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Sourisseau Academy

Smith-Layton Archive presents:

Smokestacks in Garden Valley

by Thomas Layton

Les Amis (The Friends)

February 2016

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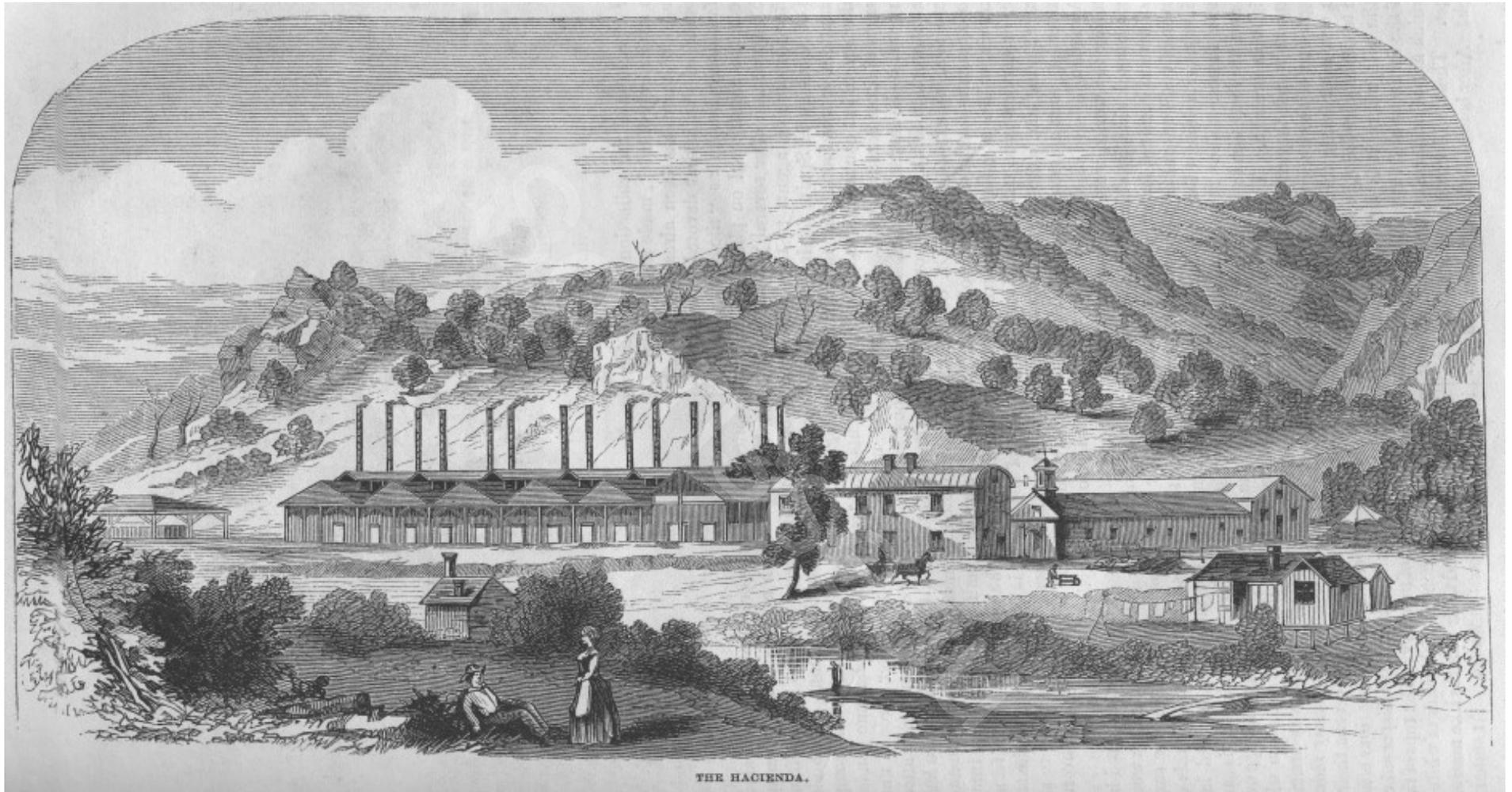
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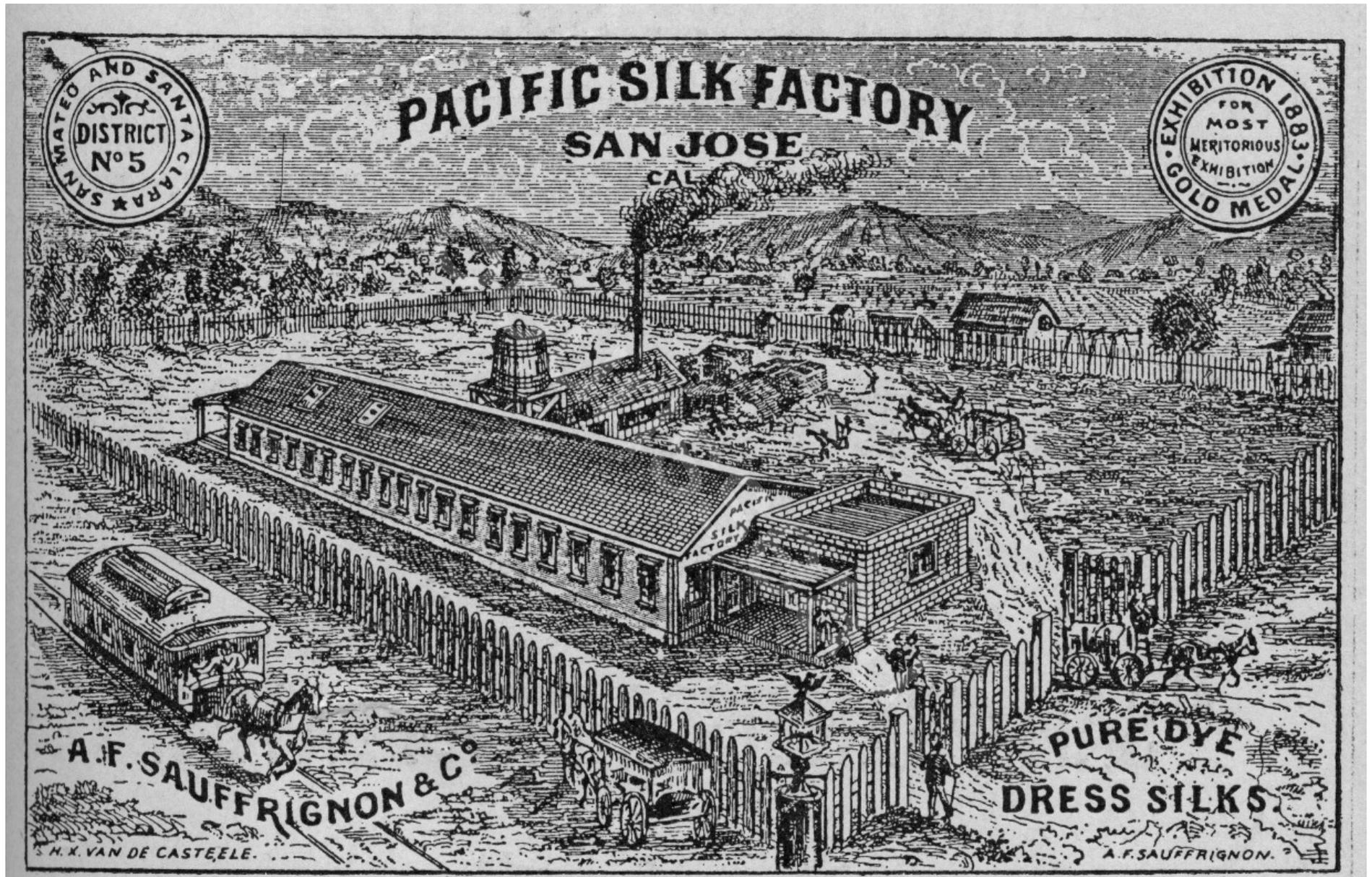
[18] **Santa Clara County Chamber of Commerce.** It may seem strange today to realize that in 1947 the Santa Clara County Chamber of Commerce was attempting to entice major smokestack industries to move their plant sites into the Santa Clara Valley by placing full-page advertisements in nationally distributed magazines, featuring an artist's fantasy of an industrial complex with seventeen (count them) smokestacks —each one belching a choreographed plume of thick black smoke.



