

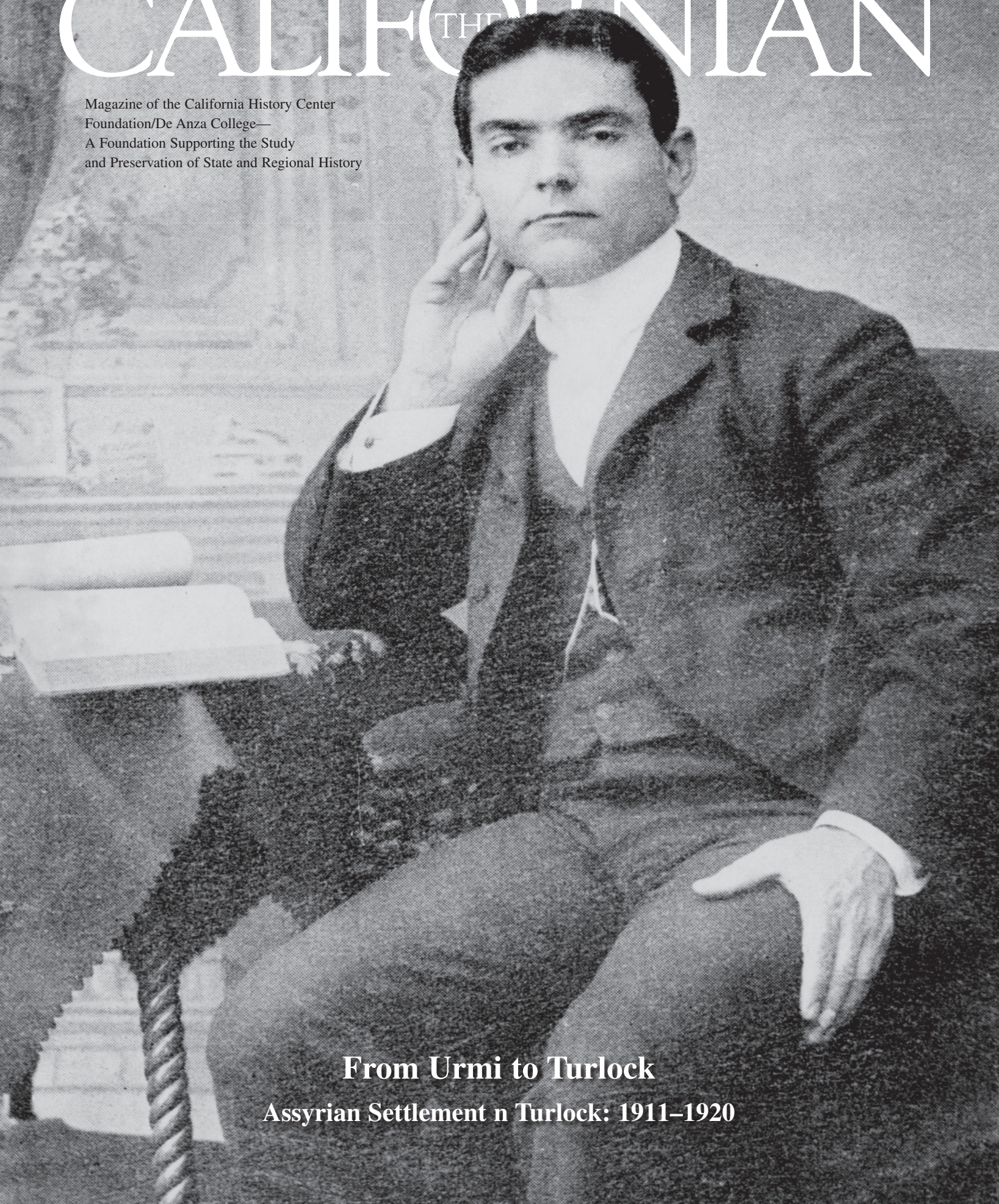
Volume 32 Number 1

April 2011

CALIFORNIAN

THE

Magazine of the California History Center
Foundation/De Anza College—
A Foundation Supporting the Study
and Preservation of State and Regional History



From Urmi to Turlock

Assyrian Settlement in Turlock: 1911–1920

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Tripping over History



Photo: CHCF Library

Tom Izu

I have a terrible sense of direction. I get lost quite easily, even in places I have known for most of my life. I am still known as “U-Turn Tom” from the days when I first learned to drive, which should help you understand how deep this issue goes since I have been driving for over 35 years.

The other day I got lost close to my own neighborhood, trying to remember how to reach a short cut to go around some roadwork. I operate based on visual memory cues — I use cues I pick up from the landscape or buildings I see and try to match them up with my memories of places I know. This time I apparently got a false reading. While I never did find the short cut, I did find an entire new neighborhood I never knew existed and began to wonder what kind of people had lived here, who lives here now, and why it was where it was when it didn't seem to fit into what I knew about the area and its history.

This experience of being directionally disoriented made me realize how easy it is to forget to look and think about what is going on around us and allow ourselves to be lulled into a comforting sense of the familiar. The proverb “familiarity breeds contempt” perhaps explains it; that we become arrogant, perhaps even a little cynical about our local world and what we think we know. And our familiarity itself is bred by certain stories we have been told and have had reinforced over and over to the point where we see what we are supposed to see.

It takes making a wrong turn now and then to realize there is so much right here, right in front of us, that needs to be explored. My saving grace, if I have one, is that I do get lost and disoriented sometimes. It is getting “lost” that allows us the opportunity to bump into things, stub one's toe on a truth that would otherwise never be known, and literally to trip over history and find old things that are suddenly “new.” It is a good thing to be “historically disoriented” now and then, and be forced to face some confusion based on things not fitting together the way you thought they were supposed to, like hearing a story for the first time that you know is true but can't quite accept yet because it

doesn't fit the familiar theme.

This is what inspired me to help start the Silicon Valley Documentation Project, a project aimed at uncovering stories and narratives left out of the common ones we all hear about our valley. I grew up with the Silicon Valley story — and it is indeed a nice one, filled with spectacular transformations and mind-boggling prospects for the future. Indeed, the theme of a sleepy farm community turning into a world center of high tech almost overnight is such a powerful one that it seems to eliminate the need for any history at all beyond what the latest innovation is and which CEO is either the richest or soon-to-be richest. It has become the story to end all stories, locally and historically speaking.

But if you let yourself get lost you will find other worlds waiting, some right in plain view but rendered invisible by this fantastic story.

There actually is a history here that continues, without “Silicon Valley.” There are creeks and plants that could tell us an ancient story of a landscape mostly gone, but not totally. Or around them are visual layers of other communities' stories hidden in old buildings, stashed in a neighbor's basement, mostly gone, but not totally.

And then most surprising are the brand new communities of all sorts blended into the familiar old ones but there in glaring contrast to the “only in Silicon Valley story” that asks us to make the unfamiliar into the familiar without any real understanding, and without having to involve any knowledge of history at all.

So, if you tell me to get lost, I will be happy to do so for the sake of historical exploration.



This will be the last issue of *The Californian* in its current format. We have decided to update and change our publications. In the fall we will send out a newsletter style publication, in winter an extended version of *The Californian* featuring additional articles and essays, followed in spring with a newsletter style publication. We feel that this will enable us to get out announcements and information in a more timely and economical manner, and still offer a substantive journal once a year.

Cover photo: Photograph of Dr. Isaac Adams, circa 1895. Stanislaus Region History and Culture Image Collection.

EDUCATION

California History Center State and Regional History Academic Program

The following courses will be offered spring quarter 2011 through the California History Center. Please see the History class listing section of the Schedule of Classes for additional information <http://www.deanza.fhda.edu/schedule/> or call the center at (408) 864-8986. Please note change in starting time; starting time is now 6:30 P.M. for most evening classes.

TRANSFORMING MONTEREY: THE RAILROAD AND THE MONTEREY PENINSULA

Chatham Forbes

HIST52X95

Spain, Mexico, and the United States made Monterey the seat of power in California. The Gold Rush left the town a backwater until the Central Pacific Railroad put venture capital behind a shrewd prediction and endowed the peninsula with a resort, and residential elegance that has endured to the present day.

Lecture: Thursdays, April 21, May 5,
6:30 p.m.-10:15 p.m., CHC

Field trips: Saturdays, April 23 and May 7



economic activity, outright invasion, and de facto occupation have all played a part in the maneuvers of nation states that coveted the territory's strategic advantages and natural resources.

Lectures: Thursdays, May 19 and June 2,

6:30 p.m.-10:15 p.m., CHC

Field trips: Saturdays, May 21 and June 4

SAN JOSE 1890 -1935

Mary Jo Ignoffo

HIST 107X95

This class takes a look at San Jose beginning at the turn of the twentieth century, through World War I, a flu epidemic, the beginning of Prohibition, until the Great Depression. We will explore original records to analyze how local people felt about San Jose, and how the town was perceived from afar. Particular interest will be paid to San Jose's economic dependence on fruit growing and canning, to ethnic diversity, and to the social and cultural life of the agricultural center. We will visit historical sites and buildings in the community.

Lectures: Wednesday, April 13 and 27, 6:30 p.m.-10:15 p.m.

