Building Communities – Economics & Ethnicity

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INTRODUCTION

Approaching the Delta from the east, off of Interstate 5, the hurried and harried pace of life gives way to a gradual western sloping landscape of manicured fields. As the morning fog burns away, glimpses of old barns, field equipment, and neatly stacked fruit crates appear alongside the road. As one approaches town, heavy-duty pick-up trucks meet at the four-way stop with their driver motioning for visitors to take the right-of-way. The post office and local coffee shop buzz with morning routines. A tour through the Delta carries visitors along levee roads, across iconic bridges and into culturally rich historic towns. Orchards and row crops expand from levee roads; and farmsteads and stately homes exist alongside ethnic heritage landscapes and new commercial developments. The communities of the Delta are places of the present and the past that are stitched together by a network of railroads, canals and levees, and by the open spaces that link them together. These are the first impressions of the Delta as a place and the start of many questions. What is the meaning of this place, who made this place and how has it changed through time?

In the 1850s, powerful economic, political and social forces precipitated momentous change in the Delta region of California: 1) the California Gold Rush, 2) levee construction and agricultural development, and 3) the migration and settlement of domestic, European and Asian cultural groups. The great migration linked to California's Gold Rush is purported to be the largest movement of people to a single area on the North American continent. Other areas have comparable numbers associated with their frontier migration, including the land rush into Oklahoma and the settlement of Wisconsin. California's distinctiveness lies in the rapidity and uneven pattern of settlement over the land. Moreover, the settlement of the state was not uniform and was complicated by Hispanic colonizers and topographic features that restricted movement into, and settlement of, certain areas.[1]

The Delta region was one of the early settlement foci associated with the Gold Rush migration and it serves as an ideal microcosm in which to learn about social and economic change in California. In 1860, seventy-five percent of the state's population was concentrated around San

[1] David Hornbeck, *California Patterns: A Geographical and Historical Atlas*, (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing, 1983), 64-66.

Francisco and the interior mining region. As mining declined, most ex-miners moved to the San Francisco region, but also settled areas adjacent to previous population centers.[2] The Delta was an important crossroads location during this period and the inhabitable lands of the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys proved enticing to post-Gold Rush settlers, as well as newcomers. Diverse cultures forged distinct communities during the Delta's land reclamation phase and subsequent agricultural development. While this might seem to exemplify familiar themes in our country's past, the small family farm that once characterized so much of agricultural development in North America has not epitomized rural life in the Delta; instead corporate farming and agribusiness has significantly shaped the region's history and much like that of the rest of the state. Since its early colonization, the effective settlement and development of the region has depended on the labor of both indigenous and subsequent newcomer groups.

Throughout history the Delta has been a crossroads, a place of environmental change and agricultural fortune, and a destination for newcomers. The Delta is a place *in between*, exceptionally endowed by nature, location and cultural heritage. Flanked by the urban fringes of both the Bay Area and Central Valley, the region faces development and population pressures from all sides, and commuters and city dwellers alike seek refuge on its back roads and in its quiet communities. The Delta region is a palimpsest landscape that is layered with elements from different cultural groups and economic activities originating from both modern and historical periods. The region's unique rural landscape has multiple meanings. It can be interpreted as symbolic of prosperity and success, and it can equally reveal labor conflict, inequality and exclusion.

The theme of this Delta Narrative is *Building Communities: Economics and Ethnicity*. The narrative is divided into three sections. The first section focuses on initial settlement in the Delta, starting with the earliest indigenous inhabitants. It traces the arrival of subsequent immigrant groups and how communities were built around ethnic bonds and the economic needs of an emerging agricultural region. It also covers the early experience of Delta residents, emphasizing themes of human-environment interaction, emerging settlement patterns, and early community development. The second section emphasizes the labor history of the Delta and how the work of different ethnic groups impacted the development of the region. It draws particular attention to how the nature of agricultural labor in the Delta hindered development and the growth of community in the region. Immigrant labor in reclamation, tenant farming and patterns of ethnic specialization in agriculture, along with discriminatory and exclusionary activities associated with work and settlement are important themes in this section. The third and final section addresses the notion of the Delta as a refuge for short-term, transient settlement, recreation and respite. In some cases, ethnic communities were too small to

[2] Hornbeck, *California Patterns*, 66-67.

become viable communities, while other transitory settlement efforts represent urban dwellers seeking isolation or retreat into Delta hideaways. Throughout the narrative, community vignettes illustrate how these three themes played out to shape the Delta's identity including its legacy towns, enduring ethnic landscapes and economic imprints.

I. Early Inhabitants and Human Imprints

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is one of California's unique cultural and environmental regions. Typical of many river deltas, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is an evolutionary product of running water and erosion, sediment transport, and deposition. The Delta's uniqueness, however, derives from its atypical inverted river delta type where the sediment from the Sacramento and San Joaquin drainage system fills the area of river confluence rather than exiting and dropping its sediment load into the bay. The accumulation of sediments behind the narrow Carquinez Strait led to the formation of low-lying peat islands and natural levees. Features such as braided and meandering streams, undercut banks, and oxbow lakes are common to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and they provided a unique environmental setting for the region's earliest inhabitants.

Population estimates for California's pre-contact Native peoples range from 133,000 to 705,000, and Cook's estimate of 310,000 is frequently cited as a baseline figure. More recent work by William Preston suggests that transmission of Old World diseases arrived well before the Mission period colonial expansion that devastated traditional California Indian societies. If true, then the pre-contact population of California is much higher.[3] Native California communities in the Central Valley were based on triblet organization. Within an aggregate of villages, groups owned land and were politically independent, usually sharing the same languages with one or more neighboring triblets. Within these large "Indian towns" craft specialists could devote time to basketry, tool-making and hunting. In the smaller communities of 50 or 100 persons, extended families were self-sufficient in these production activities. Community life was also reflected in construction of family dwellings. Northern Valley Yokut dwellings were lightly built structures covered with tule stalks that had been woven into mats.[4]

Radiocarbon dates from archeological sites indicate a thriving hunting and gathering Native American culture utilizing the rich Delta ecosystem as early as 2500 B.C.[5] There was no food shortage for Delta region dwellers. Villages were typically located near diverse and abundant food resources including fish, mussels, waterfowl, antelope, deer, elk, rabbits and other game,

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[3] Hornbeck, *California Patterns*, 34-35; William L. Preston, "Portents of Place from California's Protohistoric Period," *Ethnohistory* 29 (2002): 68-69.
[4] Robert F. Heizer and Albert B. Elsasser, *The Natural World of the California Indians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980): 41-42.
[5] Heizer and Elsasser, *California Indians*, 169-170.

as well as seed-bearing grasses, cattail roots, acorns, berries and other plants providing year-round food supplies.[6]

In addition to abundant food resources, inhabitants utilized the diverse environment of the Delta to create various items including the use of tules and reeds for basket and mat weaving. Tules and small willow and cottonwood branches were lashed together to construct shelters, rafts and hunting traps. According to reports by early explorers, the Delta region supported a native population of between 3,000 and 15,000 with individual villages containing 200 residents, and at least one settlement numbering over 1000 inhabitants. Before European settlement, Native peoples took advantage of the unique Delta lands by locating their villages along major river courses, favoring sites on the natural levees or low knolls above the floodplain. Settlements occurred on mounds six inches to five feet above the surrounding plain.[7] For example, a Patwin Indian settlement was sited at the head of Jackson Slough (present day Isleton) along the Sacramento River.[8] Similarly, Northern Yokuts clustered along the narrow strip of land bordering the San Joaquin and its main tributaries. Their settlements reached a population density of over ten persons per square mile, equal to any aboriginal group in California.[9] A concentration of middens east of the Delta in the vicinity of the Cosumnes, Mokelumne, and Calaveras Rivers attests to a much greater population density. The location held diverse food-producing situations such as tidal swamp, river bottomland, oak-studded grassy plains, and wooded Sierra foothills.

Comparatively few Indians lived on the thinly wooded and water-short plains to the west of the Delta, although exceptionally large villages were evident in the Sherman and Staten Island vicinity; their location suggesting they served as a place of refuge. The Delta was an important hiding place for Indians escaping from Spanish missions in the Bay Area. The region was also a refuge for Indians from villages which the Spanish relied on for their workforce. These hideouts along the San Joaquin River provided key retreat locations for Indians fleeing their Spanish pursuers. During the colonial era, land grantees were not interested in developing the tidal swamps of the Delta and the region became an important survival area as settlement elsewhere gained momentum.[10] In time, the region's subsequent newcomers would follow the dominant settlement pattern first established by the Delta's native peoples, concentrating their activities on the natural levees which provided an elevational advantage from the flood basins.

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[6] Heizer and Elsasser, *California Indians*, 38.

[7] John Thompson, "The Settlement Geography of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, California," dissertation, Stanford University, 1957, 110-111; Patricia Pierce, "A Geoarchaeological Analysis of the Prehistoric Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, California," thesis, University of California, Davis, 1988, 34.

[8] *SRDHS Newsletter*, "Andrus Island," (December 1996), 3, accessed 12 January 2015, http://www.srdhs.org/Pages/SRDHSNewsletters.aspx.

[9] William J. Wallace, "Northern Valley Yokuts" in *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 8* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 463.

[10] Thompson, "Settlement Geography," 93-94, 111, 130.

Newcomers in the Delta

Spanish colonization efforts in California began in 1769 with the focus of establishing permanent settlement that included a network of presidios, missions and pueblos. Colonists weighed several factors when selecting a mission site. Favorable local conditions included an adequate water supply, a high native population and travel distance to existing colonial settlements. Beginning in 1772, the Spanish sent several exploratory parties to the Sacramento Valley and the Delta, but no suitable sites were found. Over time, the Franciscan effort to create an ideal Spanish society met with mixed results. The costs associated with sustaining the northernmost mission lands, especially the difficulty of securing a permanent indigenous labor force, led officials to increasingly concentrate on the more successful southern settlements.[11] The neglect of the northern missions and interior Delta hinterlands created a refuge for indigenous residents and those fleeing the harsh conditions of mission life elsewhere. Spanish missionaries continued their reconnaissance efforts as late as 1811 and even though they found large Native villages in the Delta region, the establishment of a mission failed to happen.[12]

Spanish colonization most directly impacted California's southern and central coastal tribes and resulted in rapid population decline among indigenous people through disease, malnutrition and harsh treatment. Indirectly, the introduction of agriculture created sedentary lives among many indigenous groups and permanently removed others from tribal lands. The introduction of exotic plants such as wheat, maize and barley, along with the expansion of mission livestock including cattle and sheep competed with and in some cases replaced the local food supply that hunter-gatherer groups depended upon for sustenance. Finally, the establishment of settlement nuclei that included missions, civilian communities (*pueblos*) and military presence (*presidios*) created a network of towns and centralized locations that were linked together by the 600-mile *El Camino Real*. In order to facilitate travel between the various settlements, missions were established approximately 30 miles apart, or roughly a day's ride on horseback. In the northern zone of this colonization effort, the Spanish were most attentive to consolidating their position in the immediate vicinity of San Francisco Bay and they had comparatively little interest in the interior Delta lands. Over time, the Spanish settlement strategy not only utilized indigenous labor to colonize California, but their development further pressed the state's native population to seek refuge in this isolated area of the state.[13] In the Delta, these areas of indigenous retreat created a reservoir of labor that imprinted the region throughout the Spanish colonization period and during the subsequent development of the area.

Under Mexican rule, mission lands were confiscated and given out as private ranches. During this period, large areas of land were privatized and granted as ranchos to Mexican nationals

[11] Hornbeck, *California Patterns*, 42-47.
[12] Thompson, "Settlement Geography," 88-96.
[13] Hornbeck, *California Patterns*, 50-55.

and eventually to naturalized European and American settlers. In the period 1821-1846, more than one-fifth of the 473 land grants in Alta California went to people with Anglo surnames. A major concentration of Anglo ranchers developed in the Sacramento Valley and by the late 1840s the region had become the nucleus of an Anglo ranching system. The region's greatest resource for cattle ranching was its flora. Most prized were the "California prairies" that were concentrated in the Central Valley. The poorly drained "tule lands" of the Delta region were arguably the most sought after because they combined marsh grasses with wet areas for cattle during the dry season. What started as a Hispanicized nucleus of cattle ranching became an Anglo-Californian cattle boom after 1848, when the Gold Rush mines provided for the first time a local market for beef.[14]

The negative treatment of Native Californians continued unabated during this era with indigenous labor put to work on large rancho landholdings. Cheap land and "free" indigenous labor made ranching hugely profitable and subsequently transformed California's economy into one focused on the hide and tallow trade. Diseases such as small pox, scarlet fever and a devastating malaria epidemic in the early 1830s were now reaching Native peoples in the interior of California. The export trade associated with the ranching economy also led to increased activity in California seaports, which opened the region's isolated port cities to the wider world.[15] By 1846, starvation, epidemics, relocation and forced labor had all but decimated Native Californians. It is estimated that the population of Native Californians was reduced by ninety percent. California came under the control of the United States in 1846 and gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill two years later. After millennia of processes that resulted in great ecological diversity and stable Native adaptations to the environment, the Delta moved into an era of ever-quickening social change, environmental disorder, and increased human impact on the landscape.

On the eve of the California Gold Rush, Delta visitors and newcomers to Northern California had traversed, explored, mapped and in some cases settled permanently. An Anglo-California ranching system developed in the Sacramento Valley and would soon become the focus of the state's cattle boom. At the global scale, California was still an outpost, relatively unknown and heavily reliant on agricultural and lumber supplies from Oregon, as well as shiploads of goods from eastern cities. Over time, new ranch owners in the Sacramento Valley became increasingly independent and tired of depending on outsiders for supplies. The time was ripe for the residents of California to produce their own agricultural products and develop the region's economic potential. As the region's population increased over the years, especially after the Gold-Rush-induced stampede began in earnest, the Delta not only became the

[14] Terry G. Jordan, *North American Cattle-Ranching Frontiers* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993): 161, 241-246
[15] Hornbeck, *California Patterns*, 58-59;

primary gateway to the goldfields, but an area of potential economic development. The California Gold Rush quickened the pace of agricultural production and economic expansion in the region. Gold-seekers and those disillusioned with mining quickly realized that new economic opportunities and fortunes were to be found in the soil rather than the mines.