[19] **Sunshine, Fruit and Flowers.** Although that soot-blemished image may not match our cherished conception of a verdant valley of Sunshine, Fruit and Flowers (1895), the Santa Clara Valley has been the home of smokestack industries for a very long time — all the way back to the California Gold Rush.



[20] **New Almaden in 1857.** By the early 1850s, the Baron Forbes Company at New Almaden produced most of the liquid mercury used to extract California's placer gold, and it was already a destination for visitors eager to view mercury production and to take guided tours down into the depths of the mine. This 1857 engraving shows the fourteen immensely tall chimneys that captured smoke and fumes from the wood-fired furnaces used to roast cinnabar (mercury ore). The ore-roasting furnaces featured elaborate water-cooled passages to capture the mercury fumes released from the ore and to condense those fumes into liquid quicksilver. The tall chimneys facilitated additional condensation. However, the acrid smoke, soot and ambient mercury fumes were a constant problem for the New Almaden residents.



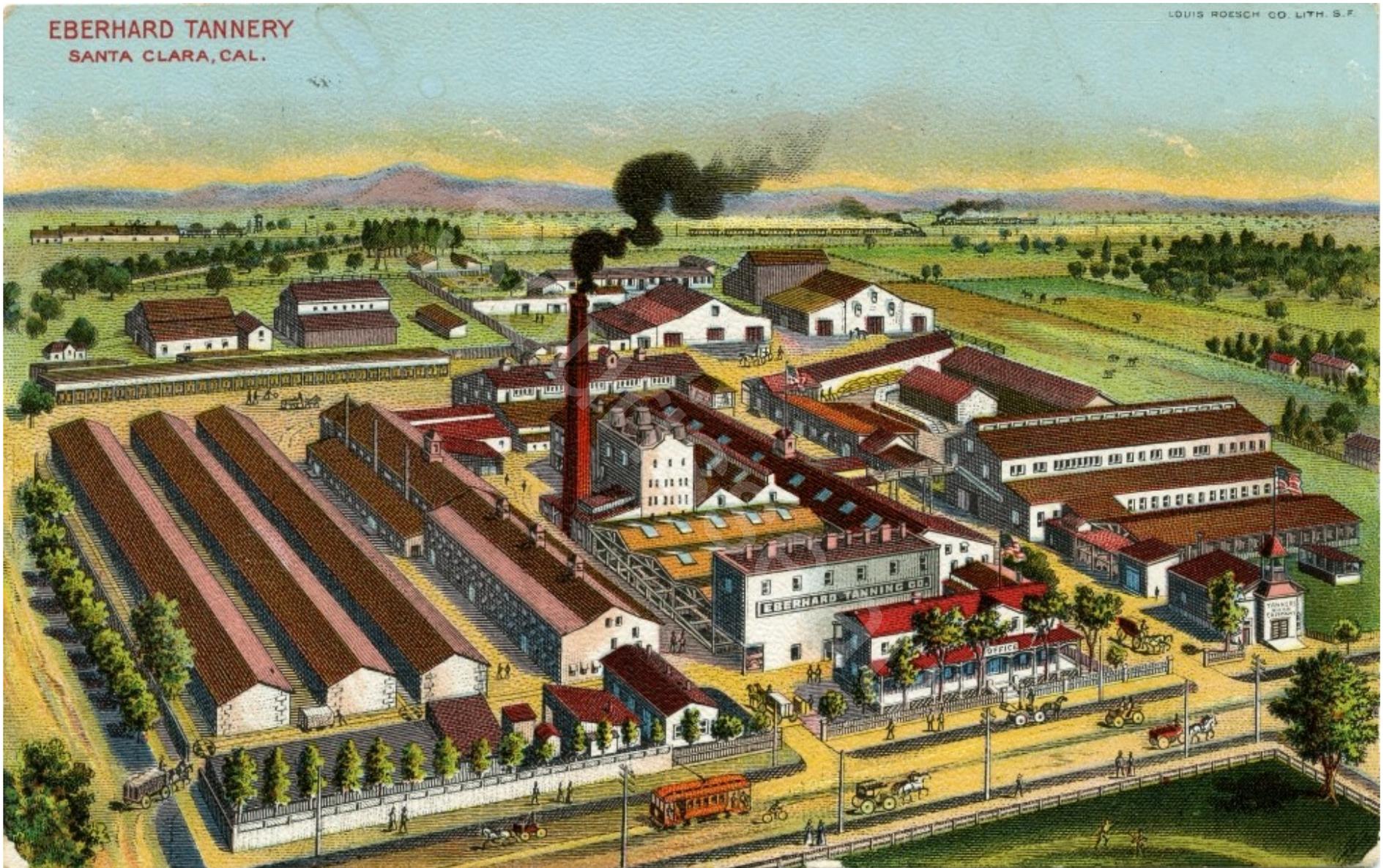
[21] **Pacific Silk Factory.** In 1882, when the Pacific Silk Factory, replete with a soaring smokestack, was established at the corner of Delmas and San Salvador Streets in San Jose, it began purchasing railroad-car-loads of coal to feed the boilers powering its ten looms. Although their silks won a gold medal at an 1883 Exposition, the company had failed by 1891.



