

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

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**RACE, CITIZENSHIP, AND THE NEGOTIATION OF SPACE: CHINESE,
JAPANESE, AND MEXICANS IN FRESNO, CALIFORNIA, 1870–1949**

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

HISTORY

by

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September 2012

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the development of the multi-racial community in Fresno, California. Particularly, this study focuses on the process of racialization, which coincided with the development of Fresno as a key agricultural site in California from its inception in the 1870s until the end of the 1940s when the racial climate shifted as a result of World War II. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Fresno emerged as a leader in agriculture within the state and the nation, due to the sophisticated irrigation systems and ideal climate. I argue that the growth in the region initiated two racial projects for Fresno: the creation of a multi-racial/multi-ethnic segregated enclave and the commodification of workers of color in the agricultural industry. Both of these processes worked together to mold Fresno into an important hub city within the Central Valley of California while also priming the condition for the economic success of Fresno locally, regionally, and nationally. My project maps this process from the beginning of Fresno as a small town founded primarily by white migrants who brought their own racial assumptions about their position of power to the historical moment of World War II, which serves as a key example of how Fresno's everyday racial dynamics and social interplay both eliminated and created opportunities for non-whites in West Fresno. The events of World War II, particularly the removal of Japanese peoples from the West Coast, highlights the various ways in which whites "raced" people of color and also how non-whites understood and defined their own racial position within Fresno. I use this particular historical moment as an example that reflects the conditions of the Nation

in wartime, where shifts occurred in national understandings of citizenship, accountability, responsibilities, and also power and autonomy.

This project makes important interventions in the historical scholarship of race as well US history in two ways. The first is in the focus of study on a dynamic rural community in California. Fresno has a rich and important history that lends much to the understanding of race/racism, labor, and racial/spatial segregation. And yet, the San Joaquin Valley, especially its hub city, Fresno, has garnered limited academic inquiry. My project is highlighting the importance that rural California communities bring to macro-narratives of race and racism in the US. The second contribution of this project is that it seeks to understand multi-racial/multi-ethnic relationships within segregated neighborhoods. I focus on the importance of looking at communities of color, not as monolithic one-dimensional entities, but as fluid and active participants who worked and lived in relationship with and in reaction to other members, individuals, and racial groups in their physical spaces. My project flushes out those relationships in racially segregated Fresno to present a nuanced multi-racial picture of the community, highlighting the process of racialization and commodification of non-white people as laborers, while also demonstrating the negotiation of each group's position within Fresno.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The process of writing this dissertation has been a long journey where I have learned many things, not only about the subject at hand, but also about who I am as a scholar and person. I am thankful to my multiple communities, which helped me finally achieve my goal. First and foremost I would like to thank the various institutions that helped fund my time at the University of California, Santa Cruz. The History Department at UC Santa Cruz generously funded various grants for conferences and professional development as well as a Summer Writing Fellowship and Teaching Fellowship. The Cota-Robles Fellowship funded my first two years of graduate study. The Ford Foundation Pre-doctoral Dissertation made my early years of research and writing possible. The Chicano/Latino Research Center (CLRC) at UC Santa Cruz has been an invaluable resource. Early in my studies I was offered a mini-grant, which funded a research trip and also encouraged me to hone my presentation skills. The CLRC also offered much needed support in the area of professional development. I have most especially appreciated the opportunity to meet important scholars and colleagues in my field through the annual meeting of Chicana/o historians organized by CLRC.

A huge debt of gratitude goes to my dissertation committee members who stood by me from the earliest steps of my project and assisted me at every stage of this process. Pedro Castillo provided the foundation for my early investigations into Chicana/o history and has been an amazing supporter of my work. Patricia Zavella has been a wealth of knowledge and pushed me to critically think about the ways I

should situate my project, not just within history, but also as a scholar of race. Dana Frank, who has served as my advisor during my years at Santa Cruz, has helped shape me as a scholar and writer, and I am grateful for her advice and her support over the years. My chair, Gabriela Arredondo, has been an absolute source of inspiration to me. Not only has she encouraged me in developing my intellectual identity, she has been the person to give a firm nudge when I was not being the most productive, pushed me to think critically about the type of scholar I want to be, encouraged me to believe that I could do this even when I wanted to give up, and overall made me appreciate what it means to be a teacher by serving as a role model. I am deeply honored to have worked with all of these amazing individuals.

My time as a graduate student has also introduced me to some wonderful colleagues who have helped shape my identity as a scholar. Many thanks go to Alicia Romero, Sabrina Sanchez, Sara Smith, Chrislaine Pamphile Miller, Troy Crowder, Colin Tyner, Cheryl Lemus, Meg Gudgeirsson, Michael Jin, Jessica Roa, Susy Zepeda, Gloria Chacón, and Sandra Alvarez. I must give a very special thanks to my *colegas*, Xóchitl Chávez and Marianne Bueno, for their friendship and support in this shared journey. Our many get-togethers where we discussed our scholarship and indulged in good food provided me with the sustenance I needed to keep motivated and keep writing. Marianne, especially, took me under her wing and taught me everything she knew about research and writing and what it means to be a Chicana feminist historian. I feel privileged to be able to work with her and call her my Chicana “her-story” *hermana*. I also wanted to give a special thanks to Dr. Matt Lasar

and Dr. Maria Elena Diaz, both of whom I had the pleasure of working with as a teaching assistant. The passion that both of these professors have for teaching history and the invaluable lessons I learned from speaking with them and observing them has been monumental in shaping my own methods for teaching and my relationships with students.

I also would like to thank the Ethnic Studies Program at Santa Clara University, most especially Dr. James Lai, Dr. Ramón Chacón, and Pauline Nguyen. I had the privilege to teach my own courses in this program, which has proven to be a wonderful experience. These individuals have also encouraged and supported me in my efforts to finish my dissertation. They were always ready with a kind word, encouragement, and belief in my abilities. Dr. Chacón, in particular, has been my long-time friend and mentor. It is because of him that I even ventured into academia in the first place. He was the person who told me I could do it when I was not even aware that becoming a historian was a career option. He continues to be a huge source of support for me, including introducing me to people in his hometown of Fresno while I was researching this dissertation project. I will be forever grateful and indebted to him for igniting the fire that eventually lit my career path.

I would like to thank my friends for all of their support over the years. They provided me with everything from words of encouragement, making me dinner, coffee talks, but most of all just being there. Thank you to Janell Wolwacz, Oleg Wolwacz, Monica Garcia, Ericka Bratton, Miriam Hernandez Kohl, Christina Jenkins, Tonantzin Mitre, Nish Nijjar, Diana Rodriguez, Jovan Bell, Penny Howie,

Adriene Raleigh, Stephanie Pesantes, Juan Rodriguez, Eddie and Stephanie Farias, Gerald and Crystal Gonzales, Nashely Villalvazo, Sylvano Alvarez, Cesar Herrera and Celina Escobedo, Lorenzo and Elizabeth Medina, Ruben Orozco and Rachelle Andersen, Stephanie Cooper, the Rodriguez family, and my Midwest dissertation buddy and best friend Dr. José A. Cabrales. A special thank you to Marissa Brown, not only for her friendship, but also for the much-needed help in editing my dissertation.

Finally I would like to thank my family. My in-laws, the Guzmán family, Ubaldo Guzmán, Teresa Guzmán, Gabriel Guzmán, Cathy Carrillo, Juan-Carlos Guzmán, Dr. Mark Fierro, Cristina Fierro, and of course my nieces and nephews Emilio, Mireya, Emma, and Mark Enrique. Their love and support has been invaluable and words cannot express how much I love and care for them. Thanks to the Burciaga and the Curiel families, as well. I would not be who I am today without my family, the Morales family. It started with my grandmother, Remedios Morales, who is a true definition of a strong matriarch. I like to think that we all have a little bit of her strength, which is what makes us such a strong family.

Thank you to my brother Johnny and his family, Jennifer, and my nephew Moses for their love and support. To my parents, John and Miae Morales, words cannot begin to express how grateful I am to have you both in life. You have both shown me what it means to be a strong independent person and at the same time have always let me know that in case I fall you will be there to catch me. And while I have

gratefully not needed you to do that, it has always served as a source of comfort to know that no matter what, you are there. I love you both.

Finally, last but certainly not least, to my husband Miguel. This project has been a huge part of my life for the last ten years, and has therefore been a big part of his life as well. So, in every conceivable way, I share this dissertation and this accomplishment with him. This endeavor would not have even been possible without the sacrifice, unconditional love, and support he has given me. During this project, Miguel and I were blessed with two amazing sons, Joaquin and Santana. The focus of why I was completing this project shifted in a major way after having my boys. So now that I am done with the project, and am feeling full of gratitude to everyone listed, as well as many more who I am probably not remembering, this project is ultimately dedicated to my babies. They served as the motivating source to push forward every day in the hopes that what I have learned about history, about scholarship, and about being a mother is shaping their lives in a positive way. It is my hope that in some way this will encourage them to find their own paths towards their dreams.

INTRODUCTION RACE AND SPACE IN FRESNO, CALIFORNIA

Figure 1 Fresno County Highlighted¹



The first time I drove to Fresno, California I expected to see a small farming community not unlike where I grew up. My hometown, Gilroy, California, famed “Garlic Capital of the World,” is approximately 2 hours Northwest of Fresno and is similarly a city dependent on agriculture as its economic lifeline. I considered myself familiar with agricultural-based community living. My father was part of a farm working family and used to take my brother and I around town and through the back roads of Gilroy to show us where he worked as a child, pointing out what crops he and his 10 siblings used to pick. I had imagined that Fresno would have the same

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_California_highlighting_Fresno_County.svg, accessed June 2012.

small farm community feeling that I experienced in my youth. But as I pulled into the general vicinity of Fresno, passed the county line and the long rows of planted fields and industrial farm machinery, I was awestruck at the size of it all. While I had assumed Fresno to be a small farming community like Gilroy, it was instead a daunting rural metropolis, which encompassed 12 freeway exits off of Highway 99 alone. A sprawling city with a current population of over 480,000 residents, it is a far cry from small town living.² And yet, while offering an urban oasis of sorts within the rural confines of the San Joaquin Valley, Fresno and its surrounding areas are relatively unexamined in terms of academic inquiry.

Along with the sheer size of the city, the second thing that was apparent to me from my first afternoon conducting archival research at the downtown library was the stratified nature of the community. Just west of downtown Fresno is a decaying and economically depressed section known locally as West Fresno or the Westside. This area historically housed Fresno's Chinatown, Japantown, and the Mexican barrio, known as *El Barrio Chino*. Today, there are a few shops and restaurants that mostly cater to the ethnic Mexican community. Liquor stores and discount shopping centers have replaced the once thriving community of color. Despite efforts to revitalize the once vibrant area, it is now just a shell of its former self. Immediately I questioned, how did it get to this?

Historically, Fresno played a major role in state and national agriculture; however, there are few scholarly works that interrogate the means by which it grew.

² "About Fresno," *City of Fresno Website*, accessed November 2011, <http://www.fresno.gov/DiscoverFresno/default.htm>

Beginning as a largely barren and arid space in California due to the intense summer heat, early Spanish and Mexican explorers in the 1700s and 1800s deemed Fresno as unfit for settlement. It would not be until after the US-Mexico war, 1846-1848, that the area would be home to a major population; the discovery of gold in California prompted a major migration of whites from the Eastern part of the US. These new settlers not only increased the population of the San Joaquin Valley, but also brought with them notions of race and racism developed in their former communities. Thus, by the 1870s the city of Fresno developed along with the process of racialization of people of color, creating the reality of a racially segregated Fresno. During the inception of the city, white settlers immediately crafted a geographical boundary to separate themselves from the Chinese, who they marked as the first non-white group. This separation resulted in the emergence of Fresno's Chinatown, west of the downtown area. If one drives through the Westside of Fresno there is a significant departure from the rolling green pastoral dreams that were once heralded as Fresno's image. The Westside, as historian Ramón D. Chacón has pointed out, is currently a picture of urban blight. The overgrown weeds in most of the yards, large empty lots within the residential district, and substandard housing available are all markers of a depressed segregated social space.³ The Brookings Institute, in our post-Hurricane Katrina era, revealed in a national report that Fresno, not New Orleans, had the deepest pockets of poverty in the nation.⁴ Driving through the Westside district in the

³ Ramon D. Chacon, "The Beginning of Racial Segregation: The Chinese in West Fresno and Chinatown's Role as a Red Light District" *Southern California Quarterly*, 70, no 4 (1988): 371-398.

⁴ Allan Berube and Bruce Katz, "Katrina's Window: Confronting Concentrated Poverty Across America," in *Brooking Institution and Metropolitan Policy Program* (Washington, DC, 2005).

late 2000s, after the major national economic downturn, one can see the evidence of poverty in the numerous tent cities erected near the Westside off-ramps of Highway 99.

Given that Fresno is an agricultural hub city—a place where most people from smaller farming communities come in for culture, shopping, and other forms of leisure—while also housing such a significantly economically depressed sector caused me to reflect on Fresno’s position as an important centralized city in the state of California. Here we have a major city accessible by Interstate 5, connecting directly to Sacramento, and situated halfway between San Francisco and Los Angeles, two major urban centers in California. Like many other large cities it is also racially segregated. These revelations raised my curiosity and posed some important questions: How did Fresno become racially segregated? How does this racial segregation relate, if at all, to the economic success of Fresno’s agricultural pursuits? What strategies, if any, did the non-white racial groups use to cope with their segregated status?

My study examines and interrogates the process of racialization that coincided with the development of Fresno, California, an important agricultural site in California. My project reflects how the process of racial formation, defined by Michael Omi and Howard Winant as “the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed,” created two specific racial projects in the region: the development of a racially segregated Fresno and the

commodification of workers of color within the agriculture industry.⁵ Both of these processes worked together to mold Fresno into an important hub city within the Central Valley of California while also priming the conditions for the economic success of Fresno locally, regionally, and nationally. My project maps this process from the beginning of Fresno as a small town founded primarily by white migrants who brought their own racial assumptions about their position of power to the historical moment of World War II, which serves as a key example of how Fresno's everyday racial dynamics and social interplay both eliminated and created opportunities for non-whites in West Fresno. The events of World War II, particularly the removal of Japanese people from the West Coast, highlights the various ways in which whites racialized people of color and also how the non-whites understood and defined their own racial position within Fresno. This particular historical moment reflects the conditions of the nation in wartime, where shifts occurred in national understandings of citizenship, accountability, responsibilities, power, and autonomy.

* * *

While California has been vastly studied in the area of race, race relations, and community development, there are still many communities within the state that have been ignored. Early studies of people of color in California focus on Southern California and specifically urban spaces like Los Angeles.⁶ Recent scholarship of

⁵ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2nd ed. (New York, New York: Routledge Press, 1994), 55.

⁶ See: Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1979); Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Los Angeles Barrio, 1850-1890* (Berkeley, California:

people of color in the West/California has opened and expanded our understanding of what it means to be non-white in California, extending the focus to the central and northern parts of the state. One example of such work is Stephen Pitti's work *The Devil in Silicon Valley* which focuses on the ethnic Mexican Community of San José, California from its beginning as a mining community to the social activism of the 1950s and 1960s.⁷ In his conclusion, Pitti points out that few scholars have written about San José and despite the fact that it is home to a significant Mexican population it had only received "scant attention."⁸ Pitti goes on to state, "It's a scandalous fact that no one else has attempted an extended historical study of Latinos in Silicon Valley, a population of undeniable importance and a place roundly celebrated and reviled."⁹ In many ways, my project speaks to the same sentiment using Fresno as my case study; this project reflects how areas like Fresno are vital to understanding the process of racialization, yet they remain relatively unstudied.

A few scholars, such as Ramón D. Chacón, Lea Ybarra, Alex Saragoza, and some local historians have written about Fresno.¹⁰ Alex Saragoza's monograph *Fresno's Hispanic Heritage*, points to the significance of the history of ethnic

University of California Press, 1979); Ricardo Romo, *East Los Angeles: A History of a Barrio* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1983).

⁷ Stephen Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican Americans*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁸ Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley*, 198.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See: Ramón D. Chacón, "A Case Study of Ghettoization and Segregation: West Fresno's Black and Chicano Community During the 1970s," *Stanford Research Center for Chicano Research*, Working Paper no. 12 (Stanford, California: Stanford Center for Chicano Research, 1986); Alex Saragoza, *Fresno's Hispanic Heritage* (San Diego, California: San Diego Federal Savings and Loan Association, 1980); Lea Ybarra and Alex Saragoza, *Nuestras Raíces: The Mexican Community in the Central San Joaquin Valley* (Fresno, California: TEACH Project-La Raza Studies-California State University, 1980).

Mexicans in Fresno and throughout the San Joaquin Valley.¹¹ He argues that a larger and in-depth study is needed to gain full appreciation of the contributions of Fresno's ethnic Mexican residents. Devra Weber's work *Dark Sweat, White Gold*, which explores cotton culture and ethnic Mexican laborers, is one of the few major publications covering issues of labor, race relations, and agency in the Central Valley of California.¹² She not only highlights the Central Valley as the "heartland of California's capitalist agriculture, which has dominated the Valley economy since the 1870s," but also describes it as simultaneously a place where silences and invisibility around the history of these migrant workers exist. Weber asserts that these workers were both invisible faces within the Central Valley as laborers and starkly absent within the scholarship about the Central Valley's agricultural success. Weber points out that viewing these workers as "objects, not subjects" rendered them without agency in the history they helped construct. While her work pulls away from the imagery of victimization, there is also another layer that needs to be deconstructed, that of the racialization and commodification by white growers towards these working-class non-white groups.¹³

The first non-white racial group involved with whites in the process of racialization was Chinese migrants. Whites relegated the Chinese to the Westside of Fresno, literally the other side of the railroad tracks, which was a space that came to house and represent racialized "others." While the city was developing these racial

¹¹ Saragoza, *Fresno's Hispanic Heritage*.

¹² Devra Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold: California Farm Workers, Cotton, and the New Deal* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994).

¹³ *Ibid.*

cleavages, simultaneously, the introduction of an irrigation system transformed the arid desert-like land into a lush cultivatable oasis in the Valley. The majority of the white settlers came from farming and cattle raising backgrounds, which made the potential of growth for the agriculture industry in Fresno and its surrounding areas striking. The climate was ideal for several major national crops such as wheat, cotton, figs, and grapes to become economically successful. However, as the industry grew from small family farms to big agriculture farming, the need for a cheap labor force was apparent. I argue that the insatiable demand for cheap labor by white growers lent itself to a further racialization of people of color as categorically reserved for farm labor. While this particular situation is true of many areas throughout the Southwest as well as the US at large, I focus on the dynamics of the racialization process as it effects three groups in Fresno over the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican migrants in Fresno. With the influences of racist nativist discourse and definitions of “race-d” citizenship the white founders of Fresno nurtured a racially-divided space and a racially-divided work force.¹⁴ By maintaining these divisions in both areas, the white population cultivated not only a racially separate social reality, but also a segregated work space, where they defined people of color as labor only, thereby, commodifying the corporeal

¹⁴ For further exploration on nativism see: George J. Sanchez, “Face the Nation: Race, Immigration, and the Rise of Nativism in the Late Twentieth Century America” *International Migration Review*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Winter 1997): 1009-1030. Here Sanchez describes the trend of a return to the nativist discourse of the late nineteenth/early twentieth century in the current era of racial strife during the violence in the Los Angeles Riots of the 1990s. A key point on nativism that Sanchez offers is that while nativist discourse is “liked to racial discourse, they are not one and the same, and they often lead in different directions.” (1013). So while not all nativist positions are racist, the ones to which I am discussing here are both racist and nativist. For further discussion on nativism in the US see: John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925* (New York, New York: Atheneum Press, 1955).

existence of these workers of color within the agricultural industry.¹⁵ This was a two-prong process, social and economic, which meant that non-white racial groups often, but not always, did not possess opportunities to move outside of their prescribed racial positions.

In his canonical piece *Factories in the Field*, Carey McWilliams established the theory of ethnic labor succession as a means to illuminate the exploitative nature of industrial agriculture in California.¹⁶ McWilliams described how non-white racial groups, and in some historical moments the white working class, arrived in waves to work in the agriculture fields, each individual group recruited after the previous group was often exhausted out of the system. McWilliams loosely highlights the group succession as Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and Mexicans respectively.¹⁷ However, sociologist Adrian Cruz asserts in his dissertation “Racialized Fields: Asians, Mexicans, and the Farm Labor Struggle in California” that McWilliams’ ethnic succession theory does not give an adequate explanation for the racial lens of this exploitation. In fact, Cruz states that McWilliams theory results in the definition of agriculture exploitation as a class issue with racial tensions.¹⁸ My dissertation subjects reflect the ethnic succession trend established by McWilliams in *Factories in the Field*—Chinese, Japanese, and Mexicans—and it also offers the more detailed view

¹⁵ Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zuñiga, “Locating Culture” in *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 5.

¹⁶ Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field: The story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (Santa Barbara, California: Peregrine Publishers, 1971).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

¹⁸ Adrian Cruz, “Racialized Fields: Asians, Mexicans, and the Farm Labor Struggle in California.” Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 2009, 25.

<http://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/14583/1_Cruz_Adrian.pdf?sequence=3>, accessed May 2012.

into the racial dynamic of the community that Cruz is seeking in his inquiry on the ethnic succession theory. By tackling the details of each group's experience in Fresno as laborers and community members, I am building on McWilliams' work but also pushing the boundaries of the ethnic succession theory to demonstrate that the racialization of these laborers of color by white growers is the central tension, coupled with the class differences, rather than merely a condition of the class relationship.

Despite a lack of access to political power and economic opportunity, each group still defined themselves against the imposed position given by the white population, growers and citizens alike. Even within their individual groups, they viewed themselves and their opportunities for upward mobility quite differently. One of the major factors in this difference was access to citizenship. Both the Chinese and Japanese groups were ineligible for citizenship under the 1924 Johnson-Reed Immigration Act.¹⁹ Mexicans, on the other hand, had a different relationship to citizenship, which they were loosely granted, as defined by the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo; however, *de facto* relationships with whites maintained that Mexicans were relegated to a lower citizenship and class status.

In "Illegal Status and Social Citizenship: Thought on Mexican Immigrants in a Postnational World," Adelaida Del Castillo theorizes about the concept of social citizenship, where despite not having legal claims "immigrants defy the state's

¹⁹ For further information on race and citizenship in context of the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act see: Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004).

political and judicial prerogatives and challenge fundamental standards of civil society, nationhood, and national borders” by practices that “consists mostly of informal, sometimes makeshift, activities at the local level that suggest a civic identity and social citizenship made possible by the benefits and government largess of the welfare state.”²⁰ While Del Castillo is making the argument for social citizenship, or what she calls postnational citizenship for undocumented Mexican migrants, the aspects of informal practice, etc. as a means to define social citizenship can be used in the case for many non-white groups. I choose to employ her theory in my project as a way to think about how groups such as the Chinese and Japanese, who were denied legal citizenship, and later Mexicans who were denied social membership because of racism, still attempted to engage as social members of the community.

My project shows that despite the definitions of citizenship, or non-citizenship, imposed by whites upon non-white racial groups, people of color began to cultivate and nurture their own social identities within the confined space of West Fresno. The late nineteenth century bore witness to the rise of Chinatown and later in the early twentieth century the creation of Japantown adjacent to the Chinese community, allowing West Fresno to become its own vibrant racial space. This drew in Chinese and Japanese throughout the Valley constructing West Fresno as a hub for cultural life. Given that white growers defined Chinese and Japanese as laborers, the identity of “farm worker” came to be inscribed on their bodies. As Setha M. Lowe

²⁰ Adelaida Del Castillo, “Illegal Status and Social Citizenship: Thought on Mexican Immigrants in a Postnational World,” *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* Vol. 27, No. 2 (Fall 2002), 13.

and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga theorize in *The Anthropology of Race and Space*, these workers of color became, themselves, embodied spaces, their actual “corporeal existence” marking the commodification of their labor.²¹ Through their bodies and through their lived experience, we can study and analyze how they were understood by the white elite class but also how they negotiated what Natalia Molina refers to as their own social membership within the community, both as citizens and non-citizens alike.²²

The earliest groups to fulfill this work were of ethnic Asian descent, Chinese in the latter part of the 1800s and then Japanese in the early twentieth century. In *Prisoners Without Trial*, Roger Daniels points out to the connection between early anti-Chinese movements as the seedling for later anti-Japanese sentiment. Daniels argues that both movements were born from white labor leaders. He also notes that the largest concentration of Japanese lay heavily in the rural areas of the west, and stated that the “heart of the Japanese American economy was in the country.”²³ The Japanese community in particular was an important and vital component of Fresno’s agricultural success; however, the anti-Asian movements, or yellow peril discourse, which had grown exponentially during the first half of the twentieth century led to an

²¹ Low and Lawrence-Zuñiga, “Locating Culture,” 5.

²² Natalia Molina, *Fit to Be Citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2006), 3. In reference to Fresno, the idea of social membership includes the strategies and negotiations of first generation migrants who were often not US citizens, as well as *bracero* workers who were contracted Mexican nationals. All of these groups lived, worked, and interacted within Fresno, specifically West Fresno. Also, by “citizens” I am referring to the legal definition of US citizenship.

²³ Roger Daniels, *Prisoners Without Trial: Japanese Americans in World War II* (New York, New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 17.

overall instability of the position of these communities within Fresno as well as the rest of the West.

Later as the Mexican population settled in greater numbers within West Fresno, it became known as *El Barrio Chino*, reflecting the shift in its racial makeup. As all three groups began to define their respective cultural communities, my project reflects that they did so in a way that overlapped with one another given that they were living within the same defined geographical space. West Fresno functioned as a multi-racial dynamic space where, as Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence Zuniga describe, the groups living there “inscribed” or wrote themselves onto the physical landscape. Whites continually enforced spatial boundaries and limited work opportunities for people of color, denying them a chance for advancement and creating a system of oppression for Asians (Chinese and Japanese) and later Mexicans within agriculture and in social membership.

As Omi and Winant describe how a “historical flexibility of racial meaning and categories” exists, we can see this malleability play out in the historical moment of Japanese internment during World War II. Despite attempts for all three groups to carve a niche within Fresno, the entrance of the US into World War II shifted the community of Fresno and had a lasting impact for these groups, more specifically for the Japanese and Mexicans. Despite significant war time contributions and declarations of patriotism offered by the Japanese in the US, after the Pearl Harbor attack racial xenophobia led to their removal across the West Coast by 1942.

The events that catapulted the US into World War II jolted the balance of these communities. Japanese, who represented a significant portion of workers in the Central Valley and Fresno's agricultural industry were subsequently part of the West Coast removal and incarceration of "enemy alien." While racialized discourse against the Japanese stemming from the long deep-seated yellow peril discourse pushed the white community to lobby for their removal, it was done without acknowledging they were a significant part of the labor force.

The removal of the Japanese community from the West Coast communities set up a domino effect that rippled through the Central Valley, Fresno and its surrounding communities, as the loss of access to Japanese laborers created one of the lowest yielding harvest seasons ever. White growers needed to figure out a way to save their economic investments and strategized different ways to ensure an adequate labor supply. However, the way they chose to strategize sent Fresno's local community into a racial conundrum. White growers, specifically, attempted to redraw the lines of racial differences and blur national discourses around "yellow peril" in order to save their harvest crops. The loss of Japanese as workers pushed white growers to justify their return under strict supervision despite national understandings of Japanese people as "dangerous enemy aliens." Attempts to have the incarcerated Japanese released into custody of farmers in a semi-prison work program were summarily denied because the federal government had categorized the Japanese as a national threat. The fact that the growers would even attempt to create such a program demonstrated how little they thought of the Japanese. There was no concern around

the individual rights of the Japanese, the focus was entirely on the products of the harvest. When this strategy failed it was followed by a major push towards white volunteerism.

White growers attempted to repackage the actual farm work away from the racial stigma of lower-class nonwhite labor into the patriotic duty which all fellow white Americans needed to participate in order to contribute to the war effort. In the same vein that the traditional World War II narrative demonstrates, the agricultural industry also highlighted its important role in the national war effort. Growers began to actively recruit white workers by redefining the work as patriotic duty. Farm labor jobs, which whites categorically defined as suitable for non-whites, were re-imagined as valiant and courageous efforts against the treachery overseas. However, this program was also a failure for lack of manpower and a lack of skilled workers. The downfall of the 1942 harvest season, after the Japanese were removed, proved that Fresno's agricultural industry was far more dependent on the Japanese labor than previously assumed. All parts of the agricultural industry panicked and scrambled for any kind of a solution to minimize the effects of this major loss

Finally, the desperation of the growers gave way to the use of Mexican nationals, who were brought in under the federal Emergency Farm Labor Relief Program during the 1942-1943 harvest season. The use of the program by growers reverted the definition of farm labor back to a non-white racial position, and with the added lack of US citizenship of these laborers, further solidified the commodification of non-white bodies. Growers dropped the patriotic rhetoric and aggressively pushed

the Farm Security Administration and the United States Employment Services, the entities in charge of the program to bring as many Mexican National workers as possible to serve their labor needs. Again, these workers were not seen as important or significant individuals, but only as a labor commodity. The Mexican National worker was inscribed as the new commodified body.

Bracero workers were precariously positioned within the community because there was also a sizeable established Mexican American community, which was living and thriving in West Fresno. The West Fresno Mexican community had been a part of the labor community throughout the valley, but had settled in Fresno and marked its permanency and importance in establishing cultural development in the segregated space to which they were relegated. They endured the many challenges being largely ignored as a significant population because of the number of Asian communities living on the Westside. Chinatown and Japantown were mostly highlighted as areas of culture in the early part of the twentieth century. However, with the removal of the Japanese community and the entrance of Mexican National workers, the racial landscape of West Fresno noticeably changed. While the removal of the Japanese was not celebrated by the ethnic Mexican community, it did create a window of opportunity for upward economic mobility.

World War II served as an opportunity for the established Mexicans in West Fresno to negotiate and define their position as American. Japanese removal unintentionally created an opening for established Mexicans to assert their citizenship, both through participation in the war as soldiers and through the various

home front efforts to support the war via fundraising and community organizing. However, in this navigation of defining an American identity, Mexicans were still very tied to the cultural practices of their Mexican heritage. As George Sanchez points out in his work *Becoming Mexican American*, which focuses on the development of Mexican American identity in Los Angeles during the first half of the twentieth century, “cultural adaptations marked the transition to a Mexican American Lifestyle.”²⁴ Ethnic Mexicans who established themselves in Fresno asserted “Americanness,” but not without cultural caveats.

Despite the fact that the spatial segregation continued throughout the war and well into the second half of the twentieth century, the established Mexicans continued to thrive. The creation of a number of organizations, rooted in the *mutualista* tradition, served to create conditions where Fresno became a cultural hub for Mexicans in the surrounding areas. Much like the Chinese and Japanese before them, Mexicans in Fresno’s Westside began to formulate a cultural environment, a space where identity was formed, a space where heritage and history continued in practice, and fundamentally a space where pride and organizing skills flourished.

My project adds to recent scholarship that also challenges our notions of Chicana/o community and non-white racial communities in general. Scholars such as Stephen Pitti and Matt Garcia call attention to different definitions of Chicana/o communities within the West. Pitti and Garcia build particularly upon studies of early

²⁴ George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 11.

scholars such as Albert Camarillo and Mario Barrera,²⁵ that push the notions of California communities, specifically Mexican/Mexican American communities, outside of traditional urban sites such as Los Angeles and El Paso. Matt Garcia's important work *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970*, explores the suburban experience of the Southwest, while also importantly focusing on the importance of landscapes or spatial location in shaping our understanding of community and fundamentally identity.²⁶ Stephen Pitti's work *The Devil in Silicon Valley* traces the history of ethnic Mexicans in San José, known as the technological capital of the nation. Showing the early history and the important relationship and contributions of Mexicans to one of the wealthiest areas of the US also pushes our notions of the positionality of ethnic Mexican communities in the US. All of these works inform this project where I am pushing to both redefine understandings of where Chicanas/os live and function, but also, like Garcia, interrogate the racial landscape and how the physical geography relates to identity formation. Along the same lines of historian Valerie Matsumoto's *Farming the Home Place*, a case study on the Japanese community of Cortez, this project is also attempting to examine the "social and cultural questions raised by urban researchers" to "a farming settlement."²⁷ While Matsumoto's work focused

²⁵ Mario Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979); Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1979).

²⁶ Matt Garcia, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

²⁷ Valerie Matsumoto, *Farming the Home Place: A Japanese American Community in California, 1919-1982* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), 10.

exclusively on the Japanese community, my work builds on this to make inroads into utilizing an urban theorization on a rural settlement turning a multi-racial lens on Fresno's Westside.

There have been notable historical works that have focused on moving history toward a multi-racial lens. Evelyn Nakano Glenn's *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor*, for example, applies both race and gender analysis in explaining how the labor market demands shaped notions of citizenship in the US.²⁸ Glenn takes on the task of mapping a theoretical framework which reflects how social policies and the political meaning of citizenship rights are constantly shifting, not based on the political climate, but on the economic realities of the particular space and time. The later chapters of her book are then divided into case studies focused on three groups: Mexicans in the Southwest, African Americans in the South, and Asian Americans in Hawaii. While Glenn's framework does demonstrate the theory she has created, her work is somewhat limited by the separation of the case studies, rather than working on a multi-racial study within a single community. However, Glenn's work does offer a framework that is useful in investigating questions of labor and citizenship.²⁹

²⁸ Evelyn Nakano-Glenn, *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002).

²⁹ For more exploration of multi-racial communities see: Laura Pulido, *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2006); Roger Sanjek, *The Future of All of Us: Race and Neighborhood Politics in New York City* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1998); Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004); Jerry García and Gilberto García, eds., *Memory, Community and Activism: Mexican Migration and Labor in the Pacific Northwest* (East Lansing, Michigan: JSRI Books; Michigan State University Press, 2005).

The aspect of my project that seeks to understand multi-racial/multi-ethnic relationships more closely follows the genealogy of historians such as Neil Foley, Natalia Molina, and Gabriela Arredondo, who examine the racial dynamics of multiple racial groups within a specific city. Neil Foley's seminal work *The White Scourge* examined cotton culture in Texas in the early twentieth century. Foley looks at the interplay between different racial groups, specifically whites, African Americans, and Mexicans, and their relationship not only to the cotton industry, but their relationships to federal policies, particularly the New Deal programs of the 1930s and 1940s.³⁰ In his work, Foley demonstrates the ways the white elite used race to pit communities against one another. This included doling out privileges to the white working class, who worked side by side with the communities of color, yet developed a sense of entitlement from their race privilege. By looking at the community in Texas' cotton culture in this way, Foley shows how these communities were inextricably linked, thereby defining their understandings of their position only in relation to the other, thereby disrupting the black-white dichotomy in which the South was understood to function.

Natalia Molina's work, *Fit to be Citizens?*, focuses on the Los Angeles County Health Department's perceptions, assumptions, and eventually definitions of the Asian-Chinese and Japanese-and Mexican communities dealing with issues of health and sanitation, which eventually lent meaning to definitions of racial identities

³⁰ Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1997).

of these groups.³¹ In examining the trajectory of the Health Department's treatment of first Asian and then Mexican communities, Molina is not only interrogating the discourse of the health department and its contribution to creating racist policy against these communities, but her work is also reflective of the connection that these communities of color share in this specific instance of racial discrimination. Molina's work informs a different way to approach a study of larger themes, such as discourse around health using a multi-ethnic perspective. Her study reflects that a multi-ethnic approach is necessary to fully understand the scope of any one individual community's battle with discrimination. In the case of her project on public health discourse, the narratives of communities of color's health conditions developed by the health department officials built upon one another because they lived in close proximity of one another.

Gabriela Arredondo's work *Mexican Chicago* simultaneously pulls the notions of studying Chicana/o community out of the normative Western urban sites and focuses on Chicago, a Midwestern urban city where spatial relationships between ethnic/racial communities played an important part in defining identity and constructions of culture and social development for many groups, but specifically ethnic Mexicans.³² Her project interrogates the meanings and constructions of "Mexicaness" which was formulated and defined in relationship to Americanization ideals as idealized by other groups, notably ethnic Europeans, who were experiencing

³¹ Natalia Molina, *Fit to Be Citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2006).

³² Gabriela Arredondo, *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation, 1916-1939* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

Americanization in a much different way than the Mexican community was allowed to with its restrictions. In her work, Arredondo points to the fact that the history of Mexicans in Chicago is implicitly tied to these other ethnic communities, especially given that the different neighborhoods were integrated to the point that Mexicans did not constitute a majority. In similar fashion, Fresno Mexicans also did not constitute a majority population initially, so their confined space was very entrenched with the culture and community of their Asian counterparts.³³

These three works are among a group of scholarship that highlights the importance of understanding communities of color, not just as monolithic one-dimensional entities, but instead as fluid and active participants that worked in relationship with and in reaction to the other members, individuals, and racial groups in their physical surroundings. My project seeks to flush out the differences in experiences for those who lived in West Fresno, and present a nuanced multi-racial neighborhood, pulling away from essentializing the space as merely an Asian community or a Mexican community. The reality was these groups worked within the same confined geographical space, spent their leisure time within the same stores, gambling houses, and dancehalls, and ultimately developed their sense of self within the context of West Fresno and in relationship to the other community. I argue that by the 1940s the established Mexicans were able to play a larger and more active social and political role within west and greater Fresno because of the unintentional outcomes of Japanese internment. While Mexicans were neither responsible for the

³³ My use of the term “Fresnan” denotes a local person from Fresno. It is not limited to one ethnic/racial group but instead refers to individuals residing within the city limits of Fresno.

internment nor were they in agreement with internment, they still reaped the benefit of becoming a majority, not only in numbers, but in community position and power.

Ultimately my dissertation signals the necessity to study areas such as Fresno, which has garnered little scholarly attention. Fresno has a rich history that informs larger historical themes of race/racism and labor. It serves as an example reflecting how racist attitudes can be transplanted and cultivated thereby constructing an entirely segregated social and economic structure. Moreover, while historical events, such as World War II, affected the entire nation, issues such as Japanese removal and containment had very specific meanings to a space such as Fresno, which depended on Japanese labor. Historical events such as these change the way race is defined by multiple groups. These definitions are not set but instead a process of negotiation among the different players involved. In the case of Fresno, the white sector manipulated racial definitions for the perceived economic “good.” Overall, the way this city developed as a racially segregated space broadens our understanding not only of racism and its practice, but also the autonomy and power cultivated by the segregated groups of West Fresno. Despite the denial of access to political power and gross racial discrimination by whites, these groups still thrived socially and culturally.

* * *

Chapter 1 focuses on the earliest settlement of Fresno. In this chapter I set up the foundation as to how Fresno became racially segregated. Originally ignored by early Spanish settlers, Fresno was seen as an arid and undesirable place for human settlement. The discovery of gold along the riverbanks of California’s Valley was

what initially drew the population of the East and Midwesterners into the San Joaquin Valley. As the mining industry dissipated, the white miners decided to settle permanently in the valley. Given that the majority of these transplants were former small farmers, it was only logical to adapt those practices in the West. For Fresno, however, it was not until the process of irrigation was solidified that the land turned into a lush “garden of Eden.”³⁴ As Fresno developed into a township, the white settlers claimed ownership over the area utilizing notions of power and privilege that were developed from their former communities. Despite the fact that there was a significant indigenous population, despite the fact that they had mined side-by-side with Chinese and Mexicans, these “foreigners” were not included in the conception of what Fresno city was meant to become, a white space.

This chapter also maps out the evolution of the agriculture industry. Given the climate of the San Joaquin Valley, a major coup by way of irrigation projects was necessary in the creation of the now rich agricultural lands. As crops such as cotton, wheat, figs, and grapes became economically successful for the early white settlers, Fresno and the surrounding areas developed from small farm communities to a more corporate farming environment. This growth in agriculture necessitated labor, which, as I discuss, took the form of non-white racial groups/new migrants. In this first chapter I show how whites gained control of the township and immediately set up a class and geographical dichotomy between themselves and groups of color. This early

³⁴ Wallace Smith, *Garden of the Sun: A History of the San Joaquin Valley, 1772-1939* (Fresno, California: Linden Publications, 2004).

push for segregation formed the conditions of what became a racially segregated Fresno and began the process of racialization of laborers of color.

Chapter 2 explores the development of Chinatown in Fresno. Here I investigate how the conditions of segregation created the perception by whites of Chinatown/West Fresno as economically depressed and racially inferior. However, within the segregated space, the Chinese settlers were forming their own social and economic opportunities, which connected them to a statewide Chinese network. Some 600 Chinese, who were relegated to a small 2 by 4 block radius just west of Fresno's downtown area in the early Fresno days, began to cultivate that space to serve the needs of their own community. While segregated away from the other side of the tracks, Fresno's Chinatown was actually part of a larger statewide network of Chinese fraternal organizations, including the Tongs.³⁵ Although most of the white community viewed the Chinese as suspicious, ignorant, and dangerous or diseased, the reality was that Fresno's Chinatown was actually aligned with a system of cultural practices and illicit activities that spanned well out of the scope of Fresno city. At the same time, the Chinese who lived in the local area felt the brunt of the early discriminatory practice against Asian communities, culminating in the federal 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which halted Chinese migration to the US altogether. This chapter highlights the beginnings of a segregated West Fresno and the conditions that shaped the interplay among the people of color who settled there.

³⁵ Tongs were fraternal Chinese organizations, which in the US largely ran gambling, opium trade, and prostitution rings among Chinatowns. See: Richard H. Dillon, *The Hatchet Men: The Story of the Tong Wars in San Francisco's Chinatown* (New York, New York: Coward and McCann Inc., 1962).

Chapter 3 discusses the expansion of the racial landscape in Fresno with the arrival of Japanese migrants. With the decline of new Chinese migration because of exclusion policies, whites saw the Japanese, in some ways, as a replacement for labor. This chapter begins with a background on the Japanese migrant and settlement experiences. Utilizing oral histories of local Japanese, along with secondary sources, I have attempted to piece together a sketch of what it meant to be Japanese in Fresno. This chapter discusses the Fresno Japanese community in the early twentieth century and the strategies many of the local residents utilized to gain land ownership, which was seen by many as the entrance to full citizenship. When the federal government restricted Japanese, or anyone of Asian descent, to gain landownership with the Alien Land Act of 1913, this pebble in the water began a ripple effect of discriminatory practices against the Japanese, which eventually led to their internment during World War II. After the fateful attack on Pearl Harbor by Japan, communities across the West felt the brunt as the war hysteria and yellow peril discourse intersected in one of the ugliest and shameful parts of US history. As the Fresno Japanese community were forced to leave their homes, and in many cases surrender their property, they continued to assert their status as citizens of the community and in the case of half of them, legal citizens of the nation. Individual Japanese strategies to assert their “Americanness” were largely ignored by the local community and federal government alike. In the end, Japanese removal from Fresno, similar to the rest of the West Coast, had major consequences to the labor industry, shifted the racial landscape, as changed

definitions of social and legal citizenship. For Fresno, specifically, Japanese removal challenged whites to define and redefine concepts of who is a “laborer.”

Chapter 4 examines white grower’s attempts to rectify the catastrophic labor loss post-Japanese internment. Here I argue the most significant interruptions to the longstanding racial hierarchy happen as white growers and community members are forced to rethink how the racialized labor source needs to be defined for economic success. The strategies varied from attempts to use the Japanese as imprisoned day laborers to the use of draftees and prisoners of war. The status of these workers was limited to non-existent because of the perceived threat in the case of the incarcerated populations.

When these programs proved to be failures, the growers shifted the discourse around the labor need to fit into the surmounting war machine with a call for white volunteerism. The agricultural industry adopted the discourse that historically surrounds urban industrialized war recruitment, beckoning imagery such as Rosie the Riveter. They began to redefine working for agriculture and assisting with the harvest as part of the patriotic duty of citizens and emphasizing the important role of the harvest providing the food supply for the troops overseas. While this was true, the underbelly of these recruitment efforts had more to do with saving themselves from the deficit of nearly 125,000 laborers after Japanese internment. The 1942 harvest season was the most unsuccessful to date, so in order to ensure that the disaster would not be repeated, the growers began aggressively recruiting Mexican National workers from the Emergency Farm Relief Program, also known as the Bracero program.

While the program was finally able to funnel in the number of workers needed, the entrance of Mexican national workers also had another far deeper implication. Their presence shifted the racial landscape of West Fresno. With Japanese no longer physically present and the Chinese population in decline, Mexicans soon found an opening to change their social and political status.

Chapter 5 looks at the established Mexicans in West Fresno and how they rooted their identity both in the cultural understandings of Mexican heritage and in relationship to social and legal citizenship. Upon entry into Fresno, often as farm laborers, Mexicans began to carve out a space for themselves despite their segregated status. Prior to the war years, many Mexican workers and families settled permanently in West Fresno. They participated in the business sector as entrepreneurs, created social spaces for leisure, and organized in the long-standing *mutualista* tradition of the ethnic Mexican Southwest. The Mexican community remained relatively overlooked by the white population, who predominately viewed them as laborers. Discrimination and prejudice against Mexicans caused them to remain primarily within the segregated section of the city defined by the Asian groups. Yet as the ethnic Mexican community continued to develop, it experienced growth along with city's development as a rural metropolis. The Mexican community, following suit with the other ethnic communities, became an important body for the rest of the San Joaquin Valley and served as a hub for ethnic Mexicans to come into *El Barrio Chino* to shop, find work, and participate in cultural and social activities.

As World War II came underway, Mexicans for the most part began to use the past community survival skills of organizing *mutualista* and utilized the organizations to benefit the war drive. The celebration of significant Mexican National holidays such as September 16, Mexican Independence Day, simultaneously brought in the extended Mexican community while also raising money for the Fresno War Chest as a way to note the cultural significance of ethnic Mexican identity and assertion of American identity as a hybrid notion. The war years saw a significant surge of organizing within the Mexican community to better the conditions within the Westside while it also created a sense of ownership or claim to the space of their community. In this, as Setha M. Lowe and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga there was a “transformation of space to place” as the ethnic Mexican community marked its territory physically and ideologically.³⁶

By plotting the history of Fresno in this way, I am highlighting not only the important impact of non-white racial groups to the development of Fresno’s agriculture industry and economic success, but also the ways in which these people impacted and related to one another. Living in the confines of a several block radius made it impossible not to interact and impact each other’s lives as they crossed paths socially, through work situations, and eventually in the face of public policies and racial prejudice. Moreover, this project demonstrates that these non-white people, while forced into the condition of segregation, also seized opportunities to make inroads for their communities. At different times they each contributed to the creation

³⁶ Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga, “Locating Culture,” 13.

of a cultural enclave that mimicked Fresno's ever-growing status in the San Joaquin Valley and within the state. As Paul E. Vandor wrote in 1919, "Fresno County is to the state an empire within an empire," West Fresno was also a segregated empire within the segregated local, state, and national community.³⁷

A Few Notes On Sources and Terminology

In my attempt to recover the history of the Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, and white growers and community members in Fresno I found, as I am certain have most historians who are excavating these types of narratives, that sources centering people of color are limited. I was fortunate to find several key collections that helped to inform my project. There is an extensive oral history collection of the San Joaquin Valley Japanese during World War II at Fresno State University's Henry Madden Library. The collection combines the Fresno County Library's "Success through Perseverance" oral histories of local Japanese with the JACL-CCDC Japanese American oral history collection. The oral interview transcripts were invaluable to my dissertation, specifically Chapter 3. These interviews, which were largely conducted in the 1980s, are an important part of history and I am privileged to have access to them.

The second important collection was the Hispanic Oral History Collection, which documented the lives of ethnic Mexican residents in Fresno. This collection is housed in the Fresno County Free Library. I spoke with Jesus Luna, professor of Raza

³⁷ Paul E. Vandor, *History of Fresno County, California: with Biographical Sketches of the Leading Men and Women of the County Who Have Been Identified with its Growth and Development from the Early Days to the Present* (Los Angeles, California: Historical Record Company, 1919).

Studies at Fresno State University, in 2007 about the collection. Luna was one of the original interviewers for the project, which developed from an oral history/oral interview methodology course in Raza Studies during the late 1970s and early 1980s. This course was taught by Luna, Lea Ybarra, and assisted by Steve Soriano, who was staff at FSU, and was later joined by Alex Saragoza, professor emeritus in Ethnic Studies at Berkeley, who was originally from Fresno. The collection was made into a small local publication highlighting the experiences of Mexicans in Fresno. According to Luna, it was also publicly exhibited for a time with photographs and excerpts of the taped interviews. These original materials are currently missing.