Field trips: Saturday, April 16 and Friday, May 6

SEVEN FLAGS OVER CALIFORNIA: RIVALS FOR THE GOLDEN STATE

Chatham Forbes

HIST 51X95

Since 1542, seven nations have laid claim to, bid for sovereignty over, or actually intruded upon California. Diplomatic intrigue,

CALENDAR

Apr 4 First day of Spring quarter instruction

Apr 9 "Detained" exhibit open for Saturday hours, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Apr 13 San Jose class, 6:30 p.m., CHC

Apr 16 San Jose field trip

Apr 21 Monterey class, 6:30 p.m., CHC

Apr 23 Monterey field trip

Apr 27 San Jose class, 6:30 p.m., CHC

May 5 Author's talk, "Assyrians in the California Heartland," 1:30 p.m., CHC

Monterey class, 6:30 p.m., CHC

May 6 San Jose field trip

May 7 Monterey field trip

May 14 "Detained" exhibit open for Saturday hours, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

May 19 Rivals for the Golden State class, 6:30 p.m., CHC

May 21 Rivals for the Golden State field trip

May 28 "Detained" exhibit open for Saturday hours, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

May 30 Memorial Day holiday observed, campus closed

June 2 Rivals for the Golden State class, 6:30 p.m., CHC

June 4 Rivals for the Golden State field trip

June 11 "Detained" exhibit open for Saturday hours, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

June 24 "Detained" exhibit closes
Spring quarter ends

The Historic Corridor's Progress

by Ron Bottini

De Anza College's Historic Corridor — a collection of campus buildings and areas being restored to remind the community of the property's history from the late 1800s to the college's opening in 1967 — is coming closer to completion.

By the beginning of the fall quarter, most components of the Historic Corridor — strongly supported by the California History Center and its foundation for several years — will be in place, according to Donna Jones-Dulin, De Anza's associate vice president in charge of finance and educational resources.

Jones-Dulin reports that the projects included in the Historic Corridor go back to the 1880s when Charles and Ella Baldwin developed the property. The vineyards of the Baldwin estate produced award-winning wines recognized throughout the world. After the Baldwins sold the estate in the early 1900s, the property went through several other owners before being purchased by the Foothill-De Anza Community College District for De Anza College.

Being restored as part of the Historic Corridor are the old winery building, recently renamed the Baldwin Winery; a Cottage that formerly housed estate workers and guests; and the Sunken Garden — all located adjacent to where the college's Flint Center for the

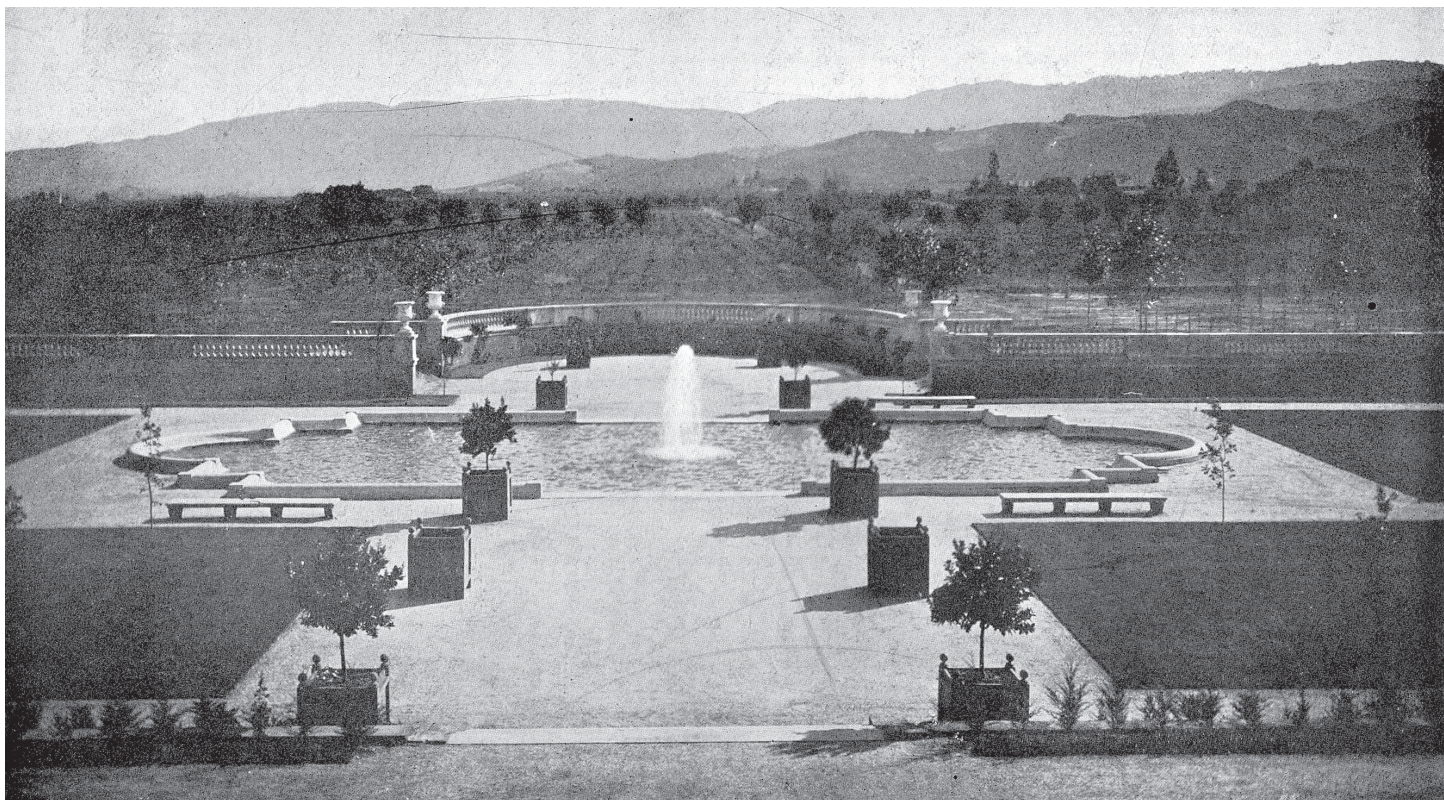
Performing Arts now sits. Also part of the Historic Corridor, and adjacent to the Cottage, is the Trianon, the main building on the Baldwin estate, restored 30 years ago to house the California History Center.

Jones-Dulin says the \$7.9 million cost of Historic Corridor improvements is financed by the passage of a \$490.8 million bond in 2006 (Measure C) that also included the building and renovation of classrooms and laboratories, the upgrading of technology, and improved disabled access at De Anza and Foothill colleges.

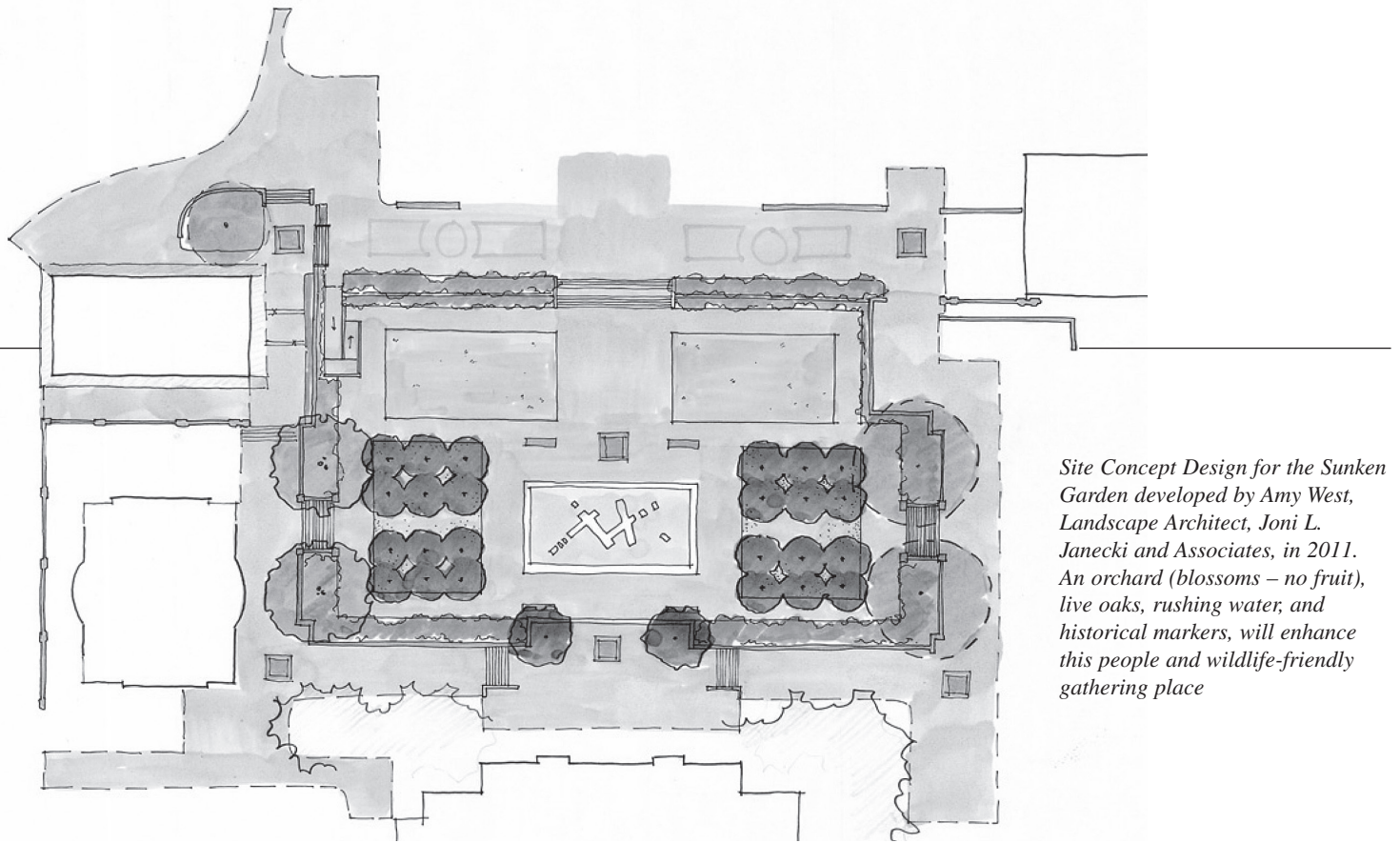
Below is an update of the components making up the Historic Corridor:

The Baldwin Winery, built around 1887, served as De Anza's bookstore when the college first opened. In the winter of last year a complete renovation of the two-level, 6,783 square-foot structure began. The Financial Aid Office and Reprographics Center have moved into the ground floor. The basement floor is still under renovation and will house part-time faculty offices when completed this spring. Total renovation cost: \$5.5 million.