Emerging Settlement Patterns & Agricultural Development

Prior to the reclamation of the Delta, the majority of farmland in San Joaquin and Sacramento counties was mostly devoted to grain farming over the production of other crops. In particular, wheat and barley could tolerate the region's summer drought and the absence of irrigation. Moreover, long hot valley summers produced a durable type of wheat that could last the long months of transport to European markets. Wheat was easy to plant on the rich flat lands of the valley and it required almost no care during the growing season. In addition to ideal growing conditions, demand for wheat was enhanced by better transportation including increased wagon, steamboat and barge traffic. In 1869, almost half of the land under cultivation in San Joaquin County was planted in wheat. By 1883, the county claimed the largest wheat crop in the world.[16] Most of the grains grown in California were shipped to European destinations, setting a pattern of integration into global markets that characterizes the state's agriculture to the present.[17] In the 1860s, the coming of the steamship offered the potential to supply grain to Europe. The impact was especially noticeable in the late 1870s when California was undergoing a wheat bonanza, while yields were miserable in northwest Europe. Closer market integration that resulted from cheap California grain also negatively impacted the peripheral areas of Europe by threatening the livelihoods of grain farmers and other local industries.[18]

Several key factors influenced early agricultural patterns and settlement in Northern California and the Delta including the desire for good soil, the availability of a ready water and wood supply, and access to markets. Settlers also preferred tree-covered areas believing that treeless plains were an indicator of poor soil quality and inferior agricultural land. Taken together, these factors encouraged farmers to choose land along rivers and streams over the region's vast plains.[19] Similar to their indigenous predecessors, farmers selected a riparian settlement pattern on the higher natural levees that bordered the Sacramento River. They also selected sites near the Delta apex where mainland fragments benefited from deep water access, firm ground, and modest timber resources. The short-lived Mormon settlement of New Hope near

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[16] Susan W. Hardwick and Donald G. Holtgrieve, *Valley for Dreams: Life and Landscape in the Sacramento Valley* (Lahnam, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), 105-107; Minnick, "Samfow," 69.

[17] California's wheat bonanza created competition for traditional Mediterranean exporters, a development that would also be repeated in the Delta's transition to fruit cultivation.

[18] H. Clout, "Rural Europe since 1500: Areas of Innovation and Change," in *A Historical Geography of Europe* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1998), 235, 252.

[19] Margaret Trussell, "Land Choice by Pioneer Farmers: Western Butte County Through 1877," dissertation, University of Oregon, 1969.

the Montezuma Hills is a case in point. The original settlement lacked timber and was abandoned for a more favorable location on the lower Stanislaus River. The new site called "New Hope," supported a dozen or so colonists who built log houses and constructed a sawmill. The colony was abandoned in fall 1847 when the settlers were called back to Salt Lake City.[20] The settlements along the San Joaquin River and its tributaries, like their northern counterparts, also had the advantage of being near good trade and navigation centers including Stockton, French Camp and Antioch.

Transport-Focused Settlement - Landings, Gateways, and Water Routes

The Delta's earliest towns share the distinction of being important points of convergence and transfer for gold-seeking Argonauts. By the mid-nineteenth century, Delta farmers were also laying down the settlement roots that would eventually become the foundation for more extensive and intensive agricultural development. Transportation nodes and preferred trade routes emerged favoring those sites where goods could be off-loaded and carried by mule and ox teams to the goldfields. Key river crossings, gateway sites and transport systems were also integral to the development of the Delta region and are discussed at length in a separate Delta Narrative.

Stockton

The establishment of Stockton coincided with the rush for gold. German immigrant, Charles Weber founded Stockton and he commissioned a square mile townsite in 1949-49, including the street pattern, parks, and town lots, just prior to the Gold Rush-induced surge of development. The town, once known as Tuleberg, was considered to be on the very edge of frontier development where few would venture. By mid-1849, Stockton was thriving and warehouses, dwellings, and commercial developments began to fill the townsite. By May 1850, Stockton's residents may have numbered 2,400, with an additional "floating" or transient population of 2,000. The growing town became an important "goods-forwarding" site although winter rains often hampered transport efforts.[21]

Stockton is distinguished by several "firsts." The early survey of the town gave Stockton the distinction of being the first planned community in California. The City of Stockton, the name bestowed in honor of Commodore Robert F. Stockton, was the first in the state to be given a name that was not of Spanish or Native American origin.[22]

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[20] Thompson, "Settlement Geography," 128.
[21] Thompson, "Settlement Geography," 145-146; Raymond W. Hillman and Leonard A. Covello, *Cities & Towns of San Joaquin County since 1847* (Fresno, CA: Panorama West Books, 1985), 3.
[22] Hillman and Covello, *Cities & Towns of San Joaquin County*, 3.

French Camp

French Camp holds the distinction of having the longest history in San Joaquin County. The area's first homes built by white settlers were temporary shelters established for trappers, and were the precursor to later permanent settlement. French Camp, originally settled by French-Canadian fur trappers and the southernmost campsite of the Oregon-California trail, was also identified as an important transportation node. The small hamlet had the advantage of high banks and porous soils allowing transport to and from the mines throughout the year including the winter season. French Camp was also well connected by trails to San Joaquin Crossing and by steamer to Stockton. During the early 1850s, the town saw regular passenger and freight service and by 1853, two hotels took in lodgers 100 at a time.[23]

Beginning in the 1920s, Japanese immigrants became established in French Camp. A community of seventy-five families established a Japanese truck-farming co-op alongside the Southern Pacific tracks that became known as the "Salad Bowl of the Valley." French Camp also has the only Chinese cemetery in the region. In 1959, the small community was recognized as California State Historical Landmark due to its long and diverse history.[24]

San Joaquin Crossing

Another key transport site, San Joaquin Crossing, was established to accommodate travel between San Jose and the gold fields. A lucrative ferry service developed along this section of the river between French Camp and San Joaquin City. Sheep rancher, Henry C. Banta, ran an inn that catered to travelers who traversed the ten to fifteen mile dry, treeless plain from the direction of Mount Diablo. Travelers coming from French Camp about 10 miles to the northeast also utilized the crossing.[25]

Freeport

Freeport is one of the oldest communities in the Delta. It was established as a railroad town so that businessmen could avoid paying taxes as they shipped freight and passengers from the Bay Area to Sacramento and on to the Gold Rush region. A ten-mile line was built from the Brighton Station on the Sacramento Valley Railroad to a "free port" which became the town of Freeport. In the early years, the town boasted a population of 400, but declined after the Central Pacific Railroad purchased the line and removed the track to eliminate competition.[26]

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[23] Hillman and Covello, *Cities & Towns of San Joaquin County*, 131; Thompson, "Settlement Geography," 147.
[24] Hillman and Covello, *Cities & Towns of San Joaquin County*, 3.
[25] Thompson, "Settlement Geography," 148-149.
[26] Pezzaglia, *Towns of the Sacramento River Delta*, 123-127.

In the late 1800s, the Freeport-Clarksburg region was one of three major truck-farming areas. The two other areas where truck-farming predominated were in the Stockton vicinity, and east of Antioch on the margins of the Delta. The truck-gardens of Freeport-Clarksburg were operated by Italian, Portuguese, Chinese, French, German, and domestic migrants. Over time, Southern Europeans became the primary operators of small farms. Sacramento was the main recipient of commercial produce from the region.[27]

Freeport annexed into City of Sacramento in 2013 and is designated a Special Planning District and will retain its "delta river town" identity.[28] Today, the development of a new transportation corridor promises to reshape the rural environs and farmlands surrounding the city. A major public works project is currently underway that will extend Cosumnes River Boulevard to Interstate 5 and create a new interchange at Freeport. The construction paves the way for large-scale residential and commercial development including the thousand-home Delta Shores project.

Antioch

Another key access point to the Delta was recognized by the Smith brothers, William and Joseph, who founded Smith's Landing in December 1849. In order to secure establishment of the new town, the Smith's recruited potential residents by offering them newly surveyed lots. Gardens, a windmill irrigation system, and protection for livestock were important developments in this emerging village. Smith's Landing was eventually renamed Antioch and it became a significant gateway settlement, maintaining regular trade in surplus produce and hay with San Francisco.[29] From its early beginnings, Antioch has been a place of successful commercial activity. Its commercial identity started with brick making plant in 1852 and sheep raising served as a primary activity for many years.[30]

Antioch is located on the western end of the San Joaquin-Sacramento Delta. Its strategic location as an outlet to the rest of the world made the city important in the Delta's early communication and transportation history. The site of the early city boasted three miles of frontage on the San Joaquin River that was forty-feet deep and nearly a mile wide. Trade with San Francisco was established early and the discovery of mineral resources including coal in the hills south of Antioch (1859) and copper ore (1863) added to the city's importance as an early industrial center. Interestingly, sand mined from the Antioch Dunes was used to make bricks which helped San Francisco rebuild following the 1906 earthquake. The Antioch Lumber

[27] Thompson, "Settlement Geography," 325.
[28] Section 17.448.010 Sacramento City Code accessed 30 April, 2015, http://www.qcode.us/codes/sacramento/?view=desktop&topic=17-iv-17_448.
[29] Thompson, "Settlement Geography," 146-151.
[30] George Emanuels, *California's Contra Costa County* (Fresno, CA: Panorama West Books, 1986), 212

Company is one of the oldest in the region and the town's wharf played a pivotal role in handling large scale lumber and mill products. The city also played a lead role in agricultural expansion by shipping the Delta's fruits and vegetables to world markets.[31] Chinese and Italian gardeners leased land east of Antioch. Their produce supplied the short-lived coal-mining communities of Nortonville, Sommersville and Judsonville and was also shipped to San Francisco's markets.[32]

In the early 1900s, beaches and bootlegging were important aspects of Antioch's early identity and ties to the Delta. Oak Grove Beach was a popular gathering spot for Italians who held their Sons of Italy celebrations there. In 1919, the Eighteenth Amendment, commonly referred to as the Volstead Act, prohibited the manufacturing, sale and distribution of liquor. For many, the Act resulted in a money-making venture. Italians and other groups who had a tradition of winemaking built stills in their basements and barns and began producing and distributing illicit alcoholic beverages throughout the Delta.[33]

Antioch was also an important transportation and industrial hub during the first half of the 1900s. Passengers and freight were ferried on modern propeller-driven boats, with connections to Rio Vista, Stockton and Sacramento. The Jarvis brother established ship-building at Smith's Point prior to their plant becoming the Fulton Shipyards in 1924. During World War II, the navy commissioned twenty-seven vessels from Fulton.[34]

Taken together, these early transport-focused cities share an outward focus of supporting regional development and linkages to areas outside the Delta including transit to and from both the gold-bearing region, and to the emerging population centers of Sacramento and San Francisco. Over time, they would also help to establish the Delta as a destination for commercial, mainly agricultural development, although Antioch is an important exception to this "Delta rule." By contrast, other early towns were more focused on their own development and an internal delta identity. These early "legacy towns" were established along the northern riverbanks with residences and fields clustering near present-day Clarksburg, eastern Sutter Island, and north Grand Island.[35] As mentioned earlier, the south Delta offered settlers fewer attractive sites. The marginal lands south and west of Stockton suffered from a poor and insufficient water supply, and the southern Delta islands were lower in elevation and didn't possess sufficient tree-cover that settlers preferred.

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[31] Earl Hohlmayer, *Looking Back: Tales of Old Antioch and Other Places* (Visalia, CA: Jostens Printing and Publishing Division, 1991), 1-3
[32] Thompson, "Settlement Geography," 327.
[33] Hohlmayer, *Looking Back*, 149, 199.
[34] Emanuels, *California's Contra Costa County,* 219.
[35] Thompson, "Settlement Geography," 139-142.

Early Legacy Towns – Walnut Grove, Clarksburg & Courtland

Delta-oriented, or legacy towns, were established shortly after the first settlement in the region. The geographical location of Delta towns included a combination of favorable factors such as siting on natural levees, access to waterborne traffic, and acting as a trans-shipment point. These factors facilitated the establishment of steamboat landings, along with wharves and packing houses that often became the heart of the early business districts. Delta towns were also influenced by the changing configurations of levee construction, transportation technology and agricultural production. Over time, they developed distinct functions and cultural patterns linked to these developments. Delta-oriented towns initially benefitted from serving as collection and distribution centers. Over time, flooding, fire and competition from better located sites challenged existing towns. Shifting settlement patterns and new configurations emerged both between and within communities. Some towns were able to capitalize on the advantages of certain sites, while others declined. Today, interests in historic preservation and agritourism may bring new life to the Delta's legacy towns and offer new opportunities to farms and ranch lands.