Finally, I was fortunate to encounter the Ben Walker collection at the Fresno County and City Historical Society. Walker, a local historian and former head of the historical society, created a large depository of newspaper clippings, which he catalogued under subject headings. This collection was key in my development of this historical narrative. In sum, I wanted to highlight these three major sources first, because of the importance of these collections in recording historical memory, but also to highlight the limitations of the amount of sources we, as historians, sometimes have available. At the same time, I want to emphasize how important these collections are because they do contain the histories and stories of the lives of these individuals, their trials and tribulations as well as their triumphs.

* * *

Like many scholars before me, the issue of what terminology to use when discussing race is complicated because it is a process of negotiating how the historical

actors defined or identified themselves, how they identified each other, as well as how I, as a scholar, understand and define them. For the purpose of this project I have used white to discuss the Euro American majority who were part of the founding of Fresno as well as those who had roots in other parts of the US before eventually migrating to the San Joaquin Valley. For migrants from Europe I use ethnic European to denote a place of origin as well as possible cultural or ethnic identity. This is, of course, a generalization as I do not have sources that support my definition at this time. For the Chinese and Japanese I use their respective racial identification. For Mexicans I use established Mexicans to indicate those who had settled in Fresno from the early twentieth century, 1910s to 1920s. I use Mexican national to describe new migrants, post-1930, as well as bracero workers. I use bracero to discuss those specifically who worked under contract with the Emergency Farm Labor Relief Program. And finally, at times I use ethnic Mexican as a term that encapsulates both the established Mexican community and Mexican nationals.

CHAPTER 1 THE RISE OF AN AGRICULTURAL HUB—EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF FRESNO, CALIFORNIA

Like much of the West, the development of Fresno was a by-product of the great California Gold Rush in the 1840s and 1850s. Most of the earliest residents were white families who had migrated westward from the South and the Midwest with the hopes of getting rich in the mining industry. According to local historian Schyler Rehart, many of the early white settlers came from former slave-owning states and believed in the confederacy.³⁸ In some cases, white individuals traveled to California with African American companions who local writer, June English, speculates in some cases may have been slaves.³⁹ These individuals wanted to ensure

³⁸ Ben R. Walker, *Fresno Community Book* (Fresno, California: Arthur Cawston Publisher, 1946), 194. Schyler Rehart, "Fresno City Its Leadership and Progress" in *Fresno County in the 20th Century*, ed. Charles Clough, et. al (Fresno, California: Panorama West Books, 1986), 33. Both sources gained this information from Paul E. Vandor, *History of Fresno County with, Biographical Sketches of the Leading Men and Women of the County Who Have Been Identified with its Growth and Development from the Early Days to the Present* (Los Angeles, California: Historical Record Company, 1919), 108. Vandor does not provide any footnotes to support this claim. However, the second half of his work is a series of biographical sketches of prominent citizens of early Fresno. All of the individuals are of European descent except for one individual who migrated from Panama (although Vandor is not clear about the racial status of this person). It is difficult to pinpoint numbers from this source as at times he includes information about spouses and sometimes the spouse is just mentioned without much background. From his biographical sketches approximately 48 individuals migrated from Southern states including Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Texas. Approximately 86 of the individuals were from the Midwest states including Missouri, Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Kansas. There appears to be a significant amount of people from the East Coast/ New England area as well as those who were California born (roughly 37 California natives). The most staggering numbers however came from foreign-born individuals who had either directly came into California or had one stop in another state before arriving in California which was approximately 65. I believe the politics of the Southern individuals was highlighted but they were not the largest concentration by far. Also, the biographical sketches reflect that most of the individuals arrived in California around the later 1860s and 1870s but the years are staggered.

³⁹ This is really a speculation first asserted by June English in her article on the "Fresno County's Black Pioneers." English cites the example of the first documented black individuals in Fresno as recorded in relationship to whites. For example, one of the first recorded black men was Jacob Dodson who was associated with California explorer John C. Fremont. English notes that Dodson was listed as part of the California Battalion but he did not receive wages. This leads English to speculate that

that the township of Fresno would maintain autonomy from state and federal regulations. Moreover, they wanted Fresno to become a place for white families to prosper. Thus, the beginnings of what is today one of the largest agricultural cities in Central California was planted with an early seed of racism. At the end of the nineteenth century, the predominate non-white racial group in Fresno was the Chinese who had participated in mining alongside whites and Mexicans. As Chinese permanently settled in Fresno they were isolated to the Westside of town where they would remain until their population decline in the early twentieth century.

Table 1.1 Total Population of Fresno County and City by Decade⁴⁰

Decade	Fresno County	Fresno City
1880	9,478	1,112
1890	32,026	10,818
1900	37,862	12,470
1910	75,657	24,802
1920	128,779	45,086
1930	144,379	52,513
1940	178,565	60,685

Fresno developed into a focal city within California’s Central Valley by the end of the nineteenth century. The early white settlers literally transformed this arid

Dodson may have been a slave. English, June, “Fresno County’s Black Pioneers” Box 13:Folder Ethnic Groups; African Americans 1871-1877 and 1959-1986, June English Collection, Henry Madden Library, California State University, Fresno, California, 1-2.

⁴⁰United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Population: Vol. II Characteristics of the Population* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1943), 540, 545, and 599; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Population Vol. III, Part I, Alabama-Missouri* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1932), 242, 251, and 248; United States, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920: Population, Vol. III, Characteristics of the Population by States* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1922), 113 and 110; United States, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population, Vol. II, Alabama-Montana* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1913), 145 and 612; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900: Population, Vol. I, Part I* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1901), 75; United States, Bureau of the Census, *Eleventh Census of the United States, 1890: Population of the United States, Part I* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1895), 11 and 70; United States, Bureau of the Census, *Tenth Census of the United States, 1880: Compendium of the Tenth Census, Part I* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1885), 16.

desert land into a lush agricultural powerhouse. In the early part of the twentieth century Fresno continued to grow not only in population, but also in diversity of crops. Various crops such as cotton, figs, grapes, and raisins were grown and harvested within the city limits, as well as throughout the outlying smaller communities. By 1929 Fresno was the tenth largest city in California with a population of 78,646, and by 1941 it swelled to nearly 100,000.⁴¹ The growth of the population was directly linked to the success in agribusiness. Local historian Ben Walker pointed out that while Fresno grew in economic prosperity it was not a “resort town,” but instead an area that developed into a large-scale corporate style farming.⁴² The rise of agriculture and population growth changed how Fresno was defined.

The changes in population and the growth of agriculture shifted Fresno into the hub of the San Joaquin Valley. Although the population was not as large as major urban cities like Los Angeles and San Francisco, Fresno eventually became the place that many people traveled to from surrounding smaller communities for economic opportunities as well as engaging in leisure activities. Cletus Daniel’s work *Bitter Harvest*, discusses how the farming industry in California was a departure from the small farming traditions of early America. Daniel notes that beginning as early as the 1890s California moved toward large-scale farming similar to industrial manufacturing. Daniel argues that the industrialization of farming in California

⁴¹ Schyler Rehart, “Fresno City: Its leadership and Progress” in *Fresno County in the 20th Century*, ed. Charles Clough, et. al (Fresno, California: Panorama West Books, 1986), 56, 59.

⁴² Ben R. Walker, *Fresno County Blue Book: containing facts and impressions for the better understanding of Fresno County* (Fresno, California: A.H. Cawston, 1941).

reformulates it to modern values more akin to the “industrial order.”⁴³ Fresno evolved into this type of “industrial” rural community, while maintaining the characteristics of a rural community. The farming industry became much more than just local family-owned businesses, and instead resembled a sophisticated corporate system. This growth in farming, coupled with the population growth, eventually positioned Fresno as an important city within central California and the state as a whole.

This chapter will explore the rise of Fresno from its humble small town beginnings to the agricultural giant it evolved into by the beginning of the twentieth century. I am arguing that the rise of the agricultural capitalist system effectively lays the foundation for a racially-segregated Fresno. The early white settlers brought with them racist notions, which created a racial divide between whites and Chinese (the first non-white racial group). As Fresno continued to grow, and more people migrated in, white growers began to define non-white racial groups, such as Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican migrants, as laborers. While Chapters 1 and 2 focus primarily on the Chinese, I will touch upon the entrance of all three groups into Fresno as laborers. Later chapters will develop the experiences of the Japanese and Mexicans.

The first part of this chapter will explore the historical background of the city and its development. Beginning with its Spanish roots, Fresno was largely overlooked as a place to settle. There were few inhabitants during the 1840s, primarily just native tribes who took refuge along the banks of the Kings and San Joaquin rivers. The westward migration for the Gold Rush brought the first signs of settlement interest in

⁴³ Cletus Daniel, *Bitter Harvest: A History of California Farmworkers* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1981), 39.

the central valley. Once the mining industry plummeted around 1850-51, the migrants to the West Coast began to create a sense of permanency by establishing communities and relying on their former knowledge of agriculture and cattle raising to settle and make a living. I will discuss the major players in Fresno's inception including the crucial role that both irrigation and the railroad played in creating the buzz about this area as a desirable space to live and work, and how these developments push Fresno to the next level with the town no longer being able to stay small and unassuming.

The next section discusses the development of the agricultural industry in Fresno. As Carey McWilliams writes in *Factories in the Fields*, "In no other state has farming so quickly lost its traditional character and become an established industry as in California."⁴⁴ True to McWilliams' words, Fresno began as a collection of small farming communities or colonies as they were called. However, the success of the crops pushed the potential for growth and the agricultural industry eventually developed into the large-scale farming industry that we are familiar with today. I argue that the other lasting effect of this growing industry was the creation of the race-class divide. As farms grew in size, labor demand increased with it. White growers were no longer able to maintain their land holdings with a small crew, and with the expansion of the labor demand came the increase of migration, primarily by people of color.⁴⁵ Specifically Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican peoples moved into Fresno to fill the labor demand. This increase in population, specifically a racialized

⁴⁴ Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field: The story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (Santa Barbara, California: Peregrine Publishers, 1971), 48.

⁴⁵ My use of people of color is specifically referring to persons of non-European lineage.

working class, eventually led to two realities in the region. The first, which will be discussed in this chapter, was the creation of a proletariat class of color, which fed the economic growth of predominately white growers capitalistic appetites. The second reality, which will be discussed in Chapter 2, was the push by the established white community to claim space in the township, thereby segregating people of color into West Fresno. This area initially established itself as Chinatown, but later became the segregated place where communities of color were isolated and forced to live.

Overall, this chapter lays the groundwork of how Fresno was inscribed early on with a white racial identity and white supremacy. Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zuñiga define an inscribed space as one where “humans ‘write’ in an enduring way their presence on their surroundings.” For Fresno the first white settlers wrote themselves into the top tier of the racial hierarchy thus claiming ownership of Fresno.⁴⁶ Whites defined people of color primarily as laborers and not fellow community members, regardless of the length of time they lived in the area or how they participated in the political economy.

From the Beginning

Fresno, located within California’s Central Valley, better known as the San Joaquin Valley, was initially discovered by Spanish explorers in the 1700s and noted for its dry and arid landscape.⁴⁷ Spanish explorer Pedro Fages reached the Valley in 1772 citing that the space had much potential for settlement with its fertile rivers

⁴⁶ Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zuñiga, “Locating Culture” in *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 13.

⁴⁷ Vador, *History of Fresno County*, 34.

abundant with fish and other wildlife. However, despite much further exploration under Spanish rule, it would not be until almost fifty years later, under the newly minted independent Mexico, that the San Joaquin Valley would become populated.⁴⁸ In 1804 Spanish explorer Gabriel Moraga was one of the first to explore the region that was predominantly inhabited by Native Americans. Moraga found that although the land seemed uncultivable, the valley itself was centered between two main rivers. Moraga named the first river San Joaquin after his father and named the other *El Rio de los Santos Reyes*, known today as the Kings River.⁴⁹ The name Fresno was given to the area by early Spanish explorers because of the abundance of the white ash trees or *fresnos*, a local tree that grew along the banks of the rivers.⁵⁰

Initially, the Spanish explorers and settlers of the region swept through the San Joaquin Valley, but did not settle there. In fact, the use of “Fresno” as a moniker was not recorded until after the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848 in reference to the Fresno River, which was originally named the Santa Ana River by the Spanish-Mexican government.⁵¹ According to the local history source *Imperial Fresno*, after exploring the region in 1846, US explorer John C. Fremont “pronounced it worthless and barren waste, over which roamed wretched Indians, and along the streams of which fed herds of wild horse, elk and antelope.”⁵² While Fremont and others found

⁴⁸ Alex Saragoza, *Fresno's Hispanic Heritage* (San Diego, California: San Diego Federal Savings & Loan Association, 1980), 21.

⁴⁹ Michele Dennis & Kevin White, producers. *A Land Between Rivers*, documentary film, 2006. Produced for Fresno City and County Historical Society.

⁵⁰ Fresno City and County Historical Society, *Imperial Fresno* (Fresno, California: Fresno Republican Publication Co, 1979), 9.

⁵¹ Walker, *Fresno Community Book*, 91.

⁵² *Imperial Fresno*, 8.

the valley to be undesirable, this perception quickly changed with the discovery of gold in the river banks of the San Joaquin Valley.⁵³ Once the US gained California as a territory through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, the Gold Rush of 1849 attracted a large-scale migration from the Eastern part of the country.⁵⁴

The American River to the north and the San Joaquin River in the center of the state were particularly saturated with gold deposits. This discovery caused a massive migration of white Americans who wanted to strike it rich quickly; they left their homes and farmlands to seek riches in the former Mexican territories. For the first time settlers, who were predominantly miners, began to inhabit the central parts of California.⁵⁵ In 1851 Fort Miller was the first mine camp to develop in Fresno County.⁵⁶ White, Chinese and Mexican miners settled along the riverbanks to search for gold. White settlers often carried over with them the virulent racial attitudes against Indigenous people that were common in the Eastern US. This violent racism from the new settlers created a hostile and dangerous environment actively driving out the Indigenous people and at times, forcing them into labor around the mining camps.⁵⁷

⁵³ Walker, *Fresno Community Book*, 91.

⁵⁴ For more on the Gold Rush migration see: Douglas Monroy, *Thrown Among Strangers: The Making of Mexican Culture in Frontier California* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1990); Henry K. Norton, *The Story of California from its Earliest Days to the Present* (Chicago, Illinois: A.C. McClurg, 1913).

⁵⁵ Dennis and White, *A Land Between Rivers*, documentary, 2006.

⁵⁶ Dennis and White, *A Land Between Rivers*, documentary, 2006

⁵⁷ For more on racism against Native peoples in California see: Richard Street, *Beasts of the Field: A Narrative History of California Farm Workers*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994); Douglas Monroy, *Thrown Among Strangers: The Making of Mexican Culture in Frontier California*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1990).

Not all Native American tribes accepted this volatile treatment by the white settlers and in some cases they retaliated with violence. For example, a white miner, D. B. James, recalled a specific incident, “One evening in returning to camp we were horrified to see their [Mexican] camp deserted and one Mexican impaled on his crowbar; spitted like a pig, and he had been roasted (perhaps alive).”⁵⁸ The Mono Indians also attacked and killed a US soldier on sentinel duty in the Yosemite Valley area. James recalled times in which white miners were afraid of a possible Indian attack. For this reason, many white miners banded together to inflict violence on the Native populations as a preemptive measure.⁵⁹ These examples, however, reflect that at times non-white racial groups, in this instance Native Americans, did not just accept the violence and terrorism of white settlers, but instead exerted power in their response.

The Gold Rush represented a great economic opportunity for most white Americans seeking to move westward in search of fortune. However, the lust for gold continued to reveal an ugly and rampant racism. Greed and the fear of perceived “foreigners” prospering over white Americans caused a large anti-immigrant movement. Although many of the non-white racial groups, such as the Chinese and Mexican communities, were longtime residents of California, laws were pushed and passed by the white miners to ensure that the miners of color would be disenfranchised. For example, the 1850 Foreign Miners Tax, passed by the state,

⁵⁸ James, David Bice, manuscript. “Reminiscences of Early Days in the ‘Southern Mines’ Ed. by Lil A. Winchell.” Box 6, Folder 2, June English Collection, 13.

⁵⁹ Ibid. In James’ manuscript he recalls specifically the camp of a miner Jim Savage who after sometime, went on a violent offensive against the indigenous population of the mining areas in the San Joaquin Valley.

taxed foreign miners \$20 dollars a month. Although the law was not explicit in its definition of “foreign” it was primarily used against the Chinese and Mexicans, with little regard to the citizenship status of individuals.⁶⁰

Table 1.2 Chinese and Mexican Miners, Fresno County, 1860⁶¹

Township	# Chinese	# Mexican
Millerton	0	0
Township 1	161	50
Township 2	88	1
Township 3	36	2
Totals for Fresno Co.	285	53

The first Chinese miners came to California and the San Joaquin Valley due to poor conditions and the Taipeng Rebellion in their homeland, primarily the Guandong and the Fujian provinces in search of opportunity in the gold mines.⁶² According to the *Chinatown Historic Resource Survey*, “The 1860 Census Record listed over three hundred Chinese residents in Fresno County; all were employed as miners.”⁶³ For the Chinese, life in the Valley as miners was complicated by racial discrimination

⁶⁰ Architectural Resources Group, *Chinatown Historic Resource Survey* (City of Fresno, Planning and Development Department, 2006), 21. I also want to note that while Chinese at this time, the 1850s, were not eligible for citizenship, Mexicans who were in the US for a period of more than 1 year after the Mexican-American War were granted US citizenship under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, 1848. It is clear by examples such as the 1850 Foreign Miners Tax that this was largely ignored. See: Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*. (Boston, Massachusetts: Little, Brown, & Co., 1993).

⁶¹ United States, Bureau of the Census, *Eighth Census of the United States, 1860* (Washington, D. C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1860). Manuscript census consulted on <http://www.ancestry.com>, accessed April 2012.

⁶² In my research I found very little information about the origins of the Chinese settlers in Fresno. While the Guandong and Fujian provinces were the only ones noted as points of origins there was almost no information on whether there was any conflict between Chinese people from these different regions. At best we can tell by the beginning of the development of Chinatown in the late 1850s and early 1860s there is heavy interaction among all Chinese due to the racially segregated nature of Fresno. See: Architectural Resources Group, *Chinatown Historic Resource Survey* (City of Fresno, Planning and Development Department, 2006).

⁶³ *Chinatown Historic Resource Survey*, 22, notes that that Department of Labor and Commerce cites all Chinese as Miners. Also, the summary of the 1860 Population census marks Fresno with 309 Chinese persons. *Tenth Census of the United States, 1860: Compendium of the Tenth Census, Part I* (Washington, D. C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1860), 382.

especially due to the development of yellow peril discourse, claiming that Asian communities were a threat to American life. Many white miners, threatened by the skill and knowledge of Chinese miners, pushed for state laws to only allow the Chinese to mine at worked-over claims, meaning they could only mine after white miners had already picked at the site.⁶⁴ This prevented Chinese miners from gaining any new strike opportunities and was a law that reflected the racist attitudes of the time. These types of restrictive laws led to Chinese miners working out long hours with very little to no financial gain. For the Chinese this was one of the only employment opportunities for them in the area. Despite the low paying wages and back breaking work, as many as 300 Chinese mined the rivers of the San Joaquin Valley well into the late 1870s.⁶⁵ As gold in the riverbeds began to dwindle significantly, the Southern and Midwestern transplant communities began to create a permanent space for themselves. Abandoning the decaying mining industry, they began to root themselves by claiming land holdings and returned to their former work in farming and cattle raising. Eventually the settlers renamed the area Millerton and the thriving town was the original seat of Fresno County in the 1850s.⁶⁶

Throughout California, white settlers contested former Spanish-Mexican land settlements. In 1851 the Land Act called into question the land grants of the former

⁶⁴ David Bice James, manuscript, Box 6, Folder 2, June English Collection, 33.

⁶⁵ *Chinatown Historic Resource Survey*, 22.

⁶⁶ For more information on racial discrimination against Chinese Miners see: Elmer Clarence Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Urbana, Illinois: The University of Illinois Press, 1939); Ellen Rawson Wood, *California and the Chinese: The First Decade* (San Francisco, California: R and E Research Associates, 1974); Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1971); Ping Chiu, *Chinese Labor in California: An Economic Study*, (Madison, Wisconsin: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1963).

Californio state under Spanish and Mexican rule. The act reviewed whether or not these grants were valid under the new territorial claims of the US after the Mexican American War. While the legal battle for land was underway, white settlers creeping into the West Coast began squatting and claiming land parcels for themselves. Mario Barrera points out that while this particular portion of the conflict is highly examined, we should recognize that the major beneficiaries of the 1851 act were actually the “capitalist, speculators, and financiers who interest had most strongly motivated the Mexican American War.”⁶⁷ In both cases, land became an important focal point to building white communities throughout California. This particular act caused the racial makeup and hierarchy of the West to shift toward the white dominant model that was already well established in the East.⁶⁸

By claiming the land, the white settlers began to take ownership over the area despite their status as newer migrants. Drawing on the larger national discourse of Manifest Destiny, the idea that it was their “God given” duty and obligation to maintain and work their land, white settlers developed a racialized discourse, which they formulated into legal rights.⁶⁹ For the San Joaquin Valley inhabitants, this meant that despite the long history of the area as part of a Mexican-Californio history, the

⁶⁷ Mario Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 18-19. The entire section on California and Land from pages 18-23 is a brief but informative piece on the process of how California shifted to a white racial hegemonic system due to the Land Act.

⁶⁸ For more information on the 1851 Land Act and its effect in the shift of land ownership and power in California see Douglas Monroy, *Thrown Among Strangers: The Making of Mexican Culture in Frontier California* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1990); William W. Morrow, *Spanish and Mexican Private Land Grants* (San Francisco, California: Bancroft-Whitney Co, 1923), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/service/gdc/scd0001/2001/20010801003sp/20010801003sp.pdf>

⁶⁹ For more information on Manifest Destiny and its effect on the West see: Laura Gomez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (New York: New York University, 2007).

entrance of the Chinese groups, and the long standing population of Native American tribes in the area, white settlers did not believe that a viable community existed in California's Central Valley until their arrival. This notion was justification that white Americans held true "ownership" of the land and subsequent towns and cities they created.⁷⁰

By the 1860s white settlers began to venture in the Fresno County area in larger numbers attempting to seek land of their own; however, the lack of cultivability still posed a large problem for settlers. According to Wallace E. Elliot, "Previous to 1866 no water had ever been appropriated for irrigating purposes, or diverted from the channel of King's River."⁷¹ In the summer of that year Anderson Akers and S. S. Hyde constructed a ditch to bring water from the Kings River to aid their farms in the valley. They maintained this production for two years until they sold their water rights to the Centerville Canal and Irrigation Company. In 1868 Moses Church arrived in Fresno with the belief that Fresno could be developed into a major agricultural mainstay in the state if he could effectively bring water into the area. Church began purchasing stock in the Centerville company and by the summer of 1870 he owned the majority of shares and rights to the irrigation system from the Kings River.⁷² By 1871 Church teamed with several investors, including Anthony Easterby, who through the process of irrigation was able to produce 4 million pounds

⁷⁰ For more on the history of Californios and the decline of Californio society see: Pitt, Leonard, *Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish Speaking Californians, 1846-1890*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

⁷¹ Elliot, Wallace E. and Company, *History of Fresno County, California with Illustrations* (Fresno: Valley Publishers, 1973), 102.

⁷² *Ibid.*

of wheat.⁷³ Together they created the Fresno Canal and Irrigation Company in 1872, which was responsible for bringing 2,000 feet of irrigated water into the area.⁷⁴

The success of the Fresno Canal and Irrigation Company raised interest throughout the state from many important figures, including “The Big Four” of the railroad industry: Charles Crocker, Collis P. Huntington, Mark Hopkins, and Leland Stanford. While the railroad tycoons investigated many locations in the valley as possible sites for coveted railway stations, it was decided that Fresno was the best midway point for trade and travel between Stockton and Los Angeles. In 1872, the railroad came through what was later developed into downtown Fresno, creating a station on Tulare Street.⁷⁵ The railroad brought two important changes to the city. The first was the development of an actual town, with the train station serving as the hub of downtown Fresno’s activity. The second was the accessibility of Fresno by railway from people across the state. The success of irrigation practices further transformed Fresno into what Leland Stanford termed the “oasis in the desert.”⁷⁶ As local Fresno historian Robert M. Wash notes,

And so was born the infant that was to flourish and grow into the great city that we know today—a city beyond the wildest dreams of the little handful of men who once had a vision that here the desert might bloom as a garden.⁷⁷

By 1874 Fresno city secured the county seat, where it has remained until the present.

⁷³ Dennis and White, *A Land Between Rivers*, documentary, 2006.

⁷⁴ Elliot, *History of Fresno County*, 102.

⁷⁵ Robert M. Wash, Manuscript. “Our County’s Yesteryears,” Box 3: Folder 1, June English Collection, 39.

⁷⁶ Dennis and White, *A Land Between Rivers*, documentary, 2006.

⁷⁷ Wash, “Our County’s Yesteryears,” Box 3, Folder 1, June English Collection, 39.

Early Fresno City

Initially the City of Fresno served as a hub between major areas of California spatially located in the center or heart of the state. The presence of the railroad transformed it into an important stop in the route from Northern to Southern California. However, the beginning of the city itself had a less than glamorous background. Initially Fresno was a hot spot for illicit activity. Boasting the second largest Chinatown in the state outside of San Francisco, Fresno's "Westside" district was a hotbed for gambling, saloons, and prostitution. In fact, Fresno's earliest notoriety came from the fact that it was a place where miners would be able to spend their hard earned money in "leisure activity."⁷⁸ By 1885 there were over three thousand residents in the Fresno area but the boundaries remained fairly undefined until its incorporation in the same year.⁷⁹

Prior to Fresno being granted official city status and the county seat, the initial settlers created a colony system that was specific to this part of the Central Valley and lasted until the 1890s. This system was significant because the formation of these farming communities unlocked the potential of how rich the soil was with proper irrigation. These colonies eventually brought agriculture to the economic forefront, leading to the boom of large scale farming during the early twentieth century. Virginia Thickens' Masters' Thesis, "Pioneer Colonies of Fresno County" highlights the importance of the first colony recorded, the Alabama Colony.⁸⁰ Land speculator

⁷⁸ Rehart, "Fresno City," 34.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Virginia Emily Thickens, "Pioneer Colonies of Fresno County" (MA Thesis, University of California, 1942).

William Chapman had purchased much of the area in the county and by 1868 had accumulated approximately 80,000 acres.⁸¹ Chapman then sold the land to various individuals and groups. Early in 1868 a group of plantation-owning men from the Alabama and Mississippi area purchased thousands of acres for an inflated price, but it did not deter them from writing back and encouraging other Southerners to travel to California. This initial colony attempt failed because the Southerners arrived when the irrigation projects for the area were in their early stages. By 1874 it became clear that the farms would not yield the harvest the settlers needed to pay their debts, so many of them returned back to their homes in the South. While the Alabama colony was not an economic success, Thickens notes it did set up the possibility for other colonies to develop. By the 1890s The Fresno Colony, The Easterby Colony (also known as the Easterby Rancho), and the Fruitvale Estate were all successfully thriving with the development of a newly sophisticated irrigation system created and maintained by the Fresno Canal and Irrigation Company.⁸² At the same time the colony system also created the first set of divisions within Fresno. As local historian Robert Wash has observed, these settlements were “unique in the development of California and the West and which were to leave imprints upon the history of Fresno County discernable even today in the location of racial groups and in the names of school districts and roads.”⁸³ In this sense the colony system also create the first

⁸¹ Wash, “Our County’s Yesteryears,” Box 3, Folder 1, June English Collection, 56.

⁸² Thickens, “Pioneer Colonies of Fresno County,” 16-20. Descriptive section on the Alabama Colony.

⁸³ Wash, “Our County’s Yesteryears,” Box 3:Folder 1, June English Collection, 56-57.

means of segregation, in this case by colony sectors, but this translated into a more traditional race-class segregation as the city continued to develop.

The incorporation of Fresno as a city took almost a decade after it had already attained the county seat. Fresno's white settlers strongly opposed the idea of a city government. Heavy anti-Union/pro-Confederate political leanings fostered an attitude of mistrust of organized government, especially within a pro-Union state such as California.⁸⁴ For this reason, many white settlers were cautious against creating a governing body. In particular, big bosses from the newly established Westside district of Fresno, a primarily informal association of saloon owners, were against incorporation for fear of how it would negatively affect their businesses.⁸⁵ However, as permanent settlement increased, the more family-focused settlers began to grow weary of Fresno's unruly reputation. In 1885, the town voted 277 to 185 in favor of incorporation.⁸⁶

With incorporation came the issue of creating a governing body. The first governing body was an elected board of trustees with the mayor serving as president. William Fayonville was the first to serve in this position. Initially, the duty of the board of trustees was fairly limited and they did very little to maintain the city in any significant way. However, as Fresno moved into the later 1880s it was hit with a boom of new immigrants clamoring for permanent settlement into Fresno. In a local history, writer Schyler Rehart notes, "Fresno was fortunate in the early years of the

⁸⁴ Vandor, *History of Fresno County*, 108.

⁸⁵ There were not findings into whom these individuals were, but they were noted to be white men who were running some of the saloon businesses. Although an exact date is unclear by the late 1880s, the area was fully incorporated by Chinese who then ran the red light district activities.

⁸⁶ Rehart, "Fresno City," 34.

1880s to have enjoyed a relatively steady but not spectacular growth which permitted the newly elected city fathers sometime to get organized.”⁸⁷ As families and individuals settled in Fresno in greater numbers the growth of the once small town was rapidly transforming. This was also evident in the construction of buildings; new homes and businesses were developing to keep up with the booming population. This early period saw the first non-white racial group, Chinese formerly from Millerton, settling permanently into Fresno.⁸⁸ Many Japanese followed suit, along with a significant Armenian and German-Russian community. Then in the late 19th century a trickling of Mexican migration was present which continued steadily into the beginning of the 20th century.

Table 1.3 Major Racial Groups by Decade-Fresno County⁸⁹

Race	1880	1890	1900
Caucasian	7,891	28,474	34,570
African American	40	457	399
Chinese	753	2,736	1,775
Japanese	0	12	598
Mexican*	--	188	146
Indian (Native)	794	347	520

* Mexicans in this early period were noted as foreign-born white in the census so these numbers do not reflect native-born ethnic Mexicans.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 35.

⁸⁸ Millerton was the town that was formerly populated as the mining industry declined. It was a carryover of the campsite of former miners and had a significant Chinese population who were also former miners. The town itself started on a decline after a major flood in 1867 and was eventually abandoned after the railroad was established in Fresno. See Charles W. Clough and William Secrest Jr., *Fresno County: The Pioneer Years* (Fresno, California: Panorama West Books, 1984).

⁸⁹ United States Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900: Population, Vol. I, Part I* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1901), 337; United States, Bureau of the Census, *Eleventh Census of the United States, 1890: Population of the United States, Part I* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1895), 403, 612; United States, Bureau of the Census, *Tenth Census of the United States, 1880: Compendium of the Tenth Census, Part I* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1885), 531, 565, 739.

The board of trustees system became obsolete as the saloon and gambling bosses of the Westside corrupted the board and controlled its actions. As distrust grew among the larger Fresno community, there was a push towards modifying Fresno into a ward system.⁹⁰ The ward system divided Fresno into five wards with each receiving an equal vote. Fresnans hoped this new system would deter an individual ward's ability to create a political stronghold against the municipal government, thereby curbing the Westside bosses corruption of the local system.⁹¹ However, the change was not just ineffective, it made the situation worse. Rehart again notes, "If city hall did not give to West Fresno's special interest just about everything they wanted, it did give them the one thing they wanted most: a free rein to operate their largely immoral and illegal activities without fear of suppression or punishment."⁹² Despite community efforts to clean up the Westside, the area did not change.

Finally an agreement was achieved in 1898 when the entire municipal structure was revamped as a last ditch attempt to break the control of the Westside political bosses. White Fresnans voted to dismantle the ward system and create instead three elected offices—the mayor, the police judge, and city clerk—with each position holding a four-year term.⁹³ Along with that two boards were created, an executive board of trustees and the school board, with eight elected members each. The new charter called for at-large elections to deconstruct the former ward system exploited by the Westside bosses. This way the officials felt that the saloon owners

⁹⁰ Rehart, "Fresno City," 37.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

could not determine the votes in their own districts by bribing people with liquor. Eventually the voting power of these Westside bosses was weakened; however, the questionable dealings of the late nineteenth century Westside bosses coupled with the development of Fresno's Chinatown in the 1880s formed the perception of West Fresno as a dangerous, illicit, and undesirable area of the city.⁹⁴

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Fresno was maturing into an important site for the region and the state. Despite the obstacles it had endured from its humble beginnings, Fresno transformed from a dry and barren landscape into a lush cultivable area. As the transplanted Southerners and Midwesterners began to root their crops in the soil, they also began to root themselves permanently on the West Coast and commit themselves to building community. Their former participation in Southern Confederate politics made the incorporation of Fresno initially undesirable. The arrival of the railroad and the success of the irrigation projects pushed Fresno into the spotlight of importance within California. This was the beginning of Fresno emerging as an agricultural empire in the state.

Agricultural Industry

Agriculture, the main source of Fresno's economy, was dependent on two factors: a reliable supply of water and a sufficient labor force at peak times of harvest.⁹⁵ Early federal and local irrigation projects within Fresno city and county placed great emphasis on agricultural development, boasting production of over 204

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Bonnie Trask and Mary Graham, "Labor Agitation in the Fields" in *Fresno in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Charles Clough, et al. (Fresno, California: Panorama West Books, 1986), 194.

different types of crops and livestock.⁹⁶ Although the lure of gold was what initially brought a large population to the area, the subsequent decline of gold made the new settlers realize that mining would not be a sufficient means to sustain a living in the San Joaquin Valley. The population of Fresno increased greatly with the white population in particular recorded at 3,359 in 1870. According to Virginia Thickens, many white miners had come from the Southern and Midwest states and owned farms in their former places of residence.⁹⁷ They soon recognized that a greater profit was to be made via farming and raising livestock.⁹⁸ The development of a sophisticated water irrigation system pushed Fresno and its surrounding area to become one of the richest farm lands of the nation. The once arid desert-like space transformed into a lush “Garden of Eden” allowing Fresno to rise into what historian Richard Hall describes as an “agricultural phenomenon.”⁹⁹

During the 1860s, early white settlers found the climate of the Central Valley to be the biggest foe to agricultural development. During the arid summer months, temperatures would reach well over 100 degrees Fahrenheit, even in the shade. While

⁹⁶ Richard D. Hall, “Agriculture and Water” in *Fresno County in the 20th Century*, ed. by Charles Clough, et al. (Fresno, California: Panorama West Books, 1986), 169.

⁹⁷ Census data for 1870 notes that the total population for Fresno County was 6,336. The total white population was 3,359 for Fresno County. Approximately 2,300 of the whites were native US born (total number of US native born was 4,974-subtracting the Indian 2,635 and Free Colored 15 gives us an approximation with the remaining recorded racial category being Chinese. Mexicans were not recorded in their own category for this census). US Census Bureau, *Ninth Census of the United States, 1870: The Statistics of Population of the United States, Vol. I* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1872), 90. The origins of these new settlers is also discussed in Virginia Emily Thickens, “Pioneer Colonies of Fresno County” (MA Thesis, University of California, 1942).

⁹⁸ Richard Steven Street, *Beasts of the Field: A Narrative History of California Farm Workers* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 116. In this he is discussing how the high demand and inflation of food prices made it an inevitable occupation to switch to from mining because of the profit possibility that it presented. Also, most of the miners were younger men who were able to withstand the physical demands of farming.

⁹⁹ Hall, “Agriculture and Water,” 169.

at times, white settlers were capable of growing crops, more often their crops died before the harvest. Fruit was nearly impossible to grow as writer Paul E. Vandor noted it “baked on the trees before ripening.”¹⁰⁰ Raising cattle and poultry was also difficult due to the extreme heat of the valley in the summer months. Other troubling factors of the region included the threat of coyotes, sandstorms, and cold winds in the winter.

In order for Fresno to become a major national influence in agriculture, a dependable water source needed to be developed. The early private irrigation projects allowed for the beginning of the farm industry to germinate. However, the local water companies could not support the needs of the growing farm industry, which expanded during the late 1800s. A growing network of canals pulled water from the Kings and San Joaquin Rivers. By 1938 federal projects also supported the production of both the Friant and Pine Flat Dams, which generated a water supply for the west farmlands of Fresno County. These programs also created storage for water supply from the Sacramento River as the expanding farmlands reached hundreds of thousands of acres. The thirst for water continued to increase in this region throughout the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁰¹

Wheat and cotton were the two earliest significant crop staples in the US to be developed and brought to the Central Valley by the former southerner and midwesterners settling in the area. Wheat, for example was in high production during the latter part of the 1870s. Grain growing, also known as “dry farming” took over

¹⁰⁰ Vandor, *History of Fresno County*, 168.

¹⁰¹ Hall, “Agriculture and Water,” 181.

during the 1870s as the valley began to show its true potential for crop growing with the irrigation projects under way. Wheat in particular showed remarkable success with the climate conditions, average rainfall, and availability of space allowed for large grain farms. It was fairly common for wheat growers to possess on average anywhere from 1,000 to 3,000 acres. In Fresno, Clovis M. Cole, one of the largest wheat farmers, held over 10,000 acres of wheat fields by the 1890s.¹⁰² Over the next thirty years, wheat produced a better yield than the gold that drew most people out West. Writer Paul E. Vandor observed, “San Joaquin Valley wheat was all in all, of excellent quality and considered as among the best milling wheat anywhere.”¹⁰³ The success of the wheat crops helped build the reputation of Fresno and pushed people to migrate there. By the end of the nineteenth century wheat declined as the soil naturally did not yield as much product. The need to diversify crops, along with the fall in wheat prices, lent to the waning of wheat as a staple agriculture product. As historian Alex Saragoza notes, “Fresno County produces 40 million bushels [of wheat] in 1890.” However, wheat crops dropped, “by 1895, just over 7 million bushels were gathered in the Valley.”¹⁰⁴

In the early part of the twentieth century cotton took over as a significant staple product in the San Joaquin Valley. Cotton was a transplant crop that traveled with the Gold Rush migrants from the South. Given that cotton was a huge agricultural staple of the southern region it was not a surprise that white settlers

¹⁰² Ibid, 168.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Saragoza, *Fresno's Hispanic Heritage*, 34.

would also begin to plant small plots of cotton as they settled in permanent small farms in the San Joaquin Valley. Local history writer June English reflected on the familiarity with cotton as she wrote, “it was a rare family in which the women could not spin or weave” as was the tradition of Southern women during the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁵ Settlers from the South quickly recognized Fresno, and the San Joaquin Valley, as a possible site for cotton to be planted.

Devra Weber points to the importance of cotton in her work *Dark Sweat, White Gold*, despite its slow beginning in the West.¹⁰⁶ Different varieties of cotton were produced including Alcala, Columbia, Lone Star, and Triumph, to name a few. With the difficulty of early farmers to pinpoint a likely candidate for the best crop yield, cotton was seen initially as a secondary crop staple to wheat. Moving into the early 1920s cotton became the key crop responsible for changing agriculture from small family farms to larger mechanized farms within a corporate farming framework.¹⁰⁷ It was during this time that the farmers of the area focused on one type of cotton, *Acala Cossypium Airsutum*, which they found to be the best type to yield a large successful crop.¹⁰⁸ Weber notes that during the 1910s and 1920s large cotton growers and ginneries were able to dominate not only the economic but also the political sphere within the valley and particularly in Fresno’s surrounding areas.

¹⁰⁵ June English, “Cotton” manuscript, January 5, 1975, Box 2, Folder 1, June English Collection, 1.

¹⁰⁶ Devra Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold: California Farm Workers and the New Deal*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994).

¹⁰⁷ Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold*, 23.

¹⁰⁸ Rehart, “Fresno City,” 69.

Cotton production increased from 5.5 thousand acres in the 1910s to over 51 thousand acres during the 1920s.¹⁰⁹

Figs were another important crop, originally brought to the valley by Armenian immigrants. Much like cotton, figs had a slow start in the valley. The original white adriatic fig orchard was planted in Fresno around 1885 occupying twenty-seven acres of land. Although it produced a crop, the white figs were viewed as a dry product that did not match the more desirable figs imported from Smyrna, which were seen as tender and more flavorful.¹¹⁰ However, the Smyrna variety had difficulty growing in the valley as the first attempted crops could not reach maturity, often hardening and falling off the trees before they were ready for harvest. In the 1890s, George Roeding, discovered that when the Smyrna were pollinated by *Blastophaga* wasps they would successfully ripen; however, this species of wasp was not native to the Fresno area. Roeding found that he could pollinate the Smyrna figs himself using a toothpick. After importing a few *Blastophaga* wasps and using his simple method, he was able to explode into the fig market, changing the fruit industry in the valley. Figs soon became an important staple crop for the valley.¹¹¹

However, the grape industry became the most noteworthy crop of San Joaquin Valley by the 1920s. Grapes developed rather rapidly as a key crop when they tripled in production from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth. Historian Alex Saragoza shows, “In 1910, over 100,000 acres of vineyards covered

¹⁰⁹ Saragoza, *Fresno's Hispanic Heritage*, 34-35.

¹¹⁰ Hall, “Agriculture and Water,” 171.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

the Fresno area. Incredibly, between 1910 and 1930, the number of vines grew from 40.7 million to 85.2 million in Fresno County.”¹¹² Vineyards became a mainstay in Fresno’s natural landscape both within town and just upon its outskirts. Muscat grapes were initially harvested to ferment into dessert wine. However, the record high heat of the summer tended to dry out some of the crop before it was harvested. As Richard D. Hall pointed out, “The more enterprising farmers packaged and marketed those raisins.”¹¹³ And so the creation of the nation’s largest raisin industry was born.

During the 1880s raisin growers developed the California Raisin Growers Association, which by 1898 was headed by M. Theodore Kearney, one of the largest land owners in Fresno. However, by 1904 the association was falling apart as the packing industry refused to negotiate with Kearney. By 1911 it was retooled, with the packing industry involved in the organization, and the California Associated Raisin Company was formed, which was the precursor to the Sun-Maid Raisin Growers. The raisin industry hit high yields at the beginning of the twentieth century, but hit a rough patch early on once prohibition developed. With the onset of prohibition in the 1920s, growers producing wine grapes had to scramble to save their profits and quickly decided to dry them as raisins.¹¹⁴ The over-saturation of raisins on the market caused the prices to plummet.¹¹⁵ The raisin industry suffered throughout this decade and did not fully recover until World War II. The global conflict caused uncertainty

¹¹² Saragoza, *Fresno’s Hispanic Heritage*, 34.

¹¹³ Hall, “Agriculture and Water,” 169.

¹¹⁴ For more on the effect of prohibition on the grape industry see: John R. Meers, “The California Wine and Grape Industry and Prohibition” *California Historical Society Quarterly*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (March 1967), 19-32.

¹¹⁵ Rehart, “Fresno City,” 56.

with other grape producing countries, which in turn opened up the market to Fresno's supply. Although the raisin industry continued to fluctuate in its success in the decades that followed World War II, Fresno and Sun-Maid became solidified as dominant forces in the industry.¹¹⁶

The agricultural boom during the early twentieth century required an extensive labor force. This time period marked a trend in the changing face of laborers from small white family farmers to non-white racial groups who were marked as "other" in a process of creating a proletariat class of color.¹¹⁷ Historian Cletus Daniel remarks that soon after the dwindle of the Gold Rush period, "The dependence of large-scale commercial agriculture on a large force of cheap seasonal labor was fairly well established by the 1850s." He goes on to note that "most of the work that needed to be done on bonanza farms had come to be regarded as not suitable for whites."¹¹⁸ As white growers established social and economic power throughout California, they were in a position to exercise their white privilege by relegating Asians and Mexicans to physical labor. For Fresno, this pattern quickly solidified the race and class segregation as communities of color became the working class of agriculture.

¹¹⁶ For more on the Raisin Industry see: Larry Trujillo, "Race, Class, Labor, and Community: A Local History of Capitalist Development" *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, Vol. 4, No. 3, Chicano Labor and Uneven Development (Winter 1981): 571-596. This work discusses the raisin industry in Parlier, California within Fresno County as well as the race-based labor system.

¹¹⁷ By "other" I mean to define this as other than white, although it can be noted that some of the groups were able to change their socio-economic positioning over time, for example early Armenians were marked as ethnic "others" but were able to gain upward social mobility with economic prosperity.

¹¹⁸ Daniel, *Bitter Harvest*, 24, 26.

Laborers

As agriculture became a key economic source by the 1920s it was clear that labor demand was high. White growers required workers to be accessible year round since the weather and conditions of the San Joaquin Valley meant that harvest work could last through all seasons. Growers also desired to pay these workers low wages. These two factors along with the legal and social racial discrimination against Asians and Mexican laborers soon molded perceptions of laborers as persons of color and as non-citizens. Both white growers and white community members saw these racial groups solely as workers or laborers and not as participating citizens.¹¹⁹ Historian Mario Barrera defines this practice as occupation stratification, which sets up racial segregation in labor employment, as “minority workers are concentrated in the least desirable occupations.”¹²⁰ In addition, Marta Maria Maldonado argues in “It is in their Nature to do Menial Work” that “race becomes a proxy for workers skills” which is how growers not only construct the ideology that specific racial groups are suited for menial labor but, as Maldonado asserts, racial meaning is placed on the jobs themselves.¹²¹ This is reflected in the labor dynamics in Fresno as well.

The earliest labor source was the indigenous population of the area, primarily from the Mono Indian tribe. This was a fairly short-lived labor supply because the

¹¹⁹ In using the term citizen I am referring to both the legal definition of citizen as part of a sovereign nation with all the rights and privileges that are afforded as well as the social membership or ability to participate in one’s community. See: Adelaida Del Castillo, “Illegal Status and Social Citizenship: Thought on Mexican Immigrants in a Postnational World” *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Fall 2002), 11-32.

¹²⁰ Mario Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 43.

¹²¹ Marta Maria Maldonado, “It is in their Nature to do Menial Work” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 6 (July 2009), 1018.

abuse of the native population that had run rampant for decades prior to the gold rush radically diminished not only the numbers, but also the opportunities for this group. In particular, the San Joaquin Valley also saw the mistreatment of the indigenous people. As Richard Street points out in *Beasts of the Field*, a long system of debt peonage had been in place throughout the state, which allowed for native peoples to be forced into slavery. He writes, “Around Fresno, intoxicated or ‘delinquent’ native persons unable to pay their fines were imprisoned, placed on auction blocks, and sold to the highest bidder just as they were in Los Angeles.”¹²² In this way, the early agricultural success of the state relied heavily on native labor.

However, Street goes on to discuss how the development of the reservation system eventually led to the decline of the use of Indian labor in the Fresno area. James Savage, an individual who worked with California explorer John C. Fremont, controlled the reservation system in Fresno.¹²³ Savage initially led the native people of the Kings River forcefully at gunpoint to live and work from the reservation. In the early 1850s he directed this first group to dig a four hundred yard irrigation canal from the San Joaquin River to the reservation site. This allowed Savage to cultivate 350 acres of grain and 150 acres of produce.¹²⁴ Savage was not well liked by the Native population and was eventually murdered. The indigenous people under his care were initially happy about his death because of the abuses they had suffered under his leadership.¹²⁵ However, as time went on major organizational disarray left

¹²² Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 126.

¹²³ Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 140.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

the indigenous peoples formerly under Savage's care completely ignored and destitute. The white community, along with the local and state government, eventually voted to expel the native population from the area causing the dismantling of Fresno's reservation site by the 1880s.¹²⁶ The end of the reservation meant the Native people had to return to the riverbanks to forage and fish for their own sustenance with no Federal or State assistance. The reservation experiment shows how racism was an early part of the social structure of Fresno. Attempting to mimic the way in which Indian Removal policies had been taking place throughout the East, there was little to no regard for the true health and welfare of the native peoples, but rather moves to exploit them and then eliminate them all together.¹²⁷

Chinese migrants had established their presence in the Fresno area early on during the mining phase of the 1850s. These early Chinese migrants settled in Fresno and transitioned from mining to agriculture labor when Native American labor was no longer accessible in Fresno and its surrounding areas. However, because of widespread national prejudice against Asians, federal policies, such as the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and subsequent 1892 Geary Act, closed off any opportunity for Chinese nationals to legally migrate to the United States.¹²⁸ Of the Chinese who

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ For more information on the Native American Population in Fresno and James Savage see: Robert Eccleston, *The Mariposa Indian War 1850-1851; Diaries of Robert Eccleston: The California Gold Rush, Yosemite, and the High Sierra*, ed. C. Gregory Crampton (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1957); Wallace W. Elliott, *History of Fresno County, California with Illustrations* (Fresno, California: Valley Publishers, 1973); George Harwood Phillips, *Indians and Indian Agents: The Origins of the Reservation System in California, 1849-1852* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997).