The building known as the East Cottage, one of two similar structures originally built on the property, is of significance because its Mission Revival style by renowned architect Willis



Beaulieu's, and our, Sunken Garden as it appeared in House and Garden, 1902



Site Concept Design for the Sunken Garden developed by Amy West, Landscape Architect, Joni L. Janecki and Associates, in 2011. An orchard (blossoms – no fruit), live oaks, rushing water, and historical markers, will enhance this people and wildlife-friendly gathering place

Polk inspired De Anza’s logo (a series of arches) and the college’s early building design. The two structures housed a variety of De Anza offices before they were deemed unsafe for occupancy.

One of the cottages was demolished in 2006 for better traffic circulation around the Flint Center parking structure.

The remaining 3,078 square-foot Cottage was slated for rehabilitation following the passage of Bond Measure C, and work began in 2009. The budget was \$695,000. However, on June 2, 2010, one of the cottage’s chimneys fell and took the entire building with it. Fortunately no workers were injured, and the contractor’s insurance covered the additional costs.

Before the accident, the restoration was considered a renovation, but following the collapse of the structure, it is called a replica of the original structure, meeting current construction codes by the state.

The Cottage is slated for completion in early summer, and will be a multi-use facility with a 40-seat classroom; a 20-seat resource lab for the Social Sciences and Humanities divisions and the CHC, and offices for De Anza’s Institute of Community and Civic Engagement, an innovative program that connects students and classes directly with community groups.

In the creation of the Historic Corridor, the 36,000 square-foot Sunken Garden will be completely re-landscaped. Work will begin this summer and should be completed by the time classes resume in the fall. Total cost: \$695,000.

All lawns, trees, shrubs and other plantings — which arborists say are in poor health — will be removed. Only the two large live oak trees on the east side of the garden will remain, and two similar trees will be planted on the west side to mirror the mature oaks. The reflecting pool and its sculpture also will remain, as will some historic benches. Balustrades, which surround the Sunken Garden, also will be refurbished.

The new plantings, according to Amy West, landscape architect for Joni L. Janecki & Associates of Santa Cruz, will be “a largely native formal garden,” much like the original garden. All of the plantings, she said, will be native or adaptive with low water use. The irrigation system will also conserve water.

The northern portion of the garden will contain two lawn areas and plantings that will be low in nature, recalling the original open garden plan. The southern area around the pool and sculpture will contain 24 flowering (non-fruit-bearing) trees to simulate an orchard. Fruit growing and processing were the mainstays of the Santa Clara Valley economy from the late 19th century until the post WWII era. There also were orchards on the property over the years.

The paving in the Sunken Garden will be a mix of colored and scored concrete, with varied finishes to give it some refinement. There will be a decorative gravel field under the orchard planting, and the beds will be lined with a recycled granite cobble band.

Paving improvements will extend to the Flint Center entry from the parking structure and will create a more defined and clear entry point to the campus.

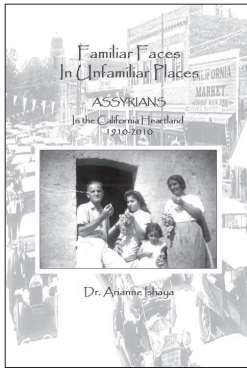
With the redesign, the Sunken Garden will be able to accommodate as many as 1,520 chairs for campus events.

Eventually six historical markers, including written text and images referring to the property’s history, will be placed at different locations. The first marker will be installed as part of the Sunken Garden renovation.

Commenting on the nearly complete Historic Corridor, Tom Izu, CHC director, said, “The renovated structures and redesign of the Sunken Garden comprise a historic area of great significance made even more valuable and unique because the surrounding community, indeed all of Silicon Valley, has lost most of its historical buildings from this time period.”

From Urmi to Turlock

Assyrian Settlement in Turlock: 1911-1920



De Anza College anthropologist Dr. Arianne Ishaya documents the little-known history of Assyrians in California in her book, Familiar Faces in Unfamiliar Places: Assyrians in the California Heartland, 1911 - 2010. Dr. Ishaya writes "...the Assyrians are a stateless people. There is no country called Assyria... their existence as a people is either most often not known or misunderstood." Assyrians trace their roots to Mesopotamia but acts of persecution, exclusion and genocide against them have caused many Assyrians to emigrate from their ancient homeland to Europe, North America, and beyond.

Following is an excerpt from Dr. Ishaya's book that focuses on the beginnings, in the early 1900s, of the Assyrian community in Turlock, a town in California's Central Valley.

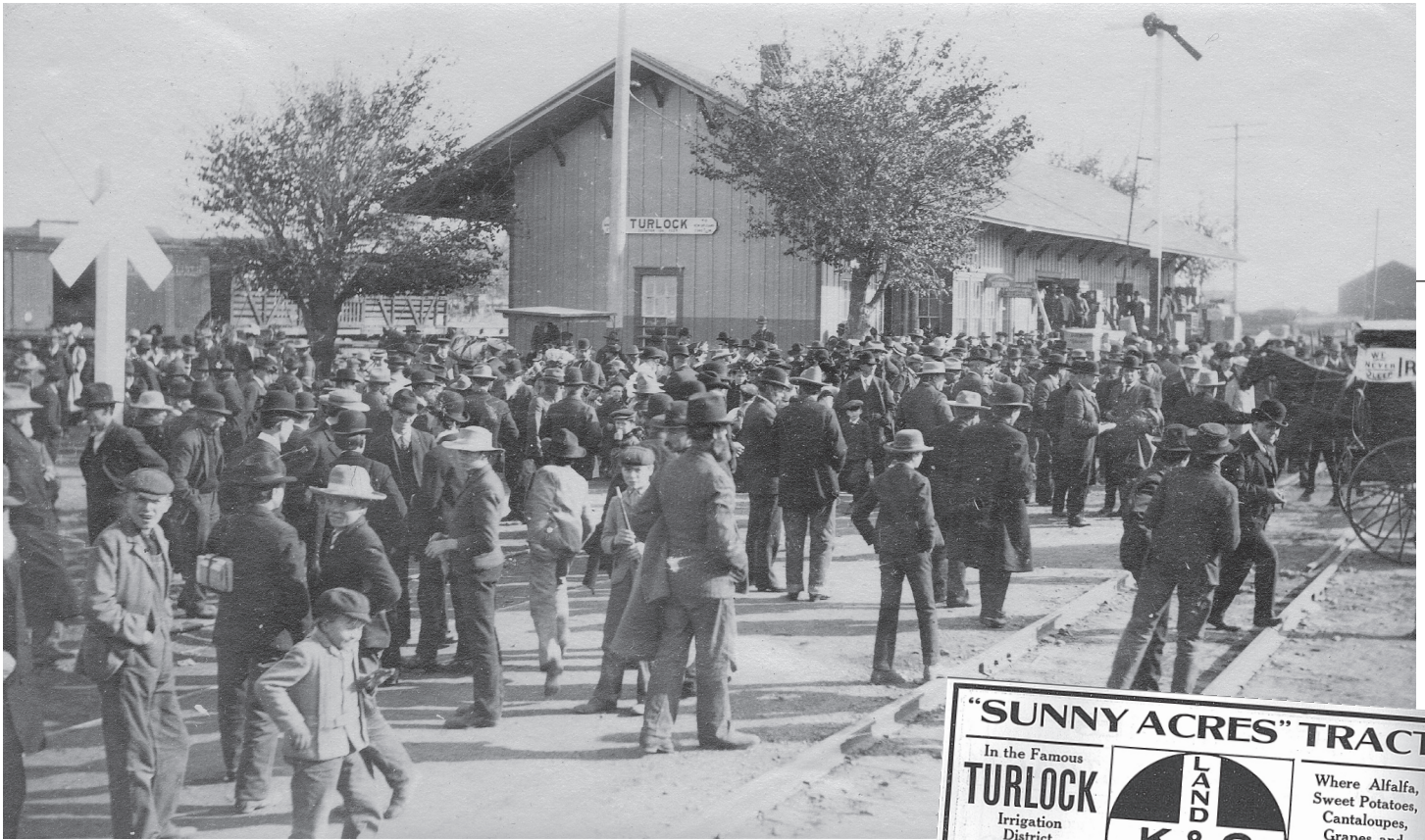
The story of the settlement of Assyrians in California reads like a fairy tale complete with heroic acts and heartbreaking setbacks. It starts with a 16-year old cattle herder by the name of Isaac Adams who dared to dream of America. He was born in the village of Sangar, near the town of Urmia, in 1872. At the age of six he lost his father who had gone to Russia as a migrant worker. Subsequently the village Agha (landlord) confiscated the family's land on the pretext that his father had owed him money. The mother and five children were left in the care of their relatives. In his boyhood he herded cattle, and did farm work in the village fields and vineyards as a hired hand. Adams writes in his journal that he came under the influence of the Presbyterian mission where he attended school. Upon reading the passage from the Bible that says "Cut thee out of thy country...into a land that I will show thee," this modern day Abraham decided to leave on his own to the Promised Land, America (Adams 1900:24). In 1889 he entered the United States at the age of 16 and made his way through customs with less than \$6 in his pockets when the regulations for entering the country required a minimum of \$25. With the help of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, he studied to become a minister. What is unique and colorful about the personality of Isaac Adams is that having learned the ways of the middle class in the West and its fascination with things "exotic" he traveled throughout North America on a 45-day lecture tour dressed in his picturesque native costumes speaking on the culture of the Persians and the traditions of the Muslims and Christians. He sold photographs of himself in traditional costumes and raised money with which he opened mission schools in various Assyrian

villages when he returned to the old country. In 1897 Rev. Adams returned to the United States to pursue his studies in medicine. Three years later he graduated from Grand Rapids Medical College. Dr. Adams returned to the old country and married Sarah, the daughter of the prominent physician, Hakim Israel, who is reputed to have been the court physician in Iran. Sarah was only 15 and it appears that her parents were hesitant to marry their daughter off to live in a faraway land but Dr. Adams could not be dissuaded. He persisted and finally overcame their hesitation.



