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*Sourisseau Academy*

*Smith-Layton Archive presents:*

**Main Streets**

**South of the Bay!**

by Thomas Layton

*Les Amis (The Friends)*

*April 2016*

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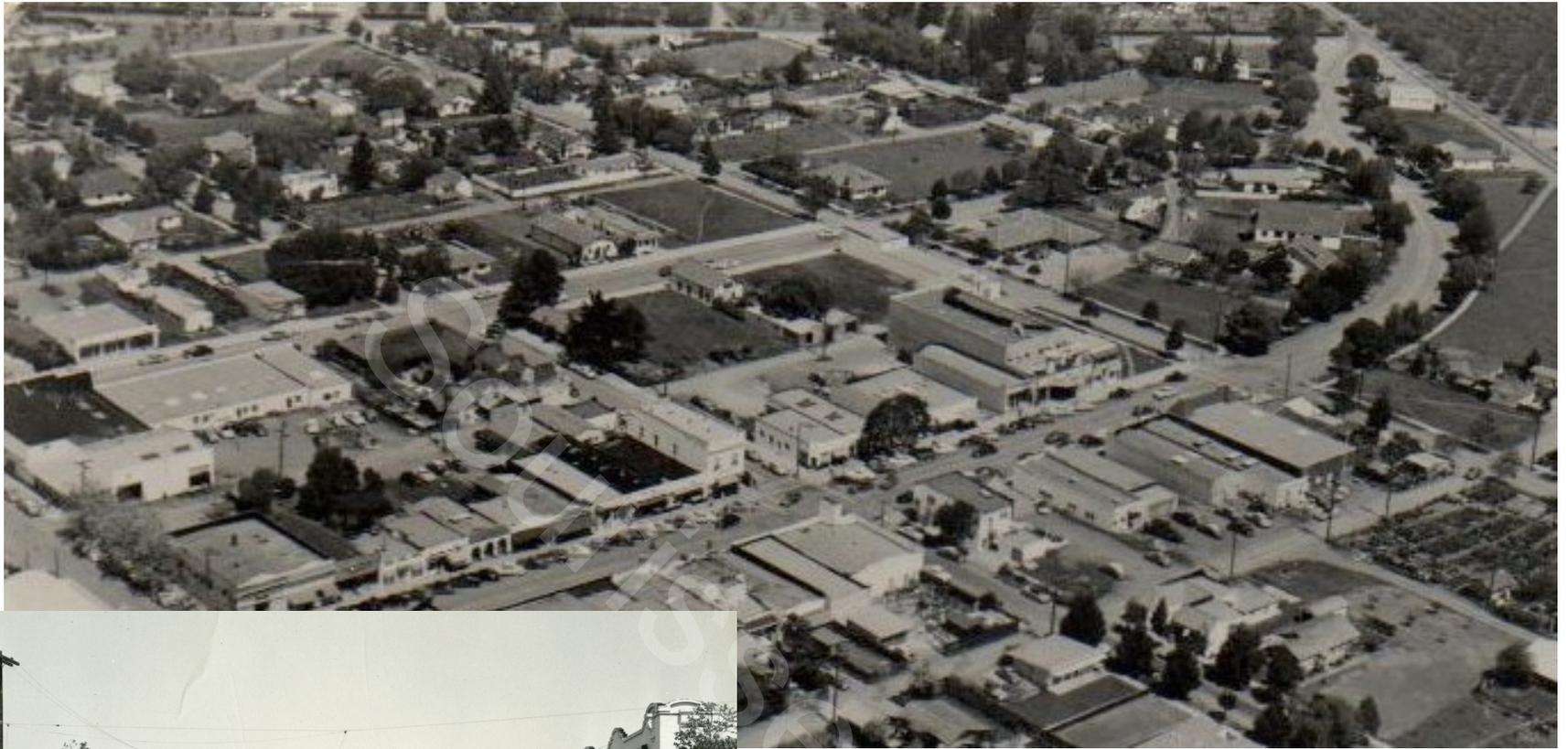


[45] **San Jose, 1925.** There was once a time, lasting through the 1950s — before big box stores and suburban shopping centers brought about the demise of Mom and Pop enterprise — that a busy main street, lined wall-to-wall with local retailers, defined the downtown core of most California towns. And, taking pictures of those Main Streets was the bread-and-butter occupation of most postcard photographers. Let's visit those lively main streets of yesteryear, starting, of course, in San Jose, with this 1925 photo of South First Street. Why do we know the year? Because, in 1925, the Bank of Italy (about to become San Jose's tallest building), seen in the distant left, was under construction — its uppermost floor still a breezy skeleton of steel girders!