¹²⁸ The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act ended legal Chinese migration into the US (with few exceptions and some undocumented migration) until 1943 when a limited migration was once again allowed. For more on the Exclusion acts see: Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese*

remained in the US, a large number of them were bachelors as there was very little female migration from China during the nineteenth century.¹²⁹ The prevailing negative racial attitudes towards the Chinese forced them into the segregated enclave of West Fresno with no real hope of upward social or economic mobility. However, within the confines of West Fresno, Chinese migrants began to settle in and thrive as small business opportunities and vice activities formed Chinatown, a separate social space in Fresno.

The decline and eventual elimination of Chinese migration pushed the Japanese community into becoming a dominant labor source by the 1910s. At that time, Japanese composed over fifty percent of the laborer population and quickly became an important part of the working class in Fresno.¹³⁰ Unlike the Chinese before them, Japanese settled in the US largely as family units. While “yellow peril” discourse and racial discrimination did limit Japanese migration through laws such as the 1907-08 Gentlemen’s Agreement, Japanese women were allowed to migrate over to the US as picture brides. This afforded the Japanese migrants the opportunity to settle their roots permanently, as a second-generation of Japanese US citizens were born. Despite the fact that they were legally discriminated against along with their Chinese counterparts, many Japanese still attempted to position themselves as

Exclusion Act (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Sucheng Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil: The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860-1910* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1989) and Sucheng Chan, ed. *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882-1943* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1991); Roger Daniels, *Anti-Chinese Violence in North America* (New York, New York: Arno Press, 1978); Hyung-Chan Kim, *A Legal History of Asian Americans, 1790-1990* (Westport, Connecticut.: Greenwood Press, 1994).

¹²⁹ See Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

¹³⁰ Saragoza, *Fresno’s Hispanic Heritage*, 35.

permanent and vibrant members of the community. One of the ways they sought this position was through attempting land ownership. Eiichiro Azuma describes their efforts:

Drawing from such real-life experiences, which all “Orientals” shared in early twentieth century America, their pronouncement of Japanese-white likeness, East-West parallelism, and immigrant cosmopolitanism constituted a radical act of social maneuvering. Their formulations not only contested the norms of American race relations that kept Issei socially subordinate but also attempted to debunk the “Yellow Peril” fear, which alienated them from the society in which they wished to claim a place.¹³¹

Some Japanese were successful at obtaining land within Fresno, but a greater majority of Japanese remained part of the working class, settling within Fresno’s *nihonmachi*, or Japantown, adjacent to Chinatown in the racially segregated Westside.¹³²

Despite the role of early Spanish-Mexican explorers in Fresno’s discovery, Mexican migrants of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century remained an invisible community in this early period of a developing non-white working class. Asian groups dominated the labor needs early on, but as national policies set restrictions on their entrance into the United States, Mexicans soon became an important labor source. White settler’s racial attitudes towards Mexicans deemed them an undesirable labor force in Fresno in these early decades. According to

¹³¹ Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 8-9.

¹³² While I describe the Japanese experience in Fresno in greater detail in Chapter 3 and Mexicans in Fresno in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, I felt the need to add this section as well as the next portion about Mexican laborers to give the reader an overview of how growers used each group at different times, often depending on the racial climate at the time. This will hopefully give the reader a broader scope of the use of groups of color as the primary labor source before delving into the nuanced historical experience of each community as part of agriculture in Fresno.

historian Alex Saragoza, white growers viewed Mexicans as “invariably placed at or near the end of the list of a half dozen or more races employed by farmers.”¹³³ The necessity for a cheap and abundant labor source eventually changed white perceptions of Mexican workers. Saragoza highlights that Mexicans comprised less than five percent of the labor force in the entire Central Valley during the 1910s but by 1930 the number climbed to sixty percent with some estimates pushing it closer to eighty percent. Given that Fresno and its surrounding areas were largely dependent on ethnic Mexican labor, it encouraged people of Mexican origin to migrate *Al Norte*, specifically the San Joaquin Valley. However, Saragoza points out that white growers continued to categorize Mexicans as “belonging to a lower class of human beings” whose only purpose was to serve as workers.¹³⁴

While Chinese, Japanese, and Mexicans were groomed to serve as the working class in the agriculture industry, they were not the only new migrants into Fresno. African Americans were not a large part of the early population of Fresno or the larger San Joaquin Valley. According to June English’s article “*Black Pioneers*” African Americans who were present in Fresno were transplants predominantly from the Southern region of the US. English offers that the theory that these early Black pioneers may have traveled with their white masters or white families whom they had worked for in their home states. California itself was a free state so no persons of African American descent were legally categorized as slaves. However, English assumes that occupation listings of African Americans as workers, as “miners,” or

¹³³ Saragoza, *Fresno’s Hispanic Heritage*, 36.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

sometimes under the title of domestic positions such as “cook” was a strategy used by white masters to blur the lines of their relationship.¹³⁵ African Americans in the Central Valley were not noted as significant as a labor force until the first few decades of the twentieth century given that a small population was available. For example, in 1870 only 15 African Americans were recorded as living in Fresno County.¹³⁶

European migrant groups also settled in Fresno. While they were not expected to live among the non-white racial groups, these ethnic European migrants were also not fully accepted by the white native-born settlers. They often moved into ethnic enclaves, the neighborhoods just adjacent to West Fresno. For example, from the 1880s onward there was a concentration of British and Scandinavian migrants as well as significant Portuguese community originating from the Azore Islands. While many Portuguese had experience in growing fruit in their home country, they dominated the dairy industry in the San Joaquin Valley.¹³⁷ Other prominent ethnic European groups were Italians, Greeks, and French Basques. Ben Walker, local Fresno historian, points out that while initially most of these European migrant groups arrived from their native countries, as generations were born in Fresno, very few retained cultural

¹³⁵ June English, “Black Pioneers,” Manuscript, Box 3, Folder 16, June English Collection. In her notes, English contends that the census information may have masked the master-slave relationship.

¹³⁶ According to US Census not until 1890 was there a sizeable population of African Americans in Fresno County with 457 recorded. From 1890 until the 1910 census the population remained the same (1900-399 African Americans, 1910- 474 African Americans with 250 living directly in the city of Fresno). United States, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population, Vol. II, Alabama-Montana* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1913), 170; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900: Population, Vol. I, Part I* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1901), 531; United States, Bureau of the Census, *Eleventh Census of the United States, 1890: Population of the United States, Part I* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1895), 403.

¹³⁷ Walker, *Fresno Community Book*, 200.

connections to their heritage, but instead opted to become part of the white American social structure of power and privilege. Some Italians and Portuguese continued to hold onto cultural beliefs via the creation of social-cultural organizations, however, the second generation of these groups was able to assimilate into white society.

One particular ethnic European group, the Armenian community, was a paradox of sorts strongly exhibiting the characteristics of what James Barrett and David Roediger term “inbetween people.”¹³⁸ Armenians originated from the Middle East; they were western in culture, orthodox Christian, and yet their entrance to the US began in the East Coast where they were greeted with racial hostility and discrimination. Barrett and Roediger argue that many of the early ethnic European migrants faced racial hostility as white nativists categorized them in the same vein as non-white racial groups, such as African Americans and Chinese. Ethnic European groups such as Italians, Polish, Greek, and in this case Armenian had to balance assimilation and acculturation into a white racial identity which recognized the full privileges of American citizenship while also facing discrimination. But, Barrett and Roediger point to the complexity of this process of racialization for ethnic Europeans, as it was not seamless. Therefore, these ethnic European groups were “inbetween people” as the process of becoming American and becoming white were inextricably linked to an often painful and violent part of their historical memory.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ James R. Barrett and David Roediger “Inbetween Peoples: Race, Nationality and the ‘New Immigrant’ Working Class,” *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Spring 1997), 3-44.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

Armenians began to migrate into the San Joaquin Valley around the late 1880s. Initially about 160 Armenians settled in Fresno but by the 1920s there were over 8,000 living in and around the city. The earliest Armenian settlers, the Seropian brothers—Hagop, Garabed and Simon—became involved with the fig industry by setting up the first fig packing plant in the area. The Seropian brothers quickly became one of the wealthiest and most successful entrepreneurs. By 1930 Armenians as a community owned forty percent of the raisin industry and comprised twenty-five percent of the growers.¹⁴⁰ Initially the Armenian community faced much discrimination from the white community because of their darker “middle-eastern” appearance, language, and custom differences. Despite these attitudes, Armenians held on to their cultural traditions and identity. Local historian Ben Walker noted that they were seen as a Christian group with “Oriental methods” in terms of their household cultural practices. Within the city of Fresno, the community felt that it had found a haven for them to be Armenian. Fresno’s climate and conditions were similar to their home country and the rural environment was viewed as an opportunity to purchase land and prosper economically, an opportunity not afforded on the East Coast.¹⁴¹

What became known as “Armenian town” was initially adjacent to the segregated Chinatown on Fresno’s Westside, near the Southern Pacific railroad. However, with the growing success of major Armenian players in the agricultural

¹⁴⁰ Bobbye Sisk Temple, “Overview 1900” in *Fresno County in the 20th Century*, ed. by Charles Clough, et al. (Fresno, California: Panorama West Books, 1986), 6.

¹⁴¹ Walker, *Fresno Community Book*, 196. Also see: Berge Bulbian, *The Fresno Armenians: History of a Diaspora Community* (Fresno, California: California State University Press, Fresno, 2000), 19-20.

business, the site for the Armenian community shifted to the north end and more affluent neighborhood in Fresno by the 1930s. White community members were unhappy about this shift and attempted to keep the Armenians out of their neighborhoods, but were unable to do anything legally as the ethnic group did not fall under the same racial categories as Asians and Mexicans, for example.¹⁴² This isolation in their early years encouraged the development of many Armenian social institutions such as fraternal organizations, Armenian churches, and the development of an Armenian language newspaper in Fresno. These institutions allowed for the resistance of the Armenian community to Americanization. While they became permanent settlers in Fresno, they still maintained cultural, social, and political ties to their home country, especially during times like World War I. Yet, despite the denial of full initiation into the social community, Armenians became important economic contributors to the area in their own unique way. Eventually there was some acceptance by the affluent white community of the Armenians, which reflects to some degree that Armenians were able to surpass the “inbetween” status and challenge the label of racialized “other.” However, other non-white racial groups, particularly Asians and Mexicans could not.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Ibid, 197.

¹⁴³ For more information on Armenians see: Berge Bulbian, *The Fresno Armenians: History of Diaspora Community* (Fresno, California: California State University Press, Fresno, 2000); Charles Mahakian, *History of the Armenians in California* (San Francisco, California: R and E Research, 1974); Nectar Davidian, *The Seropians: First Armenian Settlers in Fresno County California* (Berkeley, California, 1965).

Conclusion

Early on, the original Spanish-Mexican explorers overlooked Fresno. Arid and desert-like conditions made it an undesirable place for settlement, and until gold was discovered in California after the US-Mexico war of 1846-1848, the Central Valley remained largely empty. Once the Gold Rush of 1849 came under way, the banks of the San Joaquin and the Kings Rivers soon became important mining sites. With the decline of the Gold Rush many of the white miners who migrated from the East had to decide whether they wanted to return to their former homes or stay in California; a large majority of them decided to stay and try their hand at the same occupations they had left behind, farming and cattle raising.

Many of the early settlers were looking for a space where they could run a city fairly undisturbed by larger state and national politics. A sector of the white migrants from the Southern states specifically held distrust of the federal government lingering from the Civil War defeat of the Confederacy. For a time, Fresno enjoyed existing in the Central Valley fairly unmolested by government restrictions and taxation. Socially, Fresno was fraught with racial discrimination as many of the white settlers had brought with them notions of racial superiority. As these new migrants claimed land they utilized what Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zuñiga term spatial tactics. Low and Lawrence-Zuñiga define spatial tactics as the use of space to strategically control or assert power, which, for Fresno, resulted in segregation. As Low and Lawrence-Zuñiga state, spatial tactics are the way “space is used to obscure these [power] relationships. The assumed neutrality of space conceals its role in

maintaining the social system, inculcating particular ideologies and scripted narratives.”¹⁴⁴ For Fresno, white settlers’ use of spatial tactics created social and racial stratification, which manifested in two ways. The first was the white community’s claim to land ownership and as the top tier of the social, political, and economic hierarchy. The second was the physical segregation used as a means of power and control, dividing Fresno into the city and the Westside enclave, which served as both the red light district and the area that housed the non-white population. White settlers began to claim ownership of Fresno as their space, relegating those they deemed “unworthy” out to the Westside or unincorporated areas. However, Fresno was an “untouched” community for only a short time because of its desirable location between two major cities of the state, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Fresno became an attractive area for the railroad, which opened up the landscape to a much larger population and more possibilities or opportunities to become an integral city in the state. The development of Fresno’s position as an important city within the state and the rise in population pushed it to eventually becoming the county seat in 1874.

When Moses Church and Anthony Easterby created a sophisticated irrigation system, Fresno emerged as an agricultural leader. The warm climate and introduction of water to a former desert-like area made for an ideal home to many crops beginning with wheat and cotton, and moving towards figs, grapes, and raisin production which has brought the most acclaim to the San Joaquin Valley. The growth of agribusiness also began to change the physical make up of Fresno. It continued to expand in both

¹⁴⁴ Low and Lawrence-Zuñiga, “Locating Culture,” 30.

land mass and population. The growth in agribusiness also created an insatiable need for cheap wage labor to harvest the crops. The Chinese followed by Japanese worked as the areas primary laborers. However, national policies restricting Asian migration coupled with yellow peril racist discourse focused on purporting Asian communities as undesirables. Policies such as the 1882 Geary Act, also known as the Chinese Exclusion Act, and later the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 cut off the possibility of Asian migration, thereby stunting the ability to acquire workers from these countries. With the suppression of workers from this ethnic pool, growers looked to Mexico to bring in laborers.

Mexicans began to fill the positions as fewer Chinese and Japanese immigrants were available. At first it was predominantly young men who were migrating to work various crops throughout the Southwest. After the Mexican Revolution of 1910 many families migrated to permanently settle in various areas of California. In Fresno, although many families initially began in labor camps or unincorporated areas, there were quite a number of families who settled within Fresno city limits. What started out as a small pastoral town quickly grew in size, not only in terms of actual geographical space, but also in population size and agriculture industry. As Fresno grew over the first portion of the twentieth century, it became an important site when the US moved into wartime, specifically World War II. As we will see in the upcoming chapters, Fresno unfolded as a strategic space for the military. Moreover, the effects of the war in Fresno are indelibly etched onto the community's racial makeup and notions of citizenship.

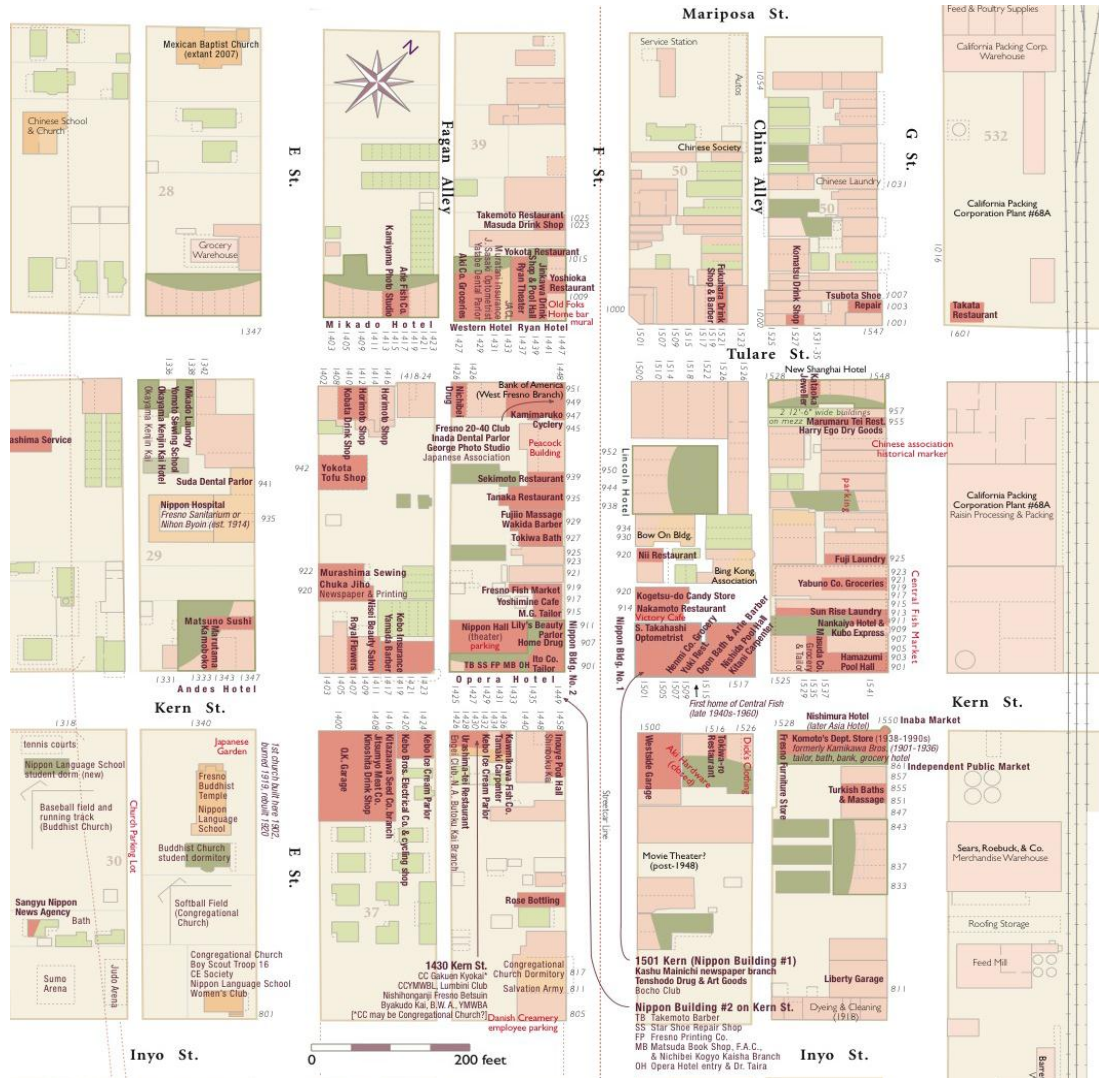
CHAPTER 2
DARK AND DISMAL DENS—THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINATOWN
AND THE RACIALLY SEGREGATED WESTSIDE

Fresno's rising agriculture industry necessitated a large and cheap labor force, and from the 1870s into the first half of the twentieth century, it filled its labor needs from communities of color. However, as these workers of color began to move into the area and settle permanently, the white people of Fresno did not want these laborers of color to infiltrate and taint the predominantly white pastoral dream they had created in the Central Valley. Whites aggressively lobbied for these groups to move into the segregated Westside, located west of the downtown area and across the tracks. Moreover, as Fresno continued to grow economically and increased in population, the spatial and cultural cleavage between non-white racial groups and whites became clear. The use of non-white people as laborers did not mean they were welcome as neighbors. On the west side of the tracks, a new community was forming, one that would become a significant site for community building and ethnic identity formation in Fresno into the twentieth century.

It was evident from Fresno's beginnings that whites desired to create a separate space for themselves. In his article "The Beginning of Racial Segregation: The Chinese in West Fresno and Chinatowns Role as Red Light District, 1870s-1920s," Ramón D. Chacón noted that in 1873 two Chinese persons purchased land east of the railroad tracks. White Fresnoans balked at the idea that any Chinese people would live in their neighborhood. Whites immediately took action by convincing land agents for the Central Pacific Railroad company, who owned much of the land in

Fresno, to only sell to white citizens on the east side and allow Chinese to purchase land only on the west side of the railroad tracks.¹⁴⁵

Figure 2.1 Fresno's Chinatown and Japantown, 1940s¹⁴⁶



¹⁴⁵ Ramón D. Chacón, “The Beginning of Racial Segregation: The Chinese in West Fresno and Chinatown’s Role as a Red Light District” *Southern California Quarterly*, 1988 70(4), 373. At this time the railroad owned a great portion of the land purchased to build the railroad in Fresno’s city limits. After the construction of the railroad the company sold surplus land back to the residents.

¹⁴⁶ *Japantown Atlas*, <http://www.japantownatlas.com/map-fresno2>, accessed May 2012.

Furthermore, an 1874 town meeting declared that whites would live on the east side of town “and relegated other ethnicities and disreputables to the west side.”¹⁴⁷ The first non-whites to move into Fresno were Chinese who were former miners from the Millerton settlement. Anti-Chinese sentiment throughout the state facilitated white Fresnans’ justification for keeping themselves apart from the Chinese community, which mainly consisted of bachelors. In the late 1880s we see the emergence of anti-Chinese organizations and their efforts to replace the services Chinese provided as a solution to encourage them to leave. As racial divisions between whites and Chinese intensified, more aggressive efforts to establish ideologies of white supremacy began to rise, which would also affect other groups of color throughout the twentieth century.

Despite its status as permanently segregated, the Westside developed its own character and grew to be an important and significant part of the city and its surrounding areas, serving as a hub for leisure, shopping, and cultural interaction among San Joaquin Valley’s ethnic population. West Fresno’s Chinatown was the second largest outside of San Francisco and later Japantown and a growing Mexican *barrio* emerged as the racial makeup of West Fresno expanded. Early on Chinatown developed a poor reputation for its involvement in gambling rings, opium dens, and brothels. The vice activity taking place in this red light district meant that West Fresno and its residents overall became synonymous with criminal and immoral activity.

¹⁴⁷ Architectural Resources Group, *Chinatown Historic Resource Survey* (Fresno, California: City of Fresno, Planning and Development Department, 2006), 23.

At its inception Fresno’s Westside was seen as an undesirable place where vice activity such as gambling, drug use, and prostitution were rampant. However, by the 1920s it became a thriving social and cultural space for people of color, including Chinese, Japanese, and Mexicans. A cultural shift took place within the confined area and the community developed with its own cultural identities, organizations, and as we will see in later chapters some political organizing. This city within a city attracted attention from many communities of color in Fresno’s outlying areas. From the early Chinatown era of the late nineteenth century, and for many decades after, West Fresno was connected to people of color across the state.

Table 2.1 Total Number of Chinese- Fresno County and City¹⁴⁸

Year	Fresno County	Fresno City
1900	1,775	1,104
1910	1,377	975
1920	998	617
1930	1008	747
1940	931	790

This chapter will map out the development of West Fresno with a focus of the creation of Chinatown. I argue that the forced segregation of the Chinese to this limited geographical space created conditions for both a larger vice activity network and a self-sufficient Chinese community. Statewide racist attitudes against the Chinese created a hostile situation for Fresno’s earliest community of color.

¹⁴⁸ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Population: Vol. II Characteristics of the Population* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1943), 567-568; United States, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920: Population, Vol. III, Characteristics of the Population by States* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1922), 109-110; United States, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population, Vol. II, Alabama-Montana* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1913), 596; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900: Population, Vol. I, Part I* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1901), 565.

However, despite these conditions, Fresno's Chinatown emerged as an important racialized space in the San Joaquin Valley. Many Chinese from surrounding outlying areas participated in both legitimate and illegal activities in Fresno. Moreover, Fresno's Chinatown was linked with Chinese vice activities in both San Francisco and Los Angeles demonstrating that while Fresno's Chinatown was segregated inside the city limits, it was part of a larger statewide Chinese network.¹⁴⁹

The vice activities in West Fresno, as well as larger national racist discourse, molded white Fresno's perceptions about the Chinese. The creation of an Anti-Chinese organization in 1886 and later the presence of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in Fresno during the 1920s demonstrates how deeply white supremacy lingered in the psyche of some white community members. As Tomas Almaguer argued in *Racial Fault Lines*, "In its fully developed form, white supremacy means 'color bars,' 'racial segregation,' and the restriction of meaningful citizenship rights to a privileged group characterized by its light pigmentation."¹⁵⁰ In the context of Fresno, Anti-Chinese leagues and the KKK were symptomatic of this assumption of white privilege and power.

In this chapter I will also discuss the nature of the vice activities and violence that took place in Chinatown during the latter part of the 1800s. The reputation of Chinatown as a series of "Dark and Dismal Dens," as constructed by the local newspaper, shaped racialized understandings of Chinatown and its inhabitants as

¹⁴⁹ S. Michael Opper and Lillie L. Lew. "A History of the Chinese in Fresno, California" in *The Life, Influence and the Role of the Chinese in the United States, 1776-1960*, Ed. by The Chinese Historical Society of America (San Francisco, California: Chinese Historical Society of America, 1976), 48.

¹⁵⁰ Tomas Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994), 19.

morally corrupt, dark, and dirty. White readers consumed these images and descriptions, which in turn informed opinions about the Chinese in Fresno.¹⁵¹ No one at this time took into consideration that the creation of a segregated city also meant that the Chinese in West Fresno lacked access to important resources. The racial exclusion by whites of the Chinese from greater Fresno was responsible for the poor conditions, but the responsibility of the dismal situation was placed on the residents of the Westside.

However, a shift took place in the 1890s. Chinatown's vice activity became a lucrative business and prominent white citizens wanted to be involved for personal economic gain. Whites began to actively participate in the "carnival of vice" and temptation on the other side of the tracks. Once Chinatown's activities began to infiltrate into the homes of white Fresnans, effectively "corrupting," for example, white housewives. The local paper, *Fresno Daily Expositor*, launched an active campaign to shut down all the gambling houses and reform or arrest known Chinese perpetrators. By that time, Chinatown's illegal business became a major part of the political and economic structure, and was not so easily dismantled as prominent figures such as the police chief and the district attorney were allegedly involved in the gambling racket.

Ultimately, the forced segregation of Chinese settlers created a vibrant and active Chinatown that eventually changed from a racially isolated space, where Chinese laborers were forced to settle, into a hub community, which catered to

¹⁵¹"Dark and Dismal Dens" in *Fresno Daily Expositor*, March 21, 1894, Fresno Scrapbook, Fresno County Public Library.

Chinese both within and outside of Fresno and later to whites. The interplay between white citizens and Chinese in the last decade of the nineteenth century directs us to the growing importance of the Westside. While the surface implications of this segregation created a second-class citizenship status for the Chinese and other groups of color who arrived later in Fresno, the core implication of Chinatown's development primed the conditions for the newer migrant communities, such as the Japanese and Mexicans, to establish a rich multi-racial and multi-ethnic enclave.

Beginnings of the Westside Enclave

Figure 2.2 China Alley - Approximately 1910¹⁵²



¹⁵² *Online Archive of California*, <http://content.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/tf7j49p5bh/?order=1>, accessed June 2012.

The Chinese experienced racial discrimination in California well before the incorporation of Fresno as a city. As early as 1852, the governor of California pushed for limited immigration of Chinese “coolie” labor. This was followed by an 1855 act for a fifty-five dollar head tax for Chinese immigrants, and finally in 1858 the state passed legislation to forbid Chinese from entering California, although this last piece of legislation was deemed unconstitutional. Karen C. Wong points out that these various state acts were reflective of the heavy Anti-Chinese Sentiment and despite the failed attempts to bar Chinese at the state level, nativists, in turn pressured the federal government to pass laws to restrict Chinese from entering the US.¹⁵³

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 followed by the Geary Act of 1892 both eliminated legal Chinese migration all together.¹⁵⁴ The lack of migrants created an imbalanced sex ratio, developing also the stigma of Chinese as a “bachelor society.” David R. Chan cites these acts, particularly the Geary Act, as “ultimate insults” against the Chinese community, creating a sense that the Chinese male laborers in the US were almost deemed as parolees with the registration requirements and inability to travel to and from China freely.¹⁵⁵ Chan also argues that these exclusion acts were responsible for the creation of illicit activities in Chinatowns throughout the West. He further contends it was “white America’s laws which made the [illegal] activities the

¹⁵³ Karen C. Wong, “Discrimination Against the Chinese in the United States,” in *The Life, Influence and the Role of the Chinese in the United States, 1776-1960*, ed. The Chinese Historical Society of America (San Francisco, California: Chinese Historical Society of America, 1976), 217.

¹⁵⁴ See Chapter 1, footnote 128 for an explanation and further references on the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act.

¹⁵⁵ David R. Chan, “The Tragedy and Trauma of the Chinese Exclusion Laws” in *The Life, Influence and the Role of the Chinese in the United States, 1776-1960*, ed. The Chinese Historical Society of America (San Francisco, California: Chinese Historical Society of America, 1976), 193-194.

only diversions available for the lonely men of Chinatown.”¹⁵⁶ The statewide and national anti-Chinese movements lend to the conditions of the segregated and often ghettoized areas of Chinatowns all over the State.

Fresno Chinatown’s first inhabitants were the former Chinese miners who moved over from the Millerton mining camp and town developed during the Gold Rush period. Approximately 200 Chinese settled in Fresno at its inception, assisting in building most of the major downtown landmarks such as the courthouse.¹⁵⁷ However, with the settlement of a significant Chinese population, the founding fathers of Fresno decided there would not be any sale of land to any Chinese person east of the railroad tracks. By the mid-1880s many Chinese settled in a one block by two block radius in “F” and “G” street in between Kern and Mariposa. In this small crowded space several hundred Chinese worked and lived side by side.¹⁵⁸ Many of them began to establish businesses including general merchandise stores held over from the mining days, restaurants, and retail shopping. For the last portion of the nineteenth century, Chinatown Fresno became an important space for the Chinese community in surrounding towns as close as Hanford and Reedley to as far as Bakersfield and Visalia.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Chan, “The Tragedy and Trauma of the Chinese Exclusion Laws,” 196.

¹⁵⁷ In my research I found very little about individual Chinese persons and almost no information on the origins of the Chinese other than the fact that a number of them were from Guandong and Fujian province. While I assume that there must have been regional differences between individuals there has been little written about those types of nuances in the early Chinese settlers. While I am writing about the Chinese in a very general sense based from the sources I have found, more research should definitely investigate these early Chinese settlers.

¹⁵⁸ Mabelle Sellano, “Fresno’s Chinatown,” Pamphlet, n.d., Folder: Chinatown, Fresno County Library Vertical Files, Fresno County Public Library.

¹⁵⁹ Oppen and Lew. “A History of the Chinese in Fresno, California,” 48.

The Chinese workers, predominantly men, who had settled in Millerton were forced to segregate themselves away from white miners, especially because of the greed and competition of the mining industry. They settled in the lower parts of the San Joaquin River bank and began to run their own general merchandise stores. S. Michael Opper and Lillie Lew note that white miners often bought from their Chinese counterparts because of fair prices; however, little to no social interaction took place between the racial groups. The white community feared that “the very appearance of the Chinese was corrupting their children.”¹⁶⁰ The physical appearance of Chinese miners with their “long hair” or queue, their style of dress, and the language differences in particular were reasons white settlers chose to separate themselves. These racist views served as the rationale for restricting and segregating Chinese people within the newly formed city of Fresno.¹⁶¹

Restricted migration patterns resulted in a sexual imbalance in which by 1900 there were 985 Chinese men to 110 Chinese women within Chinatown Fresno.¹⁶² The limited female population and lack of family units pushed the Chinese efforts to encourage the limited numbers of children to continue learning and preserve Chinese culture. There were no public schools located within the limits of the Chinatown district. It was not until the latter 1930s that Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican children

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 47-48.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, manuscript, (accessed on www.ancestry.com, May 2012) Fresno Ward 5, Enumeration District 9, 27 pages. Ward 5 covered the “heart” of Chinatown- Tulare St, E Street, F Street, G Street, and China Alley. All 50 individuals listed on pages 17, 18, and 19 were Chinese male boarders.

attended Lincoln Elementary School located in West Fresno.¹⁶³ While the Chinese saw American education as important for their children, Chinese school was required in the evenings and on Saturdays. Here children learned to read and write in Chinese and were taught the principles of Confucius as a means to preserve their Chinese cultural identity.¹⁶⁴

Within California and most of the West, the Chinese community developed a reputation as an “undesirable” race, specifically regarding issues of disease and cleanliness. In *Fit to be Citizens* Natalia Molina points to assumptions held about the Chinese in Los Angeles during the 1880s, which are similar to the assumption about the Chinese in Fresno. In the Los Angeles case, white citizens and public health officials defined Chinese as heathens and disease-ridden while also depicting Los Angeles’ Chinatown as “a dirty, disease-filled space.” Molina argues this discourse around the Chinese as “unclean,” which was validated by the county health department, allowed the white community to define the Chinese as inferior and as a medical and social menace. These definitions allowed Los Angeles to justify the segregation and eventually the removal of the Chinese community.¹⁶⁵ In *Contagious Divides* Nayan Shah points out a similar construction of “the pestilential Chinese” in San Francisco. Beginning in the late nineteenth century Public Health officers in the Bay Area wanted to promote San Francisco as the “healthy city in the world.”

¹⁶³ It is at Lincoln Elementary that Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican children would have interaction with the new European migrants such as Russian-Germans and Italians. These neighborhoods were adjacent to West Fresno. In chapters 3 and 5 oral interviews of West Fresno residents reflect the kinds of interactions they had with their ethnic Euro-American neighbors.

¹⁶⁴ *Chinatown Historic Resource survey*, 38.

¹⁶⁵ Natalia Molina, *Fit to be Citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2006), 22.

According to Shah, the Chinese in San Francisco represented an obstacle to their goal, causing public health officials to question whether the Chinese were able to adopt health sanitation practices or should be expelled altogether. Like Molina, Shah demonstrates how the racial divide in San Francisco was constructed around discourse of race and disease.¹⁶⁶

In Fresno, whites defined Chinese food peddlers as disease carriers and Chinese launderers as unclean and unsanitary. The discourse connecting race and disease affected other non-white racial groups, such as the assumption that Mexicans were disease carriers, but once the stigma of disease arose for the Chinese, it was not easily avoided. One example was the rumored beginning of small pox in Chinatown during 1875. For several days there was an assumption among the general population that a small pox epidemic might be developing within the segregated Chinatown. While the end result was that no such epidemic existed, news reports noted, “As the Chinese portion of our village is entirely distinct from that occupied by the white people, should the dreadful disease exist as reported, there is little to no danger of a spread of the disease among the whites, if proper precaution is used.”¹⁶⁷ The fact that the newspaper could report with certainty about the segregation between the Chinese and whites illustrates that physical separation existed. This highlights the likelihood that very little social interaction took place between the two communities.

¹⁶⁶ Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2001), 45-48.

¹⁶⁷ Untitled Article, *Fresno Weekly Expositor*, September 15, 1875, Fresno Scrapbook.

Despite the social quarantine, the Chinese living on the west side developed their own sense of claiming and defining space. The Chinese living in west Fresno began developing a business district, which offered opportunities to negotiate social-cultural identity through leisure activities. For example, as the population in Chinatown grew over time, they held their first Chinese cultural fair in 1884. The Chinese settlers raised one thousand dollars through donations, which they then sent to San Francisco's Chinatown to hire a fair coordinator. The coordinator had a tent constructed similar to a camp dwelling. Inside the tent there was an exhibition of religious themed artwork. There were also shows that highlighted traditional Chinese music.¹⁶⁸ This particular event reflects two important things about Fresno's Chinatown. The first is that despite Chinatown's status as a segregated community, it was still able to create a space for leisure and cultural development. The second is despite the rampant racial prejudice from the white community, the Chinese continued to hold onto their cultural traditions. Both points demonstrate how Chinese settlers were developing a sense of community on the Westside, not just existing as laborers for the white elites.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ "A Chinese Fair", *Fresno Weekly Expositor*, November 19, 1884, *Fresno Scrapbook*.

¹⁶⁹ I am using of the term "community" here very loosely as I was not able to find any evidence, such as oral interviews or written memoirs which would point to the perception of the Chinese themselves and how they felt about living in the segregated Westside. At best these types of cultural events and the connection with other Chinese (i.e. Chinatown San Francisco) give us clues as to the connection the Chinese settlers may have felt given they were all living under similar conditions and facing similar obstacles across the state.

Race Relations and Divisions in Fresno

While the Chinese served as the primary source for labor, white community members lobbied for complete Chinese removal rather than segregation. In March of 1886, the Anti-Chinese Club was created to push Chinese out in a “peaceful and lawful manner.”¹⁷⁰ The organization drafted a resolution “that the club establish a white labor intelligence office in Fresno” whose purpose would be to develop a white business sector that would displace Chinese businesses. If Chinese merchants such as vegetable peddlers, laundry owners, etc. could be replaced by white-owned businesses, the club believed the Chinese would no longer need to remain in Fresno. One participant, Mr. Stevens, reported at the March meeting that he was working on developing a white-owned laundry business. At that time Mr. Stevens was waiting for an important piece of machinery; however, he stated that in the interim he would, “hire white help enough to do the work of four hundred families.”¹⁷¹ In using these “peaceful” strategies the Anti-Chinese Club hoped to cut off Chinese merchants, thereby facilitating the indirect removal of Chinese in Fresno. It is important to note that the club stated quite emphatically that any type of violent or unlawful activity against the Chinese would lead to dismissal from the organization. It is unknown whether the by-law truly prevented these types of actions.

However, racial tensions did become more volatile into the twentieth century. An example was the formation of KKK chapters around the state. The KKK targeted

¹⁷⁰“Resolutions of the Anti-Chinese Club,” *Fresno Weekly Expositor*, March 31, 1886, *Fresno Scrapbook*.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

prominent white citizens to join and terrorize non-white and non-Protestant communities with the burning of crosses and threats of violence.¹⁷² The membership lure was under the guise that the KKK was a fraternal organization that would bring about socialization opportunities. Rory McVeigh argues that the KKK can be studied as a social movement, one where members worked towards preserving status-based interests. These interests prompted individuals to join based on camaraderie of maintaining a racial status quo while also providing a fraternal environment.¹⁷³ Mr. W. N. Gilliam described his recruitment experience by the organization. A local Fresno physician and friend of Gilliam approached him stating the KKK might be of interest to him. Gilliam was unaware that his friend was already a member and used specific recruitment tactics. Gilliam recalled that his friend and the Cyclops, local leader of the KKK, gave him an informational visit.

The solicitors first approach you and feel you out and if you feel friendly toward the organization they advance the idea of joining the organization. If you are in a receptive mood they bring you around an application blank and get your donation.¹⁷⁴

With a donation of \$10 dollars, one was initiated into the local “klavern.” For his part, Gilliam claimed that he was unaware of the true nature of the organization until he

¹⁷² For more on the KKK see: Wyn Craig Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America* (London, England: Simon and Schuster, 1987); Rory McVeigh, *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: Right-Wing Movements and National Politics* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota, 2009); Kathleen M. Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1991).

¹⁷³ McVeigh, Chapter 7: “How to recruit a Klansman” in *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan*, 139-166.

¹⁷⁴ “My Experiences as a Klansman” W.N. Gilliam, *Fresno Morning Republican Newspaper*, May 2, 1922, Folder: KKK, Fresno County Vertical Files. I have to note that this particular story highlighted Mr. Gilliam’s experience, but as a reader we are not clear on the motives behind his story. He may have been unaware about the nature of the organization or perhaps he could be covering up his own association. It is not made clear through the article why Mr. Gilliam decided to step forward and give his testimonial.

attended his first meeting and witnessed the initiation ceremony with Klan members in full regalia.¹⁷⁵

The KKK went nearly undetected for the first two decades of the twentieth century. In 1922 the District Attorney of Los Angeles County, Thomas Lee Woolwine, instigated an investigation that uncovered the names and activity of thousands of Klan members throughout Southern and Central California.¹⁷⁶ In this discovery, it was noted that a chapter of the KKK was operating in Fresno. Many of the district attorneys throughout the Central Valley were called to a meeting in Los Angeles in April of 1922 to convene about the surmounting threat of this organization. Fresno's District Attorney B. W. Gearhart was among the attendees, gaining a list of names of the members in Fresno area.¹⁷⁷

By the end of April it was determined that there were a significant number of KKK members in Fresno, including six members who were part of the Fresno police force. *Fresno Morning Republican* published the names of the most prominent Klan members in the April 30, 1922 edition. Charles Farnam, Fresno Deputy Sheriff, along with local physicians Dr. Luckle and Dr. C. F. Dickenson were publicly "outed" by this story.¹⁷⁸ Deputy Sheriff Farnam resigned not long after his public outing when he was forced to admit that he was indeed a member of the organization. Other people

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Those participating in the KKK were required to maintain a veil of secrecy about their participation. It was part of the guidelines for membership in the organization. In 1917 Imperial Wizard William Joseph "Doc" Simmons proclaimed that the KKK would always be a secret from his decree going forward. Secrecy became an obsessive part of the organization. Information from Wade, *The Fiery Cross*, 150.

¹⁷⁷ "Investigation of Ku Klux Klansmen turned to Fresno," *Fresno Morning Republican Newspaper*, April 29, 1922, Folder: KKK, Fresno County Vertical Files.

¹⁷⁸ "Gearhart Reveals Names Obtained in Los Angeles Raid," *Fresno Morning Republican Newspaper*, April 30, 1922, Folder: KKK, Fresno County Vertical Files.

whose names were on the list sent letters of resignation to the Grand Wizard of the KKK, citing that they were either unaware of their membership, or like Mr. Gilliam, had been misled into the organization. This was their attempt to disassociate from the KKK. However, writers of the *Fresno Morning Republican* received threats of violence from the KKK for its participation in the outing of its members, reflective of the violent and secretive nature of the group itself.¹⁷⁹

Mayor Truman G. Hart dismissed the Klan members serving on the Fresno police force. Mayor Hart charged that the men had “violated their oath of office.” However, after a hearing with the Civil Service Commission, all of them were reinstated back to the force, although they were limited to traffic control at intersections, an undesirable job on the force.¹⁸⁰ While this public outing of Klan members seemed to push the organization into the dark background of the county, the fact that it was such a significant presence during this time reflects that racist assumptions of white citizens in the area were still very alive and present. The second is linking the early twentieth century ethnic migration to the rise in the Ku Klux Klan. The feelings of xenophobia targeted at Asian communities and the rise of Mexican migration in California post-Mexican Revolution, set the stage for the emergence of such a racially volatile group. Through this we can begin to see how in an area such as Fresno, a racist ideology of nativism lingered among the white community

¹⁷⁹ “4 More Policeman of Fresno Found on Ku Klux Klan List,” *Fresno Morning Republican Newspaper*, May 2, 1922, Folder: KKK, Fresno County Vertical Files.

¹⁸⁰ Hallam, Gene, “From Callbox to Computer: Law Enforcement and the Criminal” in *Fresno County in the 20th Century*, 330.

members seeking to ensure that “foreigners,” a term defined primarily as non-white, remained in a subordinate social, political, and economic position.¹⁸¹

While Klan activity did subside, it did not die down. After the 1922 incident the KKK remained somewhat active in Fresno with the renewal of the position of county livestock inspector. The inspector at that time, Dr. John F. McKenna, held the position for nine years. The KKK however, did not approve of his reappointment because of problems with his religion, which was not specified.¹⁸² They decided to run their own candidate for the position, Dr. W. L. Brown, who went ahead to gain the position after Klan members “made nocturnal visits to the supervisors.”¹⁸³ It was also discovered around this time, in the Autumn of 1925, that there were several junior leagues of the KKK in the local high schools modeled as fraternal organizations. While the KKK was not heavily active throughout the rest of the twentieth century, it always lingered in the background.¹⁸⁴

Even at the height of anti-Chinese sentiment, there were a few members of the white community who did choose to work with the Chinese in an effort to encourage assimilation to some degree. An example of this was the creation of the Chinese Mission House in 1890 by Miss J. S. Worley, a white woman, along with Loo Quong, who assisted in interpretation. Miss Worley developed the Chinese Mission house on

¹⁸¹ For more on Nativism see: John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New York, New York: Antheneum Press, 1955); George J. Sanchez, “Face the Nation: Race, Immigration, and the Rise of Nativism in the Late Twentieth Century America” *International Migration Review*, 31, no. 4, (Winter 1997): 1009-1030.

¹⁸² While the article does not specify the religious background of Dr. McKenna, there is a strong possibility that he was Catholic given the presumed Irish last name.

¹⁸³ Verne H. Cole, “The County Grows ad Prospers” in *Fresno County in the 20th Century*, ed. Charles Clough, et. al (Fresno, California: Panorama West Books, 1986), 28.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

Kern and G streets, at the edge of Chinatown, in order to proselytize the Chinese out of their “heathen” ways and into Christianity. Miss Worley’s mission began with a small converted set of rooms in a building on the white side of town. The *Fresno Daily Expositor* reports,

When the mission was first started rooms were secured in the Edgerly block, but such a storm of opposition to the character of the tenants—due largely to prejudice—was made that other temporary quarters were secured until such time as a suitable building could be erected in the Chinese quarters.¹⁸⁵

Miss Worley was not discouraged and continued to push her efforts to teach the Chinese about Christianity and held English language classes. In line with much of the proselytizing of the West by Christian missionaries, particularly white women, the efforts of the Chinese Mission House reflected a trend that would become popularized throughout the West during the latter part of the nineteenth and into the first portion of the twentieth century.¹⁸⁶ The movement of these white Christian women was couched in the discourse of Americanization, educating and adapting skills for the seamless transition into American society. However, as historian Vicki Ruiz points out in her work on El Paso’s Rose Gregory Houchen Settlement, the efforts and services of the missionaries was given with the expectation of a return: Christian-Protestant conversion.¹⁸⁷ For the Chinese, conversion and Americanization were difficult because the conditions of bachelor society made it particularly difficult to

¹⁸⁵ “Chinese Mission,” *Fresno Daily Expositor*, June 20, 1890, Fresno Scrapbook.

¹⁸⁶ For more on the movement by white Christian, Presbyterian in particular, to develop Chinese Mission Homes see: Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

¹⁸⁷ Vicki L. Ruiz, “Dead ends or Goldmines?” in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in US Women’s History*, 2nd ed., ed. Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carol Dubois (New York, New York: Routledge, 1994), 302.

wrangle many in as converts, coupled with the fact that they were legally ineligible for US citizenship.¹⁸⁸

The Chinese Mission House's opening ceremony was a success for the white missionaries who wanted to assist the Chinese towards a limited assimilation. Both white and Chinese community members attended the ceremony. While the opening ceremony event was a success, the long-term acceptance of the Chinese by the white missionaries was based on the expressed desire of these individual Chinese to move towards assimilation.¹⁸⁹ The undertone of the event focused on how the Chinese should refute their "heathen" past and move towards a wholesome Christian future. This may not have been fully realized by the Chinese; for the most part the presence of the Chinese Mission House did not greatly impact or change any of the activities within Chinatown as west Fresno continued to be ignored by whites living on the other side of the tracks.¹⁹⁰

The lack of concern for Chinatown is evident in a number of fire incidents occurring during the 1880s and 1890s. One of the first fires took place in February of 1883, hitting several buildings owned by prominent Chinese vice leaders. Lam Lee,

¹⁸⁸ Both Ruiz' in "Dead Ends or Gold Mines" and George J. Sanchez in "Go After the Women" and *Becoming Mexican American* point out that often these measures of proselytizing and Americanization went hand in hand with targeting women, particularly wives and mother as the assumption was they had the hold of the family unit and could bring the most influence towards shifting the family, namely the second generation, towards assimilation. This did not work as effectively for the Chinese community as there were almost no family structure for most of the Chinese in the West, but most definitely not for the Chinese of Fresno. See: George J. Sanchez, "Go After the Women" in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in US Women's History*, 2nd ed., ed. Vicki L Ruiz and Ellen Carol Dubois (New York, New York: Routledge, 1994), 284-297; George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

¹⁸⁹ "Chinese Mission," *Fresno Daily Expositor*, June 20, 1890, Fresno Scrapbook.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

owner of Chinese gambling and opium dens as well as a restaurant, was hit hard in the first major fire which affected several businesses including two restaurants, two or three prostitution houses, a doctor's office, and several laundry businesses. There was no formal Fire Department in the city of Fresno until the late 1880s; those fighting fires were merely a set of volunteers from the community. For this particular incident, the *Fresno Weekly Expositor* reported,

The earlyness of the hour and the remote location of the scene of the conflagration, permitted the fire to get a big headway before being discovered by the white residents of the town, and therefore when they [firemen] arrived on the scene in sufficient force to accomplish any good, the fire was beyond control. The Chinese themselves were apparently paralyzed and made but little effort to save their property.¹⁹¹

The blaze had grown to a considerable size before the white residents gave it enough attention to warrant firefighting efforts. Also, the reporters' opinion that the Chinese did not make any effort to save their own property reflects the belief that the Chinese were either incapable or unwilling to help themselves in this tragic moment of terror and panic. It was reported that over forty-thousand dollars' worth of damage was incurred.¹⁹²

There were two more incidents of large-scale fires in Chinatown during May and November of 1887. During the large blaze in May there were reports of people stealing and ransacking businesses during the fire. The *Fresno Daily Expositor* reports, "A good deal of stealing went on during the excitement—enough to suggest

¹⁹¹ "Fire in Chinatown," *Fresno Weekly Expositor*, February 21, 1883, Fresno Scrapbook.