Walnut Grove

In 1850, New York native John Wesley Sharp used the recently passed Federal Swamp and Overflow Act to acquire the land that would eventually become Walnut Grove. Sharp built a wharf to enhance the town's location and new settlers gradually arrived and expanded the settlement. Walnut Grove is the only river town south of Red Bluff to occupy both sides of the river. At first, Walnut Grove's location was well-suited to facilitate local travel. The town was initially connected by ferry until a bridge was built to connect the two commercial halves. In the late 1870s, the town added a hotel, covered wharf and warehouses and it became an important midway shipping point between Tyler and Andrus islands.[36] In the 1920s, the right bank (Clampett Tract) was the preferred location for the town's prosperous residents. Such clusters of homes were given the name "Asparagus Row" or belonging to members of the "pearistocracy." Over time, Walnut Grove boasted a diverse mix of commercial and cultural establishments including canneries, a theatre, and several European-style hotels.[37]

Walnut Grove's Chinese settlement was established in the mid-1870s, initially including residents from both the Sze Yup and Zhongshan districts of China's Guangdong Province. Walnut Grove's first Chinese settlement was built on stilts overhanging the Sacramento River. After several fires, the settlement was relocated to the landside of the town. By the early 1900s, Walnut Grove supported the largest Chinatown in the Delta comprised of two distinct

[36] Thompson, "Settlement Geography," 426-427.
[37] Pezzaglia, *Towns of the Sacramento River Delta*, 55-65; Dillon, *Delta Country*, 105.

residential groups that identified themselves along socio-linguistic lines. Hailing from different homeland districts, they spoke different dialects. This cultural cleavage was further reinforced by membership in voluntary associations or *tongs* which provided support for new immigrants and whose leaders often played influential roles in the community. In Walnut Grove, the Zhongshan outnumbered the Sze Yup in total population and registered 400 active members in their Bing Kong Tong. Each dialect group occupied separate areas of town, and when a fire erupted in 1915 destroying nearly 100 homes and businesses, the spilt between the two communities became solidified with the Zhongshan choosing to relocate and build a new Chinatown in Locke, one mile north of Walnut Grove.[38] The Sze Yup rebuilt Walnut Grove's Chinatown along with Japanese residents who created their own district just north of the Chinese settlement.

A second fire in 1937 destroyed much of Walnut Grove's Chinatown and today the majority of buildings in the Chinese district date from the post-1937 era. Several buildings represent blend of Chinese influence combined with the Art Moderne style that emerged in the 1930s. Building exteriors blend colorful Chinese embellishments with the curving forms and horizontal lines of the Modernist style. The Chinese Freemason Hall is a prominent landmark from the period, built on the site of a former joss house that was lost to fire. Other important landmarks include several businesses owned by Alex Brown and other family members, the Walnut Grove Buddhist Church, Kawamura's Barber Shop, and Hayashi's Market.[39] The following sites are listed on the National Register of Historic Places: the Walnut Grove Chinese-American District, the Walnut Grove Japanese-American District, the Walnut Grove Commercial/Residential District, and the Walnut Grove Gakuen Hall.[40] The Sacramento River Delta Historical Society in collaboration with the Walnut Grove Chamber of Commerce has produced a heritage walking tour of the town sights.[41]

Today, Walnut Grove has evolved into three recognizable sections. The main business section is located on the high ridge of the levee, facing Highway 160 that connects to Sacramento. The second and lower area behind the levee is the old town. It includes some commercial activities, and both historic Asian-American districts. The third area lies across the main bridge and includes a few services and stores, churches, and a recognizable "bedroom community."

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[38] Lawrence, et al, *Locke and the Sacramento Delta Towns*, 91.

[39] National Park Service, "Locke & Walnut Grove Historic Districts," accessed 31 January 2015, http://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/asia/1999/locke.htm. The Walnut Grove Buddhist Church website provides a concise history of church construction, the impact of EO 9066 on the community, and a list of past presidents and ministers, accessed 31 January, 2015, http://walnutgrovebc.org/wp/?page_id=18.

[40] The name on the register, an image, listing date, city or town associated with the historic place and geographic coordinates came be found at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Register_of_Historic_Places_listings_in_California.

[41] Walnut Grove Chamber of Commerce, "The Community of Walnut Grove," accessed 31 January 2015, http://www.walnutgrove.com/wgwalk.htm.

Clarksburg

Clarksburg, situated on the southern tail of Yolo County, was founded by Judge Robert Clark in 1849 (some sources say 1856). The town is centrally located between the Holland (Netherlands) Tract, the Lisbon District and Merritt Island. The people of Clarksburg were often referred to as "rim landers" because the town was built on a natural levee situated between Sutter Slough and Elk Slough. Many early residents also lived on houseboats or homes built on stilts. Large numbers of Azoreans Portuguese farmers and fishers settled in the Lisbon District. The Azoreans proved to be excellent fisher-folk, achieving commercial success in salmon fishing until the 1950s when fishing on the Sacramento River became highly regulated. Dairying was an important economic activity in the area with more than ten dairies supplying urban markets in Sacramento and San Francisco. Such developments helped to solidify specific groups to the area and in the case of the Azorean Portuguese, they eventually established their own schools near Clarksburg. Holland Union Gakuen, one of the few remaining Japanese language schools in the Delta, is also located in Clarksburg. Plans to preserve and redevelop this historic site are currently underway.[42]

In 1912, drainage of a large tract of land west of Clarksburg by the Netherlands Farms Company established the 25,000 acres of land that investors hoped would produce sugar beets. When the sugar tariff resulted in the collapse of the market, the investment group reorganized and added an additional 3,000 acres to complete and rename the newly developed land the "Holland Tract." In the 1920s, Clarksburg was considered a model town when the Holland Land Company took control of the reclamation district and subdivided 15,000 acres into smaller units. The new properties were sold to buyers who had been prescreened for their "agricultural ability and "civic responsibility."[43]

After 1920, sugar beets were introduced again to the area and became the area's primary crop. Early photographs show heaping mounds of beets at Clarksburg's "beet dump" in preparation for transfer onto barges. A sugar refinery was built in the mid-1930s. The "sugar beet factory" as it was locally known, processed local beets and those shipped from outside the area. The "beet factory" closed in 1993.

Recent surveys conducted in the region suggested that the Holland Tract would make a good wine growing region. It received recognition as a certified American Viticulture Area (AVA) in

[42] Kusic, Galen, "Holland Union Gakuen School in Clarksburg Approaching Restoration," *River New-Herald and Isleton Journal* (May 28, 2014), accessed 25 January 2015; *SRDHS Newsletter*, "Clarksburg," (June 2006), 26(1), 2-8, accessed 20 January 2015, http://www.srdhs.org/Pages/SRDHSNewsletters.aspx.
[43] Dillon, *Delta Country*, 106; Thompson, "Settlement Geography," 431.

1984 producing over 25 wine grape varietals. The Old Sugar Mill is currently being converted into a showcase facility for multiple wineries and related events.[44]

Courtland

London native, James V. Sims is credited with the founding of Courtland in 1870, naming the new town after his son. The Courtland wharf was important to fruit shipments from nearby pear ranches and after 1900, the town also benefited from the asparagus boom. Early photographs show a bustling community complete with social halls, grocery stores, a bank, a service station and the iconic Courtland Market, one of the most recognized buildings in town.[45]

The most northern Chinese settlement in the Delta is located in Courtland. It was established before 1870, located just upstream from the Courtland Wharf. Because of its unique "waterside" placement, the community was built on stilts adjacent to the levee, projecting out over the Sacramento River. A fire destroyed the Chinatown in 1879 and it was rebuilt only to be burned down again in 1930. The Chinese rebuilt once again, this time moving their community to the land-side of the levee on Courtland's north end.[46] Though small in size, Courtland's Chinatown served a large Chinese population, with many living on surrounding farms that used the settlement as their primary commercial center. Early maps of the town indicate that the Chinese quarter consisted of restaurants, grocery stores, lodging houses and a pool room.[47] One prominent Courtland native, Chauncey L. Chew, opened a general merchandise store in Chinatown dealing in dry goods, hardware and automotive parts. During the harvest season, he was a labor contractor for workers from the Bay Area and he was instrumental starting a Chinese school in Courtland.[48] Today, Courtland's small commercial center includes Chinese architecture and an outdoor museum featuring farming equipment from Chan's Diversified Farms. The town's Pear Fair is held in the summer and is a celebration of the annual Bartlett Pear harvest and the town's unique character and rural lifestyle. As previously mentioned, several Delta communities operated separate schools for Chinese and Japanese children including the Courtland Bates Oriental School.

Gold Rush Settlement

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[44] Pezzaglia, *Towns of the Sacramento River Delta*, 115-122; *SRDHS Newsletter*, "Pierson Reclamation District #551," (December 1998), 4, accessed 20 January 2015, http://www.srdhs.org/Pages/SRDHSNewsletters.aspx.
[45] Philip Pezzaglia, *Towns of the Sacramento River Delta* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2013), 93-110; Thompson, "Settlement Geography," 429.
[46] Minnick, *Samfow*, 178-179; Thompson, "Settlement Geography," 429; Tom Lawrence, B. Tom and the Chinese American Museum of Northern California, *Locke and the Sacramento Delta Towns* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2013), 21-22.
[47] Courtland, California. 1911. "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps," Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970. https://catalog.sjlibrary.org/wamvalidate?url=http%3A%2F%2F0-sanborn.umi.com.catalog.sjlibrary.org%3A80%2F (31 December 2014).
[48] Lawrence, et al, *Locke and the Sacramento Delta Towns*, 27.

During the early years of Gold Rush, settlement in the Delta was profoundly shaped by *site* and *situation*. The sites of several Delta settlements were determined based on the physical landscape and the unique environmental setting on which each town was built. In the Delta, fertile soils and high levees along with plentiful water and timber resources were key factors in the establishment of early settlements. Newcomers were also drawn to the Delta's geographical situation or a settlement's location relative to the surrounding area and regional population centers. The locations of the towns mentioned above offered accessibility including important crossroads and bridging centers for both overland and river transport routes.

The advantages of site and situation are not evenly distributed across the Delta region and therefore some locations were favored over others for settlement. Those areas with the right combination of resources and access became the focus of settlement in the post-Gold Rush era. The next phase of development in the Delta involved massive modification of the environment including the construction of hundreds of miles of levees. The reclamation of the Delta marshlands began in earnest as gold mining declined and the economic growth of the state became more focused on agriculture. The region, once a place of marginal commercial interest during the Gold Rush, faced enormous change thanks to the pace of rural development.

II. Impact of Agricultural Development - Ethnic Experience & Labor History in the Delta

By the mid-1850s, the Delta's nascent settlements, travel routes and transportation linkages enhanced the region's potential for agricultural production. In order to realize that potential, the physical landscape of the Delta would undergo a colossal transformation, turning 500,000 acres of marshland into one of the state's most productive agricultural areas. The details of this massive modification of the environment are covered in a separate Delta Narrative. Draining the Delta's wetlands and making the land suitable for crop production required a labor force to construct levees, cut drainage ditches, clear the land, and break-up the sod for cultivation. The building of levees was a monumental undertaking, requiring the backbreaking labor of new immigrants.

The transformation of the Delta into cultivatable fields and the subsequent planting, harvesting and processing of crops depended upon vast numbers of mobile, seasonal, and inexpensive workers. The Chinese filled early demand in the fields, but with the impact of the Chinese exclusion laws in the late 1800s, they were replaced by Japanese immigrants. By the 1920s, add Filipinos and Mexican Braceros. While the labor was welcome and necessary for the success of agribusiness, permanent settlement by diverse ethnic groups was not. Additional newcomers from Europe did not face the same levels of discrimination, which influenced the communities they built in the Delta. The stories of ethnic settlement and place-making are detailed below and generally follow the sequence of their arrival in the region. Community

vignettes are also included to illustrate the significant contributions that diverse ethnic groups made in this rural refuge and the varieties of ethnic experience in the Delta.

Chinese Settlement in the Delta

The first newcomers to arrive on the scene were Chinese laborers, many recently departed from California's mining districts or from construction work on the Transcontinental Railroad. This first phase of reclamation, from the early 1850s to the early 1880s, coincided with the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869, which sent thousands of Chinese laborers into the workforce.[49] In rural northern California, a population shift of Chinese was well underway with concentrations of settlers relocating to townships along the Delta portion of the Sacramento River. Stockton's early Chinatowns, like those of Sacramento, would also serve as important recruitment centers for the next stage of development in the Delta.

As the gateway to the southern Mother Lode, Stockton was an important early destination for large numbers of Chinese laborers looking for work. Commonly referred to as *Sam Fow* or "third city" in the Cantonese dialect, Stockton supported three unique Chinatowns that reflected the diverse backgrounds of Chinese settlers. The Zhongshan (formerly known as Heungshan or Xiangshan) hailed from the east banks of the Pearl River Delta (Guangdong Province) and dominated the Channel Street enclave, Stockton's first Chinese settlement. The location of the settlement was ideal for meeting incoming and outgoing vessels at the docks, and, over time, the enclave featured wood-framed hotels, restaurants and a joss temple. The Zhongshan shared their neighborhood with other early immigrant groups including Germans who built their social institutions adjacent to the Chinese quarter. A second Chinese enclave was established south of the Channel Street quarter on Washington Street between Eldorado and Hunter Streets. Recently arrived Sze Yup from Guangdon's Toishan District (Xinhui, Taishan, Kaiping and Enping) settled in the Washington Street area. In addition to coming from different areas of China, the new residents spoke a different dialect than their Zhongshan counterparts. The Washington enclave also developed a multicultural character that included recent immigrant arrivals from northern Italy. A third settlement developed along the south bank of Mormon Slough. Initially starting as a squatter settlement for Chinese fisherman, it soon grew into a thriving commercial center with truck farms, laundries, and fish-drying services.[50]

Chinese Contributions to Reclamation

[49] Sucheng Chan, *This Bitter-Sweet Soil: The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 165-167.
[50] Sylvia Sun Minnick, *Samfow: The San Joaquin Chinese Legacy* (Fresno: Panorama, 1988), 35-52.

While the contributions of Chinese immigrants in mining and railroad construction are widely known, their role in the development of rural California and reclamation of the Delta is not. By 1860, Chinese were already engaged in a range of occupations in rural California, often in support of mining activities. In Sacramento and San Joaquin counties for example, diverse occupations included laundrymen, cooks, servants, and truck farming. By 1870, Chinese immigrants earned a living in light manufacturing or, agriculture and were also hired as common laborers to construct and maintain the levees, roads, ditches and bridges in the Delta.[51]

Initially, individual Delta landowners were the first to undertake reclamation projects. These early efforts included small-scale projects in select areas. In 1861, a new policy of reclamation was adopted, which gave the state responsibility for projects. During this period of state control, reclamation districts formed by local landowners were created and acreage limits were imposed on individual landowners. By 1868, reclamation matters were transferred to county governments and the acreage limits were dropped. The removal of acreage controls encouraged land agents and corporations funded with outside capital to secure large tracts of swamp land in the Delta.[52] These developments had implications for the size and skill of the labor force that would need to be mobilized to pursue reclamation projects.