[46] **Willow Glen, 1944.** The original name for Willow Glen's main street was El Abra. Two name changes later, during the mid-1860s, it became Lincoln Avenue, in honor of our recently fallen President. This 1944 view north from Minnesota Avenue shows a dynamic business section, many of whose buildings survive today. The telephone poles and the diagonal parking spaces are now long gone, but the *Willow Glen Central Market* building survives today as *Hicklebee's Children's Books*. And the *Willow Glen Theatre* building, now sadly stripped of its colorful neon marquee, has become the *Thrift Box*.

Images on file at the Smith-Layton Archive, Sourisseau Academy for State and Local History  
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[47] **Los Altos, circa 1951.** Main Street comprised the commercial district of sleepy Los Altos. A 1951 license plate on the first car to the right dates this photo. But could the curving north end of Main Street really have been truncated by a grove of trees? Well, yes! This aerial reveals a thriving orchard at that location.



[48] **Los Gatos, 1946.** Seventy years ago, before Los Gatos went upscale and cute, ordinary people could do most of their shopping along this 100-foot stretch of Santa Cruz Avenue. One could procure a bag of groceries from the *Lincoln Market*, a hardware item from next door, and a plethora of household items from *Sprouse-Reitz* (10-15-25 cents store). Before crossing the street for dinner rolls at *Fairbanks' Bakery*, you could take a quick peek next door at the window display of new appliances and then fill a prescription at the *Buy for Less Drug Store*. A 1946 license plate dates the photo. But, why are the autos so much older? Because civilian auto production had been suspended for four years during World War II.

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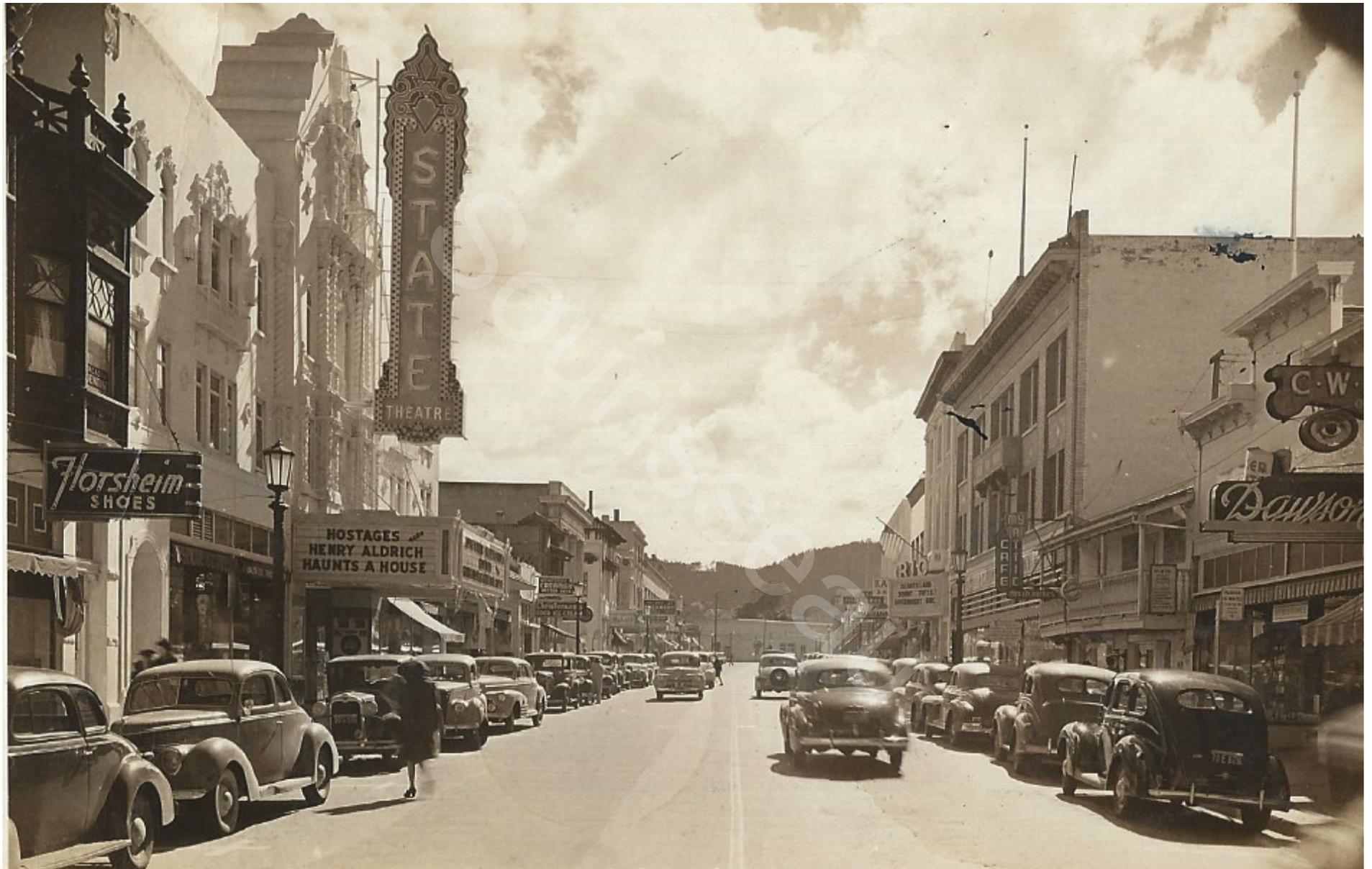
[49] **Saratoga, 1950.** Big Basin Way is the long-time main street of Saratoga. Although this twin-turreted building still stands (minus the turrets), the spiffy *Buy & Save Market No. 2* and its successor, *Whitlow's Department Store* (1956-1980), are both long gone, replaced by three current tenants, including the *Vintage Burger Bar*! A 1950 license plate on the Chevrolet on the far right provides a secure date. (Caption information from Jan Whitlow)