¹⁹² Ibid.

what might be expected should a fire of this nature occur on this side of the track.”¹⁹³ So while reporting on the event, there was also an undertone of racial prejudice that punctuated the white community’s desire to separate themselves, physically, and in this case also differentiate moral actions. In the reports of these various fires, one thing that is absent is any indication of how these fires started.¹⁹⁴ The silence around the origins of these fires suggest questions as to whether or not these fires may have been malicious acts against the Chinese, especially because the latter two occurred within months of each other. A clue to this comes with an incident in August of 1893 when several bombs were ignited in Chinatown, mortally wounding one individual, and wrecking several buildings. *The Fresno Daily Expositor* reported the incident and gave several possible explanations of its origin. The first two scenarios involved ongoing statewide Chinese gang/highbinder war.¹⁹⁵ These were highlighted as the most likely scenarios; either it was a gang on gang incident brought in from highbinders in San Francisco’s Chinatown or that the highbinders were targeting a specific individual, most likely Lam Lee, as his buildings were the ones seemingly targeted. The third possible scenario reported by the paper was “that white men threw the bombs on general principle.” This statement was quickly followed with, “But the Chinese do not take much stock in this theory.”¹⁹⁶ The fact that so many physically

¹⁹³ “Chinatown Ablaze,” *Fresno Daily Expositor*, May 16, 1887, Fresno Scrapbook.

¹⁹⁴ “Fire in Chinatown,” *Fresno Weekly Expositor*, February 21, 1883, Fresno Scrapbook; “Chinatown Ablaze,” *Fresno Daily Expositor*, May 16, 1887, Fresno Scrapbook.

¹⁹⁵ Highbinder was the name given to the specific Chinese gangs in New York City by the local police. The term is then used for any Chinese person involved in vice activity. For information on highbinders in California see: Richard H. Dillon, *The Hatchet Men: The Story of the Tong Wars in San Francisco’s Chinatown* (New York, New York: Coward and McCann Inc., 1962), 52.

¹⁹⁶ “Three Ugly Bombs,” *Fresno Daily Expositor*, August 29, 1893, Fresno Scrapbook.

destructive incidents happened in this small neighborhood in a short time span can only lead to the speculation that these incidents were somehow related. While the last incident was couched in terms of an ongoing intra-racial/Chinese gang conflict, the larger implications point to the possibility of racial prejudice by white individuals as a motive for these violent incidences.

The development of West Fresno, starting in the 1880s, positioned the Westside to become a segregated enclave. For the Chinese, the restricted ability for physical and social mobility limited choices for integration into the larger Fresno community. While some white individuals worked to assist in the possible assimilation of Chinese, many other whites wanted to maintain physical segregation. Within this part of the city, a red light district slowly formed offering gambling, prostitution, and drugs. By the late nineteenth century, Chinatown's vices became a problem for Fresno as political interests and corruption became intertwined with the perceived moral bankruptcy of the district.

Chinatown Vice Activity—Developing a Racialized Image

Chinese settlers in Fresno faced heavy discrimination by their local white community members as well as national ideas of their inability to assimilate. However, these ideologies were reinforced by the reputation that was created from the vice activity which took place in Chinatown Fresno. Prostitution, opium dens, and card houses occupied the various storefronts throughout West Fresno. This area held a reputation of corruption and excessive drinking in saloons from the earliest days of

the city. As Chinatown developed into a thriving business space for the Chinese, it continued to maintain aspects of a red light district as a space where illicit, illegal, or vice activity takes place. For white Fresnans these vice activities came to negatively define Chinatown and the Chinese people who lived in West Fresno.¹⁹⁷

Chinese bosses ran the vice portion of West Fresno as part of the larger statewide ring. The gambling houses in the small district were located in China Alley, behind G Street; the doorways did not face the main streets. By the 1880s-1890s, as Fresno's Chinatown became established in its businesses and population, gambling quickly grew as a lucrative and successful past time for Fresno, increasing the Westside districts notoriety.¹⁹⁸ Initially, only Chinese men engaged in West Fresno's vice activities, however, over time some white men began to participate as well.¹⁹⁹ For many, these leisure activities were a release from their jobs as laborers while also providing opportunities to potentially expand their income.²⁰⁰

Of the vice activities, the card game Fan-Tan, was quite popular. One of the well-known Chinatown bosses, Lam Lee, owned a Fan-Tan gambling house that

¹⁹⁷ For more on Chinese vice activity in the US see: Ivan Light, "The Ethnic Vice Industry, 1880-1944" *American Sociological Review* 42 (June 1977): 464-479; Brian Paciotti, "Homicide in Seattle's Chinatown, 1900-1940: Evaluating the Influence of Social Organizations" *Homicide Studies* Vol. 3, No. 9 (August 2005): 229-255; Ko-Lin Chin, *Chinatown Gangs: Extortion, Enterprise, and Ethnicity* (Oxford, England: Oxford University, 1996); Jeffrey Scott McIlwain, *Organizing Crime in Chinatown: Race and Racketeering in New York City, 1890-1910* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company Inc., 2004).

¹⁹⁸ *Chinatown Historic Resource Survey*, 56.

¹⁹⁹ At this time, whites were vehement in wanting to keep the Chinese and their gambling houses out of east Fresno, there seem to be some laxity with the activities going on in Westside. As long as the physical separation remained, it seems that white Fresnans cared very little about what happened in Chinatown. It is not clear why and how these white men chose to partake in gambling, one can assume it was done for leisure/ pleasure. Not until later when more white community members begin to engage in gambling practices does it become an issue. I address this in the later part of this section.

²⁰⁰ Ramon D. Chacón, "The Beginning of Racial Segregation: The Chinese in West Fresno and Chinatown's Role as a Red Light District" *Southern California Quarterly*, 1988, Vol. 70, No. 4, 381.

many Fresnans frequently visited. The growth of popularity for Fan-Tan also incited violent reactions among the card players. For example, in December 1882, a Chinese man pulled out a knife in an attempt to stab a white man, John Abbott, during a card game. *The Fresno Weekly Expositor* reported, “Abbott threw up his arm and warded off the blow from his body, but received a bad cut in the arm while doing so.”²⁰¹ Another incident was a shooting among Chinese men who participated in a Fan-Tan game at Lam Lee’s gambling house. One of the individuals asked another man to leave during the game when the verbal altercation shifted to violence. This incident resulted in one man being killed and another man’s fingers shot off. None of these individuals volunteered information about the victims or the shooter to the authorities. This led the police to assume that this incident was probably part of a Tong war, or Chinese gang interaction.²⁰² It is significant to note that in the first example the Chinese individual was identified by the local paper, the *Fresno Weekly Expositor*, as a “Chinaman” as opposed to the white individual, and alleged victim, who was identified by his full name, John Abbot. In the second example, the *Fresno Weekly Expositor* again refers to the individuals as “Chinamen.” In this way, the newspaper created an erasure around the Chinese community. By referring to them solely by their racial category, the inference is that all the Chinese are the same and there is not a need to differentiate between them. This sort of generic categorization is seen in the

²⁰¹ “Cutting Affray in Chinatown,” *Fresno Weekly Expositor*, December 6, 1882, Fresno Scrapbook.

²⁰² “Battle in Chinatown,” *Fresno Weekly Expositor*, May 7, 1884, Fresno Scrapbook.

majority of newspaper entries about Chinatown unless discussing a specific court cases against Chinese individuals.²⁰³

While there were other prominent bosses in Chinatown, Lam Lee was a person of interest to law enforcement and white community members. As previously mentioned, Lee was the successful owner of several buildings in Chinatown, which housed vice businesses and legitimate businesses such as restaurants and laundry operations. As the police tried to curtail the fan-tan activity due to the violence that it seemed to perpetrate, Lee became a significant target in attempts to shut down the gambling houses. In the mid-1880s the police began to conduct raids in Chinatown to catch those engaging in criminal activity. One of the first major raids took place in July of 1885, when police arrested thirty-three individuals for their involvement in fan-tan games. The police charged Lam Lee, known in Chinatown as the “merchant prince,” specifically with heading the entire vice operation. Lee was able to immediately hire legal assistance, which according to reports from the *Fresno Weekly Expositor*, he used to “secure if possible the defeat of the charge against him and the release of the patrons of his house.”²⁰⁴ This particular case contained insufficient evidence causing Lee and the patrons to be acquitted. While the police continued the investigation on Lee himself, he went on to celebrate the victory by hosting a dinner.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ “A Grand Blow Out,” *Fresno Weekly Expositor*, July 29, 1885, Fresno Scrapbook.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

An important thing to note was that this celebratory dinner was attended by prominent Fresno political figures including the Chinese consul, W. D. Tupper, president of the Bar Association of Fresno and W. J. Dickey, Chairman of the Fresno Stock Exchange.²⁰⁶ This points to two important considerations: the first is the inference that Lee, while being a boss of vice activity, was also someone who was politically connected and therefore able to afford protection against any sort of convictions. The second implication is that while white Fresnans placed the blame and responsibility of the vice activities in Chinatown solely on the Chinese, the celebratory dinner guests infers the involvement of prominent white citizens, political figures, and law enforcement in the vice activity of Chinatown.²⁰⁷ This point is particularly important when reflecting on the motivations of the westside political bosses, who while not named specifically, were identified as the non-Chinese business owners in that district. This type of intimate gathering infers that there were whites that supported the illicit activities for their personal financial gain.

The success of Lam Lee in diverting prosecution did not deter the efforts of the police. They continued to make raids periodically in Chinatown well into the 1890s in order to shut down gambling houses and opium dens. The constables had a difficult time raiding gambling houses because they were located in buildings behind closed and barred doors. It was rumored that the buildings in Chinatown contained

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ I am making a generalization that most white Fresnans disliked the vice activities of Chinatown as inferred from the types of news reports which seemingly reflected the social attitudes of the times. There is no way to tell through the evidence I found available if every individual felt negatively towards Chinatown, and the fact that there were some white patrons of the gambling houses reflects that some may have welcomed, but it seems that this group was a minority in this late 1880s-early 1890s time period.

underground tunnels to ensure an easy escape from police.²⁰⁸ In September of 1890 another significant raid by the police took down Ah Jim who was known in Chinatown as “the prince of opium keeping joints.” His den was raided and police seized property, which amounted to approximately \$1800. Ah Jim was described in news reports as “a smooth tongued Mongolian” because of his ability to speak English fluently.²⁰⁹ This report reflects the surmounting racial imagery of the Chinese not only as criminals, but also as manipulators. This idea would be the groundwork for assumptions of Chinese seducing white citizens to participate in criminal activity, conveniently absolving any wrongdoings on the part of these white citizens. In reality, gambling fever soon took a foothold in greater Fresno.

The police pressure on Chinatown’s activities was not always met idly. In October of 1890 an incident erupted when an attempted police raid on Chinatown resulted in a riot and assault on police officers. According to newspaper reports, as Constable Johnson and Deputies Childers and Qualls attempted to raid another gambling den, the Chinese “closed all the doors and rushed upstairs to escape over the roofs of the houses.” What happened next was an unexpected response.

While the officers were cutting off this means of escape the wiley Mongolians returned to the lower floor, broke down the door, and rushed into the street where they were joined by not less than 50 of their countrymen. An attack was at once inaugurated upon the constabulary. A brick building nearby was in course of construction and its material served as weapons to put the officers to flight. The officers escaped through the howling mob, but not before each had received a blow from a flying brick.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ Mabelle Sellano, “Fresno’s Chinatown,” Pamphlet, n.d., Folder: Chinatown, Fresno County Library Vertical Files.

²⁰⁹ “An Odd Number,” *Fresno Daily Evening Expositor*, September 19, 1890, Fresno Scrapbook.

²¹⁰ “Another Raid,” *Fresno Daily Evening Expositor*, October 29, 1890, Fresno Scrapbook.

The spectacle prevented any arrests from taking place, but the officers did return later in the evening making 28 arrests. It was not reported as to whether they were able to prove that those were the specific individuals involved in this incident and no other follow up was reported on the case.²¹¹ This incident does point to the fact that the Chinese community may have become tired of the police harassment in the community and that it was very likely that participants in this mob were not all directly related to the gambling house but may have taken this opportunity to express frustration with the law enforcement.

Incidents such as these continued to feed white Fresno's negative perceptions of Chinatown. The *Fresno Daily Expositor* reported on Chinatown's conditions in an exposé manner in an article entitled "Dark and Dismal Dens" on March 21, 1894. It stated that Chinatown contained "underground vaults of reeking filth." The paper printed the article after an incident where a young Chinese woman, Sing Yen, was allegedly kidnapped by Chinese highbinders after an attempt to leave a life of prostitution.²¹² According to news reports, Sing Yen, a young prostitute, attempted to seek refuge from her life as a sex slave by placing herself in the custody of a white woman, Mrs. Green, who was a member of the Chinese Presbyterian Church. Mrs. Green was attempting to assist Sing Yen in fleeing Fresno; however, a warrant for Yen's arrest was issued for her prostitution activities and she was detained before

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Several news reports listed her as Sing Yen while others listed her as Sing Toy. The information of the cases are identical which means that they may have initially gotten the name wrong and then just began printing stories with the correct name but no indication about the correction.

she could leave by train. Subsequently, she was allegedly released by bail from a group of men who were solely identified as “Chinese Highbinders” who most likely held her as property. Mrs. Green was present at Sing Yen’s release, but was able to do nothing to stop the young women from leaving with these individuals. Shortly after her release, it was speculated that Sing Yen was sent to Los Angeles to remain a part of the statewide sex worker market. Mrs. Green was beside herself and asked the police officer, Mr. Merritt why he did nothing to stop this incident. He was reportedly complacent, stating his pistol was in his drawer.²¹³ The policemen ignored Mrs. Green as a hysterical woman and the young girl was taken with no clues as to where she was headed. The lack of police effort to stop such an abuse again raises questions as to how involved the police force was with the vice activity in Chinatown.²¹⁴

After this incident, white Fresnans created a search party to scour through Chinatown in an attempt to find young Sing Yen. This was one of the first times many of them had every interacted so intimately with the Chinese. The *Expositor* reported the reactions as follows,

The outside of the Chinese quarter of the city may be considered bad enough with its flies and filth in the summer, and its dirt and nastiness in winter, but all that may be seen from the outside is as a paradise and Eden in comparison with the offensive odors, the darkness, the stifling air, the gloomy caverns, the blind passages, the secret doors leading

²¹³ “Sent Back to Slavery,” *Fresno Daily Evening Expositor*, March 19, 1894, Fresno Scrapbook.

²¹⁴ For more information on Chinese Prostitution see: Lucie Cheng Hirata, “Free, Indentured, Enslaved: Chinese Prostitutes in Nineteenth Century America,” *Signs* 5 (1979), 3-29; Ivan Light, “From Vice District to Tourist Attraction: The Moral Career of American Chinatowns, 1880-1940” *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (August 1974), 367-394; Neil Larry Shumsky, “Tacit Acceptance: Respectable Americans and Segregated Prostitution, 1870-1910” *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Summer, 1986), 665-679.

into lower levels and darker apartments which are encountered as one penetrates to the center of one of these solid blocks. The smell first strikes the white man as something unendurable. It is a combination of smoke, dust, opium, rotten fish and meat, decaying vegetables, leaking gas, moldy wood, old clothes, bugs that creep and thrive in crannies where soap is unknown and the only water present is the seepage from the earth beneath and the unventilated walls.²¹⁵

While some of the description could be accurate, it is difficult to decipher how much of the report was exaggerated. What the news article fails to point out is how the segregated nature of the city created the conditions that the search party allegedly encountered. Again, the report reflects the sentiment that responsibility for the conditions of Chinatown lay with the Chinese residents and merchants. However, the racial exclusionary practices such as segregation, lack of access to civil service, and lack of attention overall to the hygiene conditions in Chinatown, meant that the Chinese were most likely excluded from city resources.²¹⁶ The young woman, Sing Yen, was never recovered, and it was assumed that the men who took custody of her sent her to Los Angeles in an attempt to continue her terms as a property of the Tongs. In a way, Sing Yen's story is illustrative of the inability to "save" the Chinese. Despite Mrs. Green's efforts to save Sing Yen spiritually and corporeally (from sexual violence), Yen was lost to the vices of her own community.

By 1895 a shift was perceivable in the opinion of Chinatown as whites began openly engaging in vice activities on the "other side of the tracks." The first incident

²¹⁵ "Dark and Dismal Dens," *Fresno Daily Evening Expositor*, March 21, 1894, Fresno Scrapbook.

²¹⁶ For more on Chinese exclusion and sanitary conditions see: Natalia Molina, *Fit to Be Citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939*, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2006); Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2001).

bringing this change to light was another religious festival in Chinatown. Similar in nature to the first festival in 1884, a tented area contained displays of Chinese religious imagery as well as showcased musicians for entertainment. The difference was this festival also allowed for much of the gambling and vice activity to come out of the dens and into the streets. By this point, the police were not doing anything to stop the open gambling.²¹⁷ Another significant difference was the presence of white community members at the festival. The *Fresno Daily Expositor* observed, “The white people of both sexes seem to have been allowed to take advantage of the season of religious festival of the Chinamen to practice their vices without any sort of restraint.” The *Expositor* goes on to state, “It is hardly reasonable that a religious festival of the Chinese would be held to be an excuse for all the indecency and violation of law on part of the white people over there.”²¹⁸ With the police ignoring the activity, a group of white citizens felt comfortable to let go of their inhibitions openly; however, the conservative tone of the news report reflects that there was still an overall disapproval of what was happening in Chinatown by a larger community voice. The fact that whites crossed over into Chinatown signaled to the conservative and bigoted faction that the Chinese were tempting and corrupting whites to participate in illegal and immoral activities.

This sentiment of disapproval peaked at the end of the 1890s in a public and very active campaign to eradicate the Chinese lottery games. Gambling houses held

²¹⁷ The underlying inference here is that this is a marker of a shift of the police now cooperating with the vice activity.

²¹⁸ “A Carnival of Vice,” *Fresno Daily Evening Expositor*, October 25, 1895, Fresno Scrapbook.

weekly lottery drawings, which was an extremely popular activity statewide. In Fresno almost any Chinese merchant, such as launderers, small shops, and restaurants, sold these tickets. The editor of the *Fresno Daily Expositor* made it his personal mission to eliminate the lottery altogether, especially as it became clear to the public that the police were not interested in stopping the game. The news reports in the *Expositor* estimated that the lottery in Fresno was making approximately one-thousand dollars a day, amounting to about \$372,000 annually. Officer Marshal Woy and the district attorney's office were aware that this was happening, but were doing nothing to stop it. Part of the argument that the *Expositor* made was that the lottery was infiltrating the wholesome community at large. Local Chinese peddlers reported that some of their repeat lottery customers were local businessmen, policemen, as well as married wives and mothers. The *Expositor* pointed out how the lottery was bringing corruption to the community as people were allegedly losing their businesses and throwing money away towards this "evil." The article focused on the married women playing lottery stating they "played \$12 everyday with [the Chinese peddler]. They won \$50 one time, \$9 at another, \$14 at another and \$6 at another or a total of \$79. Had they played \$12 a day for but one month, these foolish women would have paid \$360 for the privilege of winning \$79."²¹⁹ The very idea that these women would make such a "foolish" decision as to waste their household money for the lottery was seen as an important piece of evidence in the argument to close down the lottery racket. Moreover, it was noted that the husbands of these women must be "puzzled

²¹⁹ "Chinese Lotteries Must Close," *Fresno Daily Evening Expositor*, February 11, 1897, Fresno Scrapbook.

to know where the money goes at home” and that they should inquire “from their Chinese laundrymen or vegetable peddlers” who were framed as targeting or duping women into this gambling addiction. While returning to earlier racialized sentiment that the Chinese merchants were “smooth talking manipulators,” the paper also chauvinistically framed these housewives as unable to make conscious and responsible financial decisions for their households. The reports ignore the autonomy of these women, their right to indulge in leisure pastimes, and their desire to participate in the lottery.²²⁰

The *Expositor* continued to run similar stories in hopes of highlighting the dangers of Chinese gambling. These articles also contained the newspapers solicitation to the community for donations to hire private detectives to investigate the issue since the police were not interested in stopping any of the activities. In February of 1897, the police arrested a few Chinese bosses who were running lottery games. One in particular, Quong Chong, stated openly that he was not concerned about an indictment because he had the police on his payroll.²²¹ There was no further evidence of the outcome of these particular cases and the lottery business continued. While white conservatives wanted to suppress the activity in the Westside district, they were not very successful. The Chinese bosses and the gambling racket was protected by the political elite and the police force.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ “Quong Chong Says He Buys Officers,” *Fresno Daily Evening Expositor*, February 24, 1897, Fresno Scrapbook.

While much of Chinatown's reputation proved to be true, the vice activity was only one portion of what was happening in the district. In fact, by the 1920s there were a well-established number of Chinese grocers (including 40 general grocers, 3 meat sellers, 5 poultry sellers, and 6 vegetable peddlers), a Chinese auto mechanic, general store and dry goods sellers.²²² Yet, the picture portrayed by white Fresnoans assumed all the inhabitants were the same. Perceptions of the Chinese were largely influenced by the media reports of the time, which focused negatively on the conditions of the space as well as the immoral activities taking place. The newspaper never focused on how the racially segregated conditions of the city could have led to these unsavory conditions, or how the consumption of gambling by the community as a whole led to the continuation and success of the red light district.²²³ In fact, much of the ownership of corruption was placed upon the Chinese themselves rather than examining the shared responsibility. Overall, these assumptions about life in Chinatown and about the Chinese fueled the already growing yellow peril discourse that was growing throughout the West Coast. These early perceptions about life on the Westside allowed subsequent non-white racial groups to settle there and continue to feel the racialized legacy of this early Chinatown.

²²² United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of United States, 1920* (Washington, D. C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1920). Manuscript census accessed on <http://www.ancestry.com>, accessed on April 2012.

²²³ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900* (Washington, D. C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1900). Manuscript census accessed on <http://www.ancestry.com>, accessed on April 2012.

It covered the area known as Chinatown (E street, F street, G street, China Alley, Tulare St) surveyed 1350 residents of which 1095 were of Chinese descent.

Conclusion

In *The History of Fresno County*, written in 1919, newspaper writer and editor Paul Vandor recounts how white residents pushed for the Chinese to remain on the Westside of the railroad tracks, a defining line in the segregation of Fresno. After a Chinese blacksmith opened on Mariposa and I Streets followed by a Chinese washhouse in one of the flourishing white areas of the city, a meeting was held in which Vandor highlighted “The signature of nearly every resident was secured to the pledge.”²²⁴ The pledge of keeping the Chinese out of white neighborhoods relegated the Chinese to move and settle only in West Fresno. Despite the lack of opportunity to live on the “other side of the tracks,” the Chinese community, during the latter part of the 1800s fostered their own sense of community and entrepreneurship by creating a thriving and lively Chinese business center in the San Joaquin Valley. The neighborhood consisted of a number of Chinese laundries, vegetable peddlers, and restaurants. In the two by two block radius, the 600 plus Chinese who had moved over from the former county seat, Millerton, formed a community, celebrating their cultural heritage, and began to mark their permanency in the city.²²⁵

Initially Chinatown was mostly isolated from the white neighborhoods with very little interaction between the racial groups. The Chinese created their own opportunities despite the limitations they faced due to both local and national racial

²²⁴ Paul E. Vandor, *History of Fresno County, California: with Biographical Sketches of the Leading Men and Women of the County Who Have Been Identified with its Growth and Development from the Early Days to the Present* (Los Angeles, California: Historical Record Company, 1919), 330.

Important to note the use of “resident” is framed in a way that assumes Chinese exclusion from voting on whether they would be able to move out of West Fresno.

²²⁵ Mabelle Sellano, “Fresno’s Chinatown,” Pamphlet, n.d., Folder: Chinatown, Fresno County Library Vertical Files.

exclusion tactics. The very presence of Chinese in Fresno was not tolerable for a conservative sector of whites. By the late 1880s the creation of an anti-Chinese organization strategized to peacefully remove the Chinese from Fresno all together. The club argued that efforts to replicate services, such as laundries run by whites, would deem the Chinese as unnecessary and hopefully displace them from employment. The desired outcome was the migration of Chinese people out of Fresno all together. The efforts of the anti-Chinese Club were not successful, but the sentiment of white supremacy and racial exclusion lingered in Fresno. In the early part of the twentieth century, it was clear that white supremacist ideology was still present when Fresno city officials discovered that the Ku Klux Klan was active and included prominent white citizens in the local chapter, such as police officers and physicians.

Despite these efforts to eliminate the Chinese, Fresno's Chinatown thrived economically with the growing vice activities such as gambling, prostitution, and drug sales. It was also linked to a statewide underground vice operation run by the Chinese Tong society based in San Francisco. West Fresno was where one could enter into card houses, buy a lottery ticket, find brothels, and visit opium dens. The vice activity was noted, but was largely ignored as a "Chinese" problem until the 1890s when many of the white citizens began participating heavily in the gambling circles, especially in the Chinese lottery. Seen initially as a harmless pastime, everyone from businessmen to housewives purchased tickets to win some extra cash. However, a group of white citizens, led by the newspaper *Fresno Daily Expositor*,

began a campaign to end the lottery ring. During the investigation it became clear that the issue was more than just the depletion of weekly household funds. It was alleged that city officials, including a good portion of the police force, were under the payroll of the Chinese Tongs and the Westside Chinese bosses.

These complicated nuances of Chinatown formulated a unique community within the city of Fresno. For this first non-white racial group, the act of segregation lent an opportunity for the Chinese settlers to create their own space and inscribe West Fresno with their own definition. Chinatown was both a racially segregated and excluded neighborhood, as well as a vibrant and well-connected racialized space, engaging with both other Chinese around the state and white Fresnoans.²²⁶ This balance between two near polar opposite concepts, oppressed and prosperous, set the condition of West Fresno as an important place to investigate race relations. As we move into the next chapter, the entrance of new non-white racial groups and the decline of the Chinese, because of national racially restrictive policies, change West Fresno. However, the foundation of Chinatown's emergence as a hub for people of color in the surrounding area continued with new migrants groups, Japanese and Mexican.

²²⁶ See Appendix A, a list of residents of China Alley in the heart of Fresno's Chinatown. What is notable is from 1920 until 1940 the majority of residents in the two city blocks of China Alley were predominantly Chinese.

CHAPTER 3
EXPANDING THE RACIAL MAKEUP OF WEST FRESNO—THE
JAPANESE IN FRESNO, 1880s-1940s

Previously, we examined the development of Chinatown in Fresno and the beginnings of a segregated space. Racial segregation persisted in the Fresno city limits well into the beginning of the twentieth century, the system weaving new racial groups into the Westside enclave. Life for new Japanese migrants in Fresno was difficult in the beginning. Their settlement patterns allowed for communal connections among the residents of the newly-formed *nihonmachi*, Japantown in the early 1900s.

Table 3.1 Total Japanese in Fresno County and City²²⁷

Year	Fresno County	City of Fresno
1900	598	175
1910	2,233	629
1920	5,732	1,119
1930	5,280	1,176
1940	4,527	797

Yet, they still faced the same racial discrimination that their Chinese neighbors had been dealing with since the later part of the nineteenth century. Nativist discourse fueled anti-Asian sentiment among white US citizens, and Fresno’s Japanese were definitely impacted negatively by it. While some Japanese made limited upward socio-economic strides through land ownership or tenant farming,

²²⁷ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Population: Vol. II Characteristics of the Population* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1943), 567-568; United States, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920: Population, Vol. III, Characteristics of the Population by States* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1922), 109-110; United States, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population, Vol. II, Alabama-Montana* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1913), 166; United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900: Population, Vol. I, Part I* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1901), 609.

these opportunities were quickly swept away by federal policies such as the 1913 Alien Land Law.²²⁸ Along with legal discrimination, many Japanese experienced racism in their social interactions with white community members. Despite these obstacles, many Japanese continued to attempt to find their niche in Fresno.

When the Japanese Army attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the entire country was shocked that such a horrific event could have taken place on US soil. The aftermath of Pearl Harbor resulted in heavy discrimination against Japanese people as “enemy aliens.” Fear and xenophobia fueled the subsequent push by whites to have all Japanese removed from the West Coast, bringing the tragedy of Pearl Harbor to an even greater height. Some of the local Japanese, both individuals and collective organizations, declared their loyalties to the United States. Second-generation US-born Japanese, *Nissei*, felt culturally Japanese, but they did not have any allegiances to the Japanese empire. The panic surrounding Pearl Harbor, coupled with the racial prejudice against Asians stemming from the previous century, created the hostile environment that eventually stripped all Japanese, both US citizens and Japanese citizens, of their rights.

²²⁸ The 1913 Alien Land Law prohibited “aliens ineligible for citizenship” from purchasing or owning land but allowed the possibility for 3-year leases. While the 1913 Alien Land Law did not specify a racial group the Naturalization Law of 1790 defines Asian groups as “aliens ineligible for citizenship.” This law targeted towards Japanese who were seen by white citizens as an economic threat due to their successful productivity in agriculture. Many *Issei*, first generation Japanese, found a loophole by placing purchased lands in the names of their children who were US born citizens. There was a second law passed in 1920 in order to close this loophole and restrict Japanese from not owning or leasing land at all. While this more restrictive legislation passed in all counties in California, Japanese farmers were able to strategize ways to continue farming, often illegally, but ultimately maintain the ability to survive until internment in 1942. See: David J. O’Brien and Stephen S. Fugita, *The Japanese American Experience* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991), 22-26.

By the middle of 1942, the Western Defense Command, headed by General J. L. DeWitt, completely eradicated all of the Japanese residents from the Fresno area, as well as the entire West Coast. On the one hand, this historical moment has a major impact on the way we think of the treatment of people of color, specifically, the fact that race could trump citizenship status during times of war. As fear of further attacks from the Japanese Imperial Army grew across the nation, the Japanese in the US were interned in concentration camps for the remainder of the war as part of national security efforts.

In Fresno, the removal of the Japanese hurt the agricultural industry because they represented a significant portion of the labor force. White growers attempted to persuade the Western Defense Command to have the Japanese return in a program to assist the harvest efforts. These efforts to have Japanese return as workers are an indication that communities of color were defined (or at times re-defined) for the purposes of specific functions in our society, in this case for labor. As history reflects, the denial of citizenship rights to people of Japanese descent did not just begin the moment the first planes hit Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. To understand the events following this tragedy, we must really look to the end of the nineteenth century with the arrival of Japanese nationals and the erupting discourses by white nationalist' portraying the Japanese community as undesirables in a similar vein as the Chinese migrants before them.

One important thing to highlight is despite efforts from whites to exclude the Japanese, many of these new migrants made efforts and had successes in their

attempts to assert themselves in US society. The 1907-1908 Gentlemen's Agreement gave the Japanese more opportunity to live in family units, unlike their Chinese predecessors who were often looked upon with suspicion because of their bachelor status.²²⁹ From the early twentieth century, Japanese Associations supported the assimilation of Japanese citizens into the US, providing services such as American culture education programs and promoting land ownership. In the 1920s and 30s, Nissei, second-generation US-born Japanese, were incorporating both Japanese and American culture into a limited upward movement as the Japanese emerged as significant contributors to California's Central and Southern Valley's agricultural industries. These successes, however, only led to another layer of discrimination as white growers became increasingly uncomfortable with the economic competition. So while Japanese removal was couched under ideas of national security from possible or imminent attack, the underbelly of the push for removal was also tinged with this threat of economic competition. Many scholars have stressed that the removal of Japanese had economic and racial motivations.²³⁰

This chapter begins with a background description of life in Fresno for the Japanese community in the early twentieth century. As the settlement of the *nihonmachi*, Japantown, grew considerably, the physical changes on the Westside

²²⁹ 1907-08 Gentlemen's Agreement was an informal agreement between the US and Japan that stated the US would not restrict Japanese migration while the Japanese government would not allow further emigration to the US. One of the exceptions was that wives and children of Japanese individuals already in the US were allowed to migrate.

²³⁰ For more on the racial motivations of Japanese removal see: Eric L. Muller, "Inference or Impact: Racial Profiling and the Internments True Legacy" *Ohio State Journal of Criminal Law*, 103(2003) <http://www.heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/osjcl1&id=111&collection=journals>; Roger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice* (New York, New York: Atheneum, 1974); Michi Weglyn, *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps* (New York, New York: William Morrow, 1976).

reflected the Japanese sense of permanency in the community. Along with that, this section foregrounds the attitudes towards removal by providing reflections of individual Japanese, highlighting their experiences with racism and discrimination. Many Japanese found that outside of Japantown white community members heavily discriminated against them. In this, we can see how the geographic space laid out boundaries, both invisible and tangible, that could not be crossed.

The next section discusses the reactions by the Japanese and white communities to the Pearl Harbor attack. By examining the reflections of Fresno's Japanese, we can glean how the larger narrative of US history affected these individuals' everyday lives, from the point of impact (the event itself), its aftermath (racial hostility), to finally the act of federal removal and internment. This last point exemplifies how racist ideology and social beliefs shape our policy decisions. For the Japanese in Fresno, we can see how they assumed declarations of loyalty should have absolved them from this travesty, but they quickly realized this was false hope. In the end, the removal of the Japanese from Fresno and the West Coast raises important questions around citizenship, racism, and growers' economic dependence on Japanese labor.

Japanese in Fresno-Pre-World War II

Japanese interest in settling in Fresno began with encouragement from Kinzo Watanabe, from Ushi Jima Farms in Stockton. In 1890 Watanabe began to take interest in the lower central valley and encouraged Japanese migration into the area in

an attempt to develop the community.²³¹ The first Japanese residents recorded were two young men hired from Tokyo by a local grape grower in 1880.²³² John Smith, a local grower, noted that the Japanese were very “good workers.”²³³ Japanese slowly took heed of this advice and began settling in Fresno; by 1910 there were 2,233 Japanese living in Fresno.²³⁴ Unfortunately the white community members’ negative racial attitude toward the Chinese spilled over to the Japanese as well. Fresno’s racial segregation continued as Japanese settled in West Fresno in the blocks adjacent to Chinatown. A new Japantown flourished within the small neighborhood. For people living within the Westside district, the difference between “*nihomachi*” or Japantown and Chinatown was clear despite the fact that these two groups were lumped together by whites in their anti-Asian sentiment.

The Chinese community did not happily accept the arrival of Japanese migrants into Fresno. The *Fresno Daily Expositor* reported in August of 1896 that conflict developed between the two communities. Tensions were evident when a Japanese man and Chinese man engaged in a physical altercation, highlighting the situation in the Westside district. The paper commented, “The Japs and the Chinese have never been good friends. Each think his race superior to the other, and seems to

²³¹ Ramón D. Chacón, “A Unique Racially Segregated Community: The Japanese in Fresno, California, 1880s-1940”(manuscript, Santa Clara University, 2012), 7.

²³² Ibid. Also, prior to the 1880 census, no Japanese were recorded as living in Fresno. United States, Bureau of the Census, *Eleventh Census of the United States, 1890: Population of the United States, Part I* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1895), 442.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ United States, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910: Population, Vol. II, Alabama-Montana* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1913), 166.

be willing to battle for his country's flag."²³⁵ The *Expositor* goes on to speculate that the ill will may have stemmed from the First Sino-Japanese war that had just ended in 1895 with the Chinese being defeated. It is unknown how deeply the reporter investigated this story as it makes some overarching assumptions about the relationship between the Japanese and Chinese in West Fresno. This incident, however, does point to the possibility of growing pains as the Westside was evolving into a multi-ethnic/multi-racial space, expanding from just the original Chinese inhabitants present since Fresno's inception.

The Japanese quickly made significant contributions to the Westside district as prominent Japanese businesses began to appear, including a boarding house, general store, and a grocery store established by the earliest Japanese residents.²³⁶ Ramón D. Chacón reflects, "By 1905, Issei business operations had increased to 75 and by 1923 to 187, and included 16 hotels, 16 pool halls, 16 restaurants and coffee shops, 16 garages and bicycle repair shops, 13 Japanese restaurants and *nomiya* (taverns), 15 food and clothing stores, 9 barbershops, 9 fruit and vegetable shops, and 8 moving van and car rentals."²³⁷ One of the most prominent businesses was the Kamikawa Brothers Store, a general merchandise store started by the four Kamikawa brothers who had arrived in the 1890s. As one resident of Japantown remembered, they were able to prosper in a time when there was much anti-Japanese and anti-Asian sentiment. The brothers not only created a successful merchandise business,

²³⁵ "May See a Race War," *Fresno Daily Evening Expositor*, August 20, 1896, *Fresno Scrapbook*, Fresno County Public Library.

²³⁶ Chacon, "A Unique Racially Segregated Community," 10.

²³⁷ *Ibid*, 11.

they also started the first Japanese banks in San Francisco and Fresno.²³⁸ While most families of Japanese descent in Fresno did not see the same level of success as the Kamikawa family, their story is significant in reflecting the drive of the Japanese community at large to become successful.

Figure 3.1 Kamikawa Business in Japantown, 1910s²³⁹



The growth and permanency of the Japanese community in West Fresno was also reflected in the establishment of schools, temples or churches, and a hospital.²⁴⁰ Several religious institutions were founded in Japantown: The Japanese Methodist church in 1894, The Buddhist Church in 1899, and the Japanese Congregational

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ *Online Archive of California*, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/tf829012pc/?order=1>, accessed June 2012

²⁴⁰ See Appendix B, which lists all the residents and business on F Street between Inyo and Tulare in the heart of Japantown. As Figure 2.1 reflects that Japantown is adjacent to Chinatown, this list of residents from 1920-1940 (in approximately five year increments) reflects that while the majority living on the block were of Japanese descent, there was a mix of ethnic Europeans (most likely recent migrants) as well as Mexicans.

Church of Fresno in 1908 provided spiritual and community support to the residents. These three early religious institutions were physically centered in Japantown and served to assist the community members sometimes with monetary support and at other times with placement assistance for employment.²⁴¹ They also became spaces for both religious and social community events.

In 1901 Dr. Bunkuro Okonogi, an important figure in the community, opened and operated the first Japanese hospital in West Fresno. Dr. Okonogi served the Japanese people within the Westside district while also treating many of the farmworkers of Japanese descent in the outlying areas. The second hospital, Nihon Biyon, or the Fresno Sanitarium as it was better known, was established around 1913-1914 after a religious conflict between Buddhist and Christians caused a rift in the community. Dr. Okonogi was a practicing Christian, therefore the Buddhist community members refused to utilize his services for a time. Both practices were well in effect until the 1930s, after which there are no records to support that there were specific Japanese hospitals until after World War II and the return of the Japanese community post-internment.²⁴²

Like the earlier Chinese youth, in the 1910s-1930s young Japanese girls and boys attended “American” school in the daytime and often went on to the *nihongakko*, Japanese school, in the afternoons and most Saturdays.²⁴³ There they

²⁴¹ Unknown Title, *The Fresno Bee*, Oct 31, 1979, section B, 1.

²⁴² State of California, Resources Agency, Department of Parks and Recreation, “Historic Resources Inventory: *Wihon Byoin*-Hasiba Sanitarium,” December 7, 1979.

²⁴³ Architectural Resources Group, *Chinatown Historic Resource Survey* (City of Fresno, Planning and Development Department, 2006), 39. Part of the oral interview project conducted by the Chinatown Historic Resource Survey committee. Nori Masuda, long time West Fresno resident, recalled the

were able to continue to learn the Japanese language and cultural traditions, assisting their success at maintaining Japanese ethnic identity. Scholars Stephen Fugita and David O'Brien argue that the language schools was one strategy in which *issei* attempted to maintain a "viable community life" and retain their cultural identity. Fugita and O'Brien theorize that the Japanese and later Japanese Americans traditional culture contains elements "that structure social relationships among group members in such a way that they are able to adapt to changing exigencies without losing group cohesiveness."²⁴⁴ In other words, while the Japanese found their niche in the US, they also held on to their cultural identity.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, new Japanese migrants found themselves in a volatile position upon arriving on the West Coast. The rampant Anti-Chinese organizing in the West during the latter part of the nineteenth century negatively impacted other Asian migrant groups, such as Japanese, Korean, and Filipinos.²⁴⁵ Anti-Asian groups, such as the Japanese-Korean Exclusion League (JKEL), formed as early as 1905 in order to stringently oppose the migration of Asiatic groups from entering the United States. By 1908 the JKEL hosted its first annual convention in Washington State boasting well over 100,000 members in

tensions that second generation Japanese felt about attending Japanese school. Masuda stated many felt that they would not use Japanese language or return to Japan. Japanese school is mentioned in several oral histories in the San Joaquin Valley Japanese Americans in World War II collections but I did not come across a hard statistic on attendance.

²⁴⁴ Stephen Fugita and David J. O'Brien, *Japanese American Ethnicity: The Persistence of Community* (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1991), 5.

²⁴⁵ Chinese discrimination is discussed in the previous chapter. For more on Filipina/o discrimination see: Carlos Bulason, *America is in the Heart: A Personal History* (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1994); Dorothy B. Fujita-Rony, *American Workers, Colonial Power: Phillipine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1919-1941* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2003).

California alone.²⁴⁶ The significant numbers of the JKEL illustrates the strong anti-Asian sentiment in the West.

More Japanese became drawn to Fresno for a variety of reasons, including personal connections with people who settled there earlier and opportunities to attempt new business ventures. The 1890 census shows 12 Japanese in Fresno County, although more may have lived or moved around for seasonal agriculture work. By 1900, the US Census recorded 598 Japanese in Fresno and by 1910 2,233 Japanese in Fresno County with 1,119 living within Fresno city limits.²⁴⁷ Fresno by this time had developed quite a reputation as an undesirable place to settle, particularly because of the extremely hot desert-like climate. Kikuo Taira, a long-time Fresno resident, recalled that his father came to Fresno after arriving in the San Francisco Bay Area from Japan. Tomotaka Taira came from Niigata, Japan and had been educated in Tokyo, but ultimately decided to settle in Fresno because he had been told that there would opportunities to start a business. Kikuo recounts, “The one thing about Fresno in those days, about 1904 or 1905, was that people would say, ‘Do you want to go to Fresno to die?’ Anybody that goes out there is gonna get sick and die. First it’s hotter than heck and second it’s disease ridden, so anyone who goes to Fresno, it’s tantamount to asking to get sick and die. It’s that bad!”²⁴⁸ Many of his

²⁴⁶ Ruth E. McKee, *Wartime Exile: The Exclusion of the Japanese Americans from the West* (New York, New York: AMS Press, 1975), 13-14.

²⁴⁷ See Table 3.1.

²⁴⁸ Dr. Kikuo H. Taira, interview by Yoshino Hasegawa, May 28, 1980, transcript, San Joaquin Valley Japanese Americans in WWII Collection, digital collection, Henry Madden Library, Fresno, California, 1. (Hereby referred to as SJV Japanese Americans WWII)
http://ecollections.lib.csufresno.edu/specialcollections/collections/san_joaquin_valley_japanese_american.php

father's acquaintances tried to persuade him not to go, but he pursued it anyway. Akiko Suda also had a similar experience in learning about Fresno's reputation. She had come over from Japan to the US in 1916 and into the San Joaquin Valley, after participating in an arranged marriage. Her sister married a Japanese man living in the US and Akiko was arranged to marry his brother as a means to accompany her sister on the journey to a new life in the US. She was married by proxy, in similar fashion to most picture brides of her generation. Prior to leaving Japan she recalled a warning from her friend's brother that life in the US was not what many thought it would be. She remembered, "He told me that the life for women in the new land was too hard, that pictures of large western homes which were sent back by the immigrant men were homes of rich white people and that Japanese immigrants lived in shacks or barns." It was not long before Akiko found the economically depressed vision to be a reality. In Fresno she remembers seeing other Japanese migrants living in shacks or other substandard housing and participating as laborers in the Valley's economic system.²⁴⁹ Akiko herself was fortunate enough to have lived in a modest home on the Westside of Fresno.

For the Japanese migrants who settled in Fresno in these early years, there were fond memories of the developing community. While many of the newly migrated Japanese did not have much economic opportunity, there was still a strong sense of community ties, both locally and in connection with their cultural heritage. Akira Yokomi recalls in her childhood days living in the Valley, "I think we enjoyed

²⁴⁹ Akiko Suda, interview by Helen Hasegawa, June 9, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 2.

ourselves. When we were growing up everybody didn't have money and—I don't think we had a sad time. We enjoyed it. We used to visit each family and go picnicking [sic] and this and that."²⁵⁰ Frances Tashima also recalled the community picnic gatherings from her youth where the young people would also engage in past times such as baseball games.²⁵¹ Along with leisure and play, Fresno also became an important religious locale for the Central Valley Japanese community. Similarly to the Chinese, the Fresnan Japanese attracted the surrounding Japanese communities to come into West Fresno and participate in social-cultural events. The Buddhist temple built in the early 1920s was a site for religious ceremonies, weddings, and classes in Japanese language and culture for young children. Chiyeno Shimaji and her husband Kei, the first couple to be married in the Buddhist Temple in February of 1921, were actually from Reedley and Dinuba, small towns just on the outskirts of Fresno.²⁵² As the Japanese population continued to grow and key religious and cultural organizations developed, Japantown grew in importance for Japanese in the San Joaquin Valley.

Japantown or *nihonmachi*, was situated in the adjacent blocks to Chinatown, so there was a sizeable amount of interaction between the two Asian groups. As China Alley ran between "F" and "G" streets on the Westside, Japanese businesses also began to populate those areas. Long-time Fresno resident Kikuo Taira recounts

²⁵⁰ Akira Yokomi, interview by Yoshino Hasegawa, April 8, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 3.

²⁵¹ Frances Tashima, interview by James Kirihara, August 25, 1999, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 8.

²⁵² Chiyeno Shimaji, interview by Kazuko Yakumo, March 4, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 4.

that his father's store on the corner of Tulare St. and China Alley was shared space with a Chinese gambling room. Taira recalls, "On the other half was this little door with a Chinese sitting front it on a little counter-like thing. That is all he did. When someone came he unhooked the latch. It was an entry to a gambling place. It took me a long time to understand that!"²⁵³ Although there was an almost forced interaction, the attitudes of Japanese towards the gambling Chinese bachelor community did continue to permeate throughout the community, even among the Japanese working class. Tomoko Konishi recalled early memories of her family living within the China Alley district. Her father worked for the Chinese gambling bosses when the family first settled in Fresno. However, she stated that her mother desired to move out: "She didn't like to raise her children there because of Chinese gambling. She had one boy there in Chinatown. After that, she went out of there and went to Tulare Street."²⁵⁴ Her father eventually left this line of work and became a carpenter. This reflects that to some degree Japanese residents of West Fresno read their Chinese neighbors at times as dangerous and illicit. This expanded on white Fresnans earlier notions of the Chinese as an unsavory group.²⁵⁵

The Japanese enclave in Fresno was also situated close to the early European migrant community in the early part of the twentieth century. On the opposite side of

²⁵³ Dr. Kikuo H. Taira, interview by Yoshino Hasegawa May 28, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 4. Also, see Appendix A and C which reflect parts of Chinatown where ethnic-racial businesses overlapped. In some cases such as

²⁵⁴ Tomoko Konishi, interview by Wayne Tadaki, May 14, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 2.

²⁵⁵ I am generalizing the sentiment held by white Fresnans from my description in Chapter 2. There is no way to know for certain that every white Fresnan felt this way about the Chinese on the West side. Also, not all Chinese persons in Chinatown/West Fresno engaged in illegal activities. However, the climate, locally and nationally, in the 1890s suggests that the overall perception of Chinatown was definitely negative.