As mentioned earlier, the Chinese immigrated to California from Guangdong Province in southern China. The Zhongshan and Sze Yup Chinese immigrants were representative of unique village districts in Pearl River Delta, a region that shares similar characteristics with California's Delta environment. Even though California-bound immigrants were divided by language, with each group speaking a native regional dialect that was unintelligible to the other, they likely shared a common knowledge of and experience with agricultural production in the Chinese countryside.[53] The amazing skill and determination of Chinese laborers had already been demonstrated by their work on the Transcontinental Railroad and in the California mines. The Chinese work ethic, when combined with their familiarity of delta environments, provided the perfect opportunity for land developers in the California Delta to launch large-scale reclamation projects. Both individual landowners and land-reclamation corporations utilized a system of contract labor to hire Chinese laborers. The employer negotiated directly with Chinese bosses who were skillful middlemen able to connect labor supply with labor demand. Their entrepreneurial services included putting together work crews, providing transportation, supplying room and board, and overseeing the general working conditions and

[51] Sucheng Chan, "Chinese Livelihood in Rural California: The Impact of Economic Change, 1860-1880," *Pacific Historical Review* 53 (1984): 283-290.
[52] Thompson, "Settlement Geography," 196-198.
[53] Daniel D. Arreola, "The Chinese Role in the Making of the Early Cultural Landscape of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta," *California Geographer* 15 (1975): 3-9.

terms of employment. In 1869, the numbers of unemployed railroad workers and recent immigrants in Stockton were growing, thus many were willing to follow a Chinese boss who found them work and spoke their dialect.

Delta landowner Reuben Kercheval is thought to be the first person to hire Chinese laborers for swamp land reclamation. After a brief stint in the gold country, Kercheval joined his uncle who had previously settled in Courtland and selected a 320 acre tract on the northern edge of Grand Island. Kercheval hired a work crew consisting of Chinese, Hawaiians and California Indians. They constructed twelve miles of levees measuring thirteen feet at the base and three feet across.[54] Like Kercheval, Pietre Justus van Loben Sels (also known as P. J.) settled in the Delta in the mid-1870s. Van Loben Sels was put in charge of reclaiming several thousand acres owned by the San Francisco Savings Union following his marriage to the daughter of the bank's president. He used a Chinese labor contractor to obtain levee builders. The work crew hired their own cooks, constructed their own makeshift camps and tended to the horses that were often used for reclamation projects.[55] Before the introduction of dredgers and mechanical earth-moving equipment, Chinese laborers removed peat soils using hand tools and wheelbarrows.[56] They are also credited with the invention of "tule shoes" which were large ski-like woven mats that were attached to the horses' hoofs to prevent them from sinking or getting bogged down in the mud.[57]

The most extensive use of Chinese labor to reclaim delta lands is associated with the Tide Land Reclamation Company. The elimination of acreage limits in 1868 prompted George D. Roberts, President of the Tide Land Reclamation Company, to acquire large tracts of land. On average, Chinese laborers were paid a dollar a day. Profits gained from Chinese labor on the 40,000 acres of reclaimed land owned by the company are estimated between $1,000,000 and $2,000,000.[58] Overall, the Chinese are estimated to have reclaimed at least 88,000 acres of Delta land between 1860 and 1880.[59] This is an area roughly equivalent to 80,000 football fields, or more than twice the area of the present-day City of Stockton. Total Delta restoration by the Chinese is estimated to be 538,000 acres of agricultural land, or approximately 16 percent.

Chinese Tenant Farmers and Agricultural Specialization in the Delta

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[54] Chan, *Bitter-Sweet Soil,* 176.
[55] Chan, *Bitter-Sweet Soil,* 177.
[56] Thompson, "Settlement Geography," 260-261.
[57] Thompson, "Settlement Geography," 262-263.
[58] Chan, *Bitter-Sweet Soil,* 178-185.
[59] Ann F. Scheuring, "From Many Lands: Japanese, Chinese, German, Basque—the Story of California Agriculture is the Story of Its Many Ethnic Groups," *California Farmer* 26(8):35.

By 1870, reclamation of the Delta swamp lands was largely complete and thousands of acres were diked and drained by intricate systems of levees, floodgates and flumes. Farm tenancy, a longtime practice by Chinese settlers in the Delta since the early 1860s, became more pronounced. Land tenancy and sharecropping became institutionalized in the region because Delta farmers had never shown much interest in subdividing and selling reclaimed lands and they had little desire to live in the Delta.[60] Under the crop share system, owners selected the crops to be grown, while the tenant grew the crops on contract and received a share of the crop. Over time, the system resulted in a high degree of agricultural specialization with each crop linked to a particular group of immigrant farmers. Early on, the Chinese were the principal tenant farmers in the Delta specializing in orchard work, and raising potatoes and onions. The pattern of crop specialization was especially pronounced among the two Chinese immigrant groups. The Zhongshan followed a familiar practice from their South China homeland district and became orchard workers in the northern Delta region stretching from Courtland to Isleton. Further downstream near Rio Vista, the Sze Yup concentrated their efforts on potato and onion farming. Sze Yup tenants also maintained potato patches on islands in the south Delta as soon as the land was ready for cultivation. Even before land reclamation was complete, they farmed land along the San Joaquin River side of Roberts Island and in areas near Rough and Ready Island just west of the Stockton harbor.[61]

By 1880, the Chinese are estimated to have supplied one-third of the state's agricultural workforce. In large measure, they are credited with transforming California from wheat and ranching to an agricultural cornucopia of diversified crops. It has been suggested that this massive makeover of the state's agricultural landscape would not have been possible, and certainly delayed by decades, if not for the ingenuity and specialized skills of Chinese immigrants.[62] The Chinese impact in the Delta is reflected in the changing pattern and diversity of crops through time. In the early period (1860-79), nearly fifty percent of farms operated by Chinese tenants focused on fruit and vegetable cultivation. Grain and hay accounted for sixteen percent of farm production and potatoes, onions and beans were each grown on only five percent of farms. For the next two decades, potato production continued to increase, but the percentage of vegetable and fruit growing along with hay, declined.[63]

These shifting production numbers reflect larger geographical patterns in Chinese tenant farming and settlement in the region. In the early years, their efforts were focused on the narrow "fruit belt" found along the banks of the Sacramento River. Here, the fertile soils of the

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[60] George Chu, "The Chinese Settlement in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, 1860-1960," *California Historical Quarterly* 49 (March 1970): 25-28.
[61] Arreola, "Chinese Role," 8-9; Minnick, *Samfow*, 69-70.
[62] Carey McWilliams, *Brothers Under the Skin* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1946), 67-70.
[63] Chan, *Bitter-Sweet Soil,* 195, Table 18.

natural levees supported stone fruit orchards until pear cultivation was found to be better adapted to the local soil conditions. By contrast, the peat islands located in the central and southern portions of the Delta have low natural levees and much of the land was at or below sea level and thus subject to twice daily tidal inundation. These conditions were unsuitable for orchard crops, but highly conducive to potato and onion cultivation.[64] Potato farming was found to be a lucrative endeavor for the Delta Chinese. Sucheng Chan's detailed analysis of the region's agricultural manuscript censuses shows that over one-third of Chinese farmers in the Delta were producing 15,000 bushels (375 tons) of potatoes in 1880. A Chinese tenant farmer named Ah Yet was one of the largest growers, producing 40,000 bushels (1000 tons) on 250 acres of land.[65] Chinese immigrants in the Delta became specialists in potato farming because they were able to succeed where others could not. Chinese were considered "tule farmers" a name given to tenants who farmed the back swamps located in the center of islands in the south Delta. Working behind the levees, the rich peat soils could produce a double-crop of potato plantings in February and June.[66] The potato crop was prone to disease that was alleviated through crop rotation. As a result, Chinese tenants had to move from one field to another to produce a healthy crop. While this would be considered a burden by most farm owners, Chinese settlers who were prevented from owning land were willing to put up with the physical hardships of tule farming because of the financial rewards.[67]

In the late 1890s, Chinese played a major role in the success of the Delta's asparagus crop. Although the Chinese were not familiar with the new crop, they soon became experts and the number of laborers swelled in the asparagus fields. In 1894, the Hickmott Company built the first "gras," (asparagus) cannery on Bouldin Island and Chinese became the primary workforce in the new plant. During the canning season from mid-March to mid-June, hundreds of Chinese workers migrated to the island's canneries, turning out over 600 cases of canned asparagus every day. To accommodate the asparagus boom, new canneries were eventually built in Isleton, Walnut Grove, and Courtland and Chinese were involved in every aspect of production, from cultivation to canning. By the 1920s, Chinese entrepreneurs had become cannery owners, operating two major sites in Isleton, the Bayside Canning Company and the National Cannery. The Chinese-owned canneries specialized in asparagus, tomatoes and fruit and in later years they supported a diverse work force of Italian, Portuguese and Japanese workers.[68]

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[64] Chan, *Bitter-Sweet Soil,* 195-196.
[65] Chan, *Bitter-Sweet Soil,* 212-213.
[66] John Thompson, "Early Reclamation and Abandonment of the Central Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta," *Sacramento History Journal* 6 (2006): 52.
[67] Chan, *Bitter-Sweet Soil,* 223-224.
[68] Minnick, *Samfow,* 84-86.

Exclusion, Economic Growth and Newcomers

Chinese laborers, tenant farmers and cannery workers were critical to the early development of the Delta and the region's agricultural economy and emerging towns. They played a pivotal role in land reclamation and agriculture. Their enormous contribution paved the way for future economic development and settlement in the region.

In the early 1880s, exclusionary laws and policies primarily directed towards Chinese, along with new developments in agriculture, led to an increasing demand for agricultural workers. The result was the widespread migration and settlement of new immigrants representing ethnic groups from Asia and Europe. During the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, Japanese, Portuguese, Italian, Filipino and Sikh newcomers became important contributors to the Delta's rural landscape and economy.

The California Legislature and California Supreme Court were among the first to enact anti-Chinese laws. In 1852, the Foreign Miner's Tax was expanded to target the Chinese. Two years later, the state court prohibited the Chinese from testifying against whites, and by 1860 they were barred from public schools in California. In 1872, the California Legislature barred Chinese from owning real estate and by 1879 they were also excluded from employment in state and local public works projects. Continuous pressure by anti-Chinese organizations and labor unions led the United States Congress to pass the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. For the first time in America's history, the government excluded a specific group based on nationality or race. The new law barred Chinese laborers from immigrating for ten years. In 1888, Congress passed the Scott Act, which barred Chinese laborers from re-entering the United States. Taken together the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Scott Act effectively immobilized the Chinese community and froze them in place.[69] Many who supported the laws hoped that it would raise wages; however, the unintended outcome in California was a labor shortage, especially in the Delta where the economy was increasingly dependent on an experienced agricultural workforce. The impact of anti-Chinese legislation excluded new Chinese immigration, and over time, restricted the agricultural labor supply and prevented economic growth in the Delta's agricultural sector. These exclusionary laws created a labor vacuum in the region and farm operators turned to other immigrant groups to fill the void. By the 1890s, newcomers were drawn to the Delta from all corners of the globe including northern Italians, Portuguese from the Azores Islands and Sikhs from the Punjab region of northern India. Furthermore, and despite anti-Asian sentiment, Japanese and Filipinos were also among the new arrivals. As exclusionary laws decreased the supply of agricultural workers, labor became

[69] California Department of Parks and Recreation, *Five Views: An Ethnic Sites Survey for California* (Sacramento: Office of Historic Preservation, 1988), 116-117.

more essential for Delta farmers who were ramping-up agricultural production and investing in new crops like asparagus and sugar beets, resulting in increased labor demand.

Building Communities & Second Wave Settlement

Levee construction and tenant farming had led a large number of Chinese to the Delta and farming convinced many to stay. Due to the growing number of Chinese residents in the region and the need to provide them with goods and services, Chinatowns were founded from Freeport to Rio Vista. By 1880, crop specialization resulted in localized concentrations of Chinese in the Delta. The Zhongshan settled along the Sacramento River in the "fruit belt" near Courtland, while the Sze Yup "potato kings" established their communities down river near Rio Vista.[70] Like the Chinese, newcomers also found their niche in the Delta. While Chinese populations were declining in the rest of the state, the Delta provided a unique refuge where they were able to sustain livelihoods and rural enclaves. The diversification of crops in the Delta meant that Chinese men could work in farming in a variety of crops throughout the year. Weeding, pruning, harvesting, as well as repair work on the farm and on the levees gave them ample work and allowed Chinese residents to stay in the region. Chinese populations in Delta counties like San Joaquin and Contra Costa actually increased significantly after 1900. Cannery work also provided Chinese with long-term employment. They did much of the "floor work" usually reserved for white women including cutting, pitting and sorting fruit. Many were also employed in Isleton's large asparagus processing plants where they often earned higher wages than other agricultural workers, which allowed some to settle in relatively stable communities.[71]

Locke – America's Rural Chinese-American Community

As previously mentioned, Chinese laborers from the Zhongshan district established the town of Locke in the early 20th century. The new settlers were adult male immigrants who had been recently displaced when fire devastated their community in nearby Walnut Grove. The town is named for local pear farmer, George Locke who leased the new residents nine acres of land just north of Walnut Grove to build their new community.[72]

The Locke Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971, is the most complete example of Chinese-American rural community in the United States. The town itself has a unique layout with some of the buildings having two street level entrances; one at the top

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[70] Arreola, "Chinese Role," 9.