[22] **San Jose Gas Company.** The right half of this circa 1900 panoramic photo shows the San Jose Gas Company coal gassification plant, located on Center Street just north of the Alameda (now under the S.A.P. parking lot). Coal was dumped into retorts (large iron containers), which were sealed air tight to prevent combustion, and then cooked over hot fires to drive off the gas, which was then captured and stored in a large tank and piped to consumers. Soot from these massive chimneys rained down on much of San Jose. Early gas plants in San Jose received their coal from as far away as Australia; but by the turn of the century, coal was coming by rail from mines in the United States.



[23] **San Jose Gas Company.** The left half of this San Jose Gas Company panorama shows the massive expansion storage tank (the tank top moved up and down according to the amount of gas inside). Note the barrels on top of the tank — probably containing water for fire suppression.



[24] **Eberhard Tannery.** There was a time before the development of flexible synthetics that the leather industry loomed large. This magnificent circa 1900 color art graphic shows the Eberhard Tannery on Grant Street in Santa Clara, where smelly cowhides were converted to finished leather for shoes, saddles and sturdy upholstery for a national market. The massive smokestack collapsed in the 1906 earthquake. The tannery was demolished in 1953 and the land is now part of Santa Clara University. (Information courtesy Lorie Garcia)



INTERIOR HENDY IRON WORKS, SUNNYVALE, CAL.

[25] **Joshua Hendy Iron Works.** The Joshua Hendy Iron Works moved from San Francisco to Sunnyvale shortly after the 1906 Earthquake. This image shows the bright interior of their fabrication plant — but not the smokestacks for the foundry. For decades the company built heavy-duty equipment for mines and industry. World War I would see the company building components for warships.



[26] **Pacific Manufacturing Company.** Circa 1908: These plumes of black smoke wafting over Santa Clara confirm that the Pacific Manufacturing Company was in full operation, producing doors, window frames and a multitude of interior furnishings for builders, and even coffins for a market throughout the West.



[27] **Great White Fleet.** On May 1, 1908, the Santa Clara County Automobile Club motored south to Santa Cruz to view the Great White Fleet anchored in Monterey Bay. Teddy Roosevelt, seeking to demonstrate American military power, had dispatched the fleet on a well-publicized voyage around the world. Here, dense smoke from the fleet's coal-fired engines blackens the sky as the ships prepare to depart for San Francisco. In those days, housewives living anywhere near local industry often found their freshly hung laundry soiled by the pervasive soot.



[28] **Santa Cruz Portland Cement Company, circa 1928.** In 1906, the Santa Cruz Portland Cement Company opened its plant at Davenport, nine miles north of Santa Cruz. Limestone was crushed, roasted at a high temperature in coal-fired ovens to drive off impurities, and finally ground into a fine light grey powder. It was the second-largest cement plant in the United States, and its product helped rebuild San Francisco after the earthquake. This circa 1928 aerial photo shows the massive plant, belching plumes of smoke and fine grey powder, blowing inland toward the Santa Clara Valley.

Images on file at the Smith-Layton Archive, Sourisseau Academy for State and Local History
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[29] **Bean Spray Pump Company, 1919.** By the time of this 1919 photo, the Bean Spray Pump Company and other local manufacturers were beginning to convert from coal to fuel oil and electricity.



[30] **Standard Oil Company, 1920.** And, where did that fuel oil come from? Perhaps from the Standard Oil Company Refinery at Point Richmond — with more smokestacks than you have fingers to count — already in full production, as seen in this 1920 photo.

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[31] **Clean Industry in the 1950s.** By the mid-1950s, despite the black smoke dreams of the Santa Clara County Chamber of Commerce, Arnold "Del" Del Carlo could assemble a composite photo of Santa Clara Valley industrial plants, almost all of which were powered by natural gas and electricity. Remarkably, what we actually received was far better than what we asked for in that 1947 Chamber of Commerce advertisement, featuring those seventeen dreadful smokestacks, that kicked-off this photo album!