Japantown from China Alley, towards Ventura Avenue, there was a significant community of Volga Germans or Russian Germans.²⁵⁶ Just north of Japantown, there was a significant amount of overlap with a newly migrant Italian community.²⁵⁷ The most intercultural interaction took place among the youth who attended the same schools, such as Lincoln Elementary and Edison High School established by the 1930s. The larger white community members marked these ethnic groups as “undesirable.” This definition pushed these ethnic migrants to negotiate their own sense of identity and belonging.²⁵⁸

Although Japanese residents recall fond memories of early Japantown development, they also remembered discrimination against them by whites. While most found that staying within the confines of Chinatown/Japantown kept them away from blatant discrimination, racism was still prevalent. Long time Fresno resident Helen Hasegawa recalled, at eight years old, the first time she realized racial differences existed.

I was on my way home from piano lessons. I was going home on my bicycle along First Street, North of Belmont. There was a youngster about 12 year old who was standing in front of the small houses along the street who began saying, “Ching Chong Chinaman,” and poking fun. I said, “I’m not a Chinaman,” I told him. This time I really felt strongly. I said, “I’m just as American as you are. I was born here and

²⁵⁶ These were a community who were German by lineage but had settled in the Volga region of Russia, so they were Russian nationally.

²⁵⁷ Dr. Kikuo H. Taira, interview by Yoshino Hasegawa, May 28, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 2. In the interview Dr. Taira also mentioned remembering some Mexican and African American but in his recollection not in a significant number.

²⁵⁸ My use of “ethnic community” includes ethnic European migrants (Italian and Russian) as well Japanese and Chinese as they all represented different ethnicities living in West Fresno and the somewhat adjacent North West Fresno area. It is important to note that while I use the term ethnic, racially these groups were different. The ethnic European while categorized as “white” did remain separate for the most part for their early entrance into Fresno.

am an American citizen just as you are.” And went on my way. That was my first confrontation as I remember.²⁵⁹

John Kubota, another long-time resident of Fresno remembered several white-owned barbershops refusing to give him a haircut. There was only one barbershop in Fresno that would service Japanese customers. This eventually led to a Japanese owned barbershop opening up in West Fresno.²⁶⁰ These personal incidences reflected the larger attitude of discrimination against the Japanese community once they were outside of the physical space of Japantown.

These incidents reflect the larger racialized attitude and discrimination against the Japanese. Helen Hasegawa’s interaction with the young white male relates to white political views about the interchangeable nature of Asians. The yellow peril discourse which had dominated most of the West Coast at this time allowed for a lack of personal connection or concern with the Asian “other” thereby collapsing all persons into an overarching stereotype, in this case “Chinaman.” John Kubota’s situation demonstrates the white community members’ desire to maintain a physical separation from people of color. Whites were intolerant of Japanese persons inhabiting the same spaces for leisure or services with white people, thus the denial of the haircut. This demonstrates that whites wanted complete segregation, not just residentially, but in social and leisure aspects as well.²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ Helen Hasegawa, interview by Keith Boetner, February 28, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 13.

²⁶⁰ John Kubota, interview by Yoshino Hasegawa, November 26, 1979, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 3.

²⁶¹ For more information on racial discrimination against Japanese see: Roger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* (New York, New York: Atheneum, 1969); Hilary Conroy and T. Scott Miyakawa, eds. *East Across the*

Despite racial discrimination, some Japanese found limited success through land ownership opportunities. Anti-Asian sentiment and hostility towards the Japanese did not deter some of them from purchasing land in the beginning of the twentieth century. Throughout the West Coast, in particular the San Joaquin Delta area, some Japanese farmers transitioned from laborers to land owners. In areas such as Stockton, a significant Japanese business class emerged consisting of small land owners and merchants. In Fresno, Japantown began to flourish adjacent to the long established Chinatown. A growing concern from the white sectors, especially white landowners, emerged to challenge and eliminate the perceived threat of Japanese land ownership. This discriminatory view was not exhibited solely through community attitudes, but also prompted legal changes in land ownership requirements.

The most significant blow was the 1913 Alien Land Law; it was a means to deter permanent settlement of Japanese, or any other “foreign” born persons.²⁶² The law eliminated the perceived chance to gain a foothold in citizenship in the US. The Japanese community members who were working towards the possibility of land ownership were doing so under the pretense of legitimizing their position in the social and cultural sphere of the US. The Alien Land Law cut off this opportunity for the first generation of Japanese settlers. To get around this and lease land, many Japanese

Pacific: Historical and Sociological Studies of Japanese Immigration and Assimilation (Santa Barbara, California: American Bibliographical Center-Clio Press, 1972); Herbert B. Johnson, *Discrimination Against the Japanese in California: A Review of the Real Situation* (Berkeley, California: The Courier Publishing Company, 1907); Stephen S. Fugita and David J. O’Brien, *The Japanese American Experience* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991).

²⁶² See footnote 228 at the beginning of this chapter for an expanded explanation of the 1913 Alien Land Law.

used the names of their children who were legal US citizens.²⁶³ For example, Kei and Chiyeno Shimaji owned farmland in the outskirts of Fresno, but legally the land was under the name of Chiyeno's cousin who was a US citizen.²⁶⁴ In another case Mrs. Sei Morita and her husband used their US born son, Tak, as the legal owner of the farm. Their land ownership status was eventually challenged in court. Sei recalled, "We had borrowed part of the money to finance the purchase of our land from my relatives in Japan. Their name appeared on the sales document and that was part of the problem. The court argued that although the property was in our son's name, his parents, Isseis, were deriving benefits as the real owners from this property." Their case lasted until the Alien Land Law was repealed in 1952. While the Morita family was able to keep their land, they were still responsible for paying all of their legal fees.²⁶⁵

As land ownership was outlawed, Japanese laborers began to speak out about the on-the-job discrimination that they experienced. For example, some Japanese laborers were unsatisfied with their working condition and walked off the job. Other Japanese workers established themselves as independent laborers, leasing and cultivating their own land holdings in the early twentieth century. This particular movement, in turn, depleted the labor source that white landholders had come to

²⁶³ Valerie Matsumoto, *Farming the Home Place: A Japanese American Community in California, 1919-1982* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), 48.

²⁶⁴ Chiyeno Shimaji, interview by Kazuko Yakumo, March 4, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 5.

²⁶⁵ Sei Morita, interview by Yoshino Hasegawa, June 30, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 4.

depend on since the 1890s.²⁶⁶ These increasingly successful moves by some Japanese from a position of peon labor to independent farmer threatened the power hierarchy that white land-owners had established since their move west.²⁶⁷

Throughout the San Joaquin Valley, Japanese increasingly attempted to establish a foothold in determining their own position in communities. Naoichi Shohara and his father worked for the Roeding family, a major agricultural contributor to the Fresno area. The pair specifically worked in developing the nursery along with many other Japanese laborers. Mr. Shohara recalled, “Even in those days I was aware that this was one of the largest agricultural operations in California, one hears that the Japanese made the San Joaquin Valley green. And working at the nursery, seeing all the trees planted and all the Japanese employed, I would say this was true.”²⁶⁸ At the end of the nineteenth century, it was estimated that Japanese farmed 4300 acres of land, almost twenty years later, 1919, that number inflated to 30,000 acres. By 1940, just before the internment years, Japanese owned 412 farms with a total of 22,700 acres.²⁶⁹ Small colonies were established throughout the San

²⁶⁶ J. Donald Fisher, *A Historical Study of the Migrants in California* (San Francisco, California: R and E Research, 1973), 9.

²⁶⁷ For more on Japanese unionization and farm labor protest see: Linda C. Majka, “Labor Militancy among Farm Workers and the Strategy of Protest: 1900-1979” *Social Problems* Vol. 28, No. 5 (June 1981), 533-547; John Modell, “Class or Ethnic Solidarity: The Japanese American Union” *Pacific Historical Review* 38 (1969), 193-206; Karl Yoneda, *History of the Japanese Laborers in the US* (Tokyo, Japan: Shin Nihon Shuppon-Sha, 1967); Theo Majka, “Poor People’s Movements and Farm Labor Insurgency” *Crime, Law, and Social Change* 4 (1980), 283-308.; Adrian Cruz, “Racialized Fields: Asians, Mexicans, and the Farm Labor Struggle in California.” PhD. diss., University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 2009.
<http://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/14583/1_Cruz_Adrian.pdf?sequence=3>, accessed May 2012.

²⁶⁸ Naoichi Choara, interview by Helen Hasegawa, June 16, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 2.

²⁶⁹ Chacon, “A Unique Racially Segregated Community,” 17.

Joaquin Valley where the Japanese became almost self-sufficient and supported one another.²⁷⁰ The limited success of the Japanese, the growing concerns of white growers and white communities, and the hostile anti-Asian climate all converged during World War II, eventually leading to the moment where removal of an innocuous community of color was seen as not only acceptable, but an ideal situation.

Pearl Harbor and Executive Order 9066

The days shortly after Pearl Harbor were generally marked by confusion. Many people, civilian and military alike, were particularly driven by heightened emotions around fear and desire for revenge and/or retaliation. Ideas around complete Japanese removal did not materialize immediately, but the sentiment was eagerly waiting just beneath the surface. After the initial arrests of possible enemy Japanese “agents” in the West Coast region, there were attempts to calm the evolving racist torrent against the Japanese community. Groups from various church organizations to the Fresno community organizers began a campaign to discourage harassment of citizens of Japanese descent. According to political scientist Morton Grodzins, while diligent in cracking down on Japanese individuals it considered a threat, the Department of Justice also “took a firm stand in opposition to repressive acts against the Japanese as a group.”²⁷¹ The Japanese Association of Fresno sent a telegram to Congressman Bertrand Gearhart on December 10, 1941, which declared the loyalty of

²⁷⁰ For more on Japanese farm colonies see: Valerie Matsumoto, *Farming the Home Place: A Japanese American Community in California, 1919-1982* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993).

²⁷¹ Morton Grodzins, *Americans Betrayed: Politics and Japanese Evacuation* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 19.

the group and its service to the United States against the Japanese empire. Gearhart read the telegram during the first session of the 77th congress, which stated “no sacrifice will be too great...we hope that we will be called upon.”²⁷²

In fact, some of the earliest reactions of the Japanese were not that of elation, or willingness to see the sabotage of the US, but quite the contrary. Both US citizens of Japanese descent as well as Japanese non-citizens were willing and desired to work in favor of the US. Across the coast, and specifically within Fresno, many Japanese were truly shocked at the aggressive actions of the Japanese Army against the US. Bessi Ezaki, longtime Fresno resident remembered,

All ears tuned into our short wave radio to hear the news out of Japan to find out if this was true. We couldn't believe that Japan would start a war with United States! I can recall my father and other Issei's going around in a daze, uttering words of bewilderment and confused. That day, I noticed, just before noon, there were formations of many airplanes flying over with a roaring sound, so I went out to see, not knowing there was an attack on Pearl Harbor 'til later in the day.²⁷³

Bewilderment, disbelief, and shock were the responses of many local residents. Another Fresno resident, George Suda, was at the movies when he heard of the attack. He remembered his initial reaction; “I was numb when I first heard of it. I was at the movie theatre and, of course, that funny feeling came over you.”²⁷⁴ The feeling was of uncertainty about the future, and how this attack would affect their individual

²⁷² Grodzins, *Americans Betrayed*, 63. The telegram was read by Congressman Gearhart to the House during the First Session of the 77th Congress.

²⁷³ Bessi Ezaki, interview by Yoshino Hasegawa, September 7, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 8.

²⁷⁴ George Suda, interview by Helen Hasegawa, May 16, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 5.

lives. At the same time, most of the Japanese were not expecting the loss of citizenship rights that accompanied this situation.

While the Pearl Harbor incident set off a chain of events that eventually led to Japanese removal, suspicion of the Japanese in the US began long before this specific war event. Alice Yang writes, “Most of those arrested were male immigrants put under surveillance a year before the attack because they were leaders of the ethnic community—Japanese Association officials, Buddhist priests, Japanese-language teachers, and newspaper editors.”²⁷⁵ Approximately two thousand Japanese were initially detained, eventually leading to the internment of all the Japanese on the West Coast. In Fresno, Akira Yokomi recalled the FBI detaining his boss, Mr. Okuda, for his involvement in the local Japanese association. Yokomi remarked, “He [Mr. Okuda] was one of the first in Fresno to be picked up by the FBI. Because he was a pretty active man, but he always used to tell me that whatever happened this was the best country there is.” Although Mr. Okuda felt ties with his Japanese heritage, he also felt a connection to the US as many Issei did at the time. Akira also discussed how his own father did not want to return to Japan and wanted to “die here and be buried here.”²⁷⁶ Like many other locations throughout the West Coast, the early days of Gestapo-like detention of Japanese made for a tense and worrisome time for the Japanese community in Fresno.

²⁷⁵ Alice Yang, *What Did the Internment of the Japanese Americans Mean* (Boston: Massachusetts: Bedford/St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 3.

²⁷⁶ Akira Yokomi interview by Yoshino Hasegawa, April 1, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 5.

Japanese Associations, which were a long-standing tradition among the Japanese within the West Coast, now came under deep scrutiny by the FBI. These organizations functioned as a support network for Japanese citizens and families residing in the US. They also maintained cultural ties with Japan, such as through language education and support of Japanese government activity. Naoichi Shohara belonged to the *Nijushiju-kai*, Japanese association, and recalled the organization sending money to support the efforts of the Japanese army in the second Sino-Japanese War during the late 1930s and early 1940s.²⁷⁷

Every month each member sent a dollar for the cause. There were about 1200 members. Young men who had come from Japan were doing this, and there were organizations formed in many large cities in America to join this effort...I was collecting and sending the money to Japan, but a few months before the outbreak of the war I was the first to stop doing this. I began to realize that the relationship between the United States and Japan was not friendly and decided that it wasn't a good thing to do.

In Shohara's case, the fact that he recognized the problematic relationship between the US and Japan earlier may have been the only reason why he was spared from the first round up by the FBI.²⁷⁸

In February of 1942, the local Japanese organizations in Fresno and its surrounding areas held a public meeting to pledge their loyalty to the United States.

²⁷⁷ Yuji Ichioka writes on the relationship between Japanese Associations and the Japanese Government. While Ichioka's article examines an earlier time frame, 1909-1926, it shows how deeply the Japanese Associations in the US were linked to the Japanese government with the government officials approving hierarchical structures and funding distributions among chapters. It would make sense that during the Sino-Japanese conflicts that the Imperial government might call on financial support from the expatriates in the US. See: Yuji Ichioka, "Japanese Associations and the Japanese Government: A Special Relationship, 1090-1926" *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (August 1977), 409-437.

²⁷⁸ Naochi Shohara, interview by Helen Hasegawa, June 16, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 4.

Two groups in particular, the American Loyalty League which consisted of mostly Nissei, second generation and predominantly US citizens, discussed its role in the post-Pearl Harbor mayhem plaguing the West Coast. Dr. T. T. Yatabe spoke on behalf of almost 3,200 Japanese Americans living in Fresno County:

We should do everything in our power to aid the country of our adoption...It is our duty to cooperate with the government in whatever action it may deem necessary for the public welfare. So long as the orders are based on the need for a successful prosecution of the war, we should and will obey these orders, although it may work a lot of hardships on us.²⁷⁹

The Japanese Americans knew that racist discourse would restrict their position to freely engage in basic community activities such as work, leisure, and religious activities as white community members scrutinized them as perceived “enemies.” This early meeting reflects the willingness to “prove” their loyalty and thereby proving their “Americanness” to the rest of the community by voluntarily stating that they would be cooperative, although it is unclear if the assumption at that time was that removal was an imminent action.

Along with the US citizens of Japanese descent, Japanese natives who had adopted the US as their country of residence also spoke out in support of the US. The Japanese Association of Fresno as well as the Japanese Association of Madera, which primarily consisted of first-generation Japanese-born residents, gave their vocal support to the US in the war against their home country. R. T. Ono, executive secretary of the organization stated:

²⁷⁹ “Local Japanese Pledge Obedience to US orders” *The Fresno Bee*, February 21, 1942, 5x8 box: WWII, Newspaper Clipping Files: Ben R. Walker History Files, Fresno County and City Historical Society. (Hereby referred to as Ben Walker Files).

Although we have no citizenship here, we feel just like any Americans and we will follow any order by the government. That is the best thing for anybody to do, citizens as well as non-citizens. We feel that this is the country in which we have to live and die. I believe I speak for all Japanese in Fresno County when I say we are heart and soul for America.²⁸⁰

Mr. Ono, representing the approximately 1,500 persons of Japanese citizenry in Madera and Fresno, reflected the deep commitment that many *Issei* felt about the United States. Given that many had been in the US for well over 20 years and had US born children at this point, they had established lives for themselves in the San Joaquin Valley.

The Japanese were extremely watchful of exhibiting their cultural and religious practices in fear of being singled out and harassed. Bessi Ezaki recalled that the usual holiday festivities, such as the New Year celebration *Mochi Tsuki*, the rice pounding party, were cancelled in 1941 because they were all afraid of the suspicious lens the FBI had placed on them.²⁸¹ Paralyzed by fear of persecution, the Japanese tried to attract little attention. Yet the seeds of racial unrest, which had been brewing for the majority of the first half of the century, started to blossom with a vengeance. Whites' reaction in Fresno ranged from those who were sympathetic to the plight of the local Japanese to violent and overt racism. Some Japanese found allies in their white neighbors and work supervisors. Akira Yokomi found a source of support in his dentist, Dr. Cobb, who refrained from taking payments from his Japanese customers

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ *Mochi Tskuki*, translates as sweet rice ball making, is a New Year cultural celebration for Japanese. Generally the rice is soaked overnight and then pounded by hand with wooden mallets to make a paste, which are then shaped into rice cakes. The cakes can either be sweetened or placed into savory dishes. *Japanese American National Museum Website*, <http://janmstore.com/mochitsuki.html>, accessed May 2012.

and eventually sent items to them in the internment camps.²⁸² On the other side, Bessi Ezaki remembered how in March of 1942 her family car was set on fire. Two young white men set the car ablaze and were eventually caught by police because the Japanese residents retrieved the license plate number of the getaway car. Luckily no one was injured in the incident; however, it was reflective of the extreme measures that some local white residents took against the Japanese.²⁸³

As 1941 came to a close, there were already discussions in Congress to push for the removal of the Japanese community. The handful of West Coast congressmen who supported the Japanese communities were a minority in comparison to those who wanted to evacuate them. Most of the congressmen were just voicing the desires of their constituents, the majority of who in the passing weeks had felt a panic over the possibility of another attack from the Pacific. Congressman Leland Ford of Los Angeles was one of the first to vocalize a plan to contain the “threat” by placing the West Coast Japanese in concentration camps. He justified this action by stating,

I submit that if an American born Japanese, who is a citizen, is really patriotic and wishes to make his contribution to the safety and welfare of this country, right here is his opportunity to do so, name that by permitting himself to be placed in a concentration camp, he would be making his sacrifice and he should be willing to do it if he is patriotic and working for us.²⁸⁴

Therein lies the major contradiction: One must sacrifice freedom to make claims to patriotism. Ford and his colleagues did not pay attention to the irony of the situation

²⁸² Akira Yokomi, interview by Yoshino Hasegawa, April 1, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 6.

²⁸³ Bessi Ezaki, interview by Yoshino Hasegawa, September 7, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 9.

²⁸⁴ Grodzins, *Americans Betrayed*, 32.

because to them, Japanese removal was merely a remedy to halt the fear that had spread like a plague throughout the country. The plan to place Japanese in concentration camps disregarded the years of agricultural contributions and military service provided by people of Japanese descent to their local communities and the US as a nation.

In January 1942, groups began organizing and formulating for the complete removal of persons of Japanese descent from the West Coast. In particular, California was instrumental in the early parts of this movement. Organizations such as the Native Sons (and Daughters) of the Golden West had a history of pushing for the removal of Japanese and other Asian communities. Specifically, this organization used the animus that all Asians were tainting the white community; in order to preserve white American culture, they must not be allowed to migrate to the US. In the post-Pearl Harbor months, the Native Sons and Daughters shifted to the necessary removal of all Japanese as part of a perceived national threat. While this group posited itself deeply in racist rhetoric, other groups such as the California Farm Bureau Association, which had local chapters in various California Counties and regions, pushed for the removal of Japanese under a more economic umbrella. In arguing for the Japanese community's removal from a political standpoint, they were also quick to point out, as one member of the San Joaquin chapter did, that the resident Japanese "should not own a foot of our soil" which reflected a desire to protect white land ownership rather than securing the coast.²⁸⁵

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

By the early months of 1942 there was a clear push for the complete and total evacuation of Japanese. In Fresno, this was especially true because of the military air base, Hammer Field, located in the Northeastern part of the city. The first push to establish restricted zones within Fresno did not include the area directly surrounding the air base, on East Shields. General John L. Dewitt of the Western Defense Command began with a push for persons of Japanese descent to evacuate the most coastal areas of the West Coast from Washington State all the way down to the US-Mexico border. The request was to have all Japanese persons move from the coastal areas inland. In Fresno, this area was clearly marked as east of Highway 99. In March of 1942, as curfew restrictions were imposed on the ethnic Japanese community by Lieutenant General J. L. DeWitt of the Western Defense Committee, workers at Fresno's General Hospital were greatly affected. Dr. H. M. Ginsburg, superintendent of the hospital, noted that all eleven workers of Japanese descent were US-born citizens, including one Dr. Henry Kazato. Dr. Ginsberg stated that under the new federal ruling it would be "impossible for the doctor to leave his home at night, and that some other member of the staff will be assigned to take his place during his absence."²⁸⁶ The remaining employees were student nurses who lived on the hospital grounds, and were not as greatly affected. However, after the 7 p.m. curfew was set, Don Yamaoka, an orderly and student at Fresno State College, was forced to resign his position because he worked on the night shift and was not able to leave his home. Helen Hasegawa recalled not being able to cross over Blackstone Street on the

²⁸⁶ Untitled Article, *The Fresno Bee*, March 25, 1942, Fresno County Library Vertical Files, Fresno County Public Library, Folder: Japanese Americans.

Northeast end of Fresno.²⁸⁷ Another resident, Jane Tomeko Sugimura, remembered how the restrictions prevented her brother from pursuing marriage.

I think it was maybe March 1942. There was a pretty strict curfew. They said we couldn't go to this street and that street. My elder brother had a girlfriend and she was a Parlier or Fowler girl. My father liked her and my mother liked her. But the bride to be was scared to come and my brother was scared to go visit her, so they were unable to get together.²⁸⁸

Persons of Japanese descent were unable to socialize and also unable at times to fulfill work duties if their shifts went beyond the early evening curfew. While there was never an explicit push to ask people to quit their jobs, the lack of action to fight for the rights of these employees eventually resulted in Japanese persons leaving their positions. In some ways, the silences root themselves in the anti-Asian feelings that had been underlying in the community for the last century.

However, even within the factions who did want to carry out Japanese removal, there was dissent on the manner in how it should be carried out. For example, the idea of complete and total removal was not always agreed upon as the best means, especially when many communities throughout California's Central Valley depended quite heavily on Japanese labor.²⁸⁹ While extreme groups wanted

²⁸⁷ Helen Hasegawa, interview by Keith Boettner, February 28, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 26.

²⁸⁸ Jane Tomeko Sugimura, interview by Wayne Tadaki, April 15, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 9.

²⁸⁹ According to the 15th Census (1930) in the US, 16,558 Japanese worked as laborers in agriculture vs. 5,141 who were owner-tenants and 1,776 who were managers. United States, Census Bureau, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Population, Vol. V Gender Report on Occupations* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1933), 210-213. H. Brett Melendy contends that by 1940 agriculture remained the "largest single user of Japanese skills, employing 22,027. This was 45 percent of the Pacific Coast total agricultural labor force." H. Brett Melendy, *Chinese and Japanese Americans* (New York, New York: Hippocrene Books, Inc., 1984), 144. In his master's thesis Cameron Woods notes an estimated 125,000 Japanese were interned during World War II, which he claimed "aggravated the

complete removal, other factions of farm land owners really wanted to create programs that would ensure Japanese laborers for the harvest. This would also remove the Japanese landowners and small farm tenants who represented economic competition. The Associated Farmers proposed a statewide initiative to create a program in which ethnic Japanese would be “drafted” under the Department of Agriculture to work on farms to support the food supply effort of the war. They would be detained in “safe” zones and given shelter with basic amenities, creating in a sense an agricultural army.²⁹⁰ While the sentiment still retained the elements of removal of land ownership, this strategy was painted to be more sympathetic to Japanese citizens. In reality it was just a creation of a different kind of prison, one in which the Japanese who would potentially work these programs would still not have freedom and would essentially live under martial law. This was the first step in transforming the Japanese from “citizens” to viewing them only as a labor commodity.

In either case, no consideration was lent to the citizenship status of the Japanese people. Whites’ efforts to either expel or retain the Japanese were held with a detached sense of the degradation. Concerned white community members arguing in favor of removal had already vilified all Japanese as the enemy who were clearly present only to create a hostile and dangerous environment for “Americans.” Those who were in favor of retaining the community in the limited sense, under heavy

farm labor problem.” With these various statistics I am assuming that the Fresno Japanese had a significant role in agriculture as a labor force. Cameron Woods, “Mexican Agricultural Labor in California, 1941-1945” (M.A. Thesis, Fresno State College, 1950).

²⁹⁰ Grodzins, *Americans Betrayed*, 36.

supervision while working the harvest season, were more concerned with the economic outcome of West Coast, especially California's, fiscal dependency on agriculture. Neither of these arguments considered the well-being of the Japanese people. George Suda recalled that in the days after Pearl Harbor, with all of the concern about what was going to happen next, "I never thought for one moment that our precious rights to citizenship could be taken away."²⁹¹

By March 1942, police arrested approximately 139 Japanese in Fresno. The FBI conducted raids under the guise of searching for spies and saboteurs. In one raid during March 1942 seventeen persons of Japanese descent were arrested and held at the Fresno County Jail for their participation in "subversive activities."²⁹² As these arrests took place authorities gave vague reasons as to why these individuals were detained. They gave out information sparingly; in the case of the seventeen arrested, *The Fresno Bee* reported that "one of the men who was questioned here made at least one financial contribution to the Japanese army."²⁹³ This tiny morsel of information really aimed at justifying to the larger Fresno community that these raids and subsequent detentions were necessary because they were finding evidence of suspicious activity. These stories essentially laid the groundwork for the larger internment plans to come.

²⁹¹ George Suda, interview by Helen Hasegawa, May 16, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 5.

²⁹² "FBI Arrests of Valley Japanese Rise to 139; Black Dragon Mentioned" *The Fresno Bee*, March 27, 1942, 5x8 Box: WWII, Ben Walker Files.

²⁹³ Ibid.

Japanese Removal from Fresno

Initially some Japanese chose to cooperate with the federal removal process. One Japanese group, the American Loyalty League of Fresno, helped distribute flyers stating the removal regulations.²⁹⁴ The list included restrictions of movement outside the municipality. Citizens of Japanese descent were only permitted to go from home to work, school, and places of religious worship. Any changes of employment or residence had to be submitted for approval to the United States Attorney and the Immigration and Naturalization Service as well as the Federal Bureau of Investigation. These federal regulations consistently used the term “alien” when addressing the Japanese community, clearly marking them as “other” or “enemy.” The people within Japanese communities were attempting to assert their identity as “American.” This assertion is highlighted in the existence of groups such as the American Loyalty League. Also, just weeks before removal another organization, the Japanese Association of Fresno County, donated one thousand, four hundred dollars to a county committee to be used to purchase an ambulance for civilian defense use. This shows that even though they were being wrongfully removed and detained, some Japanese believed in the attributes of patriotism and loyalty to the US war effort.²⁹⁵ Some Nissei expressed feelings of guilt and embarrassment against the Japanese

²⁹⁴ The American Loyalty League was created in 1923. It was an organization of Nissei, second generation Japanese who were US citizens whose purpose, according to Yuji Ichioka, was to “teach the Nissei how to protect and exercise their American citizenship.” The American Loyalty League was essentially an extension of the Japanese Associations that had been present since the first Issei migrants arrived in the West Coast. See: Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924* (New York, New York: The Free Press, 1988), 206.

²⁹⁵ For more on Japanese and Japanese American voluntary evacuation see: Paige Smith, *Democracy on Trial: The Japanese American Evacuation and Relocation in World War II* (New York, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995) specifically chapter 10 “Voluntary Evacuation” where Smith provides personal anecdotes about individual Japanese persons feelings towards removal.

empire for causing this tragic incident. However, they were still subjected to racist attitudes and name calling by their fellow Caucasian community members. Bessi Ezaki remembered racial slurs and sayings such as “A good Jap is a dead Jap” and “Once a Jap, always a Jap” implying that no person of Japanese descent could break loyalty from the “mother country.”²⁹⁶

Akira Yokomi, a Nissei and native-born Fresnan, attempted to prove his patriotism by joining the army shortly after Pearl Harbor. Akira and a friend thought if they joined the army to fight against the Japanese empire, perhaps their parents would be spared from the evacuation process. However, by the time they tried to join, they were denied and told by the clerk they were classified as “enemy alien.” They were turned away with an apology as the clerk stated, “Sorry, it’s the rules.” Shortly thereafter, Akira and his family were evacuated east of Highway 99 and eventually to a local assembly center before a permanent camp placement.²⁹⁷ Another Fresnan, Dr. Kikuo Taira was registered in the Army Reserves at the time the war broke out. Despite having completed all of the paperwork and necessary physical test, Taira was served with a discharge notice right after the Pearl Harbor attack.²⁹⁸ In both cases, the military’s denial of entrance reflects that the social attitudes against the Japanese community were solidified in the federal government and its policies of Japanese exclusion. At the same time, both men were attempting to prove their “American”

²⁹⁶ Bessi Ezaki, interview by Yoshino Hasegawa, September 7, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 8.

²⁹⁷ Akira Yokomi interview by Yoshino Hasegawa, April 1, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 5.

²⁹⁸ Dr. Kikuo Taira, interview by Yoshino Hasegawa, May 28, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 9.

status by performing the ultimate sacrifice of self. They wanted to prove their patriotism, as individuals, while providing themselves as collateral for the safety of their family.

Despite the attacks against the perceived “enemy alien” that were creeping into the everyday discourse of the West Coast, there were still some whites who openly supported the Japanese. For example, the Clovis Women’s Club, a white women’s organization, offered assistance for Japanese families who were struggling with the relocation to the assembly centers. The club members arrived with cookies and refreshment to send off the Japanese families to their respective assembly centers. The sentiment behind these actions was to provide a “friendly face” to the Japanese during their removal process. Although seemingly ironic, Mae Takahashi recalled viewing these women as “courageous” for their efforts at the time.²⁹⁹ While little is said about who these white women were, their presence brings up questions as to how gender shaped and affected political thought.³⁰⁰

Two locations in Fresno were designated as assembly sites to hold the Japanese evacuees before their permanent removal to internment camps. In March of 1942, Pinedale, a former logging mill, and the Fresno County fairgrounds were converted into military assembly installations. The US military established similar

²⁹⁹ Dr. Mae Takahashi and Mr. Yoshito Takahashi, interview by Helen Hasegawa, September 9, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 9-10.

³⁰⁰ Dr. Mae Takahashi’s interview is the only reference I encountered about the Clovis Women’s Club. I could not find more information on this specific group. However, Paige Smith writes in her work *Democracy on Trial* that there were other types of organizations, primarily religious groups that offered similar types of services. One example in Smith’s work was a group of Quakers in San Francisco organizing refreshments and supplies for evacuees including “Kleenex to wipe away tears.” Paige Smith, *Democracy on Trial: The Japanese American Evacuation and Relocation in World War II* (New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 157-159.

centers in Merced County and Tulare, California. The Fresno County fairground held approximately 5,000 evacuees with the surrounding counties holding much smaller numbers, between several hundred to several thousand.³⁰¹

The process of removal was sobering for many of the Japanese Fresnans as they made the move into one of the two assembly centers. They attempted to continue their sense of community within the confined structures which served as the physical manifestation of their loss of citizenship. For example, in the Fresno assembly center, many of the Japanese professionals in the medical and dental fields continued to practice within the confines of their prison. Dr. Fusaji Inada recalled continuing on with dental work at the Fresno fairgrounds where the center was housed.

...as far as dentistry was concerned, it was very primitive; we never had a chair. We used a plain chair, and we made something for the headrest. We had nothing, no permanent fillings. If you had a toothache, we extracted the tooth, and if you had a cavity, we put in a temporary filing of course, I don't know what the medics did—whether they had x-ray equipment or anything.³⁰²

Despite the lack of proper equipment, these men and women continued to provide the services needed by their community members. In many ways, the continuation of these limited services brought about a sense of normalcy for the community that was imprisoned in the assembly center.

Those who went to Pinedale Assembly Center encountered the same type of community. Dr. George Suda recalled the lack of care that went into the construction

³⁰¹ California Department of Parks and Recreation, Office of Historic Preservation, "Japanese Americans" in *Five Views: An Ethnic Historic Site Survey for California*, December, 1988. http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/5views/5views4e.htm

³⁰² Dr. Fusaji Inada, interview by Helen Hasegawa, July 29, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 6.

of the Pinedale Center, citing “lack of privacy everywhere, incomplete partitions, strangers thrown together in small barracks” complete with barbed wire fences and armed guards to ensure that the Japanese would not escape the center.³⁰³ This was the first transition before the Japanese community was sent away to permanent internment camps, and the government had already created a prison environment, literally stripping away the freedom of these citizens.

Many evacuees lost their properties when they moved to the assembly centers. However, some Japanese did find sympathy among their white neighbors who volunteered to keep up the properties and hold them while they moved and eventually were sent to internment camps. Mae Takahashi recounted that when her family left, her neighbor Mrs. Johnson took care of their ranch. Mrs. Johnson was a prominent person in the community and did not fear any negative attention. Mae’s family was fortunate to recover their property after returning from the camps in the later 1940s. However, she did mention that not everyone was as fortunate to have someone like Mrs. Johnson take their family’s interest to heart. Mae stated, “Well, I think at the time, the situation presented an atmosphere where people were afraid to take the initiative to help the Japanese, even if they were sympathetic to them.”³⁰⁴ So those who supported the Japanese community did remain in the minority. However, in some cases, despite their good intentions, many of these neighbors neglected the farms or leased them to other parties who did not care for the land. Upon their return

³⁰³ Dr. George Suda, interview by Helen Hasegawa, May 16, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 6.

³⁰⁴ Dr. Mae Takahashi and Mr. Yoshito Takahashi, interview by Helen Hasegawa, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 3.

after the war many of the Japanese families found their land and property in disarray.³⁰⁵

In all, by mid-1942 Fresno, California had a deafening absence of Japanese persons in Fresno. Fresno State University's yearbook clearly reflected this change. Prior to the 1942 school year a significant group of students with Japanese surnames appear in the yearbooks and beginning in 1940 a Japanese Student Association is established. By 1943 there were no longer any persons with Japanese surnames in the yearbooks, and the Japanese Student Association was eliminated. While the Fresno State 1943 yearbook opens with a poignant mention of the many young men who had left the University to volunteer in the military abroad, there is no mention whatsoever about the fate of their Japanese colleagues. The Japanese Student Association did not return to Fresno State until 1947, almost two years after the war.³⁰⁶

Conclusion

In the early twentieth century Japanese found limited economic success in the San Joaquin Valley. Unlike the Chinese, who were unable to make their way out of Chinatown due to rampant anti-Asian sentiment, the Japanese in Fresno tried to elevate their position in a number of ways. The first was their attempt to assimilate into American society. Given that the 1907-08 Gentlemen's Agreement between the US and Japan supported the migration of Japanese women and children, the Japanese

³⁰⁵ Chiyeno Shimaji, interview by Kazuko Yakuma, April 3, 1980, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 5. Chiyeno gives a personal account of the disarray on the family property upon returning.

³⁰⁶ Fresno State College Yearbooks, 1940 to 1950. There is a glaring absence of anyone with Japanese surnames from the years as indicated above. Fresno State College yearbooks are located at the Fresno County Public Library, Fresno, California.

migrants settling the US were often living in family units, unlike their Chinese neighbors who were primarily bachelors.³⁰⁷ The support of the Japanese Associations helped to link the US Japanese immigrants with the Japanese Imperial government to provide the new migrant community with classes to teach them American ways of living, for example “proper” cooking and cleaning methods. The second way the Japanese attempted to elevate their position was by the limited opportunity of land ownership or small tenant farming. The ability to cultivate crops on their own parcels of land gave the Japanese a sense of autonomy and ownership, both literally—in the physical piece of land—and figuratively—in the power to control their own economic destiny. Lastly, the Japanese attempted to elevate their position through the creation of important institutions such as churches, hospitals, and retail shops in West Fresno. Despite the restrictions set by whites to segregate sections of the city, the Japanese, fostered a tight sense of togetherness and belonging which allowed them to maintain cultural ties while also marking their permanent status in the Westside.

As the Japanese found some success in land ownership or entrepreneurship, hostile nativist attitudes of white Fresnans purposely set obstacles in their paths. In particular, the Japanese were largely affected by the 1913 Alien Land Law, which meant many Issei were unable to own or lease land. For the Japanese in Fresno, racial discrimination began to dismantle any hopes for assimilating into US society. Whites

³⁰⁷ By the 1920s Chinese population in Fresno was 617. There were 471 Chinese males to 146 Chinese females, almost a 3 to 1 ratio. In comparison there were 1,119 Japanese in Fresno. There were 720 Japanese males to 399 Japanese females, which is slightly under a 2 to 1 ratio. Also, for the Chinese population only 178 out of the total population were under the age of 19 years old vs. the Japanese who had 439 children under the age of 19 years. United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920: Population, Vol. III, Characteristics of the Population by States* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1922), 128.

throughout the West Coast racialized the Japanese as an unassimilable racial group. Through a combination of legal acts and overt racial discrimination, the Japanese in West Fresno soon found that they would need to create and maintain a support system within their own district. The continued racism against Japanese came to a head with the Pearl Harbor incident on December 7, 1941.

While Pearl Harbor will always be highlighted in US history as a tragic event, the implications of the aftermath have left a deep wound for the Japanese and Japanese Americans who were evacuated. Federal policy forced the West Coast Japanese to leave everything they had worked hard to obtain and endure incarceration during the war years. Dr. George Suda, native Fresnan, reflects on his internment experience: “Not only from a constitutional standpoint but psychologically, it was a big mistake. We still have emotional wounds that have not healed over the years.”³⁰⁸ From the FBI detaining Japanese heads of household under suspicion of imperial loyalty to the roundup of entire communities and finally the removal process itself; all of these events created a new racial landscape in Fresno, one which was devoid of the Japanese “enemy alien.” The legacy of this event was the complete disregard of citizenship rights and human rights, resulting in the denigration of an entire generation of people of Japanese descent in the US.

However, there is also a second implication that came to the forefront after Japanese removal. While many civilians and nativist organizations championed the evacuation, the true impact of the loss of Japanese revealed itself as many large

³⁰⁸ Dr. George Suda, interview by Helen Hasegawa, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 5.

agricultural areas felt the panic of the lack of a labor force to harvest the various crops. The removal of Japanese was seen by the majority as the best course of action politically, racially, and economically, but turned out to be detrimental and crippling to the economy of the San Joaquin Valley. In this striking, yet predictable turn of events, white growers began to strategize the return of the Japanese internees as day laborers. The programs proposed by the growers positioned Japanese as laborers only, completely ignoring the gross discrimination against them. This shift punctuates the commodification of the Japanese as laborers; white growers viewed them as almost anonymous workers in the agriculture machine, a trend that would continue on to other non-white racial laborers. At the time the federal and state governments were preparing for the displacement of the Japanese, there was a major question among the agricultural industry in San Joaquin Valley. With the removal of the Japanese community, who was going to fill the labor need to ensure a successful crop harvest for 1942?

CHAPTER 4
COMMODIFIED BODIES—STRATEGIES TO SECURE LABOR IN
FRESNO, 1942–1944

With the removal of the Japanese community fully implemented by the early 1942 harvest season, the former warnings of lack of manpower for the crops came to fruition. The fear of many agricultural analysts came true; there was not enough labor available to sufficiently deal with the harvest season. The effect of losing such a significant labor supply left a vacuum that needed to be filled. What happened next was a series of events that had the growers pulling strings in order to fill their labor demand. The first movement was an attempt to release the Japanese community members who had been detained only a few months earlier in order to get them to assist with the harvest needs in the San Joaquin Valley. The push to recall and employ the interned Japanese who had been so quickly pushed out less than six months before came from desperation about a sizeable economic loss. At this time the economic needs of the growers superceded the perceived national risk that had been created in the days following the attack on Pearl Harbor. The desperate pleas of white growers shifted from wanting to rid the communities of the “enemy alien” to strategically negotiating the return of Japanese and Japanese American laborers to assist with the harvest season. White growers were asking for the return of Japanese purely to work and not for the Japanese to regain any semblance of citizenship. In fact, the proposals were more akin to a prison work camp than a patriotic contribution to the economy that was being requested by the rest of the American society.

The federal government did not positively receive the growers attempt to regain Japanese workers because it believed the Japanese were a legitimate “national threat.” The Western Defense Command, the military arm in charge of internment, was unwilling to release Japanese for any type of work program. Moreover, white community members outside of the agricultural industry lobbied to keep the Japanese detained out of fear of possible attacks. The push-pull arguments set up between the local agricultural industry and the federal government had one thing in mind, the state of the crop/harvest revenue. For the majority of whites there was not any concern for the welfare of the Japanese. In particular, growers viewed them solely as a labor source; through this lens, I argue that the Japanese became commodified bodies, persons used only for the service of labor with little to no regard lent for their personal well-being, rights, or legal status.

The use of commodified bodies began predominantly with Asian groups who worked tirelessly to build the agricultural empire of the San Joaquin Valley. Whites pushed to maintain a physical, economic, and social separation between themselves and Asian groups. Growers were primarily responsible for making Asian workers a commodity; growers understood the necessity of groups, such as the Chinese and Japanese, to complete the harvest and sustain the local and national economy. However, socially the growers saw these groups as racially inferior. This racist attitude is evident in the growers campaign to recoup the imprisoned Japanese as day laborers.

After Pearl Harbor, whites believed they had “justification” to discriminate against Japanese. This treacherous act of violence by the Japanese Imperial Army on US soil fed whites rationalization to redefine Japanese and Japanese Americans as undeserving of legal and social citizenship rights.³⁰⁹ Instead, the Japanese became an economic and political pawn in the game of agriculture. Thereby, whites were defining Japanese as commodified bodies, to be used only for the purposes of meeting the needs of a larger consumer body politic, the war machine. The agricultural industry began to move forward under the umbrella of war production, pushing to maintain food and supplies for not only the rest of the nation but also for the men and women fighting overseas. The Japanese at this point were only seen as a means to an end, a cheap labor force that was necessary for agricultural production.

When the growers were unable to successfully retain Japanese workers due to the Western Defense Command’s refusal to release them, during the 1942 harvest season they moved onto the next plan of action, a white volunteer labor force. Under this strategy of white volunteerism, growers solicited the local community, focusing primarily on women and youth to work towards creating a successful harvest. Unlike the Japanese whose bodies and labor were positioned as a commodity, white volunteer workers were adhering to the national discourse of fulfilling their patriotic duties. During this phase of white volunteerism, a redefinition of national and regional understandings of agricultural work shifted its meaning. While more urban

³⁰⁹ See: Adelaida Del Castillo, “Illegal Status and Social Citizenship: Thoughts on Mexican Immigrants in a Postnational World,” *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Fall 2002), 11-32.

and industrialized area pushed the war machine in the direction of mechanics, the building of war materials, missiles, tanks, and the like, the San Joaquin Valley also created a sense that white volunteerism in the agricultural industry was an important part of the national war effort. By shifting the terminology in this way, growers attempted to validate the work for the white volunteers and mask the former negative stigma that agricultural work was suited for laborers of color.

Even with the volunteer programs in place for the first harvest season after Japanese internment, it was still the lowest producing harvest season to date. For example, the total bales of cotton ginned fell from 47.8 percent in 1941 to 33.1 percent in 1942. In his Master's Thesis "Mexican Agricultural Labor in California, 1941-1945," Cameron Woods points out that weather conditions were optimal for the 1942 cotton harvest, therefore the decrease in production could only be explained with the lack of workers.³¹⁰ With the loss of crops in 1942, growers became increasingly concerned that the 1943 harvest season would be just as, and possibly worse than, this particular season. Their desperation led directly to a new strategy, one that included the importation of Mexican national workers under the Emergency Farm Relief Program, also known as the Bracero Program, run by the Farm Security Administration. San Joaquin Valley farmers immediately put a plan into action that continued to utilize domestic white volunteer labor but was heavily supplemented with this outside labor source. Growers understood the Bracero Program was not a complete solution to the problem, but by the end of World War II the heavy use of

³¹⁰ Cameron Woods, "Mexican Agricultural Labor in California, 1941-1945" (MA Thesis, Fresno State College, 1950), 13.

Mexican national workers transformed them into a significant labor force in Fresno County.³¹¹

The arrival of the Mexican national workers held a larger implication in that it changed the racial landscape and brought new issues regarding space, identity, and ownership. The interplay between Mexican national workers and the established Mexican residents in West Fresno, who had been there since the 1910 Mexican Revolution, redefined the ethnic Mexicans in Fresno and raised their visibility. Mexican national workers also served as the new commodified bodies, replacing the Japanese who held this position prior to evacuation. Once the white volunteer programs proved ineffective, white growers return to using people of color for labor.

Fresno's Labor Shortage and the Volunteer Harvest Programs

The crisis was palpable throughout the state, but particularly within the San Joaquin Valley. The arrival of the harvest season made it clear that removal of the Japanese left a considerable labor shortage. White Fresnans ignored the prediction by local economists and growers that the Japanese removal would impact the San Joaquin Valley significantly. In many ways, they wanted to believe that the Japanese community did not have such a strong influence in the agricultural industry. Many proponents who advocated for Japanese removal did so under the premise that the harvest season would somehow sustain itself without the use of “enemy alien” labor. They soon found that they were gravely mistaken.

³¹¹ In this chapter and the following chapter I use the terms *bracero* and *Mexican national workers* interchangeably. At times I also use *Mexican nationals* when speaking about ethnic Mexicans who are not US citizens. This may or may not refer to *braceros*.

By the beginning of 1942 a few government officials noted that the lack of Japanese labor could be problematic for agricultural production throughout the West. One of the first persons to highlight this was Colonel Bendesten of the United States Army. Bendesten stated this issue during meetings of the Wallgren committee, which was one of two committees to discuss the possibility of evacuation and possible consequences at the Federal level. During the committee's discussion Colonel Bendesten noted the various hardships the military, particularly the Army branch, would undertake with a strenuous movement like removal of the Japanese. The issues included the following: where to house all of the evacuees as no military centers were available, where they would be able to get the amount of troops necessary to pull off such a venture, and finally how this would affect agriculture as it was understood that many Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans were heavily involved in farming. Specifically, Colonel Bendesten's concern was how the removal would affect the food supply going to soldiers overseas on the European and Pacific fronts. He demonstrated how the agricultural sector was evolving into a war industry. His initial remarks, while noted by the committee, were not seen as sufficient reason to stop the push for removal as only a few senators supported his statement.³¹² Again, there was little consideration of the idea that the agricultural industry was ever dependent on the Japanese as an important labor source.

Following his remarks, R. M. Evans, administrator of the Adjustment and Conservation Program of the Department of Agriculture, sent a letter to Senator

³¹² Morton Grodzins, *Americans Betrayed: Politics and the Japanese Evacuation* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 74-75.

Wallgren on February 7, 1942 also emphasizing the dire consequences to agribusiness on the West Coast if removal of the Japanese community did come to light. Evans pointed out “the production of vegetables by Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans in California amounted to between 30 and 40 percent of the total California production.”³¹³ This, in turn, represented 22 percent of the total vegetable production for the US. Along with that, Evans also notes that a number of farmers had already left to fight in the war and therefore the removal of the Japanese would compound the labor gap leaving no reserve to fill the positions. All of these things needed to be taken into consideration before a recommendation was made.³¹⁴

However, despite the warnings and doubts the white growers expressed, these predictions fell on deaf ears as the resounding racial attitudes and discourse of the time around “fifth column” suspicion and the yellow menace clouded the minds of politicians and civilians alike. Many white community members saw this as an opportunity to rid Fresno of the Japanese economic competition and also to purge local communities of at least one “Asiatic” group that was “tainting” the racial pool. Despite the fact that the harvest season was coming in just a few short months, the need for labor was swept under the rug. People of West Coast communities had such a surmounting fear of another possible attack from Japan, the issues of the agricultural industry were secondary to their views on national safety.