[71] Richard Steven Street, *Beasts of the Field: A Narrative History of California Farmworkers, 1769-1913* (Stanford University Press, 2004): 401. The author provides a detailed account of asparagus processing and working conditions in canneries. See notes on page 792.

[72] National Park Service, "Locke & Walnut Grove Historic Districts," accessed 31 January 2015, http://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/asia/1999/locke.htm.

of the levee and the other at the base. Narrow wooden alleys connect the town's three main streets with River and Main Streets constituting the commercial core. As was typical of all Chinatowns in the Delta, the Chinese built two-story wooden-frame buildings. The second floor was often the residence and the first story was the store. Locke was a lively hub of activity in the 1920s, supporting a permanent population of around six-hundred residents. On the weekends, the population would swell closer to a thousand with field workers coming into town from the surrounding agricultural camps. Locke had a post office, a flour mill, a movie theater, restaurants, speakeasies, opium dens, and a gambling house. Today, the town's packing shed is a boathouse and the Dai Loy Museum is housed in the former gambling hall. One of the more famous destinations is "Al the Wop's" saloon and steakhouse where visitors can mingle with residents and sample the local cuisine. Locke is also home to the Chinese School, established in 1915. The building was funded by the Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party) and was originally used as a meeting place for Kuomintang members. A bust commemorating the Chinese revolutionary leader, Dr. Sun Yat-sen is located in front of the school.[73]

Japanese Contributions to the Delta

Changing economic and political conditions, military conscription and the enticement by emigration companies encouraged young Japanese men to leave rural southern Japan for America. Many early immigrants worked in Hawaii's sugar and pineapple plantations before coming to the mainland, settling primarily in West Coast regions. Entering America through Pacific Rim ports like San Francisco, first generation *Issei* men found employment opportunities in agriculture throughout the state.[74] Many started out as field hands, eventually becoming *keiyaku-nin* or a field foreman who supervised crews and helped to ensure the quality of the harvest.

Over time, a *keiyaku-nin* was able to utilize their position to secure long-term leases, grow high-value crops and earn a handsome profit. By the turn of the century, Japanese farmers were an important element of California's agricultural economy. One of the most celebrated of all *keiyaku-nin* to become a farmer was Kinji Ushijima, also known as George Shima. Shima worked as a field hand near Stockton and after a number of years eventually became a successful *keiyaku-nin* and was soon after able to purchase fifteen acres of unimproved lowlands in the Delta. Once the land was reclaimed, he planted potatoes, asparagus, and onions. The potato crop produced high yields in the rich peat soil, earning Shima enough profit

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[73] Jane Wolff, *Delta Primer: A Field Guide to the California Delta* (San Francisco, CA: William Stout Publishers, 2003), 150-151; Lawrence, et al, *Locke and the Sacramento Delta Towns*, 41-71; Pezzaglia, *Towns of the Sacramento River Delta*, 75-84.

[74] Wayne Maeda, *Changing Dreams and Treasured Memories* (Sacramento, CA: Sacramento Japanese American Citizens League, 2000), 40-43.

to expand his farming operation. With the help of an army of laborers, he eventually reclaimed more than 100,000 acres in the Delta and was commonly referred to in the press as the Potato King.[75] The agricultural expansion that Shima was able to achieve was built on the labor of six-hundred multinational workers. Approximately fifty percent were Japanese, thirty percent East Indian/Sikh, and twenty percent Mexican and other groups. These ethnic immigrant farm laborers lived in Shima's camps. In the early 1900s, twelve camps were constructed on Bacon Island, a primary location of Shima's farming ventures. The structures are still intact and constitute the Bacon Island Rural Historic District. In 1993, the district became eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) listing at the state level.[76]

While Shima is arguably the most famous Japanese farmer in the Delta, and perhaps in the state, his experience represents a path many Japanese took into agriculture. Between 1900 and 1910, many moved into farming in great numbers and California's Japanese population expanded from 10,151 to 41,356. At that time, more than half of all Japanese in the United States lived in California. By 1920, the number of Japanese in the state climbed to nearly 72,000 or sixty-five percent of the total in the United States.[77] In Sacramento and San Joaquin counties, the number of Japanese foreign born was 5,800 and 4,345 respectively, among the highest in the Central Valley.[78]

In addition to farming, Japanese also filled the labor demand in the new canneries being built in the Delta. They often settled within existing Chinatowns before establishing their own sections of town. Over time, towns like Walnut Grove and Isleton became commercial, religious and cultural hubs for growing numbers of Japanese residents in the Delta. The growing population of Japanese immigrants, first as laborers and then as successful commercial farmers, stimulated an anti-Japanese nativist movement in California. Japanese immigrants were seen as incapable of assimilation and so numerous that they had the potential to overrun the state. To appease Californians who were calling for an end to Japanese immigration, a Gentlemen's Agreement (1907) was reached between the United States and the Japanese government whereby Japan would stop issuing passports for immigration to the U.S. Since the agreement did not apply to women, the result was an increase, rather than a decrease of the Japanese population in California.

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[75] California Department of Parks and Recreation, *Five Views,* 164; Richard Steven Street, *Beasts of the Field,* 514-516.
[76] Cultural Studies Office - Division of Environmental Analysis, "A Historical Context and Archaeological Research Design for Work Camp Properties in California" (California Department of Transportation, 2013), 70.
[77] Maeda, *Changing Dreams and Treasured Memories*, 41.
[78] Allyn Campbell Loosley, "Foreign Born Population of California, 1848-1920," thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1927, 74-75.

In order to circumvent the anti-immigration laws, Japanese immigrants developed a picture bride system that allowed Japanese men in the United States to find wives from overseas in order to start families. A matchmaker in Japan would "match" the photo-portraits of Japanese bachelors in the United States to potential brides in Japan. Once the matchmaker found a suitable match, they were married and the bride is sent on a one-way trip to start her new family life in the United States. The picture bride system had precedent in Japan where arranged marriages were common and matches were based on careful consideration of socioeconomic status and family background. In America, the system did not always work in the same way. Upon arrival, brides often found out that the young looking photo of her bachelor husband was in reality a much older man. Newly arrived picture brides lacked the resources to make the return trip back to Japan and doing so would have brought shame to her family. The picture bride system resulted in considerable social mobility as well as family formation for the Japanese community.[79]

Japanese farmers are credited with high-quality standards and effective practices that created California's successful large-scale agricultural operations. Despite their work ethic and many contributions, the Japanese were criticized for their success in agriculture and their spatial concentration in rural California made them targets of discriminatory actions. As their numbers increased, there was concern that they were controlling the best farmland in the state. A map of Oriental Land Occupation, produced in 1920 showed that a high concentration of land in Northern California, and especially in the Delta, was owned or leased by Asian and South Asian Americans (Chinese, Japanese and Hindus). That same year, California law prohibited Japanese from owning or leasing land. The "Oriental Land" map provided a snapshot of the multiethnic character of the Central Valley, although the distribution of other immigrants groups including Italians and Portuguese was not included on the map, the assumption being that the clustering of European ethnic farmers was not a concern.[80]

Emboldened by anti-Japanese agitation, a state political code was amended in 1921 to allow for the establishment of separate schools for Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and Mongolian children. Such discriminatory policies were common in Delta school districts. Courtland, Isleton and Walnut Grove each practiced de facto segregation prior to the adoption of state sponsored segregation in 1921. Some California communities found ways to limit discriminatory school measures, but that was not the case for the children of Asian families in Delta communities. Separate schools for Chinese and Japanese children in the communities listed above remained in operation until the start of World War II.[81] The Courtland Bates Oriental School site was

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[79] California Department of Parks and Recreation, *Five Views,* 162-163.
[80] Robin Datel, "Picturing the Central Valley through Maps," in *Picturing California's Other Landscape: The Great Central Valley* (Berkeley, CA: Heydey Books, 1999), 100.
[81] Minnick, *Samfow*, 265-266.

converted into an elementary school while the former sites in Walnut Grove and Isleton are currently vacant.[82]

Japanese fought against discrimination and sought social justice and economic equality on many levels. Japanese farmworkers routinely organized work stoppages just before harvest. Throughout the state, they repeatedly walked off the job and earned a reputation for being disloyal and cocky. Landowners, who had initially welcomed Japanese farmworkers to replace Chinese workers, now strongly opposed them and sought to recruit their replacement. By the 1930s, Filipino field workers outnumbered their Japanese counterparts.[83]

Executive Order 9066 (EO 9066), issued February 19, 1942, was the most widespread discriminatory act perpetuated on Japanese Americans. Enforcement of EO 9066, led to the forced relocation and incarceration of more than 110,000 people of Japanese ancestry, the majority of whom lived on the West Coast. Fairgrounds, labor camps and rodeo grounds throughout California's Central Valley were converted into temporary assembly centers, including the Stockton fairgrounds, where Japanese-Americans awaited relocation to large permanent concentration camps being built in the interior desert and swamp regions of the United States. In spring 1942, Japanese families living throughout the Delta were evacuated to assembly centers and in some cases sent directly to the camps. For example, *Issei* and *Nisei* who were living in the Clarksburg area were forced to board trucks in Freeport and were then sent directly to the Tule Lake facility in northeastern California. Others were assembled in Courtland and sent by train to the assembly center in Turlock, eventually ending up at the Gila River camp in Arizona. Many Japanese-Americans lost their homes, their land and their family possessions. Some eventually returned to the Delta; most did not. Walnut Grove's Japanese community fared better than some because the local bank honored loans and local people took care of their property during internment.[84]

Isleton

Mexican War veteran, Joseph Poole founded Isleton in 1874. By 1880, he had added a drugstore, a harness shop, a hotel and a livery stable. He also built a landing and a wharf, and also served as the town's postmaster. Isleton has experienced cycles of boom-and-bust including a short-lived sugar beet processing plant. Once the Southern Railroad arrived, the town began to prosper with the coming of the asparagus boom and the establishment of three large canneries during the 1920s and 1930s. The canneries needed a large labor force so workers fueled Isleton's commercial expansion. Asian cannery workers made up a large portion

[82] California Department of Parks and Recreation, *Five Views*, 170-171, 96.
[83] Sucheng Chan, *Asian Californians* (San Francisco: MTL/Boyd & Fraser, 1991), 81-62.
[84] Richard Dillon, *Delta Country* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1982), 106; Maeda, *Changing Dreams and Treasured Memories*, 187.

of the workforce and overtime established their own residential sections of town. The Chinese section included gambling houses, a notions store and an Oriental School, while the Japanese area featured an eclectic mix of hotels, pool halls, fish markets, a laundry and a movie hall. Isleton's lively Japantown also attracted touring *Kabuki* groups and *sumo* wrestlers.[85] The two distinct ethnic commercial districts share Isleton's Main Street and in 1991, both were added to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The two block area includes over fifty buildings the majority of which are included in the NRHP's designation. This large number of historical structures, as well as the architectural style of the buildings, especially the pressed tin siding, adds to the uniqueness of Isleton's multi-ethnic Asian streetscape. In recognition of the town's unique Asian heritage, the Isleton Asian Celebration (formerly Chinese New Year) is held on the first Saturday of March.

Asparagus is closely connected to the Delta region where it was first planted in 1852. By the early 1900s, trainloads of asparagus were headed east and the market expanded considerably in California. The Delta region, and the Isleton area in particular, has the ideal combination of soil (high organic matter and slightly saline) and sun – not too hot - that is perfect for asparagus production.[86] In 1906, the Bayside Cannery was founded in Isleton by Sai Yen Chew. His son, Thomas Foon Chew, took over the operation after his father's death and developed a method for canning asparagus. By the early 1930s, the business was the third largest cannery in the world, earning Chew the title of "Asparagus King."[87]

New Atlantic and Pacific Immigration to the Delta

Italian Migration and Settlement

Southern Europeans began arriving in large numbers in the late 1880s, just in time to lessen the labor crisis created by the anti-Chinese movement. Northern Italians from the regions of Liguria, Lombardia, and Toscana along with Portuguese from the Azores Islands worked for fellow countrymen who acted as employment brokers or padrones. Rural ethnic enclaves often resulted from this system since padrones connected farmworkers to landowners in specific agricultural districts and new immigrants preferred to stick together.[88] This second-wave of

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[85] Thompson, "Settlement Geography," 430; Dillon, *Delta Country*, 108-109; Isleton, California. 1925. "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps," Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970. https://catalog.sjlibrary.org/wamvalidate?url=http%3A%2F%2F0-sanborn.umi.com.catalog.sjlibrary.org%3A80%2F

[86] Paul F. Starrs and Peter Goin, *Field Guide to California Agriculture* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2010), 274.

[87] Lawrence, et al, *Locke and the Sacramento Delta Towns*, 117, 121.

[88] Gunter Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor: Padrones and Immigrant Workers in the North American West, 1880-1930* (Cambridge: University Press, 2000), 2-3; Hans Christian Palmer, "Italian Immigration and the Development of California Agriculture," dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1965, 141-155; Alvin Ray Graves,

migration from Europe was not unique to California; however, the rural destinations they selected, coupled with the agricultural activities in the Delta, created opportunities that were not found elsewhere. While their countrymen held factory jobs in the East and Midwest, California provided opportunities to work in an expanding agricultural sector.