Isaac Adams is the first and the only person who has engineered a mass migration of Assyrians to North America. He had initially planned to settle a large group of Assyrians in California where the climate is close to that in Urmia, and where he believed that the Assyrians could exercise their traditional skills in the growing of orchards and vineyards. But when he inquired about the possibilities for homesteading, the immigration official in Sacramento told him that public lands sufficiently large for a colony were no longer available in the region. He had better luck with Canadian immigration officials whose government's policy was to settle and develop Western Canada into a major wheat and cereal producing region in the country, and not to discriminate against immigrants of a different creed or country (Hall 1975) so he installed two settlements in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, Canada, one in 1903, the other in 1907. The Turlock settlement was his third project. These settlements are unique in the history of Assyrian migration overseas because they were the sole planned group projects composed of families—and not merely men—intended for permanent resettlement abroad. Undoubtedly the people who willingly uprooted themselves from their former homes were lured to America by its legendary reputation as the land of freedom and prosperity. An Assyrian scholar who settled in the United States early in the twentieth century describes the impression Assyrians had of America:

Author's talk on Familiar Faces in Unfamiliar Places: Assyrians in the California Heartland 1911-2010, Thursday, May 5, 2011, 1:30 p.m., CHC. Author Arianne Ishaya will discuss her book on Assyrians in California. Copies will be available for purchase.



They are told that this great country is but a little island, inhabited by five thousand Christian missionaries, whose entire time is given to prayer, fasting and preaching; that this country is ruled by a Christian government, free from all evils and abuses; and that nobody plays golf, drinks whisky, or smokes. (Emhardt & Lamsa 1926:83)

Isaac Adams's life story is in many ways identical to those of the generation of Assyrian men who came under the influence of the American Presbyterian Mission which was established among the Assyrians in the second half of 19th century.¹

From North Battleford, Canada, to Turlock, California

In 1910 the Canadian provincial government paid Dr. Adams a good price for his homestead which was earmarked to become the site of a hospital. He then decided to move to California. He urged the Assyrians of North Battleford to join him, but desperate as they were, they had lost courage and confidence to undertake another venture designed by Adams. They said "Maybe it will be even worse there." They had expected to find farms when they came to Canada; instead they were taken to wilderness in a very inhospitable climate, and so the Assyrian farming ventures in Canada had failed.

En route to Turlock, Adams stopped in Chicago and gave a speech in a rented hall to a gathering in order to recruit settlers. At the time, Aprim Joseph, who later settled in Turlock, was living in Chicago, and attended the meeting. He remembered part of the speech: "He warned us that land was cheap then, but prices would go up gradually and we would not be able to afford it if we post-

Prospective land buyers gather at the train station in Turlock, California, circa 1907. Stanislaus Region History and Culture Image Collection.

"SUNNY ACRES" TRACT

<p>In the Famous TURLOCK Irrigation District</p>		<p>Where Alfalfa, Sweet Potatoes, Cantaloupes, Grapes and Orchards Grow</p>
<p>We are offering for sale the well-known "Sunny Acres" Tract, located in the Great San Joaquin Valley, Six miles S. E. of Turlock on the Santa Fe Railroad and three miles East of the Southern Pacific Railroad. The Soil is a Sandy Loam 8 feet deep over the entire Tract.</p>		
<p>Price, \$75 to \$100 per acre—cash—balance in one, two, three and four years.</p>		
<p>ONE SEASON'S WORK WILL PAY FOR THE LAND</p>		
<p>SEND FOR BOOKLET</p>		
<p>K. & O. LAND COMPANY 789 Market St. SAN FRANCISCO Branch Office: TURLOCK, or OULLAHAN-LITTLEHALE CO., 323 E. Weber Ave., STOCKTON, CAL.</p>		

poned resettling in Turlock." We will meet this old timer again in the following pages." (Interviewed Nov. 14, 1981)

As it turned out, the misgivings about the Turlock settlement came true. Among those who accompanied Adams, only two families, including his own, were to stay. The other was the Khoobyar family (name changed to Hoobyar for easier pronunciation). It is interesting that the Swedish and the Assyrian settlements had two things in common. Both were initiated by the clergy and in both cases land speculators duped them. Adams fell pray to the intrigues of real estate agents in San Francisco. He purchased a section of land in Delhi, eight miles south of Turlock, sight unseen, from The Fin de Siecle real estate syndicate. He was shown pictures to make him think this was irrigated farmland. But on arrival the pioneers found out that they had paid \$100.00 an acre for what turned out to be sand dunes with no access to water (Yonan 1962:38-39). Rev. Robert Hoobyar who was 12 years old at the time, tells the story:

We moved to California in order to commence the development of 10 acres of land that father had purchased from a real estate firm...this was virgin land. It was up to the buyer to develop his own tract. Our initial move was to bring water on to the property. The nearest main canal was 1½ miles away. The

¹ For a more detailed view of the culture and life-style of Assyrians of Urmia see Appendix A.

Detail of "Map of Central California" by Wallace W. Elliot & Company, published in History of Stanislaus County, San Francisco: Elliott & Moore, 1881. Look for Turlock on the Southern Pacific Railroad below Modesto and above Merced.



Glass negative image of an early Turlock Irrigation District canal, circa 1915. Stanislaus Region History and Culture Image Collection.



task of building irrigation ditches was duly accomplished by horses and scrapers. This took more than 6 months, but finally we had water not only for our stock but truck gardening and the planting of alfalfa for cattle-raising. We moved a 2-room house onto the 10 acres thus commencing our California living. We attended a one-room school in a building that housed a post office, a market and some home remedies. My father and Luther (younger brother) and I were given permission to cut wagon loads of bamboo in order to build fences around our 10 acres. This kept out the coyotes that had ravaged our turkey and

chicken pens, but the gophers and squirrels tunneled under the fence to feed on melons and vegetables. We killed some. We also killed rattlesnakes, scorpions and shot some coyotes. The rabbits were in abundance and our meat was assured daily. (Rev. Robert Hoobyar, autobiography. Unpublished manuscript)

Robert spares us from the account of sand storms that hit the area during certain parts of the year. But we read about them elsewhere:

Annually during this period in California history, sandstorms struck the valley in the spring and fall, lasting for at least three days. As these settlers were preparing their land for planting, one of the storms came on. For three days they were almost unable to see one another; each had to stay in his shack or tent. They couldn't move out of shelter for fear of choking in the sand swirling around their property. When the storm was over, the settlers decided their former homes were safer; all left with the exception of the Hoobyar family, which had no money to go anywhere else. (Sarah Sergis Jackson and V. Yonan Nevils in Hohenthal: 1972:101)

Robert's father, Sargis Hoobyar had also dreamt of an easy life in America. He came to the USA from Iran in 1905 with the help of the missionary, Dr. Shedd. In Iran he worked in the printing press for the American Mission in the village of Seir.² He was literate in several languages, but could not use his skills in America. He settled in Chicago doing labor work. He lived frugally to save enough money to bring his family over. It took a year and half

² Seir is located in the uplands west of the Plain of Urmia. In the 19th century it was the site of an American Mission medical school. In the village cemetery are buried a number of well-known American missionaries such as the Perkins family.



A glass negative image of a farmstead near Turlock, California, circa 1910. Stanislaus Region History and Culture Image Collection.

before he could bring his wife and his four sons, Robert, Aweetar, Lutar, and Aweemalck, (ages 9-2 ½) to Chicago. They moved to Delhi in 1910. John, Esther, and David were born in the United States. According to Arby (Aweemalck), “My father imagined he could do farming. But he should have been a priest. He couldn’t raise a grasshopper.” (Interviewed Dec. 10, 1980)

Turlock was the shopping town for these early settlers. Robert was in charge of shopping for the family “I used to take the Southern Pacific train to Turlock every Saturday with a shopping list and then take the train back again. My shopping bag was an enormous burlap bag. Food, clothing, drugs and baby shoes all were dumped into the bag.” (Rev. Robert Hoobyar, autobiography) The Hoobyars stayed in Delhi until 1915 at which time they moved to Turlock and became part of the Assyrian community there.

The Assyrian Pioneer Generation in Turlock

Trained as a physician, Dr. Adams turned into a real-estate agent once he settled in Turlock in 1911. He continued to urge Assyrians, through letters and pictures, to relocate. But the colony grew very slowly despite Adam’s efforts to attract more Assyrians to it.

