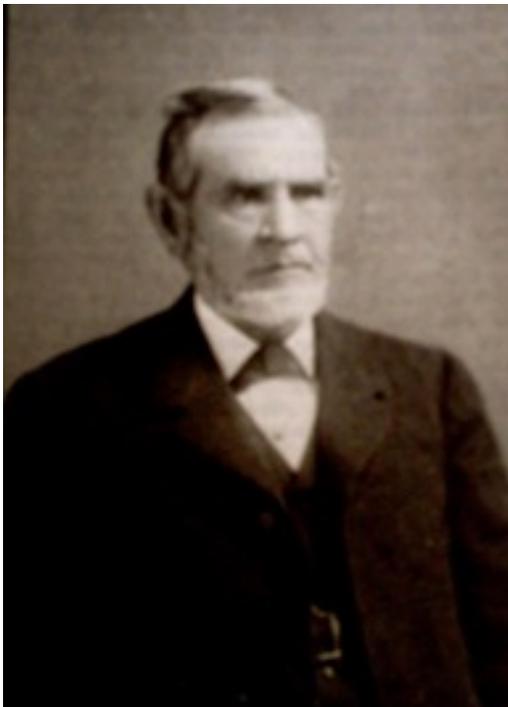


Tell Me, Grandpa!

*(A story about the early days of
Salinas, California)*



Isaac Julian Harvey



Florence Baker

Compiled by Mary Randall

First Mayor's House-Salinas City

This book is dedicated to the **third graders of Salinas**. We want you to think like historians: to learn about cause and effect, change and continuity, turning points in history and how the past can help us make sense of the present.

This is the story of your city. It is the story of thousands of people who came from everywhere to create one of the world's strongest agricultural communities and an interesting and diverse city.



Salinas City in 1884

The facts in this book are as accurate as possible and are excerpted from published works by the Monterey County Historical Society, Kent Seavey, Gary Breschini, Jennie Dennis Verardo, Denzil Verardo and Lavonne Seamans. A complete bibliography appears at the end of the book.

Chapter One In the early days...

Florence was happy that her grandfather had returned from his business trip to San Francisco. After dinner, she found him sitting in the back parlor, or sitting room, reading his paper. It seemed like a good time to ask him a question.

“Grandpa, has our family always lived in Salinas?” wondered Florence.

“Oh, no,” answered her grandfather, Isaac Julian Harvey. Florence knew that he had been the first Mayor of Salinas City but, at eight years old, she didn’t know much else.

“Let me tell you about how Salinas came to be,” Grandpa began. “Our City is really quite young. There are cities that are thousands of years old, but ours was founded in 1874. Everyone who lives in Salinas came here from somewhere else!”

Florence wondered aloud, “What was here before people came?”

“Well”, replied her Grandfather, “Geologists believe this area was formed thousands of years ago. The most unusual thing about our valley is the Salinas River. Scientists think that it is the longest underground river in America because most of it flows below the surface. Of course, in the early days, no one knew that!”

“When Columbus discovered the New World in 1492, there were already many tribes of native people living all over North America. Three tribes lived in this area. The Costanoan lived in the Salinas Valley. When they came here more than 2000 years ago, they found land rich in plants, animals and fish. They were able to supply their needs through hunting, fishing and gathering, which means that they didn’t need to develop advanced skills in farming or herding. Each tribe had its own language and customs. They lived in a land of plenty and existed peacefully together. Tribal groups traveled up and down the valley, hunting, fishing,

and gathering acorns, pine nuts, buckeyes, berries and wild mushrooms. They used acorns to make a flour-like paste.

The men did the hunting. They used bow and arrows, spears, knives and traps for hunting deer, antelope, rabbits and other small animals. When stalking their prey, the men often disguised themselves by wearing the hide and head of a deer.

People lived in small villages, usually less than 100 people. They had several kinds of houses, but the most common was made of corner poles and a middle pole covered with tule grass. The grass was tied on with strips of thin bark.



Because the climate in Salinas is warm most of the year, the native peoples wore very little clothing. When it was cold, they wrapped themselves in blankets of rabbit fur and the men sometimes covered themselves with mud.