[50] **Boulder Creek, 1948.** Central Avenue remains the main drag in Boulder Creek. In this 1948 photo, we see the marquee-front of the *Dolan* (formerly *Forest*) theatre building. It was subsequently remodeled with a porch and a balcony and today houses the *Boulder Creek Pizza & Pub*. The false-front building just beyond remains to recall earlier times with its large sign: *Moody & Cress, Livery & Express, California Redwood Park Stage Line*, and *Mac's Place* next door, bereft of its *Coca Cola* sign, is still in business!



[51] **Santa Cruz, 1935.** America may have been in the depths of the Great Depression, but this view north along Pacific Avenue, identified on this photo as *The Main Business Section of Santa Cruz*, reveals a shopping district awash in shiny new automobiles, with moviegoers standing in line at the *Santa Cruz Theatre* (built in 1920) to see Al Jolson and Ruby Keeler in the 1935 film, *Go Into Your Dance*. The *Hotel Palomar* building on the right still stands, but the clock that once stood atop the *Odd Fellows Building* now measures time in a plaza at the north end of Pacific Avenue and is known as the *Town Clock*.



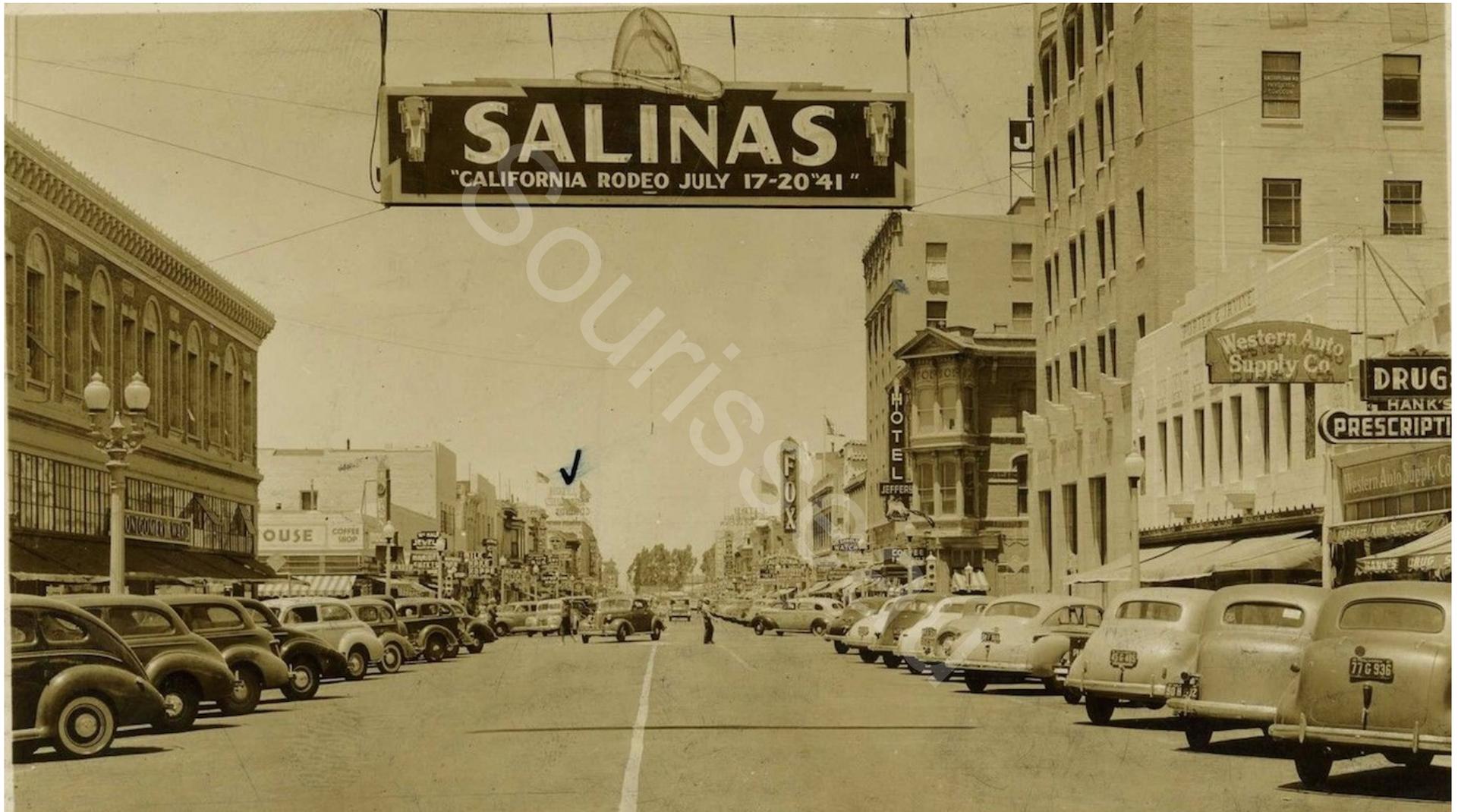
[52] **Monterey, 1943.** Back in 1943, it wasn't easy to find a parking spot on Alvarado Street in Monterey. We know the date, because the 1,600-seat *State Theatre*, built in 1926, is showing *Henry Aldrich Haunts a House*, which was released in 1943. The *State Theatre* still stands and has been restored to its original splendor.



[53] **Carmel, 1931.** Well before 1931, when this license plate-dated photo was taken, Carmel's Ocean Avenue had already achieved a self-consciously "scenic" look, replete with a mini-tower, tile roofs, wrought iron grillwork and colorful awnings. *La Giralda Hotel*, garnished with brightly patterned glazed tiles, presides eloquently on the left, as a gentleman in a sporty roadster pauses for the intersection.



