



Charlene Duval, Executive Secretary

cduval@sourisseauacademy.org

Leilani Marshall, Archivist

lmarshall@sourisseauacademy.org

Phone: 408-808-2064

Sourisseau Academy

Smith-Layton Archive presents:

Ethnic Communities of Santa Clara Valley

1848-1920

by Ralph Pearce

Les Amis (The Friends)

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[18] **The French.** Thousands of French immigrants arrived in California during the Gold Rush, and many eventually settled in Santa Clara Valley. Names like Sainsevain, Lefranc, Masson and Mirassou are now synonymous with wine. Louis Pellier introduced the prune to the Valley, which became the nation's leading producer of prunes. San Jose streets bear the names of Antoine Delmas and Edward and John Auzerais. The photograph on the left shows early French immigrant Pedro Sainsevain and his sons Carlos and Paul Sainsevain along with Carlos' wife Lydia Higuera. Don Pedro reservoir is named for Pedro Sainsevain. The de Saisset family is pictured on the right. Pedro de Saisset was an early French resident and served as the honorary Vice-Consul for the French government. The De Saisset Museum memorializes Pedro's son, artist Ernest de Saisset, shown in the photo waving his hat. The Alcantara Building/Metropole Hotel on South Market Street, built by the de Saisset heirs, is a San Jose Landmark.



[19] **Sourisseau Family.** Felix Sourisseau was also an early French settler in San Jose. Felix operated a hotel with his father and then a gun shop. Felix and Mary Sourisseau are pictured on the right. Their daughter, Eva Sourisseau, the last of the Sourisseau children, bequeathed an endowment to San Jose State University in 1969 which established the Sourisseau Academy for State and Local History to honor her father. One of her requests was that the Sourisseau Academy would work to preserve the ethnic heritage of San Jose.



[20] **The Germans.** From the mid-1800s through the early 1900s, millions of Germans immigrated to the United States. Beginning in the 1850s, many of them lived in San Jose and Santa Clara. German businesses like the Eberhard Tannery and Santa Clara Brewery provided employment to many of the new immigrants. Notable local German Americans include San Jose's Theodore Lenzen and family who designed over 500 buildings in San Jose. Lenzen designed the 1889 City Hall, Fredericksburg Brewery off the Alameda, and the brick Chinatown commissioned by fellow immigrant John Heinlen. Merchant Adolph Pfister, pictured on the left, served two terms as San Jose's mayor in the 1870s and founded the San Jose Free Library. The 1879 photograph on the right depicts a group of young men celebrating "Pfingsten", the day of Pentecost.



[21] **Latin Americans.** The Santa Clara Valley belonged to Mexico from 1822 through the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848. Like the Japanese, Filipinos, and Chinese, most Latin American immigrants who arrived in the Valley in the late 1840s worked in unskilled and seasonal occupations. This circa 1870 photograph by Robert R. Bulmore depicts a Mexican miner who worked in the New Almaden mines. The later influx of Mexicans and others from Central and South America quickly assimilated with the earlier Mexican/*Californio* populations.



[22] **Spanishtown at New Almaden.** This circa 1885 photograph (also by Robert R. Bulmore) shows children posing in front of their school in the area called Spanishtown at the New Almaden Quicksilver Mine. Spanishtown housed the Spanish, Mexican, and Chilean miners and their families. The school enrolled about thirty-five students, most of whom only spoke Spanish. The school was closed around 1900 due to lack of students.



[23] **The Chinese.** Chinese laborers drying grapes pause for this rare, turn-of-the-century “photo op.” In 1848, there were only fifty-four Chinese living in California. When word of the Gold Rush reached Canton, impoverished villagers of the region began finding their way across the Pacific to “Gum San” (Gold Mountain). By 1852, there were approximately 25,000 Chinese in California, making them the state’s largest minority group. Most of the immigrants never struck it rich, but wound up as laborers in mining, construction, agriculture, and of course the creation of the Central Pacific Railroad in the 1860s. This image is from a glass negative created by the Sunset Photo-Engraving Company.



