁸² 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/>

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. 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 1888-1913 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."⁸³

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.⁸⁴ As a result of federal

⁸³ Leonard J. Arrington, "Science government and Enterprise in Economic Development: The Western Beet Sugar Industry," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 41, No.1 (January, 1967) 2.

⁸⁴ 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

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 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, by first building his own factory in Philadelphia then another in San Francisco and then by acquiring his own railroad, which allowed him to control transportation costs of getting his sugar to markets. Spreckels created the Western Beet Sugar Company and bought land in Watsonville. He brought in “experienced beet growers, builders, operators, and machinery from Germany, and erected a \$400,000 factory [there]”.⁸⁵

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 provide Spreckels with sufficient product in sugar beets to make the enterprise profitable. In 1896, the city of Salinas pledged the requisite number of local farmers to grow the beets in close proximity to Spreckels plant, guaranteeing Spreckels a steady flow of produce to supply his production plant. However, it did not quite work out in real life. The paucity of farmers able and willing to fulfill the obligations incurred by the city led Spreckels into some innovative ways of accomplishing his goals of supply, namely by bringing in Japanese and other immigrants who arrived by way of Hawaii.

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

sugar beet manufacturers to remain competitive with their European counterparts in spite of higher labor costs.

⁸⁵ 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.

investing their own fortunes in the city, Spreckels was not interested in Salinas or in city-building anywhere he established his factories. 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 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, but 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 (named after himself), to serve the needs his workers in terms of food, housing, recreation and infrastructure.⁸⁶ Thus, there was a clear difference between the women and men who formed Salinas's leadership at the turn of the century and industrialists like Spreckels who became the model for a view of agriculture in California made famous by the likes of Carey McWilliams and John Steinbeck. By contrast, Salinas's elites were city builders who saw their own interests intimately connected to the development of the city.

The separate and sometimes conflicting goals of Salinas city leaders and that of agricultural and railroad corporate interests manifested in the way the city developed during the course of the new century. By the turn of the century, 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 above, 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 maintain "macadamized" streets and sidewalks, to develop sewer lines and pass ordinances to provide clean water and protect public health. Leaders prioritized establishing schools, and fire and police for public safety. They used zoning ordinances not only to separate residential spaces from commercial and industrial ones but also and most

⁸⁶ See Jimmie Don Conway, "Spreckels Sugar Company: The First fifty Years," unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of History, San Jose State University, 1999.

importantly to separate whites from people of color who were relegated to Chinatown on the outskirts of the city's limits by the turn of the new century. City building meant cultural development too. It meant supporting a newspaper (or two) and creating events such as the Salinas Rodeo or Big Week as it came to be called. Most importantly, Salinas's leaders and residents alike subscribed to an ideology of landownership by European origin white farmers as the basis for the ideal California community.

On the other hand, big agriculturalists like Claus Spreckels were not interested in any of this. Spreckels and his peers were 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 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 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.⁸⁷

Spreckels was aided in his endeavor by international events. The 1898 Treaty of Paris, which ended the Spanish American War and 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. Between 1875 and 1910 sugar plantations in Hawaii had increased eighteen fold, from 12,000 to 214,000. In a strategy designed to control the massive labor force needed to produce the sugar, Hawaiian planters contracted laborers from a variety of impoverished countries around the globe such as

⁸⁷ See Leonard J. Arrington, "Science government and Enterprise in Economic Development: The Western Beet Sugar Industry," *Agricultural History*, Vol. 41, No.1 (January, 1967).

China, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Korea, the Philippines, and most importantly, Japan. This population suddenly became problematic in the wake of the Treaty of Paris when 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 interests over wages and working conditions both in the field and in production sheds.⁸⁸ By 1914 there were over 75,000 migrant farm laborers in the state of California originating from twenty-six different countries of origin.⁸⁹

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 order, and economy. A combination of extremely high taxes and environmental catastrophes led to widespread poverty in Japan in the 1880s. According to the newspaper, *The Japanese Weekly Mail*, "the distress among the agricultural class has reached a point never attained [in 1888]." This led to an out migration of over 200,000 Japanese people (180,000 to Hawaii alone) between 1885 and 1924.⁹⁰ Between 1885 and 1910 over thirty thousand Japanese workers (mostly men) came to California, and in so doing replaced the Chinese as targets for anti-Asian backlash in the state.⁹¹ In contrast to a weak Chinese government that did little to challenge racist practices and policies against Chinese immigrants, an aggressive and newly empowered Japanese government protested fiercely against the mistreatment of Japanese immigrants in California, focusing specifically on the

⁸⁸ See Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (Santa Barbara and Salt Lake City, 1971 edition)

⁸⁹ 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.

⁹⁰ 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.

⁹¹ 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.

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 1906. 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 anticipate the 1913 Alien Land Act in California that would prohibit Japanese and other Asians from owning land.

Immigrant Japanese men who came to Salinas in this era were mostly teenagers and young adults who originated predominantly from the island of Kyushuu 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.⁹² 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 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 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.⁹³

⁹² *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).

⁹³ 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.