As March of 1942 came to a close it was fully realized by the community and growers that the Japanese were not going to be available for labor. The consequences

³¹³ Grodzins, *Americans Betrayed*, 75.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

were felt almost immediately in the fields as growers began to scramble to deal with the loss of what was finally recognized as a vital labor pool. For example, the California Deciduous Growers League (CDGL) requested in April of 1942 that the “evacuation of certain Japanese from the twelve California counties, including Fresno, Merced, Tulare and Kern be delayed until September 30th to permit them to aid in the harvest of crops.” The League explained that there would be a need for 20,000 workers of Japanese descent in the entire valley, 3,400 in Fresno County specifically, for the deciduous fruit tree and grape crop season.³¹⁵ Grapes in particular have only a small window to harvest or they will die quickly, the CDGL began to feel nervous about the fate of their crops.

While growers tried to regain Japanese workers, white community members continuously pushed efforts to have the Japanese remain in detention. Groups such as the American Legion of Fresno, actively lobbied for Japanese removal.³¹⁶ The American Legion in particular sent their local representatives copies of a resolution, which urged the government to remove all people of Japanese descent from the Pacific Coast as soon as possible. They were not taking into account anything other than national security and safety from the perceived threat that the Japanese

³¹⁵ “Fruit Men ask Delay in Moving of Nipponese” *The Fresno Bee*, April 5, 1942. 5x8 Box: WWII, Ben Walker Files. As the 1940 census reflects, there were 4,527 persons of Japanese descent in Fresno County, 797 Japanese in the city of Fresno, United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Vol. II Population* (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1943), 567, 568.

³¹⁶ Carey McWilliams discusses the involvement of white nativist groups such as the American Legion and their political role in California’s anti-Asian/anti-Japanese movement. McWilliams argues that along with groups such as the Native Sons (and Daughters) of the Golden West and the California Grange, the American Legion almost created the anti-Asian hostility in the state, beginning in the 1910s until Pearl Harbor. Carey McWilliams, *Prejudice: Japanese-Americans: Symbol of Racial Intolerance*, 2nd ed. (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1971), 24.

represented.³¹⁷ While many whites shared the same sentiment, many could not articulate what type of threats they assumed would take place. Outside of the discourse of “suspicious activity” or “fifth column treachery,” hardly anyone gave specifics to what types of sabotages, if any were planned, but the feeling of fear alone justified the desire of Japanese removal.

By May of 1942 the Japanese community was fully evacuated and placed into assembly centers at the Fresno fair grounds and at the makeshift military center set up in Pinedale, the northeastern community adjacent to Fresno city.³¹⁸ With those potential laborers now completely removed, growers began to scramble to find suitable workers to maintain the harvest. One of the first programs implemented was to request lower-scale selective service draftees, those who were not going to be sent immediately overseas, to work in agriculture. According to reports in *The Fresno Bee*, this strategy was ineffective because it did not supply nearly enough workers to clear the harvest fields.³¹⁹

By June of 1942 there was a desperate push from growers for the release of Japanese from the assembly centers to assist with the harvest season. The plan, which growers presented to the US Department of Agriculture and the Western Defense Command, proposed that local farmers sponsor Japanese evacuees from the Pinedale Assembly center. The individual farmer or grower would “be responsible for the

³¹⁷ “Legion Asks Speed in Japanese evacuation” *The Fresno Bee*, March 18, 1942, 5x8 Box: WWII, Ben Walker Files.

³¹⁸ David Mas Masumoto, “Heartland of the County” in *Fresno County in the 20th Century*, ed. by Charles Clough, et al. (Fresno, California: Panorama West Books, 1986), 99.

³¹⁹ “Labor, Japanese Problems Aired by Chamber Unit” *The Fresno Bee*, May 22, 1942, 5x8 Box: Farming, Ben Walker Files.

transportation to and from the assembly centers, pay the prevailing wage, and comply with all labor regulations.” Some farmers who requested these workers would be responsible for ensuring their return to the assembly centers each evening after the workday without delay. Without these workers, there was a projected labor shortage of 3,000 people within Fresno’s eastern farmlands. Growers feared there would not be enough laborers to pick the peach and apricot harvests. They argued to the US Department of Agriculture and Western Defense Command that this situation affected the quotas given by the federal government to provide dry fruit for the war effort.³²⁰ The growers hoped that by presenting the terms of their harvest loss in relationship to the needs of the federal troops overseas it would make this situation a high priority, and that the Western Defense Command would release Japanese workers.

Despite the assurance at the county level that there would be no objection to the plan, the Army denied the request. Lieutenant J. L. DeWitt, head of the Western Defense Command, stated that they “did not change their attitude toward the exclusion of Japanese from California and other military areas and [did] not propose to consider the use of evacuated Japanese as emergency farm laborers.” The feeling of the Western Defense Command was that this would disrupt the process of removal of Japanese from the West Coast communities. With no hope of reclaiming the Japanese for emergency labor, the Farm Bureau of Fresno County, which represented

³²⁰ “County Official Approve Evacuee Farm Labor Plan” *The Fresno Bee*, June 27, 1942. 5x8 Box: Japanese, Ben Walker Files.

both large and small growers, had to rely on other potential methods to assist in the harvest season.³²¹

By September of 1942, growers attempted to create different types of volunteer programs to increase the labor force. For the cotton harvest, it was imperative to have as many hands as possible to retrieve the crop, as the past few months showed relatively little success with other crops being harvested in time. The first measure that the Cotton Growers made was to increase the wages for workers from \$1.25 to \$1.50 for 100 pounds of cotton. While the increase in wage was supposed to make the jobs a bit more competitive to other cotton areas, such as Texas where the wage was closer to \$1.75, there was also an underlying attempt to create an economic incentive to recruit white workers.³²² At this meeting it was also mentioned for one of the first times that the federal program from the Farm Security Administration would allow the importation of Mexican national workers to fill the necessary gap. It is not clear from this meeting whether or not this was seen as a viable solution, but it was initially tabled as a program as local resources were suggested first.³²³

One of the initial programs discussed was the use of parolees in harvest work. As early as September of 1942 and well until November, Fresno Sheriff George J. Overholt and District Attorney William C. Tupper were in negotiations with local judges to discuss the use of prisoners to fill the labor gap. Similar programs were

³²¹ "Army Refuses to Release Japanese for Farm Work." *The Fresno Bee*, July 8, 1942, 5x8 Box: Japanese, Ben Walker Files.

³²² "Cotton Growers Set Highest Picking Wage." *The Fresno Bee*, September 17, 1942, 5x8 Box: Cotton, Ben Walker Files.

³²³ *Ibid.*

taking place in Sacramento and Monterey Counties and were seen as somewhat successful. Monterey County specifically gained an additional 48 workers to successfully assist with the lettuce harvest. Fresno officials predicted that approximately 130 or so prisoners would have been eligible for the work release program; however, this was only a small fraction of the necessary labor force.³²⁴

As was the case in other wartime industries, the Agricultural Bureau in Fresno County looked to white women to fulfill the labor needs. The language around women's roles was very similar to the discourse used to recruit women in the defense industry.³²⁵ Touted as a patriotic and civic duty, the War Manpower Commission made certain that those who were being asked to volunteer in the harvest understood their roles as part of the war effort. Housewives in particular formed various women's farming auxiliary groups which were created initially to assist in the peach and grape harvests.³²⁶ However, the ability to gain the numbers of women needed to really fulfill the harvesting needs was still impossible.

Probably the largest and most significant sector encouraged for recruitment was white youth. Students were targeted as the Farm Bureau linked with 4H clubs in

³²⁴ "Prisoners Will be Paroled to Work on Farms." The Fresno Bee, June 11, 1942, 5x8 Box: WWII, Ben Walker Files; "Minor Offenders May be Forced into Farmwork" The Fresno Bee September 24, 1942, 5x8 Box: WWII, Ben Walker Files.

³²⁵ For more on women's roles in World War II see: Penny Colman, *Women Working on the Home Front in World War II* (New York, New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1995); Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda During World War II* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984); Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex During World War II* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Maureen Honey, "Maternal Welders: Women's Sexuality and Propaganda on the Home Front during World War II." *Prospects* 22(1997): 479-519; Mary M. Schweitzer, "World War II and Female Labor Force Participation Rates." *Journal of Economic History* Vol. 40, No. 1 (1980): 89-95.

³²⁶ "Women Seen as Solution of Labor Shortage" The Fresno Bee, November 18, 1943 5x8 Box: WWII, Ben Walker Files.

Fresno high schools and junior high schools to get students to work in the fields after school. The assumption with youth was they had more leisure time that could be spent working, there was a large population of them, and it was encouraged as a way for them to not only contribute to the war effort, but also as a means to earn extra money either as a summer job or in the later months as funding source for holiday gifts. Predominately junior and senior high school students participated, with children as young as 12 years old working to pick the crops. However, the late summer boost of men, women and a large party of youth still did not satisfy the need for labor.³²⁷

As the cotton harvest was coming to a close at the end of the summer there was much work that still needed to be done. Growers began negotiations with the school board to close down schools in order to gain students to work the harvest. The cotton crop significantly reflected the downturn of available labor because it was in a critical state by the end of October/early November of 1942 with less than 30 percent of the total harvest picked, where normally the numbers should have been closer to 70 percent.³²⁸ This became a controversial point; were the needs of the agricultural industry and war effort more important than the education of the young boys and girls who were being asked to work? While the community debated the situation, the school superintendent Homer C. Wilson, city superintendent Clarence W. Edwards, and the War Manpower Commission voted to close the four senior high schools during October's favorable weather conditions to allow and encourage students to

³²⁷ "Fresno Schools to Cooperate in Cotton Harvest" *The Fresno Bee*, November 18, 1942, 5x8 Box: WWII/Farming, Ben Walker Files; "Pupils Earn Christmas Gift Money by Harvesting Cotton" *The Fresno Bee*, December 12, 1942, 5x8 Box: WWII/Farming, Ben Walker Files.

³²⁸ "Supervisors Call on City Folks to Aid Cotton Harvest" *The Fresno Bee*, November 18, 1942, 5x8 Box: WWII/Farming, Ben Walker Files.

volunteer for the work.³²⁹ Again they would continue to receive the going wage, which had been increased to \$2 for every 100 pounds of cotton, an increase of 50 cents from just a few months prior.³³⁰ The schools decided to cooperate, but the growing efforts seemed to just continue to keep the agricultural industry at an impasse.³³¹

As a last ditch effort, growers formed a new campaign to gain every able-bodied man, woman, or child to aid in the harvest. The Fresno Chamber of Commerce titled the effort the “Victory Cotton Army.”³³² This was a desperate aim to gain the support of all the city folks to go out and assist in the cotton fields, which by now still hung at just over 30 percent harvested. The idea behind the Victory Army was the combined forces of the white community would fight against the common enemy overseas by harvesting cotton. Cotton was a necessary staple to fight the war and was used in a variety of ways from the uniforms the soldiers wore to portions of their weaponry. Therefore, by assisting in the harvest one was directly aiding the war effort. Initially only a trickle of volunteers began to make their way to working in the fields; however, after a week, the volunteers significantly increased. Buses filled with citizens began to roll in to assist in the fields and over the Thanksgiving vacation some of the best picking had taken place. In fact a young boy of high school age boasted that he had picked 350 pounds of cotton in one day, while a young girl

³²⁹ “Closing of County Schools Urged to Save Cotton Crop” *The Fresno Bee*, October 30, 1942, 5x8 Box: WWII/Farming, Ben Walker Files.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² “Supervisors Call on City Folks to Aid Cotton Harvest” *The Fresno Bee*, November 18, 1942, 5x8 Box: WWII/Farming, Ben Walker Files.

boasted 250 pounds, both were records for any individual youth that had worked throughout the past several months in the harvest.³³³

Despite the many programs and patriotic messages formed during this time period, this was still the lowest harvest season ever. For example, the percentage of cotton ginned and baled dropped from 85.3 percent at its highest in 1940 to the lowest at 33.1 percent in 1942.³³⁴ During the various volunteer programs there was an underlying effort by growers across the state to gain Mexican national workers. At the end of the 1942 season, Mexican national workers were seen as a necessity to survive the harvest without Japanese workers. The push for imported labor in the San Joaquin Valley began as early as the ideas for Japanese evacuation started; however, they were largely ignored in Fresno. As the valley geared up for the 1943 season, the growers wanted to be certain that they would not be financially vulnerable again. The volunteer programs, which had been thrown together during this first Japanese-less season, were reformulated and better organized by 1943. The true saving grace was the arrival of a large population of Mexican workers. However, along with their arrival came a new set of issues around race, citizenship and negotiation of space.

Entrance of the Bracero Program and the 1943 Harvest Season

The close of the 1942 harvest season proved to be a failure. Much of the crops and revenue had been lost in the San Joaquin Valley. The growers associations were

³³³ “Volunteer Crews Answer Plea of Farmers, Aid in Harvest” *The Fresno Bee*, November 24, 1942, 5x8 Box: WWII/Farming, Ben Walker Files; “Fresno Schools to Cooperate in Cotton Harvest” *The Fresno Bee*, November 18, 1942, 5x8 Box: WWII/Farming, Ben Walker Files.

³³⁴ Woods, “Mexican Agricultural Labor in California,” 13.

pushing to ensure that this volume of loss would not be repeated in the following harvest season. The volunteer programs instituted during the early war years, while fruitful, proved to be not enough to help lift the growers out of their predicament. While the labor power was necessary, there was little to no time to train the unskilled workers. In some ways the failures of the volunteer harvest programs could have contributed to why the crop harvest suffered.³³⁵ In the end, the growers blamed the federal governments' inability to quickly bring in workers under the newly burgeoning Emergency Farm Labor Relief Program, which would be colloquially referred to in the West as the Bracero Program.

The program, as outlined, was set up to recruit foreign workers to come into the US as contract laborers, protected by both their home governments and the US government. While the program generally recruited from a variety of different countries including Honduras, the West Indies, and the Caribbean to name a few, undoubtedly the largest concentration of workers came from Mexico, the neighbor to the south.³³⁶ With the close proximity of many of the Southwest States to the border, and the decades of fluid and not so fluid migration of Mexican people into and out of

³³⁵ Cameron Woods offers this as a potential theory to explain why the 1942 harvest season was financially dismal. The inexperience of workers made it unable for them to produce or harvest the same amount as regular workers. Woods, "Mexican Agricultural Labor in California," 11.

³³⁶ Wayne D. Ramussen, *A History of the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program 1943-47* (Washington D.C.: US Department of Agriculture, 1951), 199. Ramussen reports that of the 309,538 wartime emergency farm workers (1942-1947) 219,546 or more than 70 percent were Mexican. The remainder of workers came from the Bahamas, Barbados, Canada, Jamaica, and Newfoundland, but these workers were primarily used on the East Coast. For information on how the Emergency Labor Relief Program functioned on the East Coast see: Cindy Hahamovitch, *The Fruits of their Labor: Atlantic Coast Farm Workers and the Making of Migrant Poverty, 1870-1945* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

the US, it only seemed logical to begin this political, economic, and labor relationship that would unknowingly last well past the war years and into the early 1960s.

The program, which was led by the Farm Security Administration (FSA), was not a new idea. Even before the United States entered into the war, the FSA had been discussing the possibility of bringing in foreign workers to supplement the domestic labor force. Several conferences during 1941 discussed how they could bring these workers in as a labor source.³³⁷ For the Mexican government, however, there were some reservations that needed to be addressed before they would just allow their citizens to move into these worker positions. In the 1930s, the depression forced the massive removal of an estimated 400,000 to 1 million ethnic Mexicans who were repatriated to Mexico in order to lighten the welfare relief rolls. For many, the journey was difficult and many had to abandon the possessions and homes they had acquired during the first third of the century. Despite the Mexican government's attempts to help its citizens resettle, the dismal journey left many individuals as well as the Mexican government bitter about the manner in which the US chose to displace such large numbers of ethnic Mexicans. The memory of this was lingering heavily as the US now desperately needed the ethnic Mexican population back to assist in the agricultural arm of the war effort, therefore Mexico was not quick to jump into an agreement.³³⁸

³³⁷ Woods, "Mexican Agricultural Labor in California," 29.

³³⁸ For more on repatriation see: Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*, (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1995); Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1974); Mercedes Carreras de Velasco, *Los Mexicanos que Devolvió de la Crisis, 1929-1932* (México, D.F.: Secretaría

For many of the Western growers, this dynamic was either not understood or was purposely overlooked. They were willing to utilize the laborers, discounting what had taken place just a decade ago. They essentially wanted Mexican workers to come into the US with little to no restrictions. Yet on the other end they were not giving thought to how those workers would travel to designated work sites, nor were they concerned with what would happen to these workers once their services were no longer needed.³³⁹ With the 1942 season demonstrating a devastating loss of crops, the growers pushed for the US to hurry the contract agreement and get the bracero workers in as quickly as possible.

As early as June 1942 it was evident that the likelihood of gaining these workers was not going to happen. California Governor Culbert L. Olsen suggested that growers not look to the possibility of the Mexican laborers as a means to fulfill the much needed labor gap. Olsen's suggestion was to look toward white-collar workers or students as a means to finish the work; however, as we saw, the volunteer route did not prove to be efficient.³⁴⁰ The feeling of the growers around the Southwest, and specifically in the San Joaquin Valley, was of neglect by the federal government. By August 1942, over 2,500 Fresno farmers collectively decided to send telegrams to the President, the Secretary of Agriculture, and any other relevant federal

de Realciones Exteriores, 1974); Camille Guerin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994); George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

³³⁹ Woods, "Mexican Agricultural Labor in California," 24-25.

³⁴⁰ "Olson says Hope of Mexican Help on Farms is Gone" *The Fresno Bee*, June 30, 1942, 3x5 Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

agency to desperately plea for the recruitment and importation of Mexican workers.

One telegram read:

Repeated attempts to find experienced farm labor in California and other neighboring States have failed and we are convinced that the importation of Mexicans is the only solution to this problem.³⁴¹

By November of 1942 the low numbers of workers for the cotton-picking season in the San Joaquin Valley spurred a desperate plea from farmers in Madera County, adjacent to Fresno. They requested that “federal and state officials and defense agencies to cut red tape in order to get farm workers from Mexico into the harvest fields of California.”³⁴² However, because of the Mexican government’s insistence that all of the odds and ends of the agreement become solidified before sending a single worker, the importation of the much-needed Mexican laborers was not fulfilled during the 1942 harvest season.

In December of 1942, after the harrowing results of the harvest season, Congressman Bertrand Gearhart addressed members of the Fresno County Chamber of Commerce agricultural committee meeting and argued that the United States Employment Services and the Farm Security Administration betrayed California with the lack of action on the Emergency Farm Labor Relief program. He stated, “Every governmental agency which had anything to do with the plan to import the Mexican workers betrayed the farmers. The sooner you farmers let Washington know you are

³⁴¹ Woods, “Mexican Agricultural Labor in California,” 21-22.

³⁴² “20,000 Additional Cotton Pickers needed in Valley” *The Fresno Bee*, November 1, 1942, 3x5 Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

familiar with all the red tape the sooner you will get better treatment.”³⁴³ It was clear to them that the fault lay within the government, and most specifically with the Farm Security Administration for failing to solidify and secure the contract agreement with Mexico. The Mexican government wanted and needed to ensure certain protections for its citizens including, but not limited to, protection against discrimination both on and off the job sites, guarantee of transportation to and from the work sites, including returning Mexican national workers to their site of origin and not just dropping them off at the border.³⁴⁴ The agreement also covered wages, making sure that the Mexican national workers were given a fair wage comparable to their American counterparts, whether by hourly wage or piece-rate. Along with these rights, there was also a discussion of medical services, decent housing for the workers, as well as issues of sanitation for the protection of the workers.³⁴⁵

All of these provisions had to be agreed upon by both the US and Mexican governments. In turn, the US government was responsible to make sure these contract terms were understood and obeyed by the farmers who were participating in the program. The Mexican government would not send any workers until all of the above was agreed upon. While the initial agreements were signed in August of 1942, there were many revisions of the contract agreement, and the finalization of the process was not signed off until April of the following year. This was just in time for the 1943

³⁴³ “Gearhart Charges Farmers Betrayed on Mexican Labor” *The Fresno Bee*, December 17, 1942, 3x5 Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

³⁴⁴ Woods, “Mexican Agricultural Labor in California,” 46. Woods emphasized that this point was made by the Mexican government to prevent the same issues from the repatriation era of the 1930s where Mexicans were literally left at the border with no concern with how they might travel into central or southern Mexico.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

harvest, which the growers hoped would be a vast improvement from their worst year since the Depression.

The Farm Security Administration (FSA), an agency founded during the New Deal era to assist poor farmers in the Midwest and Southern States purchase land through tenant farming loans, became the first administrative arm of the Emergency Farm Labor Relief program along with the United States Employment Service (USES).³⁴⁶ Both the FSA and USES secured the Cooperative Employment Agreements with the individual grower. They also ensured all conditions of the international agreement were met by both the US government and the local contract employers while handling the physical distribution of workers throughout the Southwest for the first major season Bracero workers were used, approximately from September 1942 to July 1943.

Initially, the Mexican national workers were supposed to be utilized only for the harvest of war food crops. However, the need for laborers was so high, eventually the USES lent workers to other crops as well. In fact, most of the crops in California were listed as essential for war production probably as a means to gain Bracero labor. There was not a formal policy of distribution set up in this first year. While the USES claimed that the workers were being sent to areas that demonstrated the most need, the reality was there was no way to measure the accuracy of that statement, nor were

³⁴⁶ For more background on the Farm Security Administration see: Sidney Baldwin, *Poverty and Politics: The Rise and Decline of the Farm Security Administration*. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1968).

any measures in place to determine whether the places truly needed the workers to the degree they stated.³⁴⁷

One of the earliest concerns to arise was the treatment of the Mexican national workers. Due to the lingering disappointment of the repatriation program of the 1930s, the Mexican government needed tangible reassurance that the treatment of its citizens would be respectful and honorable before it would agree to such a program. The growers had to comply, and did so willingly and enthusiastically in the beginning because of the great shortage of labor supply. They could not afford to alienate and lose the chance to gain workers. For example, in Fresno, city officials were asked to notify the local offices of the Farm Security Administration immediately if any Mexican citizens were arrested, so that each individual incident would be dealt with properly. In November of 1942 State Agricultural Director W. J. Cecil wrote in a letter to Fresno District Attorney W.C. Tupper and Sheriff George J. Overholt,

It is imperative that every consideration be given to these people in the interests of fulfilling our state's obligations and in the furtherance of future friendly relationships with Mexico. These workers are making a tremendous contribution to our food production program and our need for them is great.³⁴⁸

The entire national program could not afford for any local law enforcement agency to jeopardize the standing of the importation of Mexican national workers by

³⁴⁷ Woods, "Mexican Agricultural Labor in California," 77. This was only one portion of the contracts, which were not being upheld. The contract system continued to change towards the advantage of the growers. See: Ernesto Galarza, *Strangers in Our Fields. Based on a Report Regarding Compliance with the Contractual, Legal, and Civil Rights of Mexican Agricultural Contract Labor in the United States, Made Possible through a Grant-in-Aid from the Fund for the Republic* (Washington, D.C.: 1956), 20-21; Linda C. Majka and Theo J. Majka, *Farm Workers, Agribusiness, and the State* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1982), 142-144.

³⁴⁸ "Care is Urged in Policing Mexican Workers" *The Fresno Bee*, November 7 1942, 3x5 Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

mistreating them either on or off the job. At the time of the letter, only a marginal group of Mexican national workers had been brought in to assist in Stockton and Sacramento areas, but the state department of Agriculture had to ensure that all California counties who were planning to utilize these workers were made aware of the type of care that needed to be given to those participating in the program. However, the emphasis was always on the necessity of the program for farm production, not necessarily on the welfare of the workers.³⁴⁹

By May of 1943 farmers in the San Joaquin Valley were ready to place their orders for Mexican national workers. Due to the harvest debacle of the previous year, the wages for the 1943 season were set at the highest they had ever been for the cotton harvest, topping out at 35 cents an hour and \$1.50 per acre harvested.³⁵⁰ With the wage set and the cooperation of all the involved parties, the first group of laborers was scheduled to arrive in the Valley between June 24 and June 30. Originally Thomas Robertson, a representative of the Farm Security Administration, informed Irvine S. Terrell, manager of the San Joaquin Valley Labor Bureau, that 400 Mexicans were leaving Nogales, Mexico on June 24, 600 on June 26, and 500 on June 30, totaling 1,500 workers that were requested by the growers of San Joaquin Valley. However, the Farm Security Administration was able to pull strings and bring in the first wave of laborers two weeks early, around June 10. Immediately, 100

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ “Valley Farmer to Place Orders for Mexican Help” *The Fresno Bee*, May 10, 1943, 3x5 Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

workers were assigned to J. E. O'Neill, Lester Unger, and two other Westside Fresno ranchers.³⁵¹

Most of the initial Mexican national workers, who arrived by train, had been recruited from Central Mexico where there was a heavy emphasis on agricultural production. This meant that many of the single men who came as part of the Bracero Program had prior experience in farm work. They were greeted initially by the FSA officials at the train stations and then were funneled to various ranches where they would work under their contract, which was anywhere from one to nine months in duration. While the FSA was responsible for the travel arrangements of the Mexican national workers, the growers were responsible for arranging housing, that was to be in compliance with federal specifications. In the beginning many growers in the San Joaquin Valley tried to ensure decent accommodation for the braceros. For example, many growers hired Mexican cooks for the labor camps because they wanted to ensure the workers had access to foods they were used to consuming.³⁵² This was a marginal attempt to make the Mexican national workers comfortable in their new assignments.

As the projected number of laborers were moving into the area, the growers' responsibility for housing them became greater. They needed the workers, but the development of the labor camps throughout the San Joaquin Valley was not without its difficulties. For one, there was a question as to whether or not they would have

³⁵¹ "Mexican Harvest Help to Start for Valley June 24th" *The Fresno Bee*, May 30, 1943, 3x5 Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files; "US Speed up Importation of Mexican Workers" *The Fresno Bee*, May 31, 1943, 3x5 Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

³⁵² "First Mexican Farm Workers to Arrive Tomorrow" *The Fresno Bee*, June 10, 1943, 3x5 Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

enough equipment for the camp sites. Initially the growers wanted to ask the State to subsidize equipment and maintenance for the proposed camps. A meeting was called soon after the first wave of workers arrived, so that the growers could discuss housing plans. One suggestion from the Farm Labor Agricultural Extension Service was to inspect the old Japanese relocation camps and see if any of that equipment was salvageable for use and potentially could have been divided among the different camp areas.³⁵³

It was announced by the Farm Security Administration in early July of 1943 that one of the final groups of Mexican national workers of the season were scheduled to arrive. This particular wave was significant because unlike the first two groups, this one mainly consisted of workers with special skills such as experience in irrigation and other special farm projects. With the peach crop blooming late that season, these largely unassigned workers were particularly valuable to the growers.³⁵⁴ Local growers in Fresno County hired 164 Mexican national workers within the first 24 hours of their arrival. The assumption was that the workers would yield the most product because there would not be the added burden of training them. Throughout the month of July, waves of workers arrived in batches of 100 at a time.³⁵⁵

Eventually the number of workers peaked at approximately 1,300 throughout the San Joaquin Valley. By mid-July, the saturation of Mexican national workers was

³⁵³ “400 Mexicans will Arrive for Valley Harvests” *The Fresno Bee*, June 24, 1943, 3x5 Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

³⁵⁴ “Valley Growers Have Last Chance to Get Mexicans” *The Fresno Bee*, July 1, 1943, 3x5 Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

³⁵⁵ “Ranchers Rush to Engage Latest Mexican Arrivals” *The Fresno Bee*, July 3, 1943, 3x5 Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

so high that growers could not use all of the workers coming in and they had to be redistributed to other areas around the state. I. S. Terrell, manager of the Agricultural Labor Bureau of San Joaquin Valley noted that the rest period between harvest seasons meant that the braceros were not needed at that time and they could not be accommodated. However, he went on to note that they would be needed at a later date and would return to Fresno County by August of 1943.³⁵⁶ Lending support to the idea that they were seen merely as a labor source, no attention was given to any type of settlement pattern for the workers as they were shifted and traded throughout the state.

Given that the previous cotton season was one of the most unsuccessful crops of 1942, the cotton growers of the valley were adamant about securing labor to ensure that the debacle did not repeat itself. By September of the 1943 harvest season, Fresno was slated to gain approximately 1,700 bracero workers specifically to help pick and process cotton. This was in addition to the 2,000 Mexican national workers who were already present in the area picking the fruit crops, which meant that there was an excess of 3,500 workers to employ for cotton. Gin managers and growers made sure to place their labor orders and secure workers early.³⁵⁷ The plan set in place by the Agricultural Bureau was to place crews together consisting of skilled Spanish-speaking cotton workers to help train the inexperienced Mexican national workers. As the harvest season progressed and newer workers were brought in they

³⁵⁶ “No Jobs Open, Mexicans Moved” *The Fresno Bee*, July 18, 1943, 3x5 Box 38 Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

³⁵⁷ “County May Get 1,700 Mexican Cotton Pickers,” *The Fresno Bee*, September 24, 1943, 3x5 Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

were interspersed with established picking crews rather than creating new groups to ensure that the Mexican national workers would adapt quickly and learn the skills.³⁵⁸

These additional workers made a considerable difference. By mid-November of the cotton season 45-50 percent of the cotton in the valley had been harvested, compared to 30 percent in the same time frame for the season of the prior year.³⁵⁹ City and county officials praised the progress braceros achieved in agriculture by the end of the 1943 season. I. S. Terrell reported that from June 10th to the end of December 1943 the San Joaquin Valley had acquired approximately 4,000 workers with very little turnover. Approximately 5 percent of workers decided to leave the area but most who left were placed into different counties. The Mexican national workers had success in harvesting a variety of crops including figs, peaches, grapes, olives, grains, and most especially in cotton.³⁶⁰ As the season was winding down, many of the Mexican national workers found positions at cattle ranches or working on irrigation projects in preparation for the next season. Terrell noted that the 1943 season was a success with the incorporation of both the Emergency Farm Labor Relief program with the domestic work force. But it is without a doubt that without the Mexican national workers, the 1943 season would have met the same fate as the year before.³⁶¹

³⁵⁸ “More Mexicans are Promised for Cotton Harvest,” *The Fresno Bee*, October 12, 1943, 3x5 Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

³⁵⁹ “600 Mexicans will arrive in Valley Tomorrow,” *The Fresno Bee*, November 18, 1943, 3x5 Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

³⁶⁰ “Mexican Workers are praised for Harvest Aid” *The Fresno Bee*, December 23, 1943, 3x5 Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Life as a Bracero Worker in The San Joaquin Valley

For the Mexican national workers who were participating in the program, it was clear that they were needed for work, and yet it was equally clear that their personal welfare was not always taken into account. Despite the fact that promises were made between the growers of the West, the US federal government, and the Mexican government ensuring that they would be taken care of as the growers utilized the workers for harvest, less attention was given to the conditions of the braceros in the US. Mexican national workers became accustomed to living in poor conditions, eating sub-par food, and having their working conditions largely ignored in favor of concentrating on a higher yield for the harvest. However, despite the poor working conditions, braceros attempted to find a place for themselves within the San Joaquin Valley, many finding refuge in the Westside enclave.

As noted earlier, the distribution of where these men worked was not an autonomous process. Once recruited, the FSA, along with local agricultural boards determined where they would be placed. The situation of housing was the responsibility of the employer. The growers had to set up some sort of housing for the workers, and most often this came in the form of labor camps. Growers were required to provide suitable housing for workers, which upheld specific sanitation standards set by the state. Yet most of the dwellings were makeshift areas consisting of either tents or small shack homes that had been constructed for migrant camps from the 1920s. The growers merely slapped together spaces to house these workers in desperation to gain enough labor as quickly as possible. While the housing may have

passed the inspections, it most likely passed marginally. Once the Mexican national workers settled there, little to no attention was given to the housing situation.³⁶²

An example of the lapse in the housing or camp conditions was the downgrade of the food situation for braceros. The type of food offered to the braceros was a significant part of the contract agreement, and as the growers gave less and less attention to the menu and quality of food for the workers, it became an increasingly controversial issue throughout the state in the early years of the program, 1942 to 1947. Ernesto Galarza summarized in *Merchants of Labor: The Mexican Bracero Story: An Account of the Managed Migration of Mexican Farm Workers in California*, “No single aspect of the bracero program was the cause of more irritation than the food services.”³⁶³ Henry P. Anderson, in his work on braceros and health and sanitation issues in the camps, noted that an anonymous Department of Labor Representative reported in Southern California:

I have been in plenty of camps where just looking at the mess hall invoices were enough to make you physically sick. They would consist of things like pigs’ snouts, pigs’ ears, green tripe, neck bones, pigs’ jowls, pigs’ tails, and once in a great while for a special treat, maybe some hamburgers. There was one camp, which was feeding the men this kind of stuff day in and day out, where we finally took the men away from them. We gave them repeated warnings and told them to start feeding better by they didn’t do a damn thing about it.³⁶⁴

³⁶² Otey M Scruggs, *Braceros, “Wetbacks,” and the Farm Labor Program: Mexican Agricultural Labor in the United States, 1942-1954* (New York, New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), 204-207.

³⁶³ Ernesto Galarza, *Merchants of Labor The Mexican Bracero Story: An Account of the Managed Migration of Mexican Farm Workers in California* (Charlotte, North Carolina: McNally & Loftin, 1964), 187.

³⁶⁴ Henry P. Anderson, *The Bracero Program in California* (New York, New York: Arno Press, 1976), 85. The interview was conducted by Anderson, May 8, 1957.

As the difficulty over this matter increased in the San Joaquin Valley, the Mexican consul of Fresno became involved in the dispute. Workers in the Fowler and Parlier camps were required to pay \$1.50 for board, which included meals, but growers were simply not offering nutritious meals. For example sandwiches made of “a thin film of sour Spanish rice, which most threw away” was served for lunch to the workers, demonstrating the lack of care and attention to the nourishment of the braceros. Those who did eat the sandwiches became ill shortly after from the rancid condition of the food. The State Farm Production Consul sent a representative to investigate the Consul’s complaint. The resolution was that three of the National workers in the camp were designated to do the cooking, in line with the traditional Mexican diet.³⁶⁵

Upon arrival, one of the first things many braceros were expected to engage in outside the actual field work were English classes. In the San Joaquin Valley three areas were designated to hold English language classes for the workers to assist them in their potential work sites. The teachers were being trained at Fresno State College as part of the Rural War Production Training Program and at the time there were more than 150 applicants. A majority of the applicants had experience with Spanish language either as interpreters, teachers, or travel in Latin America. However, the program was looking for teachers who also had experience in agriculture.³⁶⁶ The use of English language classes was to improve the experience for the growers. They wanted to ensure that proper communication would take place in the fields. While the

³⁶⁵ “Mexicans’ Food is Changed in Reply to Protest,” *The Fresno Bee*, September 9, 1943, 3x5 Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

³⁶⁶ “Mexican Farm Laborers to be Taught English” *The Fresno Bee*, July 4, 1943, 3x5 Box 38 Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

English classes were somewhat beneficial to the braceros, their use of the English language did not improve their position outside of being workers.

Toward the end of the first harvest season, there was some discussion among the Mexican Consul and various local labor distribution entities that they should examine the treatment of the braceros given that a number of complaints circulated around wage issues, housing conditions, and of course the food. The camps were unsanitary and haphazardly put together. Often there was not enough water to take adequate baths after a day's work, only enough water so "they could dip from a tank to bathe in." The food issue continued to loom significantly throughout the state; the California Farm Production Council continued to work on the food crisis for the remainder of the program. Eugenio Aza, Fresno's Mexican Consul, argued that better conditions would lead to a better and more productive program. The workers would have a better experience and in turn would spread the word in Mexico, which would attract more laborers.³⁶⁷

While braceros lived and worked in the periphery of Fresno, they did have some opportunities to interact and intermingle with the local Fresnans who lived in the segregated Westside enclave. The relationship between Mexican nationals and Mexican Americans in Fresno was simultaneously embracing and estranged. While some of the established Mexicans did welcome their foreign compatriots, when it came to larger community events and leisure activities, at times individual prejudices

³⁶⁷ "Mexican Consul Urges Better Care for Workers" *The Fresno Bee*, October 15, 1943, 3x5 Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

did seep into the interactions.³⁶⁸ Particularly, the established Mexican community was at a precarious time during the war years when community members were often trying to portray themselves as patriotic. The idea of supporting the war and “American-ness” was at its highest during the “good war.” In this way the established Mexican community was attempting to assert its overall identity as part of the larger Fresno community in support of the war; at the same time they were not fully crossing into an American identity that stripped away Mexican cultural identity. In *A World of Its Own*, Matt Garcia explains the many layers of tension within the intraethnic conflict between Mexican nationals and Mexican Americans. Garcia asserts that employment competition was a major source of tension but as braceros settled into their local community spaces, the competition shifted from the work place to competing for romantic partners among Mexican American women. Often these conflicts would at times manifest into physical altercations between the two groups, which Garcia notes according to his sources were most likely initiated by Mexican Americans.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁸ Some of the individual attitudes of Mexican and Mexican Americans will be explored in the next chapter. There were definitely individuals and families who welcomed Mexican bracero workers and new Mexican migrants as neighbors, but it was complicated because of World War II and feelings of patriotism that surrounding claiming US citizenship status.

³⁶⁹ Matt Garcia, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 174-188; Manuel G. Gonzales describes the relationship between Mexican Americans and braceros as “ambivalent” most likely because the presence of the program depressed wages. Manuel G. Gonzales, *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999), 174-175; Daniel Martinez’ thesis serves as another example of intraethnic conflict between braceros and Mexican Americans in Cucamonga, California during the 1940s. Daniel Martinez Jr., “The Impact of the Bracero Program on a Southern California Mexican American Community: A Field Study of Cucamonga, California,” (MA Thesis, The Claremont Graduate School, 1958), 52-61.

Long time west Fresno native Beatrice Barboza Chávez recalled her parents teaching her family to help people and that those who came from Mexico were not different from those who had grown up in the US. Chávez remembers that the more recent Mexicans migrants and braceros alike, did have some difficulties adapting. She remembers, “No I don’t think they were accepted beautifully. It seemed to me from what I can remember of the families that came from Mexico, it seemed like they were accepted here....I don’t recall them being mistreated or being any difference between the Mexican American and Mexicans from Mexico.”³⁷⁰ While Chávez did not recall specific prejudices of Mexican Americans against Mexican Nationals, there is some question as to the beginning of her statement, that the Nationals were not accepted beautifully. This lends one to contemplate what those interactions may have been, a sort of reluctant camaraderie. Another west Fresno resident, Andrea Pérez, was from one of the families who originated from Mexico. She fondly recalls that the neighbors she had, who were Mexican American, treated her family very well and helped whenever her mother needed anything.³⁷¹ Intra-racial conflict did happen between the groups despite a shared heritage. As one Fresno resident recalls “We are all Mexicans, we are all from the same race, but we are very avaricious....we are not a united race and when there are people who try to unite us, we never help the

³⁷⁰ Beatrice Barboza Chávez, interview by Julia Balderos, August 1, 1980, transcript, from The Hispanic Oral History Collection, Fresno County Library, Fresno, California, 3. (Hereby referred to as HOH Collection)

³⁷¹ Andrea Pérez, interview by Lea Ybarra-Soriano, July 15, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 2.

people.”³⁷² So there were some individuals who did not feel a connection with the bracero workers and did not feel the urge to help.

There was some resentment from Mexican Americans that the *mexicanos* were trying to “take over” the space they had worked to secure as their own over the last few decades.³⁷³ One example, found in *The Fresno Bee*, demonstrating tensions were indeed high between Mexicans and Mexican Americans, was an incident that took place in Mendota, just outside of Fresno in April of 1944. A young man, Lorenzo Ayala, an 18-year old bracero, was arrested for stabbing another man, Joe Gonzáles. Gonzáles was actually not the intended target of the stabbing, which was the result of an argument between local Mexicans and braceros that escalated into a bar fight. Kenneth Say, the deputy district attorney, cited ill feelings between Mexican nationals and Mexican Americans as the underlying cause of the fight.³⁷⁴ There were no further reports about this case in *The Fresno Bee*, however, it is likely that the arrest prompted Ayala’s removal from the program and subsequent deportation. Ayala’s case serves as a reflective point that the rift between the established Mexican community and Mexican nationals was deep enough to incite violence among the members.

Braceros were trying to function in a space that needed their bodies as workers to fill a severe labor vacuum left by the removal of the Japanese. Yet, with a lack of citizenship ties and their place in the US resting on a labor contract, there was

³⁷² Nina Bautista, interview by Jesus Luna, March 25, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 9.

³⁷³ Frances Reyes Ramírez, interview by Rachel Rodriguez, April 26, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 2.

³⁷⁴ Untitled Article, *The Fresno Bee*, April 24, 1944, 3x5 Box 38 Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files. While untitled, it appears to be clipped from the Crime Reports section of the paper.

often not much room to create any kind of semi-permanent or permanent connection to the area. Not only was there no guarantee that their living conditions would be adequate, it was also not guaranteed that they would be accepted as social actors in the community. The threat of deportation became the norm for braceros who were seen as out of line or out of control. While braceros were needed for the harvest seasons, they were also policed heavily to ensure that they were not attempting to shift away from the labor program to become permanent members of the community or free agents negotiating their own pathways. When workers were found to have violated their contracts, they would be arrested and held for “voluntary” deportation back to Mexico. Realistically the deportation would take place beyond the scope of control for the individuals. They were held in local jails until they were deported. This was one method used by local authorities to control Mexican nationals and limit their ability to make choices of any kind around their own labor situations.³⁷⁵

As the 1944 harvest season was at its peak, the need for braceros grew. While the previous season relied on a combination of local and foreign labor, 1944 showed a heavier reliance on the foreign work force than any other type of labor. By early April of 1944 officials from the Agricultural Labor Bureau of San Joaquin Valley traveled to Mexico in order to discuss the labor situation directly with Mexican government and US government representatives in order to secure and increase the labor supply from Mexico for the peak of the summer harvest season. Mexican government

³⁷⁵ “Eight Mexican Workers are Held for Deportation” *The Fresno Bee*, August 13, 1944, 3x5 Box 38 Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files; “Held for Deportation” *The Fresno Bee*, August 25, 1944, 3x5 Box 38 Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

officials notified the US that only 33,000 workers would be brought on in comparison to 50,000 the season before. This caused a panic among growers who felt that they would not get their crops harvested with fewer workers. The growers, in fact, pushed to increase the quota of Mexican nationals from the prior harvest season. The Mexican government, however, was also wary because it did not want to lose its own workers and in turn have a detrimental agricultural output.³⁷⁶ The move of the San Joaquin Valley agricultural officials going to Mexico demonstrated the growing insatiable appetite for the foreign labor force. They would go to any lengths to ensure that the crops would not suffer, including meeting with Mexican government officials directly rather than relying on the US officials to represent the interests of the region.

By mid-August, Irvine S. Terrell, the executive vice president of the Agricultural Labor Bureau of the San Joaquin Valley, declared that the valley obtained enough laborers to assist in the delicate process of the peach harvest. With the combination of “American transient” workers and Mexican national workers the growers felt extremely confident about finishing the harvest in time with approximately 250 braceros working on the peach harvest.³⁷⁷ The San Joaquin Valley, notably one of the warmest climate areas of the state, could experience summer temperatures over 100 degrees, which could in turn cause the peaches to ripen rapidly. The nature of this particular harvest required a lot of laborers to quickly process the crop. For the 1944 season, agricultural officials and farmers were not

³⁷⁶ “Valley Men Got to Mexico City on Labor Quest” *The Fresno Bee*, April 19, 1944, 3x5 Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

³⁷⁷ “Mexicans Will Assure Harvest of Valley Peaches” *The Fresno Bee*, August 14, 1944, 3x5 Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

concerned about having enough manpower to complete the harvest and in fact they did not have to use any of the back-up measures, such as the prior seasons volunteer harvest team.³⁷⁸ Growers had become completely entrenched and entitled to utilize the Bracero Program as their main labor pool.

Conclusion

While there were many warnings about the removal of the Japanese community and the impact it could have on the agricultural sector, the federal government forged ahead with the internment process. The ramifications were felt at an economic level almost immediately. The lack of available labor caused a good majority of the crops from the 1942 harvest season to be lost. For decades nativist groups and white growers alike had argued that the Japanese had made minimal contributions to the agricultural industry as a whole, and therefore, were insignificant to the greater society. At the pinnacle of the evacuation, this was quickly proven false, as the downward spiral of economic loss from lack of labor was swiftly coming to fruition. Desperate attempts by the grower community to regain Japanese workers under a work-release type program were quickly overturned by the federal government. The only focus by the Western Defense Command was to remove the “enemy alien” group and keep them detained through the duration of the war years.

In examining the arguments, for and against, the use of Japanese labor during internment, we can see that prevailing racist attitudes by whites against the Japanese become highlighted. In the proposal to use Japanese workers in this work-release

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

program, the primary concern was the harvest crops, not the well-being of the Japanese themselves. In fact, the federal government had already stripped rights from the Japanese through internment; a potential work release program was akin to the idea of a prison work program. The Western Defense Command also did not reflect concern on the situation of the individual Japanese persons, but was instead protecting the US from an alleged national threat. The Japanese in the West Coast were perceived as an enemy that had to be contained. Therefore the only value the Japanese held at this time were as a labor commodity. There were negotiations on how they were to be used, bought, and traded without consulting them or gaining their consent. The commodification of labor was in turn inscribed onto them. The views of these predominantly white groups only solidified the racial attitudes of the past decades, in which Asian groups did not belong to the citizenry but were only purposeful in an economically subordinate position.

Once it was clear that the Japanese were not an option, the growers employed various strategies to harvest the crops. The use of classic World War II discourse to gain volunteers, primarily women and children, later evolved to forcing people to serve out their patriotic duty on the home front, such as by shutting down the entire city's school system for the sake of youth workers saving the harvest season. The entire community needed to pitch in, but realistically there is no way to determine how much of the community really sacrificed their time towards working in the back breaking conditions that many of them were probably not used to. Either way, the various volunteer programs were still not enough to complete a successful harvest,

with 1942 being one of the lowest yield years to date.³⁷⁹ There was every implication for white growers to feel that the 1943 harvest season would be just as poor, and possibly worse, than this particular season. The desperation led directly to a new strategy, one that included the importation of Mexican national workers under the Emergency Farm Relief Program, also known as the Bracero Program.

The arrival of Mexican national workers throughout the Southwest was the saving grace for the agricultural industry. In the beginning, the growers of the San Joaquin Valley made certain to keep in compliance with all requests made from the Mexican government. They needed the workers desperately to prevent another major loss in the 1943 harvest season. The transition to utilizing the Bracero Program became the most effective tool in satisfying the labor demand post-internment. While there was still some economic loss, it was not nearly to the degree of the prior harvest season. However, once the program was in place and the growers obtained the number of necessary workers, the care and concern about the bracero's living conditions that had been so diligently offered in the beginning started to wane considerably by the 1944 season. The braceros became the new commodified bodies, their position as ethnic laborers viewed as a rationale against having to view them as part of the community. In the case of the braceros, the growers also had the voice of the federal government sanctioning this attitude as the workers were contracted and not seen as deserving of any citizenship-like rights outside of what was delineated in the contracts. The presence of Mexican nationals was much more complicated as they

³⁷⁹ Woods, "Mexican Agricultural Labor in California," 13.

provided an important service in their work but also made some attempts at socialization despite their limitations.

The braceros found themselves in a precarious position, not accepted socially in the greater Fresno community as they were seen as only workers, and yet trying to figure out how they could get some semblance of a social life on the segregated West side. Their presence skewed the visual understandings of ethnic life on the West side, as now Mexicans largely outnumbered the Asian population who had dominated that area in the first portion of the twentieth century. However, the established Mexican community was trying to establish itself as an important and viable entity, both within the segregated Westside and also larger local and national communities.

CHAPTER 5
NEGOTIATING SPACE AND IDENTITY—THE ESTABLISHED
MEXICANS IN WEST FRESNO

Dr. Theresa Pérez was raised in Fresno, in a farm working family, which consisted of her mother, grandmother, and her sisters. She grew up, in the Mexican neighborhood of Chinatown—or, as it was referred to by the Mexicans who lived in the area, *El Barrio Chino*. She recalled that during her early childhood years in Fresno, roughly during the 1930s and 1940s, that there were other racial groups living in her area.