[24] **J. H. M. Townsend's Chinese House Servant.** By 1880, California's predominately male Chinese population had tripled to 75,218 immigrants, with 2,695 recorded as living in Santa Clara County. This late nineteenth century studio portrait depicts a house servant, one of a number of Chinese laborers under the employment of John H. M. Townsend. Townsend was the son of Santa Clara County pioneer Dr. John Townsend, whose estate was located on Milpitas Road near Coyote Creek. Such portraits were expensive, so great efforts were made to present oneself well. Prints were often sent to relatives back in the homeland.



[25] **Italian Immigrants.** Italians were also drawn to the United States from the time of the Gold Rush into the early 1900s. From fruit production to local business to banking, the contributions of San Jose's Italian community are great and many. The first wave of Italians, mostly from northern Italy, settled in the northwest portion of San Jose. Later groups, mostly from Southern Italy, settled in northeast San Jose, around what is now Holy Cross Church and Backesto Park. A large Italian neighborhood also developed in the area that would become known as "Goosetown," south of Reed Street. Others settled on farms throughout the Valley. A portrait of A. P. Giannini, founder of the Bank of Italy, which ultimately became Bank of America, is pictured on the left. On the right is a beautiful photograph from 1915 that features the Laormino family with the fruit of their labors; buckets full of apricots.



[26] **African Americans.** California was admitted to the Union in 1850 as a "free" state. Prior to the Civil War, a few African Americans came to the Valley with their slave owners and were soon emancipated. Their communities were often located around their churches, the A.M.E. Zion and Antioch Baptist. Prior to laws passed in 1878, "colored schools" were set up for the children. The women on the left were the Cooper sisters: Georgina Breckenridge, Charlotte Madden, and Agnes Perkins. Georgiana and Charlotte were active in San Jose's early African-American community. The circa 1925 photo on the right features African-American members of a Palo Alto Boy Scout troop parading down South Third Street in San Jose. The first African-American Boy Scout troop was formed in 1911; and by 1926, there were 4,923 African-American scouts in the United States.



[27] **Japanese Immigrants.** Japanese began immigrating to the Santa Clara Valley in the early 1890s, primarily brought by labor contractors. Their recruitment was meant to replace Chinese laborers, whose numbers were dwindling due to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. In 1900, the number of Japanese in Santa Clara County was a modest 284, though that number would rise steadily. By 1930, the Japanese population in the Valley numbered 4,320. This undated colored slide shows a Japanese farmer and his sons in his strawberry field in lower Santa Clara County.



[28] **Japanese Discrimination.** Masaichi Kishimoto is shown here driving a Yuba orchard tractor about 1920. At a time when young boys routinely threw stones at passing Asian men, Mr. Kishimoto appears to have at least the momentary respect of the young man standing behind him. Even well-educated Japanese were limited in their employment prospects. Unless one was self-employed, most Japanese Americans were limited to low-wage labor occupations until some years after World War II.



[29] **The Portuguese.** In the late 1890s, immigrants from Portugal, the Azores, and Madeira Islands began making their way to California. A sizeable Portuguese community developed in the city of Santa Clara. Many were successful dairymen and farmers, like Manuel Azevedo who ran the American Dairy in the San Juan Bautista Hills off of Curtner Avenue. The community founded the SES Hall (Sociedade do Espirito Santo) on Lafayette Street in Santa Clara in 1896. The Portuguese also settled in East San Jose in the early 20th century. This photograph shows Five Wounds Church, which was completed in 1918 and is the centerpiece of San Jose's historic Portuguese community. The church is now multi-cultural, also serving the local Mexican American, Filipino, and Vietnamese communities.



[30] **Filipino Immigrants.** During the 1920s, Filipino laborers began immigrating to California. A great number of them found work in the fertile fields of Santa Clara Valley. Like the Japanese, the Filipinos gravitated to San Jose's Japantown and Heinlerville Chinatown. Most of the early immigrants were young men; and in the late 1920s, Leopoldo Escalante Sr. opened the Manila Pool Hall for socializing and entertainment. The hall was first located on the northwest corner of Fourth and Jackson Streets, and then later located in an historic Chinatown building that still stands on the corner of Sixth and Jackson Streets. This John C. Gordon photograph features Mr. Escalante (center in suit and tie) at the Fourth Street location about 1931.