Italians first entered California during the 1850s as a result of the impact of the Gold Rush. Examples of early pioneers include Domenico Ghirardelli, founder of Ghirardelli Chocolate who arrived in 1849 by way of Peru. Ghirardelli amassed his fortune selling sweets and other goods to miners. His business venture began in Stockton and he eventually moved to San Francisco after a fire destroyed his shop. The Italian population grew rapidly during the next several decades and by 1890 they had become numerically significant in the state. Most notable was their concentration in the northern half of the state.[89]

By 1900, Italian settlement grew from two initial core areas, centered in the Sierra Nevada and Bay Area, to a secondary zone of valley districts including San Joaquin County. As their numbers increased, they played a central role in commercialized agriculture and food-processing, and distinguished themselves as market gardeners and truck farmers in the Central Valley.[90] In the Delta region, they clustered near Stockton and in the north Delta community of Freeport, which both provided a market for their produce. For example, Luigi Paravagna, a Genoese from Rapallo (near Genoa) arrived in San Francisco in 1849. He subsequently moved to the Delta, eventually becoming a seed and vegetable grower in Freeport. Immigrant letters telling of great opportunity in America convinced Joseph Papini to join family members in the Freeport area. He along with his uncle Giuseppe Gastaldi worked in the "Italian Gardens" and then sold their produce in Sacramento. Truck farmers grew a variety of crops throughout the year in order to maintain an ongoing cash flow. They introduced new varieties of Mediterranean crops from their Italian homelands resulting in the rich diversity of produce that the region is known for today. Italians led the way in the cultivation of olives, olive oil production and the consumption of olive oil, which has always been a key ingredient in Italian cooking.[91] Italian immigrants were also known to maintain orchards and dairy herds near Freeport and Clarksburg.[92] Some Italians also attempted to raise silkworms, which was a

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"Immigrants in Agriculture: The Portuguese Californians, 1850s-1970s," dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1977, 50-62.

[89] Teri Ann Bengiveno, "California Italian American Project – Stockton, CA," accessed 22 January 2015, http://www.aiha-wrc.org/CIAP/stockton/stockton.html

[90] Jennifer J. Helzer, "The Italian Ethnic Substrate in Northern California: Cultural Transfer and Regional Identity," dissertation, University of Texas, Austin, 1998, 45, 48-49.

[91] Ralph A. Clark, *Italians of San Joaquin County* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2014), 92.

[92] John Thompson, "How the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta was Settled," *Pacific Historian* 3:3 (August 1959), 55.

common occupation in their homeland.[93] Italian gardens often required irrigation, especially during the summer drought season. An "Italian Windmill" was therefore a common sight on early Italian homesteads because so many Italian truck farmers used them to irrigate their crops. These wooden windmills were built by the Davis Regulating Windmill Company of Stockton.[94]

Early market gardeners often lacked the required capital needed to own property, so they rented land, often forming partnerships with others from the same region of Italy. They had a strong preference for hiring workers from their home districts and over time, specific northern Italian regional groups like the Toscani and Genoese came to dominate different aspects of market gardening and distribution. Italians also worked as field laborers and cannery workers throughout the state. Recognizing the potential of new refrigeration and other food preservation technologies, some Italian entrepreneurs shifted to highly mechanized large-scale farming.[95] The ability to invest in such operations was supported by the Bank of Italy which later became the Bank of America. The bank was established by Amadeo Peter "A. P." Giannini, whose initial success in banking was tied to making small loans to Italians. He created a network of branch banks throughout the state, including one in Stockton.[96]

Northern Italians predominated in Northern California. In addition to their agricultural knowledge, many were highly skilled in the building trades--talents that served them well in new environments. Once the first Italian pioneers were in place, they sent for family members and encouraged friends from their native villages to join them. Over time, family ties and village clustering became the building blocks of permanent communities. Nowhere was the connection between Italian roots and California regions stronger than in state's agricultural sector. Many Italian immigrants were skilled agriculturalists in their homeland and their knowledge and skills were well-adapted to the familiar environments they encountered in the San Joaquin Valley. Italians dominated the market in a few key crops. The Solari family, for example, was among the first to establish successful cherry and plum ranches. Cherry-growing had been an important crop in Italy, which led the world in exports in the early 1900s. The Solaris were also instrumental in building ties among area farmers with the creation of the San Joaquin Cherry Growers organization (1935). Italians were among the largest producers in the county and they developed important value-added packaging, as well as marketing methods

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[93] Bruce Pierini, "Italian History and Demographics of the Greater Sacramento Area, 1850-1970," A Report for the Sacramento History Center's Sacramento Ethnic Communities Survey (Sacramento, CA: Sacramento Museum and History Division, 1984), 44-45, 99-100.
[94] Clark, *Italians of San Joaquin County*, 8, 120.
[95] Paola Sensi-Isolani and Phylis Cancilla Martinelli, eds., *Struggle and Success: An Anthology of the Italian Immigrant Experience in California* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1993), 78.
[96] Felice Bonadio, "A.P. Giannini and the Bank of Italy: California's Mixed Multitudes," in Paola Sensi-Isolani and Phylis Cancilla Martinelli, eds., *Struggle and Success,* 107-109.

like the adoption of fruit labels. Brightly colored growers labels were affixed to all shipping containers and often included Italian surnames along with the locations of production (Linden, Stockton, Lodi and San Joaquin). Both the people and the place became synonymous with the production of high quality produce.[97] Tomatoes were another important crop in the Stockton area. The Cortopassis and Lagorias began producing canned tomatoes and tomato products in the 1940s. Italian families were also pioneers in farm machinery like the mechanized tomato harvester. They also owned and operated many of Stockton's early grocery stores and delis procuring much of their produce from Italian wholesalers.[98]

Italian clubs and organizations also helped Italian immigrants to establish social alliances and build community identity. The Italian Gardeners Society was established in 1902 as a mutual aid society, initially providing health and death benefits to farmers. In later years, the Society formed the San Joaquin Marketing Association (1922) and built the Growers Market as a response to Stockton City Ordinance No. 811. The Ordinance banned the selling of produce from street stands, wagons or vehicles, the very foundation that supported Italian growers and their agricultural businesses.[99]

Italian families also established restaurants and other commercial operations to serve a growing population. The Giusti brothers, Egisto, Paolo, Morro, and Pietro migrated from Lucca, Italy to America in the 1880s and eventually settled in the Walnut Grove area around 1900. They farmed land on Staten Island, Brannan Island and Sherman Island, near Isleton and Rio Vista. They established the area's first saloon at Walker Landing and also opened the first hotel in Ryde. In the early 1900s, they moved the business to its present location on Tyler Island where it was known as Miller's Ferry Saloon. Today, Giusti's is a common stop for locals and visitors alike with third and fourth generation family members running the business.[100]

The imprint of Italian settlement is primarily focused on the Delta region in the economic sectors of the distribution and marketing of the commercial agricultural products, both throughout the state, and to eastern markets. Early inroads to truck-farming, family support, financial backing from fellow-countrymen, and help from mutual-aid societies were among the factors that allowed Italians to invest in and profit from agricultural operations. These activities allowed them to build viable communities in the population centers of Sacramento and Stockton, and in farming communities on the periphery of the inner Delta communities. Their

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[97] *The San Joaquin Historian*, "A Historical Prospective of the San Joaquin Cherry Growers," (Winter 1997), 4.
[98] Bengiveno, "California Italian American Project."
[99] Clark, *Italians of San Joaquin County*, 88.
[100] Bruce Pierini, "The Italians of Sacramento," *Golden Notes* 37 (Summer 1991), 38; *SRDHS Newsletter*, "Giusti's," (June 1994), 4, accessed 12 January 2015; http://www.srdhs.org/Pages/SRDHSNewsletters.aspx; "A Four Generation Family Tradition," accessed 12 January 2015, http://www.giustis.com/#!4-generations/cvw8.

contributions were important to the overall regional economy and their efforts helped to establish the region as one of America's leading agricultural areas.

Azorean Portuguese

Portuguese also took up residence in the Delta. The majority (95 percent) migrated from the Azores, an island archipelago of nine distinct islands that lies approximately 700 miles west of Portugal. Most Portuguese are from only five of the nine islands of the Azores—Pico, Fayal, Flores, San Jorge and Terceira. In the San Joaquin Valley, immigrants from Terceira, San Jorge and Pico are in the majority.[101] Azoreans faced many hardships that led to emigration from their island homelands, including high birthrates, lack of available land for farming and economic adversity stemming from a decline in prices for exported goods. Additionally, several natural disasters, as well as military conscription spurred immigration to America.[102] The spatial patterning of Portuguese immigrants is unique among European settler groups in California due to their preference for settling in rural areas and their reluctance to join other immigrant groups in the state's growing cities. In fact, the Portuguese preference to live on rural farms was four times that of other national origin groups in 1930 and six times greater in 1960.[103] In the Delta, the Portuguese were instrumental in reclamation activities around Clarksburg and Freeport, including the creation of the Lisbon District and the manufacturing of the first clamshell dredger.[104]

For the Portuguese in the Delta, community identity and cultural renewal were centered on participation in the annual *Festa do Espirito Santo* (Festival of the Holy Spirit) and commonly referred to as simply the *festa*. Traditionally held on Trinity Sunday, eight weeks after Easter, Portuguese from throughout northern California would converge in Freeport and then ride the Soto Ferry to the historic Portuguese IDES (*Irmandade di Espirito Divino*) Hall. The *festa* celebration lasted several days and included free servings of *sopas e carne* (Azorean beef stew ladled over mint bread), a processional of floats, bands and queens dressed in handmade capes and gowns representing St. Isabel.[105] Delta farmers would also come together for traditional

[101] Alvin Ray Graves, "Immigrants in Agriculture: The Portuguese in California, 1850-1970s," dissertation, University of California Los Angeles, 1977, xiv; *SRDHS Newsletter*, "Oral History Notes," (June 1985), 3, accessed 13 January 2015, http://www.srdhs.org/Pages/SRDHSNewsletters.aspx.
[102] Jerry R. Williams, *And Yet They Come: Portuguese Immigration from the Azores to the United States (*Staten Island, NY: Center for Migration Studies 1982), 65.
[103]Graves, "Immigrants in Agriculture," xv.
[104] Lionel Holmes and Joseph D'Alessandro, *Portuguese Pioneers of the Sacramento Area* (Sacramento, CA: Portuguese Historical and Cultural Society, 1990), 68.
[105] Holmes and D'Alessandro, *Portuguese Pioneers*, 103-104; St. Josephs Church, "Church History," accessed 24 January 2015, http://www.stjosephsclarksburg.net/5752.html.

dances or *chamarritas* at the Portuguese Hall or gather for traditional hog butchering to make *linguica* and other cured meats.[106]

In order to maintain their traditions and culture, the Portuguese established their own public school districts in the Delta, one of the very few ethnic-operated schools in the state. The Lisbon School District was located five miles north of Clarksburg near the bottom of the levee on Glide Ranch. It began as a one room schoolhouse serving students through sixth grade and later expanded up to eighth grade. Most of the children walked to school on unpaved levee roads, although some from the Pocket District on the east side of the river used rowboats or crossed by ferry. The Lisbon School District remained in operation until 1923. The District's two schools, Upper Lisbon and Lower Lisbon, mainly served Portuguese students; however, small numbers of Italian and Japanese students were also enrolled.[107]

Filipino Community Making in the Delta

Filipino immigration began in 1898 when Spain ceded possession of the Philippines to the United States in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War. The first immigrants were students who benefited from a government-sponsored scholarship program that encouraged them to pursue higher education in the U.S. From 1907 to the early 1920s, Hawaiian sugar growers heavily recruited Filipino laborers and by 1919, over 28,000 had immigrated to the islands. On the mainland their labor was also in high demand, especially after the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924, which aimed to restrict immigration to the United States from non-white nations. The Act created a quota system which permitted entry of high numbers of immigrants from Northern European countries, but severely decreased the number of entries from the rest of the world. Chinese, Japanese and Asian Indians were effectively barred from entering the U.S. as they belonged to the "Asiatic Barred Zone" where the maximum number allowed to immigrate was fifty a year. The Philippines were not included in the "barred zone" because the islands were an American possession, which made Filipinos U.S. nationals and allowed them to travel any place under U.S. control.[108]

By 1920, Filipino migration to the mainland had picked-up momentum. Starting with only four hundred in 1910, their numbers increased to 5,600 in 1920 and a decade later swelled to 40,000. California was the main focus of immigration with the Filipino population rising from five in 1920, to 30,500 in 1930. More often than not, Stockton was the primary destination for Filipinos arriving in San Francisco, and they became the successor agricultural labor force to the Japanese in the Delta. Newly arrived immigrants would often pool their resources to hire a taxi for $75 to make the trip to Stockton, which initially served as a gathering center for Filipino

[106] Holmes and D'Alessandro, *Portuguese Pioneers*, 115-116.
[107] Holmes and D'Alessandro, *Portuguese Pioneers*, 124-133.
[108] Chan, *Asian Californians*, 7.

workers and agricultural laborers.[109] The majority of immigrants arriving in Stockton were from the Ilocos region on the northern island of Luzon. A smaller group of Visayan immigrants came from the central islands of Cebu, Panay, Leyte, and Bohol. All of the sending areas had high population densities and emigrants were typically drawn from lower-middle-class families of small landowners and tenant farmers.[110] Upon their arrival in Stockton they shared a rural background based on subsistence farming, but also reflected the diversity of dialects and distinctive cultures from their island homelands.

Filipinos played a major role in Delta farming and the urban life of Stockton. The city became an important settlement node and cultural hub for Filipinos as they moved from one West Coast labor site to another. More than half of all Filipinos in the United States worked in agriculture, and in California this often meant the cultivation and harvest of asparagus. They tended to stay together as group working under the direction of a labor contractor. In some cases growers preferred to mix different ethnic workers into crews speaking different languages in order to hinder mutual understanding that could lead to strikes during the harvest season. During the height of asparagus season, it's estimated that ninety percent (6,000 workers) of the harvesters were Filipinos.[111] Laborers would move from camp to camp, starting in January with asparagus picking, and then move on to row crops throughout the Central Valley and Central Coast. They used ferries and small boats to travel from one island to another to labor on farms and then return to temporary living quarters in Delta work camps. Filipinos harvested a wide variety of crops and often faced tiresome, backbreaking work conditions. They planted cauliflower seedlings, cut asparagus, and chopped spinach, all requiring bent over "stoop labor." It was common to have gangs of 300 asparagus cutters descend on the fields before dawn, attaching flashlights to their heads in order to see and be able to gather the tender shoots. The conditions were especially difficult in the Delta where choking dust from the peat soils created unhealthy and unbearable conditions for laborers.[112] When the asparagus harvest ended in late June, thousands of Filipino workers headed for employment in Alaska's salmon canneries while their families stayed behind in Stockton. Returning in August, workers could find jobs harvesting grapes, berries and other fruits. The fall season was often a period of unemployment, although some could find work in sugar beet harvesting, grape

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[109] Ronald Takaki, *In the Heart of Filipino America: Immigrants from the Pacific Isles* (New York: Chelsea House, 1995), 31.