In the community where we settled were white people and a very, very small minority of Black people, maybe one or two families in the whole community, but there were a lot of Italian people and there were Russian people and German people. One of my closest's [sic] friends when I was growing up was German.³⁸⁰

The neighborhood during the early childhood years of Dr. Pérez was racially diverse; the commonality was that most people were part of farm laboring families and economically working-class poor.³⁸¹ However, just a few blocks over, on the other side of the railroad tracks, was the start of downtown Fresno, where everything changed, and the separation of Mexicans and whites was clearly apparent.

³⁸⁰ Dr. Theresa Perez, interview by Lea Ybarra-Soriano, August 28, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 6. The beginning of this interview does not start with any specified dates or time frame. The interview begins with the question of Dr. Pérez' earliest childhood memory. While she gives the narrative she does not indicate any dates. The time frame I am suggested is based on the later part of the interview where she speaks of her adulthood in relationship to the Chicana/o movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

³⁸¹ Again, while it is unclear on her exact age of this remembrance, it can be estimated that it was the mid-1930s based upon her discussion of later community involvement as an adult during the Chicana/o movement.

We never went across the tracks, we did everything in Chinatown. We bought our shoes there, we bought our clothes there, we did our grocery shopping there, we went to the movies in Chinatown, we did everything. Mexican stores were there. We did everything in Chinatown, never went downtown. I was afraid to go downtown.³⁸²

The notion of segregation was ingrained into Dr. Pérez' psyche as a child, penetrating with fear that the "other side of the tracks," literally only several city blocks, was a barrier that could not and should not be crossed. However, despite segregation, the established Mexicans of Fresno's Westside flourished culturally, politically, and eventually causing the barrier to be broken down as Mexican community members began to assert themselves as belonging to the area, not just as laborers, but as full citizens of the community.³⁸³

The longstanding contributions of people of ethnic Mexican descent to the larger San Joaquin Valley cannot be disputed. While the early history of Mexicans in Fresno is not atypical to the narrative that most developing Mexican/Mexican-American/Chicana/o towns have experienced—patterns of circular migration, permanent settlement, and then negotiated acculturation—Fresno's story does take a unique position as a segregated location where multiple racial groups are living at once. Mexicans lived and thrived in West Fresno, an area that for most of the end of the nineteenth century until the 1930s was an Asian and Asian American space. Then

³⁸² Dr. Theresa Perez, interview by Lea Ybarra-Soriano, August 28, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 5.

³⁸³ My use of established Mexicans refers to Mexicans who had migrated and settled into Fresno/West Fresno in the earlier part of the twentieth century (approximately 1900-1930). I have chosen this term because not all of the established Mexican community were legal citizens nor am I certain that many identified themselves as Mexican American. I generally use Mexican My use of the term Mexican nationals means a person of Mexican descent who migrated, most likely during the 1940s. Often when I refer to bracero workers I also use the term Mexican national interchangeably. When I use ethnic Mexican I am referring to both the established Mexican community and Mexican nationals.

during the 1940s, as the Japanese moved to internment camps, white growers looked to Mexicans to work. However, as we saw in the last chapter, the need for labor was so great that growers pushed for the importation of Mexican national workers, or braceros, into the Fresno area to alleviate the void left by the interned Japanese. This continual process of white farm owners' commoditization of non-white racial groups for labor created the conditions for the established Mexicans to strategize ways to assert their identity as permanent community members, despite the changing racial dynamics. The removal of the Japanese coupled with the influx of their foreign compatriots changed the racial landscape of the Westside, but also produced an opportunity for established Mexicans to negotiate their position in Fresno as they became involved with the home front efforts during World War II.

The 1940s were an important period for the established Mexicans because it was a period of increased social and political activity. Fresno, as a whole, was a hub for the Central Valley; the established Mexicans in West Fresno, much like the Chinese and Japanese before them, began to establish themselves as a hub for cultural and social events for the surrounding small towns. Large-scale celebrations for Mexican Independence Day and Cinco de Mayo attracted people from all over the region to come to Fresno and it became a central city for Mexican cultural life in the San Joaquin Valley. The growing centrality eventually led to the ability of the established Mexicans to somewhat branch out of the segregated barriers that had been long established and policed by the white upper-middle class of Fresno. In doing so, the established Mexicans asserted their identity, as legitimate community members,

and autonomy to the white community, working to support the war efforts, and yet also retaining their unique cultural Mexicaness at the same time.

This chapter will map out this transitional period of the established Mexicans while also highlighting the overall importance of the contributions of all ethnic Mexicans (foreign and US citizens) to the success and development of Fresno as an important site for agriculture in California. I will begin by discussing the settlement of Mexicans in the early part of the twentieth century and their continued permanence as they settled down, purchased homes and businesses, and created social and political organizations, all within a segregated enclave. The chapter will then go on to discuss the effects of the war years, Mexicans' participation in the war and home front efforts, as well as the effect of the bracero program in West Fresno. Finally, the chapter will show how the efforts of the community shifted from solely sociocultural to the eventual rise of political movements in the latter years after the 1940s.

Early Settlement: 1920s and 1930s

Many of the early Mexican settlers did not plan to journey directly to Fresno, California. Most came through different starting points at the border from Texas to Arizona or Southern California. Most eventually passed through the Fresno area following a specific migratory circuit and ended up settling there for a variety of reasons. For example, Jessie De La Cruz's family left Mexico because of the 1910 revolution, but their path to Fresno was led by her grandfather who began his labor story working for the railroads. She recalls, "Then in 1933, that's when we stayed in

Fresno County, our truck broke down and we couldn't go back to Los Angeles." Her grandfather passed away some time after that and then the family eventually settled in a labor camp in the Fresno area.³⁸⁴ Another longtime Fresno resident Al Villa recalled during his youth that his family had lived in and around Fresno, but early on it was not a permanent space of residence. They mainly followed the different crops during the harvest season and would migrate from Central Valley California to other areas of the state.

What we would do is pick cotton in Fresno County, the Fresno area, Firebaugh, Mendota. We'd move into those areas, then we would go over to the strawberries to a place called Madron [sic], which is close to Gilroy. We would go from there to Los Gatos to pick prunes, we'd got to Salinas for the lettuce, Wasco for the potatoes, Corcoran for the cotton also. We just moved around all the time.

Eventually his family settled in Visalia because they had other relatives there and later Sanger a town on the outskirts of Fresno. Villa, himself, settled in Fresno after attending Fresno State College.³⁸⁵ These examples reflect how the migratory process, while initially not giving a sense of permanence, led to many families and individuals exposure to areas of California that they might not have otherwise considered.

By the early 1920s Mexicans were not only increasing in population but began to root themselves in Fresno. Post-World War I Mexicans served as a key source of cheap labor throughout the Southwest and especially within California.

³⁸⁴ Jessie de la Cruz, interview by Lea Ybarra-Soriano, August 27, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 2. Jessie de la Cruz was a major Chicana activist in the Central Valley, beginning her work as a labor activist with the United Farm Workers Union at 42 years old during the 1960s. For more information on her life story and activism see: Ellen Cantarow, *Moving the Mountain: Women Working for Social Change* (Old Westbury, New York: The Feminist Press, 1980), 94-151; Gary Soto, *Jessie de la Cruz: Profile of a United Farm Worker* (New York, New York: Persea Books, 2000).

³⁸⁵ Al Villa, interview by Jesus Luna, September 4, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 2.

Figure 5.1 Mexicans at Employment Office in Chinatown, 1910s³⁸⁶



Mexicans began heavily filling California's labor needs after the passing of the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act, also known as the 1924 Immigration Act. Although the Act did eliminate Asian migration and limit other foreign nationals, it did not give a numeric quota restriction for Mexicans. As Mae Ngai discusses in *Impossible Subjects*, this led to allowing Mexicans to enter for labor purposes and yet

³⁸⁶ *Online Archive of California*, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/tf509nb607/?order=1>, accessed June 2012.

simultaneously created a specific type of “race problem” with Mexicans.³⁸⁷ The *Pacific Rural Press* estimated that from 1924 to 1930 an average of 58,000 Mexican workers were brought into California for work.³⁸⁸ They were a band-aid solution to agriculture’s labor needs. White growers also desired Mexicans because they assumed that given Mexico’s close geographic proximity, Mexican workers would return home after the harvest season.

In 1926 S. Parker Frisselle, manager of the Kearney Ranch in Fresno, was sent to Congress by San Joaquin Valley growers “to get us Mexicans and keep them out of our schools and out of our social problems.” The *Pacific Rural Press* announced that 15,000 Mexicans had been imported into the San Joaquin Valley in 1927 to assist with the harvest season.³⁸⁹ Yet, the quote from Frisselle reflects the white community’s attitude towards the Mexican nationals, which white growers had to negotiate. Mexicans were a labor source, but not allowed to participate in significant areas of community life. Most whites wanted them as temporary laborers, lending to white growers later notions of Mexicans as a commodity. Carey McWilliams notes in his seminal work *Factories in the Field*:

Throughout the years from 1914 to 1930 the large farms used Mexican labor as their main source of cheap, easily exploitable farm labor in the state, beating down wage rates and forcing the cities to assume the burden of supporting Mexicans during the period of “hibernation.”³⁹⁰

³⁸⁷ Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 7.

³⁸⁸ Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (Santa Barbara, California: Peregrine Publishers, 1971), 125.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 128.

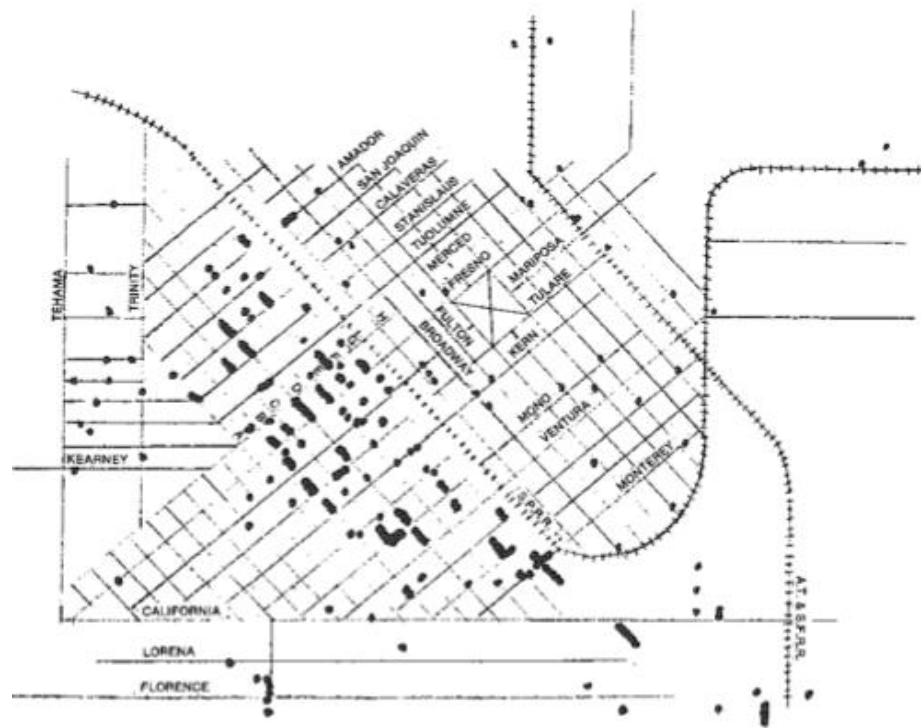
The Mexican community began to desire more than just a sojourner lifestyle and started to carve out permanent spaces in the community. For example, in 1929 the Mexican Baptist church opened in August on E and Mariposa Streets on the cusp of Chinatown.³⁹¹ The existence of a Mexican Baptist church served as a status symbol, which demonstrated the Mexican community was permanent rather than a fluid migrant population.³⁹² As ethnic Mexicans attempted to settle, they were immediately limited by the longstanding tradition of segregation that had defined Fresno. Alex Saragoza, in his monograph *Fresno's Hispanic Heritage* notes that by 1920 approximately 80 percent of the Mexican population lived on the Westside of the city.³⁹³

³⁹¹ "New Church Opens Today" *The Fresno Bee*, August 16, 1929, 3x5 Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

³⁹² The following churches were found in the Westside Enclave in 1931: Chinese Baptist, 1053 E St.; Mexican Baptist, 1061 E St.; Japanese Congregational, 801 E St.; Japanese Methodist, 1260 Kern St.; St. Alphonsus Catholic, 325 Kearny Blvd.; Buddhist, 1340 Kern St.; Japanese Salvation Army, 817 F St. Polk's, *Fresno, California City Directory, including Fresno County, 1931*. (Los Angeles, California: R.L. Polk & Co. of California, 1931).

³⁹³ Alex Saragoza. *Fresno's Hispanic Heritage*, (San Diego, California: San Diego Federal Savings and Loan Association, 1980), 41.

Figure 5.2 Spanish Surname Residents in West Fresno, 1920s³⁹⁴



The remaining 20 percent most likely resided in the outskirts or unincorporated areas where labor camps primarily existed. Zack Uribes, longtime Fresno resident, recalled his father working for labor recruiters with his primary job being assisting with the labor camps. “They had either tents or cabins and then he had a boarding house where all these men would have board. And he had, it was seasonal so that every year he would have the same people come all the time to work for him.”³⁹⁵ So while the workers did move along with different crops, there was a semi-permanence in that they would return each season to a familiar dwelling and familiar employers.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Zack and Carmen Uribes, interview by Cindy Cabrera, April 27, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 3.

The conditions of early settlement for Mexicans were sub-par at best. Jessie De La Cruz recalled her days in the labor camps during her family's settlement in the area in the 1930s.

So we stayed in the labor camps and what we saw could make anybody cry. Even my remembering it...winters we didn't have anything to eat. We would go out with ditch bags and pick mustard greens and mushrooms. My uncle, since I call them brothers, would go out, my oldest brother in the ditches and look for fish. I don't know how we survived and that was not only my family but all the families around us.³⁹⁶

Another Fresno resident Ofelía Ybarra discussed her time in a labor camp near Corcoran, just outside of Fresno city limits. There was no running water, bathrooms, or services of any kind available if residents became ill.³⁹⁷ This was fairly common with most labor camps throughout the State. The conditions were harsh and Mexican workers desired to move closer into Fresno city where, despite the segregated status, the housing conditions were much better than the unincorporated areas.

By the 1930s the Great Depression had greatly affected most of the nation. Fresno was no exception to this and the Mexican community specifically had to form various strategies for coping with this economic downturn. Saragoza notes that Mexicans in the San Joaquin Valley strategized their survival, working to maintain their homes, attempting to produce their own goods, and also joining the ranks of the unemployed searching for jobs. Often there were no viable job opportunities

³⁹⁶ Jessie De La Cruz interview by Lea Ybarra-Soriano, August 27, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 2.

³⁹⁷ Tanis and Ofelía Ybarra, interview by Lea Ybarra-Soriano, August 10, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 4.

available.³⁹⁸ Throughout the Southwest, whites scapegoated Mexicans as a social problem. The assumed transient and/or migratory nature of Mexican labor made them a liability to whites, both because of rampant employment and welfare relief competition.³⁹⁹ It was not long before a shift in discourse that whites called for the removal of the “Mexican threat.” The solution was to remove Mexicans through a “guided” and “voluntary” repatriation program sponsored by the US and Mexican governments. Francisco Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez in their pivotal work *Decade of Betrayal* note that the numbers of repatriated during this time were between 400,000 and 1 million depending on the source.⁴⁰⁰ The estimate is skewed because while federal programs did offer to pay for Mexicans to repatriate by train, it does not factor in the numbers who left before the services and money became available. While loosely touted as a voluntary process, historians Francisco Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez make the point that the lack of assistance for Mexicans created a situation where repatriation was the only option, and thereby they were forced to leave for the most part, rather than having the ability to decide.⁴⁰¹

In the San Joaquin Valley, however, repatriation was complex. While there were some instances of people leaving to Mexico during the early 1930s, there was not a significant return because the areas were still highly dependent on communities

³⁹⁸ Saragoza, *Fresno's Hispanic Heritage*, 48.

³⁹⁹ See Donald Fisher, J. *A Historical Study of The Migrants in California* (San Francisco, California: R and E Research Associates, 1973). He discusses the origins of the migratory process in California and how the arrival of newcomers during the 1930s exacerbated the economic situation that was already going on in the area.

⁴⁰⁰ Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s*, (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 121-122.

⁴⁰¹ Balderrama and Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 122.

of color, especially Mexicans, for labor. Alex Saragoza notes that while the push for repatriation in urban concentrated areas was taking place, “the need for cheap labor led government officials to minimize such efforts in agricultural areas.”⁴⁰² Balderrama and Rodriguez also note that the shortage of pickers in the San Joaquin Valley prompted welfare relief authorities to encourage the unemployed to search for jobs in agriculture. When this strategy did not produce the necessary labor, welfare authorities removed all farmworkers from the relief role to guide them back to farm employment. Throughout California, white grower networks encouraged welfare workers to wait until after the harvest season to repatriate Mexicans.⁴⁰³ Fresno resident Antonio Huerta recalled that there were some people who did accept the government’s assistance to return to Mexico, but it was predominantly people who had been in the US for a short time.⁴⁰⁴

The economic effects of the Depression were deeply felt in the agricultural sector. Conditions were very poor for what was already some of the poorest individuals. Joe Trejo, whose family came to the Fresno area and settled on the Westside, for agricultural work, describes the conditions during the early 1930s:

I remember we used to go down to the alleys, me and my brother and find coffee cans and bring them home, because that would be your dishes. And my mother would make soup, and put it in there. Also we used to grow a garden in our yard. All the *mexicanos* in that area were growing their own gardens.

⁴⁰² Saragoza, *Fresno’s Hispanic Heritage*, 48.

⁴⁰³ Balderrama and Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 82-83.

⁴⁰⁴ António and Obdulia Huerta, interview by Alex Saragoza, September 29, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 23.

Trejo also recalled that other ethnic groups, such as Italian neighbors, were utilizing the same strategies of survival during this dismal time.⁴⁰⁵

While the economic crisis created a downturn in jobs and resources, residents continued to live and thrive. Social and cultural celebrations continued to take place during the Depression era. People still gathered in Fresno from around the valley to celebrate religious and cultural holidays and feasts such as Mexican Independence on September 16 or the celebrations for the Virgen de Guadalupe on December 12.⁴⁰⁶ Also, Mexican mutual aid organizations, or *mutualistas*, formed in Fresno as early as the 1920s. For example one of the earliest mutual aid societies, Sociedad 124, gave assistance for funeral services and raised money for Mexicans settlers.⁴⁰⁷ In the 1930s organizations continued to pop up including the organizations U.P. and La Alianza Hispano-Americana which both also worked to protect the rights of Mexicans in the Selma area, another small community just on the outskirts of Fresno.⁴⁰⁸ These examples show that while a significant amount of financial and social stress existed for non-white racial groups such as Mexicans, they strategized to cope and survive, staying in the area for the coming decades.

⁴⁰⁵ Joe Trejo, interview by Lea Ybarra-Soriano, August 7, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 14-15.

⁴⁰⁶ Saragoza, *Fresno's Hispanic Heritage*, 50.

⁴⁰⁷ Hilaria R. Villegas, interview by Jesus Luna, April 9, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 6. Mrs. Villegas discusses how her husband and their neighbors were involved heavily with this particular mutual benefit society (*mutualista beneficia*). It is noted that this is one of, if not the, earliest of such organizations in Fresno. However, there is almost little to no other mention of it in any other oral interviews. Mrs. Villegas noted that when most of the founders of this organization passed away there was no forward movement to continue with *Sociedad 124*, and as we will see in the 1930s and 40s there were other organizations created that took its place.

⁴⁰⁸ Herculano Vargas, interview by Jesus Luna, April 23, 1980, transcript, *HOH Collection*, 21-22. There was no formal name given for the organization U.P. in the interviews and it was not mentioned again in the Hispanic Oral History Collection.

As the Great Depression loosened its grip on the nation, the communities of the Central Valley slowly began to recuperate. This process was accelerated by the onset of World War II. For the ethnic Mexicans who had been establishing their residency in Fresno during these early and tumultuous years, the war meant bringing on a different set of roles and responsibilities to both the community of the Westside and the Fresno community at large. The 1940s allowed them a renewed opportunity to define themselves strategically as both American and Mexican simultaneously in a way that was absolutely denied to their Japanese neighbors. The 1940s represented an upsurge for the community, to become more visible in both positive and negative ways, but also for them to define their value.

Whites and Mexicans

The relationship between whites and Mexicans in Fresno was historically tenuous. Spatial segregation came to define not only the geographical space but also the social relationships between racial groups. Whites clearly wanted to foster a separation between themselves and people of color. For example, Fresno's Westside was within a few blocks of the downtown area, yet it often felt like another world to the non-white West Fresnoans.⁴⁰⁹ The 1920 manuscript census reflects that in

⁴⁰⁹United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920* (Washington, D. C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1920), Manuscript census accessed on <http://www.ancestry.com>, accessed on April 2012.

In examining District 19 District 27, Enumeration District 27 manuscript, pages 10-20 which is approximately 500 residents, the only person who was neither US born white or white foreign born from Europe was Charlie Sain, a Chinese man who was listed as a servant (11). Also see Appendices C and D, which map out Tulare Street, which crosses from West Fresno into the Downtown area. Polk's, *Fresno City Directory, including Fresno County, 1935*, (Los Angeles, California: R.L. Polk & Co. of California Publishers, 1935).

Chinatown where Chinese, Japanese, and Mexicans primarily lived (G street, F Street, Tulare, China Alley) only those 3 racial groups lived within those confined blocks. In fact, the street China Alley reflected almost 100 percent Chinese residents until Inyo street where Japanese and others appear and Japantown begins. However, a mile away from Chinatown, in the downtown area, on the other side of the railroad tracks was a different reality. The 1920 manuscript census reflects that in this area (Tulare Street, Mariposa, Q street, P street, M street, O street, and Fresno St) was almost 100 percent white. The development of a non-white segregated enclave stunted relations with whites, limiting the interaction between them and people of color primarily to two possibilities. The first was an employer-employee relationship since whites owned the majority of large agricultural land holdings in Fresno and its surrounding areas. The second was social interactions with new ethnic European migrants who began their journey settling in or near Fresno's Westside. In the early twentieth century the primary groups that fell into this category were Italian, Russian Germans, and Armenians.⁴¹⁰ However, these ethnic whites, through acculturation, eventually were able to exercise upward social mobility and move "across the tracks" to more affluent areas. Asians and Mexicans largely remained in West Fresno throughout the twentieth century.⁴¹¹

⁴¹⁰ As newly immigrated communities I will refer to these groups as ethnic Europeans to differentiate from the white community that had been established in Fresno since its inception, many of who had been in the US a few generations by this point.

⁴¹¹ United States of America, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930* (Washington, D. C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1930), Manuscript census accessed on <http://www.ancestry.com>, accessed on April 2012.

Interaction between whites and Mexicans primarily began at the employment level. Often, the treatment of employees depended on the need of the grower. When there was a high demand for labor, growers would fulfill certain accommodations and needs of the laborers, such as provide housing facilities. However, growers did not always guarantee the quality of the accommodation. For example housing was a necessity for many laborers, but growers offered the shelter without attention to comfort. If a worker wanted to improve his or her living conditions, he or she was fiscally responsible to meet personal desires. The employers offered housing that was often in deplorable and unsanitary living conditions.⁴¹²

Dignity and respect was not always shared in the power relationship between whites and Mexicans. Longtime resident Albert Ramírez recalled his father's position as a worker under a white grower and his attempts to collect his wages. "I remember my father waiting for the patron to pay him. Sometimes he made him wait at the ranch for hours *y mi papá con el sombrero en la mano* [my father with his hat in his hand], like if he was begging for something, and he was asking for what was his."⁴¹³ Clearly the employer had blatant disregard of this man's dignity as well as rights of workers to claim their rightful wages. This example also shows how this white

The 1930 manuscript census again reaffirms racial segregation, where the Chinese, Japanese, and Mexicans were relegated to West Fresno. Reflected in the manuscript for Enumeration District 15, which concentrated on West Fresno from page 66- (Tulare Street, F Street, G street, E street, China Alley, Fresno Street) continued to reflect almost a high concentration with 387 Chinese of the 747 total in Fresno living in Chinatown; there were 316 Japanese, and 45 Mexican residents in the heart of Chinatown. There were 45 people of varying ethnicities including Russian-German, Italian, Greek, French, Filipino, and Armenian also living in the area at this time. Also, Appendices C and D support that West Fresno remained heavily populated by Chinese, Japanese, and Mexicans.

⁴¹² Nina Bautista, interview by Jesus Luna, March 25, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 5.

⁴¹³ Albert T. Ramírez, interview by Jesus Luna, March 25, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 4.

grower demonstrated racism by demoralizing and infantilizing Mr. Ramirez' position as a laborer.

By the late 1930s, outside of the workspace the segregated lines became solidified. The majority of *mexicanos* had little to no social interaction with whites. The highly segregated nature of Fresno caused many ethnic groups to not leave their neighborhood and avoid any significant interactions with white neighbors. In West Fresno, more specifically Chinatown, one could purchase anything that was needed from groceries to clothing and shoes. The comfort of this racialized space was highlighted in the earlier example of Theresa Pérez' family and how they did very little venturing into the downtown area. However, Pérez also recalled that within her neighborhood in West Fresno there were a few ethnic European families. The memories of those interactions were friendly ones and she even noted that one of her closest childhood friends was a young girl of German ancestry.⁴¹⁴ Whether or not they remained friends over the years or if the young woman's family remained in the Westside area is not clear from Pérez' interview, but the likelihood that this German family remained in the area is minimal.

One of the key factors in the relationship between these particular groups of ethnic Europeans was that all of the community members shared the same social class, working class. Italian and Russian-German immigrants carved out spaces for themselves, both within and adjacent to the Westside of Fresno. During the 1930s many migrants from the dustbowl migration of the Midwest also settled in the

⁴¹⁴ Dr. Theresa Pérez, interview by Lea Ybarra-Soriano, August 28, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 6.

Westside area. This shared working-class status meant sometimes racial lines were crossed in positive ways. Ethnic Mexican resident Joe Trejo remembers a reciprocal relationship between working-class whites and Mexicans. In regards to his white working-class neighbors who were migrants from the Midwest Trejo recalled, “The thing there is a lot of them knew how to fix cars, and *mexicanos* had vegetables in their garden and they had fruit in their trees, and it’d be kind of an exchange thing you know. A guy would fix your car and you’d give him a bag of string beans, and other stuff.”⁴¹⁵ These types of interactions blurred racial lines and reflected a working-class bond.

However, outside of the confines of the Westside enclave, racism towards Mexicans was quite strong and prevalent in the greater Fresno community. Albert Ramírez again recounts a story as a child of his mother being denied service in a restaurant:

We go into a restaurant at Blackstone. I swear to God there couldn’t have been more than four or five people in that restaurant, it was empty. We walked in there, you know, she had a clean dress, but it was old, and it was faded. And she had a chongo and no make-up. That guy told her he didn’t have any room, to leave, and that thing is burning in my mind like if it happened this instant. I have never forgotten it.⁴¹⁶

Despite the fact that his mother had been a longtime community member in Fresno, her racialized working-class appearance meant that she was denied the basic service and right to eat.

⁴¹⁵ Joe Trejo, interview by Lea Ybarra-Soriano, August 7, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 2.

⁴¹⁶ Albert Ramírez, interview by Jesus Luna, March 25, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 4-5.

Another Fresno resident recalled discrimination in hiring practices. Since the Mexican community was relegated to agricultural work, when there were attempts to move outside of that realm they were often met with resistance from the white community. Beatrice Barboza Chávez attempted to obtain a retail position at Montgomery Ward Department store when it first opened in Fresno. However, when she tried to obtain an application, the store clerk first asked for her nationality. When Chávez revealed that she was Mexican, the clerk informed her that they were no longer accepting applications despite the fact that Chávez had just witnessed her giving applications to two people earlier. This type of blatant racism reflected the attitude that Mexicans were not seen as viable workers in a department store environment, again pushing or forcing them to remain at a lower skill position, such as farm work.

This segregation was also quite strong in the school system.⁴¹⁷ Manuel Sierra López recalls shortly after his family arrived in the Fresno area around 1921, that the school they attended was very segregated. All of the ethnic Mexican children, as well as the Portuguese and Dutch children who did not speak English, were put into one class whose focus was on Americanization. In López' case, his family had moved to

⁴¹⁷ For more on segregation of Mexican children in schools and Americanization see: Gilbert G. Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation*, (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania : Balch Institute Press, 1990) and "Segregation of Mexican Children in a Southern California City: The Legacy of Expansionism and the American Southwest" *The Western Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Jan., 1985), 55-76; George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), Ch. 4; Emory S. Bogardus, *The Mexican in the United States*, (New York, New York: Arno Press, 1970), Ch. 10; Mario T. Garcia, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, & Identity, 1930-1960*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), Ch. 3; Jose Amaro Hernandez, *Mutual Aid for Survival: The Case of the Mexican American*, (Malabar, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1983), 70-71; Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1976), 141.

Fresno from Arizona where he attended parochial school up until that point. He recalls that he knew how to speak and read English fluently along with many of his ethnic Mexican classmates, but they still segregated them from the white children in the school.⁴¹⁸

While the relationships between whites and Mexicans varied based on location (Westside Fresno) and social class status, overall whites still treated and viewed Mexicans as outsiders. Whites found Mexicans tolerable as long as they remained contained and confined to the perimeters of West Fresno. But, the minute Mexicans made an attempt to venture outside of these geographical limits or attempted upward social mobility by working outside of the agricultural sphere, there was white resistance limiting the possibilities for Mexicans in Fresno to move, physically and socially.

Cultural Life and the Origins of Organizing

By the 1920s, Mexicans were actively developing a sense of belonging in Fresno. There were two major ways in which they were staking their claim. The first was the organizing of various leisure activities, which highlighted not only their permanence but also the claiming of space in West Fresno. The second way was through the development of mutual aid societies, *mutualistas*, which later served as an important stepping-stone towards political involvement during World War II.

Cultural celebrations began as early as the 1920s. Fresno's Westside community began with the September 16 celebration for Mexican Independence

⁴¹⁸ Manuel Sierra Lopez, interview by Lea Ybarra, August 22, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 3.

when at that time many of the smaller surrounding Central Valley communities did not have their own celebrations. Most people would drive into Fresno to engage in various activities from parades to dances, almost all sponsored by mutual aid societies such as *Sociedad Morelos* and *La Alianza Hispanoamericana*.⁴¹⁹ Manuel Sierra López recalled the grand parades and the crowning of the festival queens during the celebrations. The fiestas were so popular that often workers left their positions in the agricultural fields to attend the celebrations despite threats of being fired from supervisors.⁴²⁰ This reflects the deep importance that such celebrations held in the identity of the Mexican community.

This particular celebration, in the 1920s and 1930s, involved very elaborate festivities, usually beginning with a major contest for the festival queen among young women from the established Mexican families in West Fresno. Generally they would sell raffle tickets or dance tickets to gain votes. Once the queen was determined she and the other contestants would participate in the parade that began in the heart of the Mexican community and followed all the way to the Ryan Auditorium on the edge of downtown and the Westside. Generally there would be other entertainment, as one resident recalled having to learn dances as a young child to perform during the parade

⁴¹⁹ Saragoza, *Fresno's Hispanic Heritage*, 44.

⁴²⁰ Manuel Sierra López, interview by Lea Ybarra-Soriano, August 22, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 6.

as well as for other cultural events.⁴²¹ The festivities generally ended with a large community dance at the Auditorium ballroom.⁴²²

Other festivities pre-1940s were generally tied to the Catholic Church.⁴²³ The Westside parish of St. Alphonsus became a Mexican space of worship and social activity. For many of the community residents this was one of the first spaces outside of their home where they interacted on a social level with their neighbors in the community. Participation in weddings, communions, and baptisms was seen as important stepping stones for most young people.⁴²⁴ Fresno resident Joe Trejo called it a “social center,” where he personally completed all of his major Catholic sacraments and attended many dinners, *tardiadas*, and *jamaicas* or church bazaars.⁴²⁵ A significant religious organization was the Guadalupe Society, referred to as the *Guadalupanos*. It was a statewide Mexican Catholic group that served partially in a similar fashion to other mutual aid societies, but did so with a specific religious agenda. Again, for many residents the *Guadalupanos* was one of the first means of organizing in the community.⁴²⁶

⁴²¹ Dr. Theresa Pérez, interview by Lea Ybarra-Soriano, August 28, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 13.

⁴²² “Queen is Named” *The Fresno Bee*, September 9, 1940, 3x5 Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

⁴²³ Most of the recollection about these parades and festivities came from the Hispanic Oral History interviews. I have indicated in the footnotes which interviews I used for certain details. Most of the interview participants did not give exact dates so I am giving an approximation based on the age of the interviewers.

⁴²⁴ Irene López Aparicio, interview by Lea Ybarra-Soriano, August 22, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 6.

⁴²⁵ Joe Trejo interview, interview by Lea Ybarra-Soriano, transcript, HOH Collection, 4.

⁴²⁶ Dr. Theresa Pérez, interview by Lea Ybarra-Soriano, August 28, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 9.

However, leisure time was not solely spent under the umbrella of the church or community celebrations. Many people came to Chinatown on the weekends to shop and mingle or enjoy the restaurants that were open to patrons of color. For the Mexican community, spaces like the restaurant *El Jardín Canales* on F street became a significant leisure sites. This particular restaurant opened as one of the earliest Mexican businesses on the Westside and served as a restaurant and nightclub where many local music acts performed.⁴²⁷ Music and dancing were a big part of the leisure activity.⁴²⁸ Along with the major social and cultural events, there were dances every weekend at the local ballrooms, such as the Palomar and Garibaldi Hall. The Palomar was the largest and most well-known ballroom as it was closest to the freeway allowing easy access for many young Mexican men and women to come into Fresno from surrounding towns.⁴²⁹ Theresa Pérez recalled memories of the Palomar ballroom where she attended the dances with her parents as a young girl:

Oh that was the center of culture. The Palomar was the most exciting dance hall in Fresno and people would come from many *pueblitos*, from all over to go to the Palomar and to experience just an evening of wonderful fun.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁷ Emilio Moreno Canales, interview by Alex Saragoza, August 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 12-14.

⁴²⁸ For more information on Mexican/ Mexican Americans and leisure see: Jose M. Alamillo, *Making Lemonade out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor and Leisure in a California Town, 1880-1960*, (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Matt Garcia, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), Ch. 6; George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), Ch. 8.

⁴²⁹ Emilio Moreno Canales, interview by Alex Saragoza, August 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 18. Note: exact day is not listed in the transcript.

⁴³⁰ Dr. Theresa Pérez, interview by Lea Ybarra-Soriano, transcript, August 28, 1980, HOH Collection, 22.

According to Pérez, the focus of the dances was often community or family centered with a generational mix in attendance.

Dating and courtship were other important leisure activities among the youth, but it was not always easy to court as parents expected young men and women to comport themselves according to strict and traditional rules. Since the majority of the youth were first generation with parents from Mexico, dating was closely regulated by parental supervision. One woman remembered that sometimes meetings with boyfriends had to be negotiated so their parents would not find out. “When we moved to Fresno, the house we bought was right across the street from Fink Smith Playground, so we used to go to the playground, meet our boyfriends at the playground.”⁴³¹ Other places where courtships took place were at school and quite often at work in the agricultural fields. If parents approved, young couples could meet at the dances or sometimes watch a movie at one of the local movie houses on the Westside, such as the Azteca theater. However, chaperones were often used and if parents were not able to attend events siblings were sent as their proxy.⁴³²

Almost all of the leisure activity was concentrated into one space on the Westside of Fresno and that was Chinatown. On the weekends it was a scene where many people from the Mexican community felt at home to shop, socialize, and perhaps attend festivals. At times people would run into their neighbors, *padrinos*

⁴³¹ Mercedes Baeza Gónzales, interview by Mercedes Gonzales, date unknown, transcript, HOH Collection, 16. No date is given in the transcript, but based on the time frame of the other interviews it is likely to have taken place during 1980.

⁴³² For more on Mexican and Mexican American courtship and chaperones see: Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in the Twentieth Century*, (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), Ch. 3.

would run into each other on the streets and families would remain close to one another. One resident recalls the feeling of West Fresno as similar to what you would find in the barrios of East Los Angeles. The community was extremely saturated into one small segregated space, but there they were able to thrive and create a localized cultural identity to move them forward toward a solidified definition of citizenry in Fresno that was most apparent during the World War II years.⁴³³ By the 1940s, Fresno had become an important cultural site in the Central Valley of California for the Mexican community.

Organizing Mutual Aid Societies

As with many other Mexican communities throughout the Southwest, there was a long standing tradition of *mutualistas* or mutual aid societies formulated to protect the community needs around issues of burial and funeral expenses.⁴³⁴ Some of the money raised by various organizations also went to social events in the community, and for Fresno specifically, this was geared toward the Mexican cultural celebrations of Mexican Independence and *Cinco de Mayo*. As stated earlier, *mutualista* organizing began as early as the 1910s and 1920s, when the Mexican

⁴³³ Joe Trejo, interview by Lea Ybarra, August 7, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 13; Albert Ramirez, interview by Jesus Luna, March 25, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 21-22.

⁴³⁴ For more information on Mexican mutual aid societies see: Hernandez, Jose Amaro, *Mutual Aid For Survival: The Case of the Mexican American* (Malabar, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1983); Zamora, Emilio, *The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas*, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1993); Tirado, Miguel David, "Mexican American Community Political Organization: "The Key to Chicano Political Power" in *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, vol. 1, no., 1 (Spring 1970), 53-78.

community became more established and more organizations were created. By the early 1940s eight organizations were active in Fresno.⁴³⁵

One of the strongest and most popular organizations was the *Sociedad Morelos*. Starting in the 1920s, it had a longstanding membership in the community with both men and women active in the organization. This was one of the organizations that spearheaded many of the *16 de Septiembre* celebrations. In fact, these organizations provided space and opportunity for women to become involved, not just at the level of simple organizing tasks, but also at the larger planning level; however, the leadership of these organizations primarily remained in the hands of men.⁴³⁶ The *Sociedad Morelos* also sponsored smaller local events such as dances and family picnics. Often while parents met to organize the lodge events their children would play outside while waiting for their parents, making it truly a community experience.⁴³⁷ *La Alianza Hispanoamerica* was another longstanding organization with similar goals to *Sociedad Morelos*. One Fresno resident recalled community activity with *La Alianza Hispanoamerica* from his childhood and shared he became involved in it as an adult because of its longstanding presence in the ethnic Mexican community.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁵ “Consolidations of Clubs is Plan” *The Fresno Bee*, October 4, 1940, 3x5-Box 38 Men-Miller, *Ben Walker Files*.

⁴³⁶ *The Fresno Bee* would often list names of the current executive bodies of these organizations in the stories about the different events. While the names of women did appear as part of the organizing body, it was most often as secretary and sometimes as treasurer. There was always a male name attached to the role of president and vice president.

⁴³⁷ Beatrice Barboza Chávez, interview by Julia Balderos, August 1, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 5-6.

⁴³⁸ Manuel Sierra López interview by Lea Ybarra, August 22, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 7.

The year 1940 marked the 130th anniversary of Mexican Independence; with such a large celebration at hand, the Mexican consulate of Fresno, Cosme Hinojosa Jr., proposed a joint committee, the Mexican Patriotic Committee or *El Comité Patriótica*, which comprised of all the local ethnic Mexican organizations. Hinojosa announced, “Any other Mexican organization or society which does not have a written authorization for this consulate has no right to organize this celebration officially, although they may celebrate in private.”⁴³⁹ Hinojosa did this to maintain the integrity of the event itself, which he had claimed had been abused in the past by both individuals and groups attempting to make a profit rather than sticking with the true spirit of the event itself.⁴⁴⁰

Over 8,000 people from all around the Central Valley of California took part in the two days of festivities for the 130th anniversary. The first day included the coronation of the festival queen, Sarah Huerta, a variety program and ending with the reenactment of the cry of Hidalgo. The second day began with the raising of the Mexican flag over the consulate building and a parade that began in the Westside and moved toward the Ryan civic auditorium. Within the auditorium there was an extensive program of dance performances, music and singing to be followed with a formal banquet for committee members as well as the queen of the festival and her attendants. The evening culminated with a grand ballroom dance at the Ryan auditorium. It was one of the largest spectacles seen in the valley. The event was seen

⁴³⁹ “Mexican Fete Group is Named” *The Fresno Bee*, July 26, 1940, 3x5-Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

as such a success that the different lodges decided to remain as an organizing body and the Patriotic Committee became a permanent entity to serve the ethnic Mexican community.⁴⁴¹

However, this formalized organizing of the *mutualistas* was not the only form of organizing in the community. The Catholic Church was another space where organizing happened, either through formal groups, such as the *Guadalupanos*, or community events such as *jamaicas* and *tardiadas* which included baking goods and raising money for church activities. Another means of organizing was a Mexican Chamber of Commerce that was formed in 1946 by the ethnic Mexican small business owners of the Westside. While there is limited information about the organization, the business community organized around the same time the Patriotic Committee began, which in a sense reflects the fact that there was a sense of permanent community in the Westside Mexican enclave. These organizations show that the Mexican community was not only rooted in the community in terms of population, but they also wanted to shape and develop that community in West Fresno.⁴⁴²

Informal spaces of organizing also existed, in the neighborhoods and among friends. One woman Irene López Aparicio recalls her own mother's community

⁴⁴¹ "8,000 Take Part in Mexican Fete" *The Fresno Bee*, September 14, 1940, 3x5-Box 38 Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files; "Societies Join Freedom Fete," *The Fresno Bee*, September 16, 1940, 3x5-Box 38 Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files; "Consolidations of Clubs is Plan." *The Fresno Bee*, October 4, 1940, 3x5-Box 38 Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

⁴⁴² Emilio Moreno Canales, interview by Alex Saragoza, August 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 33. He mentions that his father had a significant role in establishing the first Mexican Chamber of Commerce in 1946, however, at the time of his interview his father had passed away and he could not remember other names of individuals who participated.

involvement. While Irene's mother participated in the formal avenues of involvement by attending and participating in the local celebrations, she also began a Mexican mothers' club. Through this club, women would gather and discuss family issues, inform one another about child rearing and babysitting, and also volunteer their time at the well-baby clinics. In the later years, closer to the beginning of World War II, the Mexican mothers club began a knitting circle in which the profits from the scarves and sweaters they knitted would be donated to help the troops.⁴⁴³ This reflects how women did not just serve in auxiliary groups to larger and more formal organizations, but were also creating spaces to discuss issues that were pertinent to their specific location in the community and family.

All together, the leisure and organizing of the early part of the twentieth century was set to establish the ethnic Mexican community as a permanent and important part of both the Westside community which had been a largely Asian space, while also marking them as important within Fresno at large. The fact that the organizations began on a small and almost local neighborhood scale to eventually becoming a collective organizing body overseen by the Mexican consulate by the beginning of 1940 reflects the seriousness of the organizations themselves and the need of such organizations for the Mexican residents of the San Joaquin Valley. The 130th celebration of the Mexican Independence gained much notoriety with such a large-scale attendance and proved that Mexicans had a role in Fresno outside of being just agricultural field workers.

⁴⁴³ Irene López Aparicio, interview by Lea Ybarra-Soriano, August 22, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 9.

The Established Mexicans in Fresno and World War II

The impact of the war was tangible for Fresno as a whole, but was particularly felt for the ethnic communities of the Westside. The Mexican community, in particular, was placed in a rather peculiar situation. On one hand, they witnessed the removal of their neighbors, the Japanese community, who had been deemed enemy aliens. Along with that they also saw the entrance of their foreign compatriots as emergency farm labor workers, which in many ways complicated their position within the community. As previously discussed, for the past several decades, the ethnic Mexican community established itself as a permanent fixture within Fresno, and especially within the Westside community. Yet, with the emergence of a large foreign-born Mexican population there was now more of a need to show they were part of Fresno's community. However, they negotiated their own expressions of Mexican cultural identity, which was a shared identity with the braceros. Bracero workers would engage in leisure activities in Chinatown on the weekends along with the established Mexican community, blending culturally with one another. However, World War II saw the development of a more specific Mexican American identity, in which loyalty to the US was being expected and performed by Mexican US citizens.

Early on, the removal of the Japanese community had a major impact on the entire state and within Fresno the established Mexican community in particular felt the shift. One resident, Theresa Pérez, recalled her mother who was working for a Japanese farmer picking strawberries when the war began. She describes,

I remember the Japanese being put in trucks and being taken and you know it affected us a lot because there was no work for my mother

after that, because the Japanese, their little farms would deteriorate and then I understand they ended up losing them....A lot of our friends were Japanese, the Takahashis, and we knew a lot of people that my mother worked for years picking strawberries.⁴⁴⁴

So the removal of the Japanese meant the end of jobs and the end of friendships. While many others recall being aware of Japanese removal, the Mexican community for the most part did not create formal organized efforts to protest the removal. The sentiment expressed was one of sadness and at times even injustice that their Japanese neighbors were placed into camps but no organizing was done to address it. At the same time, the removal of the Japanese also meant the entrance of braceros moving into Fresno and its surrounding areas. During the transition in the labor pool, groups of individuals from the established Mexican community attempted to make their status as US citizens known by actively participating in the war effort.

There were several ways in which the established Mexicans contributed to the overall war effort. The first and most obvious was by volunteering or being drafted into service. While many people in the community took part in the war effort, for many in the ethnic Mexican community, it was seen as an honor and privilege to serve in the US military. Balvina Grinstead recalled that during her teenage years three of her brothers served in the war. She remembers the hardships that her parents went through in praying for their safe return. Eventually all three brothers did return home, unharmed, but she remembers many families lost their sons as well.⁴⁴⁵ Louis

⁴⁴⁴ Dr. Theresa Pérez, interview by Lea Ybarra-Soriano, August 28, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 30.

⁴⁴⁵ Balvina Grinstead, interview by Lea Ybarra-Soriano, August 22, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 8.

Segura was drafted to service and went happily to defend his country as a combat engineer. He did have a choice to stay behind, but decided to serve.

I could have chosen not to go because I was doing essential agricultural work and the owner of this big enterprise was the chairman of the draft board, and he offered to keep me from going. Of course I was so patriotic that I was only concerned with going, not any personal consequences, that's why I did so.⁴⁴⁶

Segura's comments are quite reflective of the larger national discourse at the time calling young men to their patriotic duty to the US and answer the call or obligation to military service.⁴⁴⁷

The participation of Mexicans in the war effort was a means to demonstrate loyalty and citizenship in the most important way, self-sacrifice. Albert Ramírez, whose brother served in World War II, understood that ethnic Mexicans were some of the bravest soldiers, often serving in direct battle on the front lines. He recalls,

I would say a greater part of *mexicanos* in World War II were volunteers including my brother that wasn't drafted, sure there were some that were drafted, *la mayoria* [the majority] were not drafted. They went in and they died and they bled and they got amputated in the war for this country.⁴⁴⁸

So the ethnic Mexican community was not immune to the patriotic fever that was highlighting the rest of the country along with the greater Fresno community.

⁴⁴⁶ Louis Segura, interview by Lea Ybarra-Soriano, July 23, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 20.

⁴⁴⁷ For more on the hyper-patriotic nature of World War II particularly targeting people of color see: Ronald Takaki, *Double Victory: A Multicultural History of America in World War II* (Boston, Massachusetts: Little, Brown and Co., 2000); Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, Ed. *Mexican Americans and World War II* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2005); John Morton Blum, *V was for Victory: Politics and American Culture During World War II* (New York, New York: Norton Press, 1980); Brenda L. Moore, *To Serve My Country, To Serve My Race: The Story of the Only African American WACS Stationed Overseas During World War II* (New York, New York: New York University Press, 1996); Brenda L. Moore, *Serving Our Country: Japanese American Women in the Military During World War II* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

⁴⁴⁸ Albert Ramírez, interview by Jesus Luna, March 25, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 21.

However, while the majority was proud to serve or see their children serve, not everyone was as enthusiastic about the prospect of losing their child in a war overseas. Antonio and Obdulia Huerta did not have to send any of their sons to serve in the army and many years later felt no regret about it. Antonio noted that the idea of having one of his children in harm's way would have killed him in the spiritual sense.⁴⁴⁹ They did recognize that most of their neighbors did not share in this conviction as they proudly sent their sons to war. Another resident, Isabel Hernández, discussed how some families fled to protect their children from the draft. Hernández recalls, "Well, there were families that were proud and there were other families...that sent some of their sons to Mexico....Yes, I know a family that went to Mexico, the whole family because they didn't want their sons to go."⁴⁵⁰ Although Hernández was discussing this almost forty years later, she did so with hesitation. Jessie De La Cruz also remembered her brother and her brother's friends fleeing to Mexicali so they would not be drafted to fight.