[54] **Watsonville, 1932.** The marquee of Watsonville's 1,000-seat *Fox Theatre*, built in 1924, features *The Dark Horse*, starring Warren Williams. The movie was released in 1932, which nicely dates this view down a very busy Main Street. The 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake destroyed the theatre's lobby; and today, the balcony has been divided to create two separate screening rooms.



[55] **Salinas, 1941.** *Hotel Jefferson*, with its truncated entrance built in 1898, still stands on Main Street in Salinas as does the much-altered *Fox Theatre*, constructed in 1921. We thank the *Salinas Rodeo* promoters for the banner that provides an exact date.



[56] **Gilroy, 1941.** Gilroy's Monterey Road is a portion of the historic roadway from San Jose to Monterey. In 1941, the Gilroy Chamber of Commerce could boast of two painted lanes and a parking strip in each direction. On the right side of the street we see the clock tower atop the 1905 City Hall, designed by San Jose's renowned architect, Frank Delos Wolfe. This building, on the *National Register of Historic Places*, is now the home of *City Hall Restaurant*.



[57] **Hollister, 1946.** San Benito Street is the main thoroughfare in Hollister. This 1946 photo was taken a year before motorcycle gangs rioted in Hollister and inspired *The Wild One* — the 1954 blockbuster movie, starring Marlon Brando. The 1896 building housing the *Hotel Hartmann* (now *Dabo Hotel*) still stands!



[58] **San Jose, 1944.** There was, of course, more than one main street in San Jose's business district, but we end our tour of main streets back where we started, with another view along South First Street, albeit seventeen years later. By 1944, *The Bank of Italy* in the distance (unfinished in 1925) had become the *Bank of America*. To accommodate wartime cutbacks, the 1931 *Hale Bros.* department store (still there but its original façade obscured) at the southeast corner of San Carlos had added *Hale's Thrifty Mart*. The 1926 *Trinkler-Dohrman Building* is on the left, flanked by the *Mission Hotel* on the south. The 1924 *St. Claire Building* to the north is now the site of *Original Joe's* restaurant.