[110] Dawn Bohulano Malabon, *Little Manila is in the Heart: The Making of the Filipina/o American Community in Stockton, California* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 40-42.

[111] Lorraine Jacobs Crouchett, *Filipinos in California* (Cerrito, CA: Downey Place, 1982), 36.

[112] Takaki, *The Heart of Filipino America*, 37; Dawn B. Mabalon, et al., Filipinos in Stockton (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2008), 13, 28.

pruning and celery cultivation. Second generation immigrants recall that "The growing and harvesting season of the farm crops orchestrated the rhythm of our lives."[113]

Many observers have pointed out that Filipinos were assigned the lowest position in the racial hierarchy of farm laborers. In 1935, Carey McWilliams wrote that "With the exception of the Mexican, the Filipino has been the most viciously exploited of any of the various races recruited by California agriculturalists to make up their vast army of 'cheap labor.'"[114] The systematic exploitation and mistreatment of Filipino workers took many forms including low wages, poor working and living conditions, and corrupt hiring and payroll practices by farmers and labor contractors. In order to improve working conditions and settle labor disputes, Filipino field workers increasingly formed unions, especially after 1930. Similar to Japanese workers, Filipinos staged work slowdowns and strikes, and they fought head to head with police and armed guards to protect their jobs. They gained a reputation for labor militancy by responding in equal measure to attacks by vigilante mobs that threatened workers in the fields and in their bunkhouse living quarters. Over time, the response to intimidation and threats of violence resulted in growing resistance and sense of solidarity among Filipino workers that became an important aspect of their identity.[115] According to Filipino scholar Dawn Malabon, militant Filipino farm labor unions in the San Joaquin Delta gave rise to highly organized ethnic organizations that created a vibrant community and street culture in Stockton's Little Manila.[116]

Punjabi Sikhs

In the early 1900s, Sikhs emigrated from the Punjab region of northwest India. The first migrants were largely male and many came from agricultural backgrounds. The Sikh community branched out in California becoming important farmers in both the Sacramento and Imperial Valleys. The Sacramento Valley resembled their Punjabi homeland and they found work in familiar agricultural conditions. Similar to other groups, the Sikhs developed a referral network where members of the community acted as labor contractors, recruiting their countrymen for the harvest season.

They eventually left Imperial County and settled in Stockton where they constructed the first Sikh temple (gurdwara) in the United States in 1912.[117] Stockton's gurdwara was the center for Punjabi social and political life in the region. It served as a focal point for language and culture, an employment information center, and a religious sanctuary. Until 1947, the Stockton temple was the only Sikh worship and community center in the United States. Since then, nearly fifty

[113] Quoted in Malabon, *Little Manila is in the Heart,* 71.
[114] Carey McWilliams, "Exit the Filipino," *Nation*, September 4, 1935, 265.
[115] Malabon, *Little Manila is in the Heart,* 70, 95-98
[116] Malabon, *Little Manila is in the Heart,* 100.
[117] Interestingly, a replica of this historic Stockton landmark was featured on a Sikh float in the 2015 Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, California.

gurdwaras have been established throughout the state, but the Sikh temple in Stockton remains a place of special significance for Sikhs on the West Coast.[118]

An interesting aspect of Sikh settlement in California is family life and the ethnicity of spouses for Punjabi immigrants. In southern California, ninety-three percent of Punjabis were married to Hispanic wives. In the northern counties including Sacramento and San Joaquin, the percentage of Hispanic wives was just above fifty percent. Semi-arranged marriages were apparently common where sisters and perhaps a mother of the same family married into the same Punjabi community, or married into Sikh farming partnerships.[119] Additional research is needed to understand the impact of these unique biethnic household arrangements and their impact on communities in the Delta region.

Sikh newcomers gained considerable attention from Sacramento Valley almond ranchers for their orchard work and they gained a foothold in the celery, bean and potato fields near Holt, just west of Stockton. They were also hired to work on farms in Isleton, often replacing Japanese workers.[120] Much like the Japanese, Sikh field hands eventually advanced from performing wage labor for others to leasing farmland for themselves, and they ultimately thrived in the Central Valley.

Mexican Migration and the Bracero Experience

By the 1920s, farmers in the Delta faced new challenges in identifying reliable labor resources. The Chinese had mostly vanished and European immigration was being curtailed. Filipinos, Japanese and Punjabis had focused their attention on specialty crops. Moreover, the Mexican government made efforts to restrict an early immigration program due to the discrimination experienced by Mexican workers. During this early period, Mexican labor in California is often characterized as resulting from "drift migration" where over time migrants made their way from the borderlands to central California. Prior to 1940, these migration flows resulted in the formation of relatively reliable labor pools of Mexican workers and stable communities or *colonias* were eventually established outside small and large cities throughout the Central Valley and Delta region. The 1940 Census enumerated the Spanish-speaking population of California at 416,000 that included a well-established Mexican immigrant presence in the orchards and beet fields of the Delta.[121]

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[118] Bruce La Brack, "A Century of Sikhs in California," (July 2011), accessed 13 April 2015, http://www.sikhfoundation.org/sikh-punjabi-language-studies/a-century-of-sikhs-in-california-by-bruce-la-brack/

[119] Karen Leonard, "Pioneer Voices from California," in *The Sikh Diaspora: Migration and the Experience Beyond the Punjab* (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1989), 122-123.

[120] David Vaught, *Cultivation California: Growers, Specialty Crops, and Labor, 1875-1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 116-118; Richard Steven Street, *Beasts of the Field,* 487.

[121] Ernesto Galarza, *Merchants of Labor: The Mexican Bracero Story*, (Charlotte, NC: McNally & Loftin, 1964), 31-32.

An important shift away from drift migration occurred after 1940. Facing the economic and social upheaval associated with the Great Depression, the loss of workers to World War II industries and services, and the evacuation and relocation of Japanese, California farmers argued for the need of a reliable, inexpensive labor force to maintain their vast agricultural holdings. The new industries devoted to shipbuilding, aircraft, steel and oil refining were drawing workers away from Central Valley fields and into the factories. The promise of higher wages in San Francisco, Vallejo and San Diego enticed thousands to seek new lives and left few options for growers to find labor to maintain the fields and harvest the crops. They favored a managed response to the labor shortages they were experiencing and they preferred a temporary guestworker-type of Mexican immigration program.[122] Growers argued that "normal" workers rejected seasonal farm jobs and that they could not attract domestic workers by raising wages because the price of farm goods was set by the market. Migrant workers from the southern states were thought to be belligerent, so growers had additional reason to look elsewhere.[123]

By contrast, there was a perception that Mexican farm laborers were a docile workforce and like "homing pigeons" would return to Mexico at the end of the work season and therefore not create the social problems associated with previous immigrant workers. The perspective of California farmers can be gleaned from the remarks of a Chamber of Commerce spokesperson's testimony to Congress in 1926:

> "We, gentlemen, are just as anxious as you are not to build the civilization of California or any other western district upon a Mexican foundation. We take him because there is nothing else available. We have gone east, west, north, and south and he is the only man-power available to us." The Farm Bureau asserted that "California's specialized agriculture [requires] a kind of labor able to meet the requirements of hard, stoop, hand labor, and to work under the sometimes less advantageous conditions of heat, sun, dust, winds, and isolation."[124]

On August 4, 1942 the United States signed a temporary intergovernmental agreement that allowed for the use of Mexican agricultural labor on United States farms. The first installment of the program, officially known as the Mexican Farm Labor Program and commonly referred to as the Bracero Program, led to the arrival of 500 Braceros in Stockton to harvest sugar beets on September 29, 1942. Braceros or field laborers, literally those who work using their arms, faced a myriad of injustices and abuses including substandard housing, discrimination, unfulfilled contract agreements, and being cheated out of wages.

Perhaps the most representative icon of the wrongs practiced on Mexican field laborers was the short-handled hoe, "*El cortito*," the short one. The hoe measured twelve to eighteen long and required the farmworker to bend and stoop all day while weeding rows of sugar beets.

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[122] Galarza, "*Merchants of Labor*," 32.
[123] Galarza, "*Merchants of Labor*," 43.
[124] *Rural Migration News*, "Braceros: History, Compensation," volume 12, number 2 (April 2006).

Bent-over work was brutal and *El cortito,* also known as *el brazo del diablo*, "the devil's arm" led to lifelong, debilitating back injuries for farmworkers and it played a key role in the United Farm Workers efforts to demand better working conditions. The growers of the California claimed *el cortito* was a necessary tool because it provided control and accuracy for the worker and that using it protected the plants from damage. Oddly, the agricultural community in 48 other states never saw reason to utilize it. The short-handled hoe was finally banned for use in California in 1975.[125]

The Delta has a rich cultural heritage and social history. The Gold Rush, subsequent agricultural development and governmental policies profoundly shaped domestic and foreign immigration to California. The combination of the region's physical and geographical attributes eventually led people of many different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds to transform the Delta into one of the world's most productive agricultural regions. The Delta has brought together a complex mix of social classes and ethnic groups that combined to play a central role in the region's historical and economic development. The Delta is also a place of transient labor and settlement shaped by discrimination. It's a place where we have a lesson to learn about labor, agriculture and economic development in the future.

The Delta's ethnic communities share a tale of sequential occupancy, but on two tracts, one led to prosperity and community, while the other provided few options and pathways towards advancement. Native Americans sought refuge in the Delta and succumbed to disease followed by resource competition with Spanish colonizers and Anglo settlers. Subsequent settlers were initially drawn to the Delta's promise of agricultural development and employment, but groups experienced differential access to agricultural employment, owning land, and building family and community. Some overcame barriers and were able to establish settlement enclaves with the Chinese and Japanese living quarters and commercial districts in several Delta towns offering the best examples. The groups that thrived and built cohesive communities often did so because of their perceived whiteness and the presence of family. European groups for example did not face the same levels of discrimination and were able to enjoy higher levels of prosperity in the region. Seasonal work was rule in the Delta and it forced many to leave the region for long periods of time and did little to enhance long-term community-building in the Delta. Some ethnic groups dedicated themselves to specialized crops which allowed for economic mobility and the establishment of small communities. The lack of family support or even the ability to form families due to miscegenation laws often hindered community formation. The Sikhs and Japanese found unique ways to circumvent these policies and create communities despite these barriers, but in the end few stayed in the region. The means of agricultural production were not good for grafting a long-term, sustainable presence of

[125] Oakland Museum of California Collections, http://collections.museumca.org/?q=collection-item/h742201, accessed 30 May 2015.

workers, the primary population in the Delta. In most cases people simply left the region when their work was done.

III. Recreation & Refuge Communities

The Delta is primarily a place of work and agricultural production, but it also shares a long tradition as a place of refuge for city-dwellers. The tranquil setting of the Delta and its proximity to major populations centers in the Bay Area and the Central Valley have drawn people to "dawdle," temporarily dwell, and even hideout in the region. The phenomenon seems to have taken hold during the first half of the 1900s when resort communities first began to appear in the Delta. Fisherman, retirees, boating enthusiasts and other sportsmen communities have since colonized the Delta's islands and sloughs with cabins, cottages, boat docks and marinas. Pleasure craft ply the deeper channels and often appear to be "permanent" summertime residences. There are numerous resorts and facilities where vacationers can rent boats and other equipment, but many, with the exception of those located in Rio Vista and Stockton are not well-known to the public. There has not been a concerted effort to publicize the recreational opportunities in the region, and there are few hotels for overnight stay.[126]

Boat camping is somewhat unique way of life on the Delta. Many boat campers "camp wild," by finding isolated spots to pitch their tents. Camping is also available in formal campgrounds where families and boat campers have built camaraderie and community over the years.[127] The Delta offers a tranquil setting along with places of privacy that are tucked away among the fields, farm roads and levees. Erle Stanley Gardener, the best-selling detective novelist and creator of the popular Perry Mason television series, frequented Delta waters and stated that "the minute you have left the dock you have arrived at your destination." The Delta is still a place to hide and still a place of nature amid the "big-bucks" farming territory.[128] The community vignettes that follow include some representations of past and current places of refuge.

Ryde

Many of the original farmers in Ryde, an unincorporated community upstream of Isleton, came from the Azores, settling in the lower half of Grand Island. Portuguese surnames including Cunha, Bettencourt and Souza are still common in this area today.[129] The memoirs of early residents tell a story of pioneering farm efforts and resilience. In the early 1900s, Joseph Silva

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[126] Thompson, "Settlement Geography," 435-438.
[127] Hal Schell, *Dawdling on the Delta* (Stockton CA: Schell's Books, 1979), 173.
[128] Schell, *Dawdling*, 14.
[129] *SRDHS Newsletter*, "Grand Island II," (December 1994), 5, accessed 13 January 2015, http://www.srdhs.org/Pages/SRDHSNewsletters.aspx.