An old-timer explains why people were reluctant to relocate to Turlock:

Joel Mirza: The condition of the Assyrians, I tell you, was very

difficult [in Turlock]. When we first came here, what we expected was not there. Property was expensive. This was in 1920, the year I came. The village was very small. The Swedes had a lot of opposition towards Assyrians-I mean foreigners. We used to work. Sometime it got very difficult. We had not brought much money along, and were not well-educated. But we were given a chance. We used to do farm labor; nothing specific. Men were employed almost year-round picking melons, tree-fruits, later in the season, pruning. Women only picked grapes, not fruit trees. That required climbing a ladder 12 to 15 feet high. Women could not do this. (Interviewed March 21, 1982: Joel Mirza, age 65, is another pioneer from whom we will hear more later).³

In 1915 there were ten families in the Turlock District. In

³ The accounts of old-timers and other Assyrians throughout this book are in Assyrian. I (Arianne Ishaya) have translated them into English. Most are abridged.



Main St. Turlock, Melon Carnival parade 1912. Stanislaus Region History and Culture Image Collection.

1912 a brother and a cousin of Adams (Joseph Adams and Odishoo Backus joined the colony from Canada). The total population of the town was 1500, mostly Swedish. Up to 1914 even the language spoken in most stores and town businesses in Turlock was Swedish (Fjellström 1970:138). In fact Turlock was known as a “Swede town” at the time.

The *1920 Modesto and Turlock City Directory* lists the following Assyrian names and occupations:

Modesto:

Geo Backus, real estate

Turlock:

Baba Sarmas, laborer

J.C. Bobb, auto repair

Odishoo Backus, farmer

Lazar Benjamin, farmer

Jos Edgar, laborer

Andrew Hoobyar, laborer

Peter Salmas, Turlock restaurant part-owner

Rev. Samuel Ablahat, Presbyterian minister

Inweeya Tamraz, farmer and real estate agent

Turlock Outskirts:

Isaac Adams, real estate agent and farmer

Joseph Adams, farmer

Benjamin, farmer

According to this directory, by 1920 there were altogether 13 Assyrian families in the Modesto-Turlock area: 9 families in Turlock, three in Turlock outskirts, and one in Modesto. No Assyrians are listed in the nearby hamlets of Ceres, Denair, Hughson, Hickman, and Keyes.

This list omits the names of families accounted for in the early history of the Assyrians of Turlock written by two residents, Sarah Sergis Jackson and Victoria Yonan Nevils (Hohenthal, 1972: 98-107). According to their account the first Assyrian to settle in the city of Turlock was George Peters, who had attended Augustana College, a Swedish Lutheran school in Rock Island, Illinois. He came in 1911 and it appears that he was a bachelor at the time as he rented a room from Mrs. Fulkerth, whose name marks a street in Turlock. His rent was \$1.25 a week. Regarding prices in those days, it is interesting that Mrs. Fulkerth, or “Aunt Abby” as she was known to everyone in Turlock, had bought the property on both sides of Center Street from Olive Street to Geer Road for one mule! Missing from the above list is also the Daniel Lazar family who moved to Turlock from Canada in 1917. Abel Tamraz, another arrival from Canada, is also not on the list. When Aprim

Joseph came for a visit to Turlock in 1918 what he saw of the town was a train station, and a hotel called San Alamo inside which there was a grocery store. That is where he found lodging. Dr. Adams showed him the countryside. “I took a tour of the town on a horse buggy. Geer Road was covered with sand up to the knee.” (Interviewed Nov. 14, 1981)

The pioneers helped develop Turlock by opening up streets and turning dirt roads into paved ones. For example, Joseph Adams (brother of Isaac Adams), Odishoo Backus (cousin of Isaac Adams), and Abel Tamraz (Backus’s brother in-law), opened up Eighth and Ninth Streets by digging up the peach trees on their property.

George Peters also helped develop F Street which was a narrow dirt road in 1917. He donated forty feet for its widening and improved the road before donating it to the county. Peters had three wells dug on his property and built four homes. (Jackson and Yonan Nevils in Hohenthal, 1972: 102)

All farmers without exception faced two major problems in the formative years of farming in the region: land was undeveloped. To turn undeveloped land into farmland meant they had to compete with the original occupants of the land such as gophers, jack rabbits, squirrels, and coyotes so they lost a good share of their crop to wildlife before they could exterminate it. The other major problem that plagues farmers to this day was fluctuations in the price of farm products.

The Assyrians came to the Valley from diverse backgrounds: as unsuccessful farmers from Canada, as refugees from the Middle East, or from a working class background coming from the Eastern United States. The majority had very little money when they started as farmers in the Turlock District. In addition, by the time they arrived good farmland was already taken up by earlier settlers. What was left of developed land was beyond their means. So the majority invested in undeveloped land which required years of hard work to become productive. Others became tenant farmers. Since these farms were not viable, supplemental income was necessary to support the family. But job opportunities in town were restricted as the Swedes would not hire non-Swedes. The result was that the Assyrian community of Turlock became split in two sections: a family farming base in Turlock and a mobile migrant working arm composed of men who worked in construction as plasterers, painters, contractors, etc., in San Francisco. Thus it took the Assyrians much longer to become an integral part of the Turlock community. They made up for a shortage of investment money by buying land in partnership. This meant not only joint investment, but also pulling much needed labor together and providing one another with free help. That also meant a number of children did not finish high school as they were needed to work on the farm. To cope with market fluctuations, they engaged in mixed

farming, that is, growing different crops on the farm. All this is evident from the family history of the pioneer generation. For example, Odishoo purchased land on F Street in partnership with his brother-in-law Abel Tamraz, and George Peters, each contributing \$450 for a share. Then Peters, Inweeya, and Dr. Adams entered into partnership to purchase a piece of land from Fred Geer on the corner of Fifth and F Streets at a cost of \$9,500. (Jackson and Yonan Nevils in Hohenthal, 1972: 102) Next, the same three partners rented the land from Minaret Avenue to Berkeley Road and East Avenue to Canal Drive for \$35 an acre from Mr. Horace Crane. They planted Egyptian corn on the unimproved land. At the time, Egyptian corn was bringing in a good price and grew even in isolated places without irrigation. They spent over \$3,000 on the land for improvement. They killed countless gophers, squirrels, birds, and jackrabbits to protect the crop. But at the end of the harvest they only cashed in \$400. The wild animals and the sandstorms had taken their toll. Losing his money forced Peters to go to San Francisco to replenish his purse. This happened to other settlers in the area as well. Whenever finances were low, they would go to San Francisco, work for a while to make money, and then return to their land in Turlock (Yonan 1962:42-43).

There was partnership not only in investments but also in labor:

Joel Mirza: We worked both for ourselves and for others. We took turns. We all went and picked grapes for one family, and were given lunch there. Once we were finished there, we went and picked for another and so on. We had arranged it that way. But later when the number of Assyrians increased, this practice stopped. Instead we paid each other 50 cents an hour; because if I had two days work, another might have a week's work. There were about 12 families, and most everybody owned 20 acres of land. (Interviewed March 21, 1982)

To blend in, the pioneers changed their names sometimes beyond recognition. Maral became Mary; Youel, became Joel. Inweeya became Newy, Youash became Frank, and so on. This was not a mere name change, but a symbol of acquiring a double identity; being “yourself” inside the community, but “acting like an American” in public.

Despite great odds, family farming suited the situation of the Assyrians particularly because they did not know English well. Additional reasons were given by two of the settlers with a farming background:

Harvey Lazar: They had been farmers in the old country, and they could subsist on the products of their land. They liked to live in open air. They grew their own fruits and vegetables and kept chickens and a few milk cows and one or two horses for transportation. (Interviewed March 22, 1981)

Sam Warda: In those days (1920s) farming was completely different. Most everybody would have some cows, he would have some melons, he'd have to grow some feed for his cows, he'd have some grapes; many times he'd even have some chickens. I mean more so than what he needed for his family. He raised chickens to sell the eggs; kept cows to sell the milk, and grew melons to sell. Today farming is highly specialized. (Interviewed March 16, 1982)

Imagine walking in a vineyard and finding rows of grapes spread on huge sheets of waxed paper drying in the sun. The wax paper helped drops of dew and rain run off and kept the grapes dry. It was better to sell raisins than raw grapes, because they went for a much better price.