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 the obvious. The farmers (including the Japanese) who produced beets for sugar, like their counterparts in fruits, nuts, grapes, and specialty produce were aspiring land owners themselves, and did not perceive themselves to be part of a permanent, transient working class in need of union representation and organizing. They may have worked temporarily as farm laborers, but these were entrepreneurial farmers who shared a deep belief in landownership just like their white native-born contemporaries in the Salinas Valley and throughout California. They shared the same values and dreams as other Americans of their era. They were horticulturalists at heart, 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.

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.⁹⁴ The Asian population was clearly underreported by early census takers, but shows an increase that was dramatic between 1890 and 1920, from 112 to 350. This included Chinese as

⁹⁴ *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).

well as Japanese, but was limited to the city of Salinas and did not factor in the predominance of Japanese 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 documents in vivid detail the varied, but similar migration experiences of Japanese Issei first settlers to Salinas born in Japan. 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 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 groves 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 leasing his own land. 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 to the land in order 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.”⁹⁵

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 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. They nonetheless found ingenious ways to survive and even thrive 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 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 experience 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 the restricted area of Chinatown, but spread out onto farms and ranches throughout the valley and developed relationships with individual Americans there that were mostly positive. They were not prepared for the extreme rage directed against them by other Americans in the wake of the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

⁹⁵ *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).

By the time World War II broke out between the United States and Japan initiated by Japanese bombings of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii and Manila, The Philippines December 7, 1941 it was clear that the Japanese had failed in their efforts to assimilate into American life generally and into Salinas. All people of Japanese origin on the West coast, including those in the Salinas Valley, regardless of age, citizenship status or length of residence in the United States were forcibly removed from their homes on the West coast and interned in concentration camps in the mountain states and Midwest for the duration of the war, with no resistance from their neighbors of various ethnicities. Salinas's residents did not dispute the order and in fact fully supported it. As a result of the internment, most Japanese residents from Salinas as in the rest of California and the West, lost everything they had so carefully worked for and acquired, as discussed in the following Chapter.

Japanese families were spread out residentially and frequently moved onto ranches and farms throughout the Valley instead of living only in the more urban area of Salinas itself. Thus Japanese affected Salinas differently than the Chinese had done. They were fully integrated into Salinas's schools for one thing, as photographs and school records show. 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.⁹⁶

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the Japanese contributed to the transformation of agriculture in the Salinas Valley rather than a transformation of city space. They were migrant farmworkers, labor contractors, supervisors, keepers of boarding houses, and tenant farmers who leased land from Spreckels and others in order to grow beets for processing in Spreckels plant and lettuce, celery, and berries for markets nearby. Spreckels depended on the Japanese to supervise the multiracial workforce he imported and needed to grow beets and transform them into sugar.

⁹⁶ *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).

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. That 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. protectorate and Filipinos “insular subjects” of the United States with free access to immigration in contrast to other excluded Asian groups.⁹⁷ These migrants included a new more diverse contingent of students and elites who sought better economic conditions and education in America than they might have in their countries of origin. Filipinos were not all unskilled laborers but originated from all classes and walks of life. Those who came to the Salinas Valley in the first years of the century were mostly unskilled workers, however, who remained mostly migrant laborers often working for Japanese labor contractors.

The new demographic in Salinas (just as in other parts of California and the rest of urban America) came at the height of an emerging new science (known as scientific racism) that divided species (including humans) into specific, measurable and definable categories with Caucasians occupying the highest rung of the human ladder and blacks at the bottom, but with multiple spaces in between for Asians, Southern 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 Progressives, citizenship status, opportunities for housing, employment, education, and any kind of upward

⁹⁷ Rick Baldoz, *The Third Asiatic Invasion: Empire and Migration in Filipino America, 1898-1946* (New York and London: Ne York University Press, 2011), 32-33.

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 society. In this, Salinas was no different than any other metropolis in California or in America.

Thus, between 1898 when Spreckels factory went into operation and 1920s when it was at full production and benefiting from new needs brought on by World War I, a confluence of factors transformed Salinas from a railroad hub and commercial center populated by white Midwestern businessmen into a, multiracial and multicultural urban center with a new dependence on the beet sugar industry as its economic base and driving force. Salinas's city leaders worked on city-building, focusing on meeting the needs of a white, Protestant, middle class population with anti-immigrant, anti-Asian sentiments. Salinas residents at the turn of the new century like their counterparts elsewhere in the state and the nation shared a strong conservative politics, hostile to monopolies and big corporations, but just as hostile to radical labor unions such as the increasingly popular I.W.W. (International Workers of the World) and the growing Communist Party. At the turn of the last century and throughout the early years of the new one Salinas could be described as a typical California urban community 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 all parts of Asia.

By the 1920s Salinas's future looked promising and challenging as a principle location for a new version of rural America in the twentieth century. Its reliance on a farming economy was combined by its equal dependence on urban life. Salinas's founders and residents may have believed in Jeffersonian ideals of communalism and local landownership but understood that they needed the power and infrastructure of a genuine municipality, international markets, a flexible and large labor force, and increasingly sophisticated transportation systems to sustain their existence.