Vieira moved his family from San Jorge Island in the Azores to Rio Vista where he operated the Dewey Saloon. In 1905, he leased fifty acres on Andrus Island and hired Japanese field hands to cultivate asparagus. In 1931, Vieira's daughter Josephine and her husband Albine Korth also purchased land on the island for an asparagus farm. The location of their property at the confluence of the San Joaquin and Mokelumne Rivers proved to be an ideal location for a marina and in 1938, the Korth's started a small recreational facility that eventually became the Pirate's Lair Resort. Today the facility includes a mobile home park, boat berths and a marina. It's now managed by third generation members of the Korth family.[130]

Ryde is perhaps best known as the "speakeasy hamlet." From 1918 to 1933, Prohibition created a lucrative, underground bootleg industry for the isolated town. The focus of activity was the basement "speak" of the Ryde Hotel and its secret tunnel, which were both raided several times and finally closed down. Today, the Ryde Hotel is a popular roadhouse and bar and is still operation as a hotel.[131]

The Isleton Cajun and Blues Festival (formerly known as the Crawdad Festival), is held on Father's Day Weekend. The Festival's artists, schedule of events, cuisine and event promotion and branding explore themes of Acadian culture and connections between the "Bayou of the West" and the Mississippi Delta. Perhaps the more important association between the two delta regions is their recent environmental history: the 1972 levee break that submerged more than half of Isleton under floodwaters; and Hurricane Katrina (2005) that submerged large areas of New Orleans and the surrounding hinterlands.

Resort landings and popular fishing spots are common in the region; however, the potential for expanding recreational use is hampered by erosion along the levee roads and subsidence of the islands beneath the weight of the levees.[132]

Rio Vista

Rio Vista traces its early beginnings to John Bidwell's Los Ulpinos Mexican land grant. The town was established by Col. Nathan H. Davis who purchased the site from Bidwell for $400. Situated halfway between San Francisco and Sacramento, the settlement was important for shipping supplies and miners to and from the goldfields. In 1858, a daily steamer service was established between San Francisco and Sacramento. Rio Vista was ideally suited as the main port of call along the route, and residents benefitted from the trade and exchange that had to be routed through the town's landing. In the mid-1800s, salmon fishing and salmon canning

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[130] Josephine B. Korth, *Wind Chimes in My Apple Tree* (San Francisco: Island Winds, 1978), 17, 40-41, 214-217; "Korth's Pirate's Lair Marina – History," accessed 12 January 2015, http://www.korthsmarina.com/?page_id=38.
[131] Dillon, *Delta Country*, 111.
[132] Mike Hayden, *Guidebook to the Sacramento Delta Country* (Los Angeles, CA: Ward Ritchie Press, 1973), 79, 82.

were important local industries. The town was swept away by high water in 1861/62 and rebuilt on higher ground at its present location.[133]

In later years, the Del Monte Company established a large asparagus cannery in Rio Vista and the town was also well-known among Hollywood film producers whose film crews shot scenes for motion pictures from 1914 to 2012. In 1918, a bridge was built connecting Rio Vista to Brannan Island, which helped to establish Rio Vista as the main trading center for residents of the lower Delta region. An Army base operated south of town from 1911 to 1992 and was originally used to house or moor equipment, including large suctions barges used to dredge, deepen and straighten the Sacramento River. In later years, the base was used for storing and maintaining Army harbor craft and during the Vietnam War, the main function was to prepare amphibious vehicles for shipment to Vietnam. The base currently remains closed to the public.[134] Part of the former Army base is a Coast Guard Station and the remainder now belongs to the City of Rio Vista which has plans for public uses and a research facility.[135] Today, the City of Rio Vista continues to benefit from its strategic gateway location and the development of energy resources including the Rio Vista Gas Field (the largest in the state and among top fifteen in the United States) and renewable wind turbine projects. It also supports a successful sports fisherman trade and other recreational water sports.[136]

The cultural heritage of Rio Vista is evident in the city's Chinatown. The settlement was established in 1870 and residents are mostly from the Sze Yap region of China. It lies at the north end of Front Street and is bordered by Sacramento Street at the south end. Rio Vista's Portuguese heritage is apparent in the annual Holy Ghost *Festa*. The first *Festa* was held in 1899, the same year that the Rio Vista-Isleton Portuguese Club was founded. The celebration is a tribute to Queen Isabel of Portugal, in honor of the generosity she showed to the poor. Portuguese queens from surrounding Delta communities, who represent St. Isabel by carrying the Holy Spirit crown, are a prominent feature of Rio Vista's *Festa*, as are the flags and banners that represent the local Portuguese Club.

Rio Vista is a major sport fishing center. In early October, the city hosts a nationally recognized Bass Derby. The town's first Bass Derby was held in 1933 and it is the oldest event of this kind on the West Coast.

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[133] Pezzaglia, *Towns of the Sacramento River Delta*, 11-32; Thompson, "Settlement Geography," 418-420.
[134] Pezzaglia, "Exploring Rio Vista's Past: Local Military Installations, Part I," (April 20, 2011), *River News Herald*, retrieved 16 February 2015.
[135] The Army base was designated as a Redevelopment Area in 2010.
[136] Hayden, *Guidebook to the Sacramento Delta Country*, 30-33; Pezzaglia, *Towns of the Sacramento River Delta*, 11-32.

Holt

By the late 1890s, railway lines were creating new water-rail connections and settlement nodes. Holt, eight miles west of Stockton, was one such location. The new spur tracks linking Delta landings to the main rail network were important to farmers on nearby Roberts Island, Union Island, as well as those living on Upper and Lower Jones tracts who wanted to transport their Delta crops to market. In its day, Holt was a bustling place with a hotel, speakeasies and bordellos.[137] This bustling hamlet was even featured in a Sunset Home Seekers Bureau publication extolling Holt as the largest town in the San Joaquin Delta. Its advantageous location along the Borden Highway, the first paved road in the Delta, reinforced the town's importance. Holt also was a center for early innovation in the region. In 1904, the first successful test of the Caterpillar track-powered vehicle occurred in Holt. "Scientific" farmers experimented with Red Milo Maize and found hemp to be a viable crop in the area. Early dairyman, John DeCarli, introduced Ladino clover to milk production and also developed new technologies for piping milk from dairies into tankers.[138]

A large number of agricultural laborers were employed in the Holt area and not surprisingly, the town became an entertainment mecca. There were gambling houses, illegal stills, and girls from Stockton arriving by train in the late afternoon. Holt also displayed an early multiethnic character that included Chinese and Japanese sections of town. By 1917, the local school included students with Japanese, Mexican, Portuguese and Italian heritage.[139]

Terminous

Terminous owes its founding to a water-rail connection point, located at the confluence of Potato Slough and the Mokelumne River. The town earned its name as the end of the road into the Delta. It was an especially important trans-shipment point for asparagus from Bouldin Island where the first test fields of the crop were planted. The town became the focus of vegetables barged in from a wide area for washing trimming and crating. At the height of the season, it's estimated that 350 laborers were on hand to process the region's agricultural bounty with a majority of workers living in Terminous's "box car city." The "city" was made up of de-wheeled wooden box cars set up on old railroad ties. By the late 1930s, the town's freight business was made obsolete by the introduction of refrigerated trucks and smaller packing sheds distributed throughout the area.[140] Terminous has made the successful transition from an agricultural-based economy to recreation and tourism. Many of the town's original

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[137] Minnick, *Samfow,* 83-84; Hayden, *Guidebook to the Sacramento Delta*, 96.
[138] Hillman and Covello, *Cities & Towns of San Joaquin County*, 211-13.
[139] Hillman and Covello, *Cities & Towns of San Joaquin County*, 213-14.
[140] Minnick, *Samfow,* 83-84; Hayden, *Guidebook to the Sacramento Delta*, 96; Hillman and Covello, *Cities & Towns of San Joaquin County*, 227

waterfront warehouses have been recycled as boat storage facilities and the former Box Car City has been replaced by camp sites and a mobile home park near a large marina.

Richland/Hood

The town of Richland was established in 1860, primarily as a shipping site for grain. A railroad spur connected the Hood train station to the wharf where the California Fruit Exchange operated a large packing shed. At its height, Richland boasted a hotel, grocery store, church and post office, but the hamlet fell into decline by 1880. The town was resurrected in 1909 and renamed Hood. By the 1920s, the town was being promoted as a real estate venture and as a Dutch-inspired tourist destination—the "Netherlands of America." The early Hood Hotel featured Dutch architecture, but was eventually lost to fire. As evidenced by early maps listing the surnames of property owners, many current residents still own and farm the same land as their ancestors.[141] Today, Hood has about 100 households, a post office, a small commercial area and a park. An old Stillwater Orchards packing shed is zoned for light industry and is currently used to sell antiques and support other commercial activities.

Gone but Not Forgotten Communities

Collinsville

In 1859, C.J. Collins settled north of Antioch on the banks of the Sacramento River where it merges with the San Joaquin River. He surveyed the town plat, built a wharf and store and eventually sold the property to S.C. Bradshaw in 1867. Bradshaw apparently devised a promotional scam to sell lots (many underwater) to potential buyers. The con-game failed and Emory Upham purchased much of the land in 1869. Upham expanded the docks and wharf area and established a telegraph, hotels, saloons and a salmon cannery. Much of the town was built on stilts and was flourishing by the 1870s. The town's early economy was largely tied to commercial fishing and canning. The Hume brothers, William and George, had already established a salmon cannery at Broderick on the Sacramento River in 1864. Their cannery closed two years later, but the trade was taken up by Italians and Greeks who established over twenty commercial fishing camps along the Sacramento River during the late nineteenth century. Italians, who primarily harvested salmon and striped bass, dominated the fishing grounds around Collinsville. Intense ethnic rivalries were common among fisherman and often

[141] Pezzaglia, *Towns of the Sacramento River Delta*, 111-114, 116.

took place when one group encroached on the other's "drifts" and traditional fishing grounds along the river.[142]

Following the decline of the fishing industry, Collinsville began to fade. Plans to build a PG&E nuclear electric facility and a Dow Chemical plant failed to materialize. The town lacks the transportation infrastructure enjoyed by neighboring communities and its location on the north side of the river separates it from Contra Costa County's urbanized development in Antioch, Pittsburg and Bay Point. Today, Collinsville has about twenty small houses and is surrounded by agricultural land and protected Suisun Marsh lands. A largely undeveloped parcel on the west of the dredged channel is zoned for water dependent industrial land use.

Vorden

At the end of the nineteenth-century, the increase in asparagus production led to the establishment of canneries throughout the Delta. The California Fruit Canners Association and Del Monte established operations in Trask's Landing (Vorden). The cannery was eventually closed and the post office was consolidated with the one in Locke. Rico Simoni, an Italian immigrant from Lucca, settled in Vorden and became the primary owner-operator of the town's commercial district. He established a saloon in 1898 and by 1913, he and his family built a grocery store, hotel and pole barn. The town was founded by Charles F. Trask, a Massachusetts native, and originally known as Trask's Landing. In 1890, Delta resident P.J. van Loben Sels renamed the town Vorden, the same as his native town in the Netherlands.[143] Today, Vorden is zoned for agriculture and only a few houses and farm support facilities remain.

Paintersville

Paintersville was founded as a landing on the east bank of the Sacramento River, in 1852, by Levi Painter. Painter is famous for devising a unique method of burying money entrusted to him by the townspeople. He established the first "post hole bank" by burying coins and gold dust late at night. His midnight banking scheme involved slipping out to one of his key post holes where he would pull the post and deposit the gold or coin in a can or jar.[144] By 1900, Paintersville counted a grocery store, saloon and clothing store selling work clothes. In the

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[142] Jerry Brown, "Township Began with Mormon Colony Site," *Historical Articles of Solano County Online Database* (July 2000), accessed 31 January 2015, http://www.solanoarticles.com/history/index.php/weblog/more/township_began_with_mormon_colony_site/; Pierini, "The Italians of Sacramento," 15; Cultural Studies Office, "Work Camp Properties," 131.

[143] Thompson, "Settlement Geography," 341; *SRDHS Newsletter*, "Pierson Reclamation District #551," (December 1998), 4, accessed 13 January 2015,

[144] Charles A. Bohakel, *The Historic Delta Country* (self-published, 1979), 32-33; Bob Walters, *Delta: The Cruising Wonderland of California Sloughs and Rivers* (Fullerton, CA: Cordrey & Walters, 1983), 226.

ensuing decades a few houses were built nearby, and Greek and Portuguese fisherman pursued commercial salmon fishing and lived in small arks or houseboats downstream from the town.[145]

The Paintersville Bridge, a double leaf bascule counter-weight bridge, was built in 1920 by the Strauss Bascule Bridge Company of Chicago. The Strauss Company also designed the San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge.[146] Currently, Paintersville has five parcels for houses and a large parcel zoned for light industrial use that contains warehouses, containers, and stored boats and other vehicles.

Concluding Remarks

For most of its recent history, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta has been managed and molded to fit human desires and visions of economic progress. A combination of investment capital, technology and labor made it possible to convert a wilderness into a garden. As a result, the major human imprints consist of massive earthworks including levees and altered channels; even the delta soils have been completely transformed. The Delta has also shaped human settlement, livelihoods and community relations. It is an ideal place to witness the tension of people trying to control and adjust to nature, while learning to build viable communities.

At the heart of this environmental and economic transformation was the cross-cultural migration and settlement of newcomers. The Delta was a meeting ground where peoples of the Asian Pacific Rim interacted with Atlantic-based settler groups. Land reclamation and the diversification of the Delta's agricultural economy depended on a permanent and sometimes mobile workforce that involved both skilled and unskilled laborers. These newcomers worked the land, became entrepreneurs, and built lasting communities. Their rural experiences of economic success, social exclusion and celebrations of ethnic solidarity are recorded in the ethnic businesses, segregated schools and cultural heritage festivals of the Delta.

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is a unique rural region and its landscapes tell many stories of settlement, ethnic experience and community building. Over time, the succession of immigrants and economic transitions have humanized the landscape and created a unique sense of place. Presently, new ideas to preserve natural landscapes, promote cultural heritage sites, and increase recreation and tourism suggest new visions of life and landscape for the Delta. Undoubtedly, the record of environmental transformation, agricultural development and cultural change depicted in the rural landscapes will continue to form the basis of the new economic functions that will factor into the future of the Delta's communities and the region as a whole.

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[145] *SRDHS Newsletter*, "Paintersville," (December 2000), 3, accessed 14 January 2015.
[146] *SRDHS Newsletter*, "Transportation," (June 2000), 4, accessed 17 January 2015.

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