There were a few who were well off and could invest in more productive land. The case of the dentist John Sergis is interesting. He moved to Turlock from San Francisco and purchased what was then for Assyrians a sizeable orchard in 1923: forty-three acres of good land in Keyes for \$20,000. The home he built was famous because it was the first to have a tiled bathroom. It is said that strangers would drop in and ask to see the bathroom! (Jackson and Yonan Nevils in Hohenthal, 1972: 104)

As for the Hoobyars, they lost the fight with the jack rabbits and gophers and they left Delhi for Turlock in 1915. With a small down payment, they bought 16 acres of developed land planted in peaches and grapes on Quincy Road and stayed there into the 1960s. (Jackson and Yonan Nevils in Hohenthal, 1972: 102) Sargis Hoobyar donated 4 acres of land on South Johnson Avenue to the Assyrian American Civic Club in the 1960s for a rest home to be built for the Assyrians (Arby Hoobyar, interviewed Dec. 10, 1980).⁴

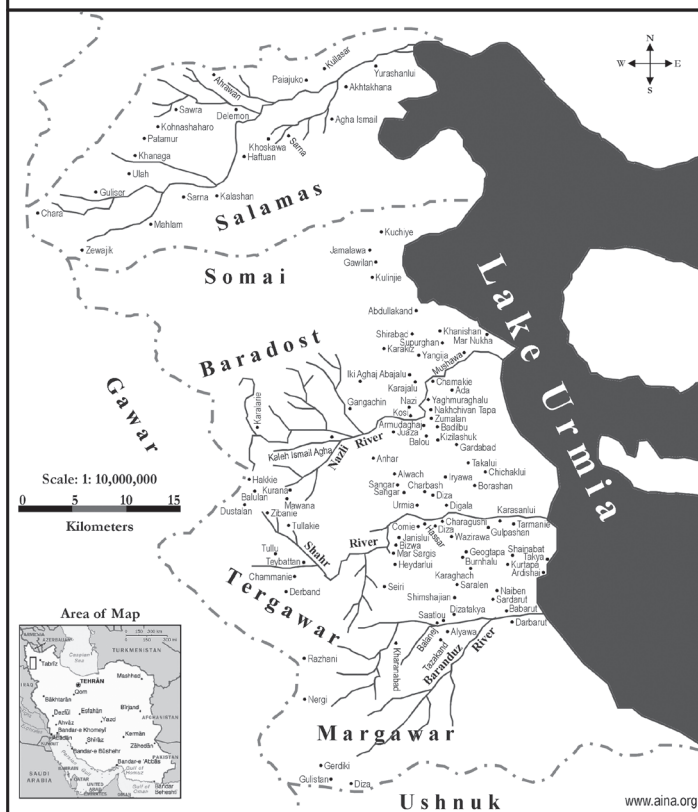
The Case of Surnames

Back in the 19th century, the government in Iran did not issue birth certificates. So people were not usually known by their surnames, but by the name of the village they came from. In fact village names replaced surnames. Besides creating a group identity, this practice was a character marker. Speaking of early settlers in Turlock, Joel Mirza referred to Yaccu *Titrash*, Abraham *Dizataka*, and Daniel *d-spurghan*. Even the generation born and raised in Turlock like Sam Warda referred to people in this way without having seen the villages. To him this was not a location, but a type of character, and he, like others of his age, unknowingly mispronounced the names.

Sam Warda: In those days, like my father was bne Ada (from the village of Ada); my mother was bne Degala; and you know, you knew a person from the village he came like bne Gara Jaly, and Abajaly, and as I was growing up I always thought that they were

⁴ The rest home was not built yet in 2011.

115 Assyrian Villages in Urmia, Iran



Courtesy Assyrian International News Agency.

type names like you know, bne spurghan were good time Charlies, they liked to drink, and they were very generous and they were very hospitable. On the other hand, bne Atla Kanddi loved their tea real dark.⁵ (Interviewed March 16, 1982)

They were also not sure of their exact birthdates. Aprim Joseph describes the situation:

I've forgotten how old I am. My dates were in the Bible. But I can tell you that in 1912, when I came to the USA, I was fifteen. I have lived in this country for 72 years; plus fifteen how much is that? I have not finished 86 yet. (Interviewed Nov. 14, 1981)

The Assyrians stood out in the Turlock community since they were considered non-white, or “colored” (Hoobyar interviewed 12/10/1981). At the beginning women wore “lachikta” which is a large scarf that is worn on the head to cover the hair (Albert Adams interviewed 1/22/1982). The pioneers wore the clothes they had brought with them until they wore out, and only then did they purchase and wear standard American fashions. They seem to have been visible in another way as well. Tony Jerome, a Portuguese old-timer explains:

You could tell them apart by the houses they built. They had a rather unique style. They never ever had porches; just a little T thing over so that you wouldn't get wet when it was raining. You could also tell by their color preference, which was blue: blue eyes, blue shutters, etc. Inside, the houses were very neat, very

⁵ The Assyrian villages on the Plain of Urmia are strung along three rivers that take their headwaters from the Zagros mountains in the West and flow Eastward into Lake Urmia. These are Nahlu in the north, Shahr Chi in the middle and Baranduz River in the south. See map of Urmia above.

nice; but they never made a big show about the outside of their houses... The old folks were shy and had a language problem. So when they came to town to shop, they were accompanied by the young or those who spoke some English. (Interviewed 4/21/1982)

Even though their houses were modest in appearance, they were kept impeccably clean inside. The women always had home-made treats for guests. The Assyrian hospitality required the hostess to lavish the guests with a spread of home-made pastries, tea, and fruits even if they arrived unannounced, which they often did in those days.

Some of the women in Turlock were “picture brides”. At the time Assyrian women were scarce in America. The men were old bachelors and were willing to pay for young brides. Maral (Mary) is a case in point. She came to this country in 1922 from Baghdad. She got married in 1923. The groom paid \$800 to marry her.⁶



What did the local community think of Assyrians?

Dr. J. Caswell: *There has been a very considerable improvement in the image of the Assyrians since about 1920. The original image was that “An Assyrian would pick up and carry off anything that wasn't tied down.”* (Interviewed March, 1982)

Perhaps it was for this reason that the Assyrians tried extra hard to make a good impression:

Sam Warda: *You think it was difficult to live as a Christian minority in a Muslim country. But it was just as hard for us who were born and raised in Turlock. The Swedes looked down upon us and treated us as though we were inferior. So our parents were always on guard and were very strict with us. We always had to dress proper and behave well and be very respectable so that “we would not bring shame upon our people.” So the Assyrians had it tough. Some stores would not sell them farm equipment; or the banks would refuse their loan application.* (Interviewed March 16, 1982)

It appears that the exact national identity of the Assyrians was unclear to the community at large. They were sometimes referred to as “Persians.”

In an article titled “Persian Families Have Troubles Too. The Parties to the Suit were Persians” the *Turlock Tribune* reported: “Rachel and Elia Benjamin divorced. Before the decree became final, the husband sold household furniture (to Hoobyar) ignoring the court order not to dispose of them in the interval. Mrs. Benjamin brought suit to recover her share.” (*Turlock Tribune* April 2, 1920).

⁶ Her husband was a lot older than she. So when he passed away, she married Jim Petros. Jim owned Jim's Restaurant on Highway 99. He sold it to an Assyrian who renamed it Dan's Restaurant. He had a 12-unit apartment building which was later acquired by the Assyrian Civic Club.

Sometimes they were not identified at all as this clipping demonstrates: “Andrew Urshan, a naturalized American citizen, son of a Presbyterian minister and an evangelist, was well received by audience in Turlock as a guest speaker.” (*Turlock Tribune*, August 1919)

Sometimes they were referred to as “Syrians.” The *Turlock Tribune* advertised the relief attempts of the Red Cross for the victims of the 1914 holocaust. “Near East Syrian and Armenian relief in Connecticut 10,000 orphans adopted by Foster Parents in America.” (*Turlock Tribune*, January 2, 1920)

The term “Assyria” and “Assyrian” began to appear in 1921. A

brief announcement in an October issue of the *Tribune* reads: “Men from Assyria Embroiled in An Argument on Road.” George Peters and Yohanan have a fight. George wounded and hospitalized.”

“Presbyterian Synod to Hear Luther Hoobyar a Turlock boy as a representative of the Assyrian race, will discuss the problems facing that people.” (*Turlock Tribune*, July 26, 1925)

Women worked both as homemakers and held jobs outside the home:

Sam Warda: The women like my mother worked very hard. They milked the cows in the morning and then they would have



An aerial view of the G. W. Hume Company in Turlock, California, circa 1938. Stanislaus Region History and Culture Image Collection.



Interior of the G. W. Hume Company in Turlock, California, circa 1930. Stanislaus Region History and Culture Image Collection.

to come in and start the wooden stoves and make breakfast. They didn't have a washing machine so all work was done by hand. Some farms did not have electricity until 1937.

In its June 6, 1919 issue *Turlock Tribune* reported that the State Industrial Welfare Commission sets rate of pay for women in the canning industry. Previous to the orders of the commission, the average rate paid by canneries for time worked was 12 and a half cents/hour. The first canning order of the commission in 1916 raised the minimum wage to 16 cents/hour for experienced workers, in 1918 to 18, and in 1919 to 28cents/hour.

Mrs. Arby Hoobyar describes women's occupations outside the home:

My father and mother started working in the Hume cannery in 1911. All Assyrians have worked there, their women, that is. First we used to cut (everything by hand. Now it is done by machinery. Apricots, peaches, all were cut by hand. There was spinach too. No, it was not a good job; being eight hours on your feet. But you had to make a living. There were no other jobs. In the 1930s 50-60 Assyrians were working in the Hume cannery (later it became Tri/Valley). Men brought them to work, and then came to pick them up. Very few Assyrian women have not worked in canneries. Back in the thirties wages were 25 cents an hour. Yes, it was a seasonal job. Spinach started in March for six weeks. Then it stopped and the apricot run began for another six weeks. There were four shifts in every 24 hours.