Let's face it, they didn't want to go fight a war, they had nothing to fight for. I mean what were they going to fight for? For picking grapes and getting the wages we were getting, for going hungry, so they went to Mexicali [sic]...All I know is that many we knew, in the forties in the later years, were very bitter about having had to go fight the war, they survived, but so what? They could survive out here too without having to go out there and kill people and get shot at.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁹ Antonio and Obdulia Huerta, interview by Alex Saragoza, September 27, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 27.

⁴⁵⁰ Isabel Hernández, interview by Lea Ybarra-Soriano, July 3, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 19.

⁴⁵¹ Jessie De La Cruz, interview by Lea Ybarra-Soriano, August 27, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 15-16.

Given the image of World War II as a positive war or the “Good War” mentality that we have built as a national discourse, it is difficult for people to admit that there was dissidence and that disagreement about our nation’s role as well as individual roles in the war existed. But De la Cruz’s comments really bring forth provocative questions about the role of the ethnic Mexican community. The expectation was that all good citizens sacrifice, and in the case of military service it was the ultimate sacrifice of life, to protect the good of the nation. However, the established Mexican community had endured more than half a century of discrimination and racism. Ethnic Mexicans were forced to live in segregated areas, work in segregated spaces without little opportunity for advancement, and had fought to create the community that was now beginning to thrive. Resistance against protecting the very system that made it difficult for them to make these strides only seems natural, but this particular discourse has rarely been discussed.

While there were many who enlisted into the military, there were also large numbers who participated in the war efforts on the home front. Manuel Sierra López was one such individual who stayed behind. He assumed that he was going to be drafted overseas given that he was of age to be a soldier. However, he recalls, “they froze me in agriculture because they told me, it’s not just a war with bullets and men, it’s a war of products of food and I didn’t ask for it. The boss wrote my local board here in Fresno,” and he was afforded the opportunity to stay and work as a soldier in

the field.⁴⁵² López actually remembers that as being a huge impact on his life because for him it literally represented the difference between staying behind to live or being sent overseas to die.

After the US gained official entry in the war, the Westside Mexican community organizations began a Mexican War Chest Committee near the end of 1942. The first captain of the committee was Jose G. Zuniga, who was also the president of the Patriotic Committee that had been formed two years earlier and was still strongly active in the community. One of the first publicized events held was a dance in November of 1942 hosted by local businesses and local musicians. The money for the event was put toward the greater Fresno War Chest.⁴⁵³ In this way, the Mexican War Chest Committee was showing its support for the larger community efforts of raising funds for the war. The established Westside community was using this participation to reflect their loyalty as US citizens to the war, while also demonstrating that its organizing strategy was one that was closely steeped in cultural values. The dance, supported by the Mexican Consul, had a distinct Mexican cultural flavor with a performance from Andrea Pérez, a local Mexican singer. In this we can see that the performative aspects of citizenship still remained with the tight knit community enclave and retained a specific Mexican cultural identity.

By 1943 the efforts to participate in war fundraising were solidified in the Mexican community. The Mexican Consul, along with the *mutualistas*, sponsored

⁴⁵² Manuel Sierra López, interview by Lea Ybarra, August 22, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 16-17.

⁴⁵³ “Mexican War Chest Committee Sponsors Benefit Dance Tonight” *The Fresno Bee* November 7, 1942, 3x5-Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

sales of victory bonds and war stamps during the events for Mexican Independence. There were several smaller events prior to the celebration that were seen as successful given that around \$4,000 was raised within less than a two week period.⁴⁵⁴ In 1943 the contenders for fiesta queen sold war bonds and stamps instead of just tickets to the events and dances. The premise of the contest was still the same; the young girl who sold the most would gain the queen's seat and the other runners up would serve as the court princesses at the event. However, in 1943 the traditional cultural celebration of Mexican Independence and the patriotic duty to assist the war efforts overseas had merged.⁴⁵⁵

By the beginning of the 1943 Mexican Independence festivities, the combined efforts of the fiesta queen contestants and the *mutualistas* raised an estimated twenty-three thousand dollars' worth of victory bond and stamps.⁴⁵⁶ The Mexican Consulate spoke at the ceremony and stressed the necessity for Pan-Americanism between Mexico and the US. The Mexican government was very supportive of the US efforts as Consulate Eugenio Aza stated, "Mexico is doing all she can in seeing this thing through. She has sent and is sending workers to the United States to help harvest the crops. There are approximately 60,000 Mexican nationals in California, between 20,000 and 25,000 of them in my jurisdiction of 14 counties."⁴⁵⁷ Aza also expressed gratitude that the bond drive for the year was supported by non-Mexican community

⁴⁵⁴ "Mexican Colony Conducts Special War Bond Drive" *The Fresno Bee* September 1, 1943, 3x5-Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ "Pan Americanism is Lauded by Fiesta Speaker." *The Fresno Bee* September 16, 1943, 3x5-Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

organizations such as the American Women's Voluntary Service and by some military personnel. In fact, during the parade portion of the festivities, soldiers stationed at Camp Pinedale and Hammer Field came out to march and participate as official military representatives. This is one of the first times it is mentioned that non-Mexicans took an active role in the September 16th fete.⁴⁵⁸

As the war years went on, the yearly ethnic Mexican cultural events such as Mexican Independence Day, *Cinco de Mayo*, and religious celebrations of the *Virgen de Guadalupe* continued. The first two events were still organized by the Mexican Patriotic Committee, while the Guadalupe Society coordinated the third event. The Mexican Independence festival became such a prominent community event, especially with its participation in the war effort, that by 1944 the daytime luncheon that commemorated special honorees for the community began to include city officials such as Mayor Z. S. Leymel and District Attorney James M. Thuesen to name a few. The new Mexican Consulate, Rodolfo Salazar, expressed confidence in the relationship between the US and Mexico, in particular dealing with the functions within Fresno and the rest of his Central Valley district.⁴⁵⁹ The attendance of these city officials at the luncheon points to a possible shift in the established Mexican people's position in Fresno. This was a positive turn, and in many ways for the established Westside Mexicans, symbolized their legitimacy and claims to citizenry within Fresno as a whole.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ "Mexicans Conclude Independence Program" The Fresno Bee, September 18, 1944, 3x5-Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

Given the several years of supporting the Fresno community chest and the larger community interest, the established Mexican community felt solidified in their unique American identity and expected to receive the benefits and rights that came along with it. One example is the relationship of trust that was developed between the Westside community and the larger Fresno community in terms of assistance, policing violence on the Westside, and having an entity outside of the Westside community to hold accountable for protection and the like. In the mid-1940s, across most of the nation the zoot suiters began to take hold, not just in fashion, but as a political and social representation of a new generation, particularly of young men of color. On the West Coast Mexican-American youth became entrenched in the style and culture of the zoot suits. For Mexicans, it was also an adoption of *pachuco* culture, which dabbled between the identities of what it meant to be Mexican American and holding onto one's cultural identity while also moving forward into a new identity. This was not always understood, however, as a cultural movement and coupled with some youth of color who participated in violent and criminal acts, whites began to discriminate against young ethnic Mexicans who displayed themselves in such opulent manners of dress and style.⁴⁶⁰

While not necessarily experiencing zoot suiters and *pachuco* culture to the same degree as larger urban cities, such as Los Angeles, Fresno did have a number of

⁴⁶⁰ For more information on zoot suiters and the Zoot Suit Riots see: Eduardo Obergón Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, & Riot in Wartime L.A.* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Mauricio Mazón, *The Zoot-Suit Riots: The Psychology of Symbolic Annihilation* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1984); Catherine S. Ramirez, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2009).

youth who participated in the counterculture. The police were very active in cracking down on this kind of behavior. However, the level of danger that these young people exhibited is debatable. Fresno resident Mercedes Baeza Gonzales recalls:

Yes because we had zoot suits, zoot suiters in Fresno, but there was nothing seriously going on in Fresno that I can remember of, just that they dressed weird and talked weird, but no to the extent that there was any trouble like there was in L.A. and San Francisco and things like that.⁴⁶¹

However, the stigma of zoot suits did ensue panic on the West Coast, including Fresno. In fact, this was one of the first instances in which the ethnic Mexican community of Fresno's Westside began to cooperate with the police in order to assist in curbing violent youth activity. In April of 1945, 55-year old Jesse Duarte was attacked and beaten to death by several youth. *The Fresno Bee* placed blame on "a group of pachuco youngsters."⁴⁶² This incident sparked concern among community members, local Mexican organizations, and from the Mexican Consulate, Rodolfo Salazar. For the first time formal meetings were held between city officials and residents of the Westside to come to together and strategize a way to stop this type of youth violence.⁴⁶³

The community meetings held were a joint venture with the Mexican Consulate and the City's District Attorney James M. Thuesen. The goal of this collaboration was to see how the local community members could assist law

⁴⁶¹ Mercedes Baeza Gonzales interview, interview by Mercedes Gonzales, date unknown, transcript, HOH Collection, 26.

⁴⁶² "Mexicans Join Drive to Ban Lawless Youths" *The Fresno Bee*, April 28, 1945, 3x5-Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

enforcement in catching these “criminals.” Thuesen stated in an interview with *The Fresno Bee*, “Most of these hoodlums are outsiders, and not all of them are zoot suiters. I’m sure Mexican families residing here are as interested as the rest of us in curbing their activities. They are capable of anything from drunk rolling to murder, and they don’t care what happens to their victims.”⁴⁶⁴ Thuesen’s statement casts a shadow of ambiguity, because he is stating that the “hoodlums” are outsiders, meaning that perhaps they are not part of the community, and yet at the same time, the implication of the efforts is that the young criminal element are connected to the counterculture of zoot suiters. This reflects that it was unknown who was responsible, or if there was even a definitive group that could be pinpointed.

As in other areas around the West Coast, panic and hysteria heightened and in turn many whites responded with blanket discrimination against Mexican youth. Albert Ramírez recalled during the “*chuco*” days that the police were particularly brutal to the youth. In fact, he remembers the police not just arresting suspicious youth, but corralling them together to cut off their long hair with knives to the point of almost “scalping” them. Ramírez remembers these incidents happening in Chinatown, with police cutting off their clothing and at times violently attacking them with force under little provocation. So while there was definitely unseemly youth activity going on, the police also reacted with a much deeper bias that was fed by the local activity and a national racist attitude.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Albert T. Ramirez, interview by Jesus Luna, March 25, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 23-24.

In 1946 the Mexican Chamber of Commerce was formed by local Mexican businesses on the Westside. J. Dolores Canales, owner of *El Jardín Canales*, the famed restaurant and nightclub, was instrumental in organizing the group. The Mexican Consul, again, supported this move; many of the business owners had also been previously involved with the Mexican Patriotic Committee, which created some overlap in membership. The original meeting that took place in February of 1946 had about 30 people in attendance, with the hope to expand its membership throughout the valley and not just within the confines of the Westside enclave.⁴⁶⁶ This points to the fact that the Mexican community was thinking of itself outside of a specified segregated space. The concept of community was widened in the Mexican Chamber of Commerce' efforts to seek membership throughout the San Joaquin Valley.

The Mexican Chamber of Commerce, though newly minted in 1946, continued on with the tradition of other established Mexican organizations in assisting with funding the community chest. In their first year, the chamber's executive council, led by Canales, pledged to raise \$500 to donate toward the Fresno Community Chest. They were confident that their strategy of soliciting donations from patrons of local businesses would exceed this amount.⁴⁶⁷ By the end of 1946, the goals of the Mexican Chamber of Commerce went beyond simply fundraising and moved toward a larger goal of development for the city and for the Mexican community. As 1946 came to a close, a new chamber president, Enrique Rincón, was

⁴⁶⁶ "Mexicans form New Valley Chamber" *The Fresno Bee*, February 25, 1946, 3x5-Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

⁴⁶⁷ "Mexican Chamber will Assist Chest Campaign" *The Fresno Bee*, October 24, 1946, 3x5-Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

elected and with his tenure he wanted to move forward, stating, “The Mexicans have taken a prominent role in the development of Fresno and the San Joaquin Valley and we desire to contribute even more to the wealth of this area. We want to grow with the valley for the betterment of our neighbors and our community.”⁴⁶⁸ While broad in their definition, Rincón’s words reflect the change that had been manufactured during the war years, the shift to pointing out that Mexicans had a long standing contributing role to the Valley’s history, culture, and development. In his inspired inaugural speech he was positing that the Mexican Chamber and the Mexican community would continue to make strides to benefit not only their position but that of the larger Fresno community.

By the time World War II came to an end in 1945, the established Mexicans shifted their social, economic, political position in Fresno. Their participation in the war efforts both overseas and on the home front gave them the strength and belief that they were no longer just a commodified labor source, only to be relegated to certain jobs and forced to live in a segregated community. Instead the community expanded itself, creating a reputation as a cultural hub for the rest of the valley, establishing a rapport with Fresnans from “the other side of the tracks,” and ultimately legitimizing itself to work with city officials whether it be about issues of crime management or about building a better business and social community. For the first time in the twentieth century the established Mexicans in Fresno claimed their social citizenship.

⁴⁶⁸ “Mexicans Pledge Development for Benefit of City” *The Fresno Bee*, December 10, 1946, 3x5-Box 38, Men-Miller, Ben Walker Files.

And while it was clear that discrimination against them continued and that much work still needed to be done in terms of building relationships between whites and Mexicans, it was a step in a new direction and meant doors would potentially be opened for new opportunities for those of ethnic Mexican descent.

Conclusion

At the close of World War II, the ethnic Mexican soldiers returning home found a changed and yet unchanged Central Valley. In some ways, the larger Fresno community respected their status as veterans. In a way it opened up opportunities that they would not have been afforded prior to the war. Venancio García Gaona recalled when his uncle returned from serving in World War II, he was able to purchase a home due to the G.I. Bill. Gaona stated, “I remember he went to see homes in what is now Bakersfield near Niles Street and he asked point blank the salesman, do you sell to Mexicans? And he says, the salesman responded so long as you can get your GI vet money, your money is good as everybody else’s.”⁴⁶⁹ Prior to that, segregation practices would have prevented Gaona’s uncle from freely purchasing home wherever he desired. And yet at the same time, lingering ideas around Mexicans as agricultural workers and the continued use of Bracero workers well past the emergency labor situation of the early war years, continued to keep the Mexican community from advancing.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, as Mexicans migrated in larger numbers to the San Joaquin Valley and found themselves systematically placed in a

⁴⁶⁹ Venancio García Gaona, interview by Jesus Luna. August 26, 1980, transcript, HOH Collection, 26.

working class that was determined by racial status. White growers defined the role of Mexicans in the US as laborers. Upon their arrival to the Fresno area, Mexicans found not only stringent racial discrimination against them but also a situation of segregation that was established decades before. In this Westside enclave within the city limits of Fresno ethnic Mexicans began to create a space in *El Barrio Chino*, or Chinatown, where a largely Asian immigrant population had settled with a sprinkling of newly immigrated Italians, Armenians, and Russian Germans.

The decades from 1900-1930 were difficult for the recent Mexican migrants due to racial discrimination. Their entrance into California was predominantly as a result of the harvest cycle. Families and individuals alike spent most of their time engaged in the migratory labor system up and down the state, following different seasonal crops to stay afloat with work. In the off-season ethnic Mexicans would sometimes stay in one place if they had roots there. At times family members who had migrated to cities and towns such as Fresno would buy or rent homes for other migratory family members to settle in.

However, during the 1930s we see the first signs of a shift away from migratory patterns. With the onset of the Great Depression whites saw ethnic Mexicans in the Southwest largely as the reason legitimate white citizens could not find work. These racial attitudes resulted in the national and state push for repatriation. Ethnic Mexicans were forcefully encouraged to return to Mexico. However, the Central Valley differed because ethnic Mexicans were a huge part of the labor force allowing them, at times, to escape pressures of having to go back to

Mexico. In turn, they were not able to migrate to other parts of the state, especially not large urban sites such as Los Angeles and San Francisco where the repatriation efforts were the strongest. For Fresno, this meant that the ethnic Mexican community was creating a sense of permanence, albeit in the segregated Westside. Mexican businesses, movie theaters, and dance halls began to appear in Fresno's Chinatown, which quickly transformed to a leisure site for ethnic Mexicans both within the city limits as well as the surrounding areas.

The entrance of the US into World War II during the 1940s contributed to the status transformation for ethnic Mexicans in West Fresno. The established Mexicans began to assert their identity beyond the markings as working-class agricultural workers. They started to frame their identity as legal and social citizens of Fresno as well as the nation. The organization of mutual aid societies, *mutualistas*, strengthened the ethnic Mexican presence in Fresno. Cultural events, such as celebration of Mexican Independence, grew from simple parades that included primarily members of the Westside community to large-scale events that lasted several days. It is important to note that as these cultural celebrations grew in size they also grew in attendance, which included spectators from around the San Joaquin Valley. During the World War II years, the *mutualistas* collectively formed the Mexican Patriotic Committee, an umbrella organization that incorporated most of the leadership of the community organizations. The Mexican Patriotic Committee organized socio-cultural events and also raised money for the war effort, often contributing to the Fresno War Chest.

It is important to recognize that while ethnic Mexicans were contributing to the nation's war effort in funding, in bodies, and as agricultural workers, they maintained a sense of cultural understanding that they did not compromise. This is exemplified in the use of the festival queen contest to sell war bonds and stamps. While giving an "American" effort, they were still asserting a specific cultural understanding and celebration of their Mexican identity. In this they were successful in carving out a specific niche.

Once the war ended established Mexicans in Fresno continued to assert their legitimacy. Unlike prior decades their efforts and contributions during the war supported their claims. Yet, their participation in what became known as the "good war" meant a great deal did not automatically translate to full social and political integration in the greater Fresno society. Restrictions and discrimination against ethnic Mexicans still persisted, however, for many the experiences of community during the war years led to organizing in the next phase, the civil rights era.

CONCLUSION—POST WORLD WAR II FRESNO

Nori Masuda returned to Fresno in 1954 after he and his family endured their time in the internment camp at Jerome, Arkansas. Like many of his peers, Masuda did return directly to Fresno. Masuda left the camp in 1943 and attempted to find work in the Midwest until 1944 when he decided to enlist in the army. Masuda was stationed at Fort Snelling, Michigan and was in training at Camp Robinson in 1945 when World War II ended. While he remained in military service, his parents and siblings returned to Fresno after the war. For Masuda's family, it was a difficult transition; they had lost everything. He recalled that many Japanese who returned to Fresno had nowhere to live.

They resettled at the church dormitory...we had to stay at the dormitory for a while, one bedroom like this, and about five, of my two sisters and my brother, five of them stayed in one room.⁴⁷⁰

Eventually Masuda's parents were able to buy a home in West Fresno and found jobs working in agricultural labor. It was a difficult road but they rebuilt their lives. As in many West Coast cities, some Japanese returned, some relocated to other areas of the US, some had help from neighbors who maintained their property and homes, while others returned to nothing. For the Japanese who decided to return to Fresno post-World War II, they soon found that the area of the former Japantown would soon change again during the next decade.

⁴⁷⁰ Nori Masuda, interview by Izumi Tanaguchi, January 20, 1998, transcript, SJV Japanese Americans WWII, 22.

In the 1950s the infiltration of Highway 99 through the downtown and Westside of Fresno etched a permanent physical marker separating West Fresno from the rest of the community. The highway project was a demonstration of progress to the growth of Fresno's status as a major city in the state. Highway 99 created accessibility to the downtown, however, it ran directly through the Westside and by default demolished a large portion of the once-vibrant multiracial community, eradicating approximately more than 11 city blocks.⁴⁷¹ Historian Ramón D. Chacón notes by the 1970s West Fresno had succumbed to a process of ghettoization, albeit, not in the traditional sense that had been understood as a predominantly urban process. The economic downturn of the 1970s coupled with the largely Black and Chicana/o populations present in the Westside was punctuated by the physical borders of the railroad tracks and the highway, referred to by a former member of Fresno County Board of Supervisors as "Fresno's Berlin Wall."⁴⁷²

Currently, West Fresno continues to be a depressed economic and social space, a shell of its former glory. While the roots of segregation can be traced back to the creation of Chinatown, the current state of the area is a sign of continued racial housing discrimination, low-income work opportunities, and lack of resources and funding to the district. In the post-war decades, Fresno as a whole continued to grow in prominence and importance to the state and national agriculture industry, and yet,

⁴⁷¹Architectural Resources Group, *Germantown, Fresno: Historical Context* (City of Fresno, Planning and Development Department, 2006), 17.

⁴⁷²Ramón D. Chacón, "A Case Study of Ghettoization and Segregation: West Fresno's Black and Chicano Community During the 1970s," *Stanford Research Center for Chicano Research*, Working Paper no. 12 (Stanford, California: Stanford Center for Chicano Research, 1986), 11.

the majority of workers during the 1940s and 1950s continued to receive little attention and no government assistance.⁴⁷³

Fresno continues to be a segregated city. While there has been movement out of West Fresno, most of the working-class Blacks, Chicanas/Chicanos, and Asians still live in racially segregated pockets throughout the city. One can clearly see where the dividing lines are, but West Fresno remains the largest concentration of communities of color. As mentioned in the beginning of this project, the Brookings Institute released a report in October of 2005 focused on New Orleans' pockets of poverty, which were nationally revealed in the wake of the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. However, the report reflects that New Orleans was number two in the fifty largest cities in the US with extreme poverty neighborhoods. Fresno was number one with a total of 43.5 percent of total concentrated poverty, predominately Black and Hispanic.⁴⁷⁴ Fresno, a rural community outranked major metropolitan cities including Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland, Sacramento, and San Jose within California alone.⁴⁷⁵ And yet, while Fresno contains the deepest pockets of poverty in the nation, there still has been little inquiry as to why. This project has mapped out the history of Fresno, from its segregated beginnings. My work points to the fact that the structural inequities within Fresno today are rooted in the initial development process of the city

⁴⁷³ Alex Saragoza, *Fresno's Hispanic Heritage*, (San Diego, California: San Diego Federal Savings and Loan Association, 1980), 63.

⁴⁷⁴ Allan Berube and Bruce Katz, "Katrina's Window: Confronting Concentrated Poverty Across America," in *Brooking Institution and Metropolitan Policy Program* (Washington, DC, 2005). Hispanic is the term that Berube and Katz use in their report.

⁴⁷⁵ Berube and Katz, "Katrina's Window: Confronting Concentrated Poverty Across America," 10. Information from Appendix A: Extreme-Poverty Neighborhoods, and Percentage of Poor People Living in those Neighborhoods, by Race/Ethnicity, 50 Largest Cities in the U.S., 2000.

as a white space. While the current socio-economic situation is not directly linked to discriminatory policies, local and/or federal, the remnants of the early geographical segregation and class-labor division planted the seed to the cycle of poverty that continues to plague Fresno to its current day.

Beginning with the creation of Fresno until post-World War II until the end of the 1940s, my project has laid out the history of Fresno by following the journey of several racial groups: white growers and community members, Chinese settlers, Japanese and Japanese Americans, and established Mexicans as well as Mexican national workers. The first two chapters of this dissertation set up the conditions that created Fresno. Former white miners who had migrated to California from the eastern parts of the US to search for gold eventually settled permanently in Fresno and created a township that mimicked the social and economic environments of their former communities: namely agriculture-based economies and socially framed in white superiority or nativist notions. One of the major characteristics of Fresno was the racially segregated nature of the town. Chinese, the first non-white racial group to settle in Fresno, lived on the Westside, physically separated from white community members. Subsequent non-white groups, such as the Japanese in the 1890s and 1910s, and then later Mexican migrants post-1910, also moved and settled into the same area.

Despite the segregated nature of Fresno, the non-white groups in West Fresno, each seized opportunities to create thriving communities, complete with businesses, religious institutions, and cultural activities. Chinatown, while segregated within

Fresno, was part of a larger statewide network of Chinese. Japantown, or *nihonmachi*, and the Mexican area, *El Barrio Chino*, both drew in people of those respective racial groups from around the San Joaquin Valley for leisure activities, such as shopping but most importantly celebrating cultural heritage. Over time West Fresno developed into an important racial and cultural hub for the Central Valley.

However, given the hostile racial climate and rise in nativist discourse, which heavily targeted Asian groups in the US, both the Chinese and Japanese faced much discrimination within Fresno. For the Chinese, national exclusion policies made it difficult for growth, especially without the possibility of legal migration after 1882. Japanese in Fresno struggled to adapt, but some found opportunities for limited upward mobility through land ownership and small tenant farming positions. Mexicans, meanwhile, were steadily growing in numbers within West Fresno and establishing their own businesses and social-cultural organizations.

Events came to a head with the US entrance into World War II. The attack by the Japanese Imperial Army on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on December 7, 1941 set in motion a xenophobic reaction that reverberated across the West Coast. Like many other locations in California, Oregon, and Washington state, Japanese in Fresno evacuated the city under federal order and relocated to local assembly grounds until their full transfer to internment camps in inland locations. Japanese removal, along with many citizens who left the area when joining in military service during World War II, left a gap in the labor need for the San Joaquin Valley. The 1942 to 1943 harvest seasons were economically dismal due to lack of laborers, and in turn, this

economic failure prompted white growers to call for the importation of Mexican national workers under the Emergency Farm Labor Relief Program initiated by the federal government. At the same time the Japanese are forcefully removed, Mexican national workers or *braceros* are brought into the Valley to work. The established Mexicans in West Fresno begin to rise economically and politically, asserting their position as Americans while also maintaining Mexican cultural identity through various forms of political and cultural organizing.

While all of these narratives are not necessarily unique to Fresno—Japanese internment was happening throughout the coast, *braceros* were imported all around the southwest, etc.—what makes the case of Fresno, and my study, original is looking at how all of these events happen simultaneously in a space where all of these racial groups (except whites) are living in the same segregated community—interacting, impacting, and affecting one another. Often we see each of these events or racial groups studied separately or focusing on individual groups, such as just Japanese internees, or only the Chinese miners. What I am attempting to do with my study is reflect how these groups are interlinked by their histories. How can we propose to study a racial group without looking at everything and everyone else in the story? In the beginning, I believed I wanted to center Mexicans in my dissertation. Yet, as I continued to interrogate questions about Mexicans in Fresno, I found that I could not write this history without including other racial groups and historical actors. They all engaged with one another, either in work or in their neighborhoods in West Fresno,

and had shared experiences such as racial discrimination and lack of upward mobility, which were informed by the way they related to one another.

I am defining the rise of established Mexicans in Fresno in relationship to Japanese removal. I understand that there is not concrete evidence to link these two events directly. At the same time, I am arguing that these two events are not mutually exclusive but in some way the removal of Japanese and the growing anti-Asian sentiment in the West Coast, has to inform the socio-political rise of Mexicans in Fresno, because it opened the possibility for Mexicans to define themselves as American in opposition to a racial group who was defined by national discourse as not American but “enemy alien.” Fundamentally, I am stating in my work that the rise of established Mexicans after Japanese removal cannot be just a coincidence, but is driven by spatial tactics and economic opportunity.

Given that this is a dissertation project, it just scratches the surface of the issues that I want to uncover. If given the opportunity to expand on this work, I want to investigate further into the narrative about the Chinese and offer a more nuanced analysis of that community, which I was only able to give an overview of due to the limited sources I found. I think that additional exploration about the earlier settlement of West Fresno will help strengthen the arguments around the racialization process that defined the segregated city. I would like to include more information around the volunteer harvest labor program of the early parts of World War II, specifically examining gender within the recruitment of white housewives. Along with that I also want to find out more about the white women’s organizations that set up hospitality

for the Japanese evacuees. Who are these women and why did they decide to engage in comforting Japanese people in a time when the Japanese were vilified across the nation? Finally, a more contextualized investigation about the everyday lives of the *bracero* workers would enrich the history of ethnic Mexicans in Fresno. Who were these men? How did they perceive their position in relationship to the established racial dynamic of Fresno? Did many of them settle permanently in Fresno once their tenure with the Bracero Program was over? I see my project as a starting point for a richer investigation into Fresno's racial history.

APPENDIX A
CHINA ALLEY*- FROM MARIPOSA TO VENTURA AVE, BETWEEN F
AND G STREETS

Address	1920**	1926	1931	1935	1940
829	---	---	---	---	Oriental
901	---	Koustouras Shoe	Koustouras Shoe	Koustouras Shoe	Koustouras Shoe
905	---	---	---	---	Shieba K - Restaurant
907	---	Tong Chong Men's Frnsh	---	---	---
911	---	---	Tong Chung & Co	Tong Chung & Co	Tong Chung & Co
912	---	Vacant	Suey Sang Co	Vacant	Oriental
914	---	Oriental	Vacant	Vacant	Oriental Club
915	---	Vacant	Vacant	---	---
917	---	Vacant	Vacant	---	---
920	---	Vacant	Oriental Laborers	Vacant	Oriental Laborers Club
921	Oriental***	Oriental	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant
922	---	---	Oriental	Oriental	Vacant
923	---	Oriental	---	Vacant	Bing Kong Assn
924	---	Vacant	Oriental	---	---
925	---	Oriental	Choy L M/ Tong Hing Jan Co Groceries	Lung Tom Restaurant	Vacant
928	---	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant	Asia Club
929	---	---	Oriental	Oriental	---
930	---	Kiniyoshi, D Restaurant	Oriental	Oriental	---
931	---	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental	---
934	---	Vacant	Tin Yen Restaurant	Tin Yen Restaurant	Yen Ten Restaurant
935	---	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental
937	---	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental
938	---	Sui Gee Tong	Ning Yung Benevolent Assn	Ning Yung Benevolent Assn	Ning Yung Benevolent Assn

Address	1920**	1926	1931	1935	1940
939	---	---	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental
940	---	Vacant	Vacant	Oriental	Oriental
944	---	Masaki, M	---	Shing Kee Restaurant	Issii, J E Restaurant
945	---	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant	Quong Jane & Co
946	Oriental	---	---	---	---
949	---	---	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental
950	---	---	Oriental	Vacant	Vacant
951	---	Oriental	Oriental	Sing Co Goods	Sing Co Goods
952	---	Vacant	Oriental	Oriental	Horn Fook Loans
956	---	Ego, H G Restaurant	Ego, H G Restaurant	Ego, H G Restaurant	Vacant
961	---	Voulgaris, Louis-Shoe	Voulgaris, Louis-Shoe Shiner	---	---
1007 ½	---	Yet Far Low Restaurant	Yet Far Low Restaurant	Vacant	---
1008	---	Sui King Lam Restaurant	Suie King Lam Café	Sui King Lam Café	Wing Lum Restaurant
1009	---	Oriental	---	---	---
1010	---	Jiminez, Josephine Restaurant	Sausedo, Peter Restaurant	Vacant	Vacant
1011	---	---	---	---	Vacant
1012	---	---	Oriental	Oriental	---
1013	---	Oriental	---	---	---
1015	---	Oriental	Fee Chy Tong Herms	Fee Chy Tong Herbs	Vacant
1016	---	Vacant	Vacant	---	---
1017	---	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental	---
1018	---	---	Bowe Tsee Hong Herbs	Bow Tsee Hong Herbs	Bow Tsee Hong Herbs
1019	---	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental
1020	---	Bow Tsee Hong Co	---	---	---
1021	---	Oriental	Gon Kee Bakery	Vacant	Oriental
1022	---	Oriental	Oriental	---	---
1023	---	Chinese Club	Oriental	Oriental	Sam Yap Assn

Address	1920**	1926	1931	1935	1940
1025	---	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental	---
1026	---	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental	---
1027	---	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental	---
1028	---	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental	---
1029	---	---	---	Oriental	Oriental
1031	---	Wing Lung Co	---	Oriental	Oriental
1032	---	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental
1033	---	---	Oriental	Oriental	---
1034	---	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental	---
1035	---	---	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental
1036	---	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental	Vacant
1037	---	---	Oriental	Vacant	Oriental
1038	---	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental
1039	---	---	Yeong Wo Assn	Yeoung Wo Assn	Young Wo Assn
1040	---	---	Chick Yuen Goods	Oriental	Oriental
1044	---	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental
1046	---	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental	Wong, Henry
1047	Goulart, Francisco				
1048	---	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental
1050	---	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental	Oriental

FROM POLK-HUSTED DIRECTORY CO, FRESNO CITY AND COUNTY, 1920, 1926, 1931, 1935, 1940.

* I chose to give a scope of China Alley as it is the heart of Chinatown and maintained a heavily Asian/Chinese population over the course of several decades.

** In the 1920 directory China Alley was referred to as F Street Alley. While not many listings appear, I do not believe it was because there were vacancies, rather little attention was paid to any Asians throughout the directory. In fact the 1931 directory notably gave more detail about the Chinese and Japanese communities.

*** The term "Oriental" was used throughout all of the directories. At times you could make assumptions of whether the directories referenced Chinese vs. Japanese based on the names and businesses in the neighborhood, but it is difficult to pinpoint which groups lived there. However, the manuscript census data for 1920 and 1930 confirms that China Alley "Orientals" were indeed of Chinese descent. (US Census Bureau, Fourteenth Census, Manuscript for Fresno County, Fresno City, District 19 and US Census Bureau Fifteenth Census, Manuscript for Fresno County, Fresno City, District 15.

APPENDIX B
JAPANTOWN*- F STREET, BETWEEN INYO STREET AND TULARE AVE,
ADJACENT TO CHINA ALLEY

Address	1920	1926	1931	1935	1940
802	---	---	Minard, E S	---	---
804	Rodriguez, Nick	Morris, Gilpin	Alvardo, Frank	Martin, Jennie	Knicholls, J E - Plumber
805	---	---	Vacant	Vacant	---
811	---	---	Vacant	---	---
817	---	---	Yamane, C - Japanese Salvation Army	Imai, Masahite - Japanese Salvation Army/ Nakamoto, S	Imai Masahide - Japanese Salvation Army
818	Gutierrez, Nicholas	Gutierrez, Nicholas	Lopez, Maria Mrs.	Gutierrez, Nicholas- Restaurant	Gutierrez, Nick - Restaurant
820	Olympia Hotel	Olympia Hotel- Avila, Trinidad	Olympia Hotel	Clayton, Viola Mrs. - Furnished Rooms	Biola Rooms/ O'Conner, Mrs. K.
822	---	Vacant	---	Gastello, Fred Restaurant	Rodriguez, Nick Restaurant
824	---	Colton Hotel - Simpson, Edward	Lopez, T R. Mrs. - Furnished Rooms	Colton Rooms/ Rodriguez, T R, Mrs.	Colton Rooms
825	Oriental	Kimura, H**	---	Kimuro, Hisaro	Kimura, Hisajuro
827	---	Rose Bottling Works	---	Kimuro, Hisaro - Bottler	Kimura, Hisajuro - Bottler
828	---	Church, Concha, Mrs. - Restaurant	Vacant	Church, C W Restaurant	El Ranchito Restaurant
831	Oriental	Paba, Ringi	Beba, R - Tailor	Manzo, Chas Restaurant/ Rear - Manzo, Chas Living Qtrs	Alonzo, Maria Saenz, Ezequial

Address	1920	1926	1931	1935	1940
832	---	Arebedo, Jose-Manning L H & Co.	---	Alonzo, Thos - Billiards	Cal Printers
838	Oriental	---	---	---	---
841	---	Fresno Japanese Language School	Fresno Japanese Language School	Fresno Japanese Language School	Fresno Japanese Language School
901	---	Ito, S & Co-Dry Goods	Ito, S.-Dry Goods	Ito, S.-Dry Goods	Ito, S. - Gen. Merchandise
907	---	Ozawa, Y - Drugs	Ozawa, Y - Drugs/Taira, T-Watchmaker	Ozawa, Y - Drugs	Ozawa, Y - Drugs
909	---	---	Vacant	Rex Theatre	Rex Theatre
911	---	Tani, S - Shoes	Vacant	Yamamisaka & Son - Real Estate	Vacant
912	Katos, Samuel	Toshiyuki, T - Drugs	Tensho-Do Co. Goods	Tensho-Do Co. Goods	---
913	---	---	---	---	Takashi, E S Optometrist
914	---	---	Nakamoto, N-Restaurant	Nakamoto, N Restaurant	Nakamoto, Moritaro Restaurant
915	---	Godain, Max - Tailor	Godain, Max - Tailor	Godain, M - Tailor	Godain, M - Tailor
917	---	Kato, Y - Grocery	Henmi Grocery	Sasaki, John Restaurant	Yoshimne, J C - Restaurant. Rear Yoshimne Living Qtrs
919	---	Iwahashi, H	Sait, Ben - Fish Market	Saito, Benj - Fish Market	Saito, Busuki - Fish Market
920	---	Kogetsudo, C	Kogetsu-Do Co.	Kogetsu-Do Co.	Kogetsu-Do Co.
921	---	---	Chong, S L Herbs	Paris Café	Paris Café
922	---	Japanese Book Co.	Komoto, K-Books	Komoto, K-Books	---

Address	1920	1926	1931	1935	1940
925	---	Kawanuma, H - Cigars/Onto, K	Mar, Gimsune- Billiards/Onto Keiso - Barber	Ballester, Lupe - Beer/ Onto, Keiso-Barber	Hee Chas Liquors/ Russell, Angelina Restaurant
926	---	---	Nii, S - Restaurant	Nii, S - Restaurant	Nii, S - Restaurant
927	---	---	Ono, G/Ono, Taka, Mrs. Baths	Sakamoto, Alma-Beauty Shop/Sanchez, Severo-Barber/ Wakida, Harry - Baths	Gardenas, Magdaleno - Barber/ Wakida, Harry - Cigars
929	Oriental	Alvarado, Frank/ Cleveland, Pearl, Mrs.	Jung, Geo- Furnished Rooms	Diaz, Gines	Diaz, Gines/ Fugita, K - Furnished Rooms
930	---	---	Garcia, Jesus- Barber	Lai, Henry- Wines	Violich, S M Liquors
931	---	---	Blake, J F- Billiards	Diaz, Ginez- Billiards	Diaz, Gines Restaurant
932	---	---	Bow On Assn (Chinese)	Bow On Assn	Bow On Assn
933	---	---	Spanish Grill	---	---
934	---	Tamaya & Co Jewelry	---	Sasaki, T S - Watch Maker	Sasaki, T S - Watch Repair
935	Oriental	---	Franks Café	Tanaka, F K - Restaurant	Tanaka , J G Restaurant
935 1/2	---	---	---	Eastern Café	---
937	---	---	Nakai, K - Grocery	Vacant	Wah Young Liquors
938	---	Seto, M I - Billiards	Nunez, Daniel- Barber	Zabala, Edward - Restaurant	Young Gordon Liquors
939	---	Tamura, Masachi - Restaurant	Tamura, M - Restaurant	Hamaguchi, N Restaurant	Sekimoto, Harry Restaurant
941	Oriental	Yamada, S	Yamada, S - Barber	Yamada, Saikichi - Barber	---
941 1/2	---	---	---	Yeuen Sam Co- Goods	---

Address	1920	1926	1931	1935	1940
943	---	---	Mukai, Y - Furnished Rooms	Mukai, Y - Furnished Rooms	Mar, W M - Furnished Rooms
944	---	Hori, Harri - Cigars	Horg, Harry - Cigars	Hori, Harry - Cigars	Lai, Hobart - Billiards
945	---	---	Mitsuhara, M - Billiards	Mar, A C - Dry Goods	Mar, A C - Dry Goods
946	---	Lincoln Hotel	---	---	---
947	---	Maruko Cyclery Bicycles	Maruko Cyclery Bicycles	Maruko Cyclery Bicycles	Maruko Cyclery Bicycles
948	---	Fong, Wing	Chon, Su - Furnished Rooms	Lincoln Hotel/ Chon See	Lincoln Hotel/ Chun See
949	---	Bank of Italy/ George Studio Photography/ Japanese American (Newspaper)/ Japanese Assn of Fresno/ Tomita, T K - Gen Business Agency	Bank of America/ George Studio Photography/ Japanese American (Newspaper)/ Japanese Assn of Fresno	Bank of America/ Catania, G H - Lawyer/ George Studio Photography/ Japanese Assn of Fresno/ Shirayama, K - Dentist	Bank Beauty Shoppe/ George Studio Photography/ Inada, Fusaji - Dentist/ Japanese Assn of Fresno
950	---	---	Meyers, Abr - Shoes	Espinosa, Salvador - Music Dealer	---
951	---	---	---	---	Bank of America
952	---	Shep, WM - Restaurant	Lewis, Richard - Restaurant	Louie, Richard - Restaurant	Nanking Café
952 1/2	---	---	---	---	Palmero Peter - Shoe Shiner
954	---	---	Valenzuela, Ignacio - Shoe Shiner	Valenzuela, Ignacio - Shoe Shiner	---

FROM POLK-HUSTED DIRECTORY CO, FRESNO CITY AND COUNTY, 1920, 1926, 1931, 1935, 1940.

*I chose to give a scope of Japantown in this section of F street that is in the heart of that area. This table demonstrates that while significant portions of Japanese businesses as well as individuals lived in

this section of West Fresno, this area is more diverse with other ethnic groups living and owning businesses in this neighborhood.

**Note that Kimura/Kimuro, H is the same individual, however, this name was listed incorrectly (most likely this is Kimura). It is significant to note that there are several instances reflected on this table where misspellings of Japanese (and sometimes Chinese) names occur.

Last, I wanted to note there some significant businesses such as Ito, S Dry Goods, Maruko Cyclery Bicycles, Fresno Japanese Language School, and Japanese Salvation Army existed for many years after a significant population of Japanese moved into the Fresno area after 1920.

APPENDIX C
TULARE STREET 1935- REFLECTION OF RACIAL SEGREGATION-
PART I
WEST FRESNO- TULARE STREET INTERSECTING A STREET TO G
STREET

Address	Resident/Business
1004	Dielo, Alesio
1035	Velasquez, Fernando
1039	Vacant
1106	Metkovich, Nick
1115	Barbee & Rhodes Fuel/Mohney, E E
1117	Hernandez, Carmen, Mrs.
1123	Vacant
1124	Raatz, Ethel, Mrs./Rear-Lopez, Apafanio
1125	Espinoza, Al
1127	Wong, Frank
1138	Hillman, Nellie, Mrs.
1140	Gloria, Angelina, Mrs./Rear Vasquez, Loretta, Mrs.
1144	Garcia, Clemente
1148	Banuelos, Leo
1204	Johnson, C H
1210	Ito, Manuel
1212	Kawile, Concha, Mrs.
1219	Ching Jan Co - Produce
1228	Nii, S
1240	Gutierrez, Arturo
1240 ½	Lara, Navoror
1251	Vacant
1255	Martinez, Clemente
1259	Lacosta, George
1315	Oriental
1319	Oriental
1320	Kee, Louis - Grocery
1321	Yen Quon
1323	Vacant
1327	Feather River Peace Mission
1331	Foreign Union Club
1335	Vacant
1337	Canton Hotel
1338	Mikado Laundry/Miyaoi, Y

Address	Resident/Business
1339	Mendez, Rosa, Mrs. - Restaurant
1341	Gonzales Julio/Martinez Benji - Tailor
1342	Haw, Thos-Auto Repair
1345	Ming Sing Cigars
1347	Encisco, Juan - Grocery
1402	Stein Morris Tires
1403	Hin, M C/Young, M J Co. - Chinese Herbs
1404	Vacant
1407	Nozu, Hatsuko - Restaurant
1409	Vacant
1410	Miyahara, Taisa - Notions
1411	Vacant
1412	Horimoto, Mitsu - Wines
1413	Mikado Hotel/Kamiyama, Frank - Photography/Shintaka, K.
1414	Hasegaaw, Kakuzo - Furnished Rms
1415	Vacant
1416	Quong Kee Co Poultry
1417	Aries Fish Market Poultry
1418	Palomino, Chas - Restaurant/Palomino, Edw.
1420	Diaz, Jose - Barber
1421	Lara, Carlota-Billiards/Yamane, I - Barber
1423	Wing Hing & Co - Grocery
1424	Palomino, Chas - Billiards
1426	Nichi Bei Drug Co/Yamamura, K
1427	Aki Company Grocery
1428	Arizona Hotel/Perez, Antonio
1430	Vacant
1431	Western Hotel/Sekiya Buichi/Yatabe, T T - Dentist
1434	Choy Jan Guey Restaurant
1435	Isnardi Jos Drugs
1435 ½	Vacant
1436	Okamura, A - Clothes Cleaner
1437	Ryan Theatre
1438	Huerta, Ygnacio - Barber
1441	Jinkaw, K - Billiards
1443	Hotel Ryan - Junkaw, K
1447	Isnardi, Jos Liquors
1501	Jue, T G - Restaurant
1502	Mar, Oak - Dry Goods

Address	Resident/Business
1505	Botica Ideal Drugs
1507-09	San Wo & Co Goods
1510	Yoshida, K S - Restaurant
1511	San Joaquin Hotel - Ock Gee
1512	Rex Market Meats
1515	Brown L T-Shoe Shiner/Carter & Carmell Billiards
1516	Fong Chow/Hop Chung Lung & Co Goods
1517	Quong San Co - Fish Market
1518	Chin, J S - Meat Market
1519	Yee Sing & Co Dry Goods
1520	Kan Kee & Co Oriental Goods
1521	Fukuhara, Goichi - Barber
1522	Wah On - Cigars
1523	Quan Chuck Meats
1525	Fook Kee Co - Grocery
1527	Komatsu, S - Grocery
1528	Gallenkamps Shoes
1530	Schwartz, L M-Men's Furnishings
1532	Happy Spirits Co Liquors
1535	Natori Kyumei - Restaurant
1536	Tong Lee - Barber
1538	Chu, Kenneth-New Shanghai Café
1539	Duck Lee Co Grocery
1542	Hing Kee & Co Chigras/Lai, Hobart
1543	Oriental
1544	Kataoka, Fred-Jeweler
1547	Fiazados, Christ. - Restaurant
1548	Doukas, Louis - Restaurant

From Polk's Fresno, California City Directory (including Fresno County), 1935 (R.L. Polk & Co. of California, Los Angeles, California).

*It is important to note that these Westside Addresses are approximately less than 1.5 miles from the Downtown Addresses. The surnames for these blocks (residential and business) are high in Spanish, Chinese, or Japanese surnames, and apparent ethnic business names. There are some European names that appear here as well.

APPENDIX D
TULARE STREET 1935- REFLECTION OF RACIAL SEGREGATION-
PART II
DOWNTOWN FRESNO- TULARE STREET INTERSECTING N STREET TO
P STREET

Address	Resident/Business
2400	McCowan, L C-Grocery
2406	Thompson, Sam - Locksmith
2410	Turpens Electric Appliance
2418	Vacant
2420	Collins, R/Detterich, Jos./Glidden, Evelyn/Megown, Vera/Stephens, Natalie
2422	Ninasian, Mazar - Barber
2424	Claverie, Michl - General Merch.
2428	Guilburt, John-Electric Supplies
2434	Dean, E H - Radios
2438	Service Plumbing Shop
2440	Moore, J H - Mfrs Agent
2442	Scribner, Ernest - Printer
2444	Vacant
2448	Zalfa, George - Grocery
2500	Karr, John-Clothes Cleaners
2501	De Jarnatt Wholesale Radio Parts
2502	Vacant
2504	Hagopian, Abraham - Shoe Repair
2505	Greeson, Bonnie - Washing Machine
2506	Vacant
2507	Pease, C D - Clothes Cleaner
2508	The Rotary Print
2509	Vacant
2510	McBride, Frieda, Mrs./Seadler, Ellen, Mrs.
2511	Vacant
2512	Larquer, Etienne - Grocery
2514	Yturri, Paul - Beer
2516	Dorris, J H - Restaurant
2518	Amos, Claude - Barber
2520	Victoria Hotel/Ballaz, Thos
2524	Ballaz, Thos - Beer
2525	Arden Protected Farms Ice Cream
2527	Heilbron, S A, Mrs.

Address	Resident/Business
2528	Carney, H D - Barber/Williams, Virginia Y. - Beauty Shop
2530	Weil & Baylor Beer
2532	Vacant
2534	Shipley Trucking Co
2536	Vacant
2547	Jones, R M - Shoe Shiner

From Polk's Fresno, California City Directory (including Fresno County), 1935 (R.L. Polk & Co. of California, Los Angeles, California).

*It is important to note that these Downtown Addresses are approximately less than 1.5 miles from the Westside Addresses, yet, the surnames for these blocks do not reflect any Spanish, Chinese, or Japanese surnames or apparent ethnic business names. There are a few Armenian last names that do appear.

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