So it was part-time and that is why women could both do housework and factory work. Mr. Hoobyar cuts in: I worked in the cannery off and on for almost 25 years too. When I was not plastering, I was working in the cannery. I worked on the equipment. During the war we worked 12 hours a day. Back in the 30s wages were 35 cents an hour. But when unions came wages went up; \$5-6 an hour. (Hoobyar, interview, age 70, Dec. 1981)

Going to School in Turlock

Sam Warda: *We started going to school here. There weren't that many Assyrians; so we mostly mixed with the American people. We were accepted.*

Arby Hoobyar: *I started 10th grade in Turlock. There were fights every day. They did not accept us because we were colored you know, they had a fair skin color. We couldn't get along. The Assyrian and the Portuguese kids were one against the Swedes. The Swedes did not like other ethnics.*

Russel Backus: *I started elementary school in Turlock. I didn't like school when I was a kid. I had lots of friends. I had lots of Swedish friends. They were good. I don't remember ever fighting. It was no way nationality fights. It was just like chicken fights. (Interviewed Jan. 27, 1982)*

Souria Sarhad: *In grammar school there were not many Assyrians. But in high school there were about 10 kids. They played*

with everybody. But during lunch hour all the Assyrian kids gathered together at their own "corner." (Age 60, interviewed April 16, 1982)

The pioneers formed a vibrant community. In the pre-television days and when telephones were rare, they gathered together every evening in each other's homes. They socialized and enjoyed traditional food such as "Kada," a non-sweetened pastry with a rich and thick layer of special filling, eaten with sweetened tea for high breakfast. They cooked varieties of "dolma," stuffed cabbage or grape leaves or stuffed peppers, eggplants, and tomatoes cooked in layers for lunch or dinner. They kept one or two cows, and chickens. They milked their own cows, churned their own butter, grew the varieties of vegetables and herbs they used in their recipes, and even cooked their own "nepukhta" (grape molasses) in improvised "tanuras" (earthen oven pits). They made home-cooked jams, pickles, kadi, and other pastries communally; and divided them among the participants. This practice continued well into the 1940s. They drank their tea "dishlama" by using small cubes of sugar. Even today they place a cube of sugar in their mouth and then drink the tea over it. For a beginner, it takes some practice to do it right. They grew fruit trees in their backyards, and always had a vegetable garden. The produce was shared between friends and relatives, and even sent to San Francisco and other cities in the Bay Area to supply friends and relatives with fresh garden produce.

Daniel Lazar's home was a popular place for friends to visit because he had landscaped his front yard to resemble a typical home in Goytapa, the village near the town of Urmia where he came from. He has a unique history as the sole Assyrian who came to Turlock in 1917 from Canada, but not from the mother colony in North Battleford. He came from Fort Williams, Ontario, where he had lived since 1901 and worked for the Canadian Pacific Railroad. All 4 of his children were born in Canada. One of them, Harvey Lazar was to become the prominent owner of a raisin dehydrating plant which he opened in 1954. Daniel Lazar was also the first Assyrian who chose Denair near Turlock to buy a 20 acre ranch. At his ranch, Daniel made up for the lonely years in Fort Williams where he had not met a single Assyrian. Many friends flocked around his yard where the samovar was always ready for tea. Daniel Lazar passed away in 1975 at the age of 94.

The pioneers kept to themselves partly because many did not know English and partly because the Turlock social atmosphere was not accepting of "foreigners":

Jenny Eshoo: There was a lot of prejudice not only towards Assyrians, but Portuguese too. Turlock was very much a Swedish colony. The Portuguese were mostly farmers too. When I

came here very few Assyrians or Portuguese worked in the stores. They worked in Modesto or San Francisco; but not in Turlock. They wouldn't hire them. During the 1940s they started hiring girls. Of course in the canneries there had always been jobs available. But not in Penney's, in offices, or in the stores; they did not want "outsiders," not even Portuguese (Interviewed January, 1982. Jenny was the niece of Joel Mirza).

Youel (Joel) Mirza had experienced discrimination first hand. This is his story:

There was a Kasha Avshalim of Degala (name of his village); we knew him in Chicago. He was in Fresno and we came to his address. That was in 1920. A real estate agent was showing us around to buy land. He was an Assyrian from Turkey. He was a very good man. On each county line there was a sign that said: "No Japanese, no Armenians wanted in this county." I went to rent a room for the night. Every hotel I went to had a sign saying "vacancy" but when I inquired, they said there was no vacancy. It was getting dark. So I went to a drugstore and called the real estate agent; Nayman was his name. I said "Mr. Nayman, I can't find no room." He came and asked me the name of the hotel I had been. The nearest was Plaza Hotel. We went in there. He knew the owner. He said "Why have you not given a room to my people?" The owner apologized and said "He looks like an Armenian; I thought he was. He can have any room he wants."

Hiring practices were to change. Mrs. Jerome explained the causes:

Discrimination in hiring practices eased as the town grew. Some businesses began to expand and they could no longer hire from their own small circle. Besides when the next generation took over their parents' business, they had already gone to the local high school and associated with other kinds of kids, and they had made friends with people other than their own kind. Besides, the town changed an awful lot when the local college opened up in 1960s. It drew a different mix of people to town. It opened up the mind of people. For example Joash Paul became county supervisor even though he is an Assyrian and a Catholic. There was just no way for an Assyrian and a Catholic to get in before. He and his brother could not have begun to make a living off their restaurant, Track 29, before the college came through.

As to dating and marriage across ethnic lines, this is how Abe Rojas, a Mexican American, described his lost innocence in the face of discrimination:

In most cases, 99% of cases, you're accepted into the community until you reach a point where there is a conflict and for most

children the conflict comes when the dating occurs so that if I'm 16 now and it's time for me to date and if I'm going to date an Anglo girl, then that's when the prejudice creeps up. If I'm going to date an Okie girl (settlers from the Dust Bowl in 1930s) the parents say "We don't want that damned Mexican in our family," you know. So as a child, as a kid, there was no problem within the academic structure of the school. I never felt that I was prejudiced [against] until it came to dating and that's when I found out that there are people out there that don't like me. (Interviewed May 4, 1982)

The View from the Other Side

The fallacy that only the Swedes and the Anglos were harboring prejudice towards other ethnic minorities is revealed when we witness a conversation that took place between Russell Backus and his American wife Murray. Russell was talking about how the Anglos did not like "to see Assyrians go mess around with American girls."

Murray Backus: *It went both ways. The Assyrians didn't want their kids to associate with the others either. I mean, I've been married to him for 53 years. I know that. And so it was on both sides. One of my American friends warned me not to marry Russ. He said the Assyrian men marry only to make a slave for themselves and their people.*

I had an awful time when I first got married just because I was not an Assyrian. At first my mother in-law, she didn't like me at all. She tried every which way to separate us. She even told me it "wouldn't last long; wouldn't last any more than 2, 3 months." But it lasted 53 years. We lived with my in-laws at the beginning and she gave me a hard time. But when she got old and bedridden I was the one who took care of her. She used to say I was better to her than her own children.

Mary Elia had a similar experience when she married Jim Elia in 1938.

Mary Elia: *It is very hard for an outsider to marry into the Assyrian families. Jim's family was very bad at first. His uncle looked me up and down and up and down. Their objection to me was that I could not speak the language, I was very light colored, and I was not a real rich person. But after a while they did like me and I got to like the food. It is not so bad with the younger generation; but the older people just can't see marrying out of the Assyrian community. They like to talk Assyrian at home, and they have their own kind of food. I think the hardest part is the language. It is very hard to learn and they talk very fast. So if you don't learn to speak the language, you are left out on a lot of things. You are seen but not heard. Sometimes when you have to listen to the language all day, it makes you very nervous. Otherwise the men are good husbands and good*

fathers. The men work hard for their families. They take care of their parents which is wonderful. I have been happily married for 44 years. I feel I am Assyrian in the heart, if I could only speak the language. (Interviewed May 6, 1982)

Jerry Adams, the wife of Albert Adams said this about her father in-law, Isaac Adams: "*He asked us to wait when Albert and I decided to get married. He said we came from two different cultures. But I and my whole family like the Assyrian way.*" (Interviewed January 22, 1982)

Other American women married to Assyrian men corroborated such statements. As late as 2010 a sigh of sorrow could be heard every time an Assyrian married a non-Assyrian. The rationale was that "We are a small ethnic group and cannot afford to lose members through inter-ethnic marriage." What people did not realize is that cultural assimilation can occur as fast among full Assyrians as it does among half Assyrian offspring.

Some references:

- Adams, Isaac. *Persia by a Persian*. Washington, DC: Author, 1900.
- Emhardt, William Chauncey and George M. Lamsa. *The oldest Christian people: A brief account of the history and traditions of the Assyrian people and the fateful history of the Nestorian church*. New York: Macmillan, 1926.
- Fjellström, Phebe. *Swedish-American colonization in the San Joaquin Valley in California*. Uppsala: Almquist and Wiksells, 1970.
- Hohenthal, Helen Alma. *Streams in a thirsty land*. Turlock: City of Turlock, 1972. (Contains Jackson and Yonan Nevils chapter on Assyrians).
- Polk's Modesto and Turlock directory*. Sacramento: Polk-Husted Publishing Co., 1920.
- Yonan, Victoria. "A History of the Assyrian people in the Turlock community." Unpublished master's thesis. Stanislaus State College.

Ishaya's book goes on to discuss the progress of the pioneer Assyrian families of the Turlock/Modesto area and continues with the stories of others who have come since, including more recent Iraqi Assyrians. Look for Familiar Faces in Unfamiliar Places: Assyrians in the California Heartland 1911 – 2010 by Arianne Ishaya, published by Xlibris, 2010.

We wish to thank Rosemary Mann and Kenneth Potts of the Stanislaus Region History and Culture Image Collection at California State University, Stanislaus, and the staff of the Assyrian International News Agency, for their contributions of images for the reprint of this article.

FOUNDATION NOTES



Connie Young Yu, *Detained's* curator, speaks to attendees at the January opening reception. Photograph by Purba Fernandez.

Special Spring Saturday hours for “Detained at Liberty’s Door” exhibit

Detained at Liberty’s Door, our winter/spring exhibit, has been well received by the community, beginning with a lively opening reception on January 28, 2011. Curator Connie Young Yu and CHC board member Leslie Masunaga presented the backstory of the exhibit to a standing-room-only crowd at the California History Center. Chinese Historical Society of America’s (CHSA) Executive Director, Sue Lee, expressed her gratitude to the CHCF for its sponsorship of *Detained at Liberty’s Door* and making it possible for CHSA to offer it as a traveling exhibit.

The story of the Angel Island detention of Yu’s grandmother, Mrs. Lee Yoke Suey, is accompanied by archeological evidence of Heinlenville, San José’s last Chinatown, and Nihonmachi, San José’s Japantown.

CHC and the exhibit will be open for special Saturday hours in the spring: April 9 and 23, May 14 and 28, and June 11 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

For information about ferry trips to Angel Island, visit on the Web www.angelislandferry.com/Home.aspx or call (415) 435-2131.



Artifacts and exhibit panels tell stories worth knowing about immigrant experiences around the San Francisco Bay. Photograph by Purba Fernandez.

Other websites offering information on Angel Island include:

- www.aiisf.org/ Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation
- www.angelisland.org/ Angel Island Association
- www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=468 Angel Island State Park
- www.angel-island.com/history.html Angel Island: Immigrant Journeys of Chinese-Americans
- www.angelisland.com/ California Parks Company
- www.chsa.org/ Chinese Historical Society of America



Left to right – CHC board member Leslie Masunaga and CHC executive director Tom Izu celebrate exhibit opening with curator Connie Young Yu. Photograph by Purba Fernandez.



FOUNDATION NOTES

Silicon Valley Documentation Project

The California History Center, in collaboration with the Institute of Community and Civic Engagement, will embark on a project which will map the various communities that make up Silicon Valley, and create a much needed database of information that students, faculty, and community researchers can use to understand this important region of our state.

Called the Silicon Valley Documentation Project, CHC will launch a pilot version during spring quarter working closely with instructors and students in several courses connected to the IMPACT AAPI program. IMPACT AAPI is a two-year program funded by an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) grant

from the U.S. Department of Education created to address the needs of Asian Pacific Islander subgroups that are historically underrepresented in higher education.

“The idea is to have our students take a kind of “snap shot” of the current and historical lives and structures that make up the local communities they come from, and, in the case of the IMPACT AAPI grant-supported courses that would include Filipino and Pacific Island communities about which we have so little information. I believe this work will, in the long run, not only benefit our students by allowing them to do work in their own communities, but will have lasting value, providing a foundation for future projects by faculty and students and information for the broader community that may not have

much knowledge or understanding about Pacific Islanders of the South Bay area,” explains Tom Izu, CHC director.

Multi-media assignments might include oral history style interviews, brief reports on organizations and special places, as well as stories gleaned from family members.

“This is a great opportunity to have our Asian American Pacific Island students engage in academic work that not only relates to their cultural identities but respects and values the communities of which they are a part. This kind of connection between academic learning and community can help students stay motivated and engaged in school, and get through higher education as a result,” states IMPACT AAPI director Mae Lee.

A documentation project is also underway that would collaborate with “Sankofa”, a program that serves students of African ancestry at De Anza.

MEMBERSHIP

OCTOBER 2010 – MARCH 2011

Special Gifts

D.R. Bennion Trust, William Cilker Family Foundation, Geschke Foundation
Hugh Stuart Center Charitable Trust, Betty Tom (in memory of Betty Hirsch)

Memberships

Individual — Aubrey Abramson, Elizabeth Archambeault, Frances Bennion, Nancy Bratman, Marilyn Bauriedel, Jim Cochrane, Albert Faris, James Feng, Rosalyn Frolich, Ellen Garboske, Linda Grodt, Robert Levy, Elsie Matt, Audrey McDonald, Charles Newman, Betty Ortez, Dolly Sandoval, Ann Sebastian, Edward Swift, Gladys Thompson, Paul Trimble, Betty Vandyke, Beverly Walz, Edward White.

Family — Michael Brandy, Stanley Lester, Jean Libby, Keith Peterson, Janet Smith.

Supporter — Robert Bettencourt, Sharon Blaine, May Blaisdell, Linda Larson Boston, Ron Bottini, Colin Busby, Philip Bush, Lawrence Coates, Ronald David, Janet Fire, Mary Hanel, Howard Hill, Anne Houghteling, MaryAnne Ifft, Mary Jo Ignoffo, Nils Lang-Ree, Letizia Picchetti, Michael Sanchez, Doris Seney, Margaret Smith, Marie Smith, Lynn Sprague, Sharon Vick, James and Linda Walker, Samuel and Mary Winklebleck,

Sponsor — Victoria Atherton, Walter Barnes, Essie Curnell, Greg Druehl, Ray and Thelma Epstein, Trudy Frank, Cozetta Guinn, Sharon Hoyt, William Lester, Alice Lopina, Leslie Masunaga, Shirley Oneal, William Palmer, Steven Ross, Dr. and Mrs. Alvin Rutner, Charles Schulz.

Patron Level — Audrey Butcher, William and Yvonne Jacobson.

Foothill-De Anza Community College District

Employee Payroll Deduction:

The following employees of the college district have generously given though the college's payroll deduction plan:

Gregory Anderson, Diana E. Argabrite, Mary Browning, Susan Bruch, Karen Chow, Tracy Chung-Tabangcura, Judy C. Coleman, Marc Coronado, Joyce Feldman, Denis Gates, Richard Hansen, David Howard-Pitney, Judith Mowrey, Hieu Nguyen, Diane Pierce, George Robles, Kristin Skager, John Swensson, Rowena Tomaneng, Renato Tuazon, Pauline Yeckley.

FOUNDATION NOTES



East Cottage with half a roof in March 2011. It is now wholly roofed. Photograph by Purba Fernandez.

East Cottage Replica Nearing Completion

A replica of the East Cottage is slated for completion this spring. After the collapse last June of this historic building during attempted rehabilitation work, plans were expedited for a replica of the original structure to rise in its place close to the CHC building. The original columns, some of the windows, and bricks salvaged from its colonnade are being incorporated into this copy of the Willis Polk, Mission Revival Style structure.

"I am so relieved to see the cottage rise up so quickly, looking safe and secure. Although it is a copy, it will, like a Phoenix, come back to life to serve again!" exclaimed Tom Izu, CHC director.

Contractors will make the exterior of the new building look similar to the original, including its heavy stucco coating (misidentified as adobe by some) and the

placement of the exterior windows and doors. The East Cottage was a part of the turn-of-the-century Baldwin estate along with its almost-twin structure which was demolished in 2006 to make room for roadwork around the Flint Center Parking Structure. The cottages served as ranch and servants' quarters for the estate. A large flower and vegetable garden originally graced the land immediately in front of the original cottages.

The new building will serve multiple uses, including the permanent home of the Institute of Community and Civic Engagement (ICCE), the service learning program for De Anza College, and will offer a 40 seat classroom for use by the Social Sciences and Humanities Division. Most important for CHC will be the resource room or "lab" space the new cottage will provide for the CHC's "Silicon Valley

Documentation Project" that will include multi-media research work recording the history of the region. This project is piloting several classroom-based activities in collaboration with the ICCE and a special grant program known as IMPACT AAPI that focuses on serving the needs of Asian Pacific Islander students at the college.

"I am very excited about our new home! I am especially looking forward to being neighbors with the CHC and continuing our collaboration on our Silicon Valley Documentation Project," stated ICCE's Interim Director, Cynthia Kaufman.

Classes and ICCE's opening in the East Cottage are not scheduled until Fall 2011. However, CHC hopes to offer a sneak preview of the building for its members at a special event in the spring. Please be on the lookout for the announcement.

DETAINED

at Liberty's Door

The story of liberty lost on Angel Island
and a legacy regained.

CHC Exhibit open through June 24, 2011 — call (408) 864-8986 for more information

"Detained at Liberty's Door," a traveling exhibit produced by the Chinese Historical Society of America in collaboration with the California History Center, traces the formation of the Angel Island Immigration Station and highlights the inspiring story of Mrs. Lee Yoke Suey, the wife of a native-born citizen who was detained for more than 15 months on Angel Island. Only an association with one of California's most powerful & iconic families secured her freedom.



California History Center & Foundation

A Center for the Study of State and Regional History
De Anza College

21250 Stevens Creek Blvd., Cupertino, CA 95014 (408) 864-8712
Fax: (408) 864-5486 Web: www.calhistory.org

Trianon Building Hours

Regular Hours:

Tuesday through Thursday
9:30 a.m. to noon and 1-4 p.m.,
or call for an appointment.

Foundation Board

President — Vacant

Founding President — Louis Stockmeir

Founding Executive Director — Walter Warren

Trustees — Thelma Epstein, Purba Fernandez, Cozetta Guinn,
David Howard-Pitney, William Lester III, Leslie Masunaga,
Edmundo Norte, Rowena Tomaneng

Ex-officio — Carolyn Wilkins-Greene

CHC Staff

Director — Tom Izu

Librarian — Lisa Christiansen

The Californian

Design

LeeAnn Nelson

Printing

A&M Printing

CALIFORNIAN

The Californian is published by the California History Center & Foundation. The Magazine is mailed to members as a benefit of annual membership in the CHC Foundation. Membership categories: \$30 Individual; \$40 Family; \$50 Supporter; \$100 Sponsor; \$500 Patron; \$1,000 Colleague.

Your contribution is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. The value of goods received as a benefit of membership must be deducted from the amount of all contributions claimed as a deduction. CHCF members receive issues of *The Californian* magazine and members who contribute at the \$50 level and above also receive a yearly Local History Studies publication.

© 2011, California History Center Foundation

ISSN: 0742-5465