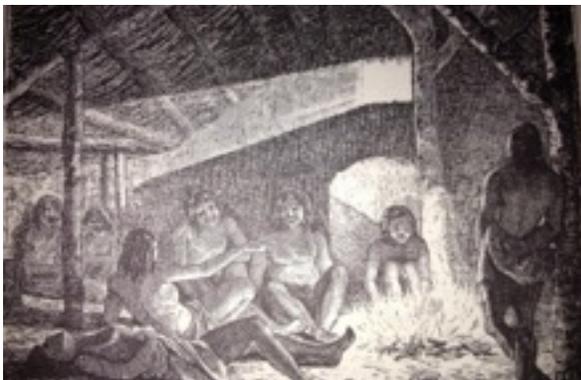
Both men and women wore their hair long. They made jewelry from abalone shells and painted their faces with dyes made from plants.

The first Americans were spiritual and had ceremonies that were part of their lives. They believed in many gods and thought that water, the moon, sun, coyote and eagle were sacred. They had stories or myths to explain how the earth was formed and how man was created. They treated the earth kindly and only took what they needed.

There aren't many native people left today, but I did meet an old man named Gabriel who has lived in this area since the Spanish arrived. When the Spanish came to the area, they said that the Costanoan were gentle and friendly and were willing to share what they had."

Grandpa went over to his library and chose a book to share with Florence. It had drawings and paintings of the Costanoan from 1791.

Temescal/Sweat House



Costanoan Woman at work

Chapter Two The Arrival of the Spanish

“Spain had claimed all of the Americas, including California, ever since Columbus discovered San Salvador in 1492. The Caribbean Sea is a long way from here and Columbus didn’t realize how much land he was actually claiming. More than 100 years later, Sebastian Viscaino found and named Monterey Bay and described it as an excellent harbor and a place of great beauty, but settlers were not interested in coming to a place that was so far away.

In the 1770s, the padres or missionaries came from Spain and from Mexico to start missions in Carmel, Soledad and San Juan Bautista. Soldiers came with them and built a presidio or fort where Monterey is now. The padres brought the Costanoans and other native groups to the mission to work and be educated even if they didn’t want to go.

The Salinas Valley was one of the first valleys to be settled because it had flat land and water for irrigation. The missions grew corn, wheat, beans and barley as well as vegetables and fruits. The native tribes were the field workers, but many died from illnesses such as measles and chickenpox which were brought by the Spanish. “

I.J. continued, “ I read an article about the Indians on the missions. Just a minute.”

After a few minutes of looking in his library of books, Grandpa returned with **Conflict at Monterey** by Sylvia Broadbent. He found the passage he wanted to read to Florence.

“ Many Indians did not like mission life. It meant a complete change of every aspect of their life, from family and village life to diet. The Spanish pattern of work was completely new to them and they had great difficulty adjusting to it... The reaction of the unhappy Mission Indians, however, was not violence or revolt. They simply tried to run away.”

Grandpa put down the book, closed his eyes . Florence decided to wait until another day for the rest of the story.



Life at the Missions



Chapter Three Rancho Days

Several days later, Grandpa reminded Florence that he hadn't finished telling her about the rancho days in Monterey County.

“ In 1822, Mexico became independent from Spain and the Salinas Valley became part of Mexico. In 1830, the missions were taken away from the padres and the lands were given to Mexican settlers and retired soldiers. Cattle and other farm animals were raised on the ranchos and were sold for their hides and tallow. People around the world wanted the hides for clothing. Tallow was used for candles and soap. Let me show you a map of the land grants in the Salinas Valley.”

Florence and her Grandfather looked at the map as he explained, “Most of the land was used for grazing and few people lived on the ranchos. The homes built at that time were adobe bricks or dirt, straw, and water made into blocks and stacked to form walls. Roofs were covered with tiles, wood shingles or grass. I could take you to visit an adobe this weekend,” Grandpa went on. He showed Florence a picture of an adobe in one of his books. She thought it looked like an interesting place to live and looked forward to her visit.

The Boronda Adobe



Grandpa continued, “Ranching was not always easy. In 1823-24, a drought caused the death of thousands of cattle and horses and some owners had to sell their ranchos. A few years later, there was so much rain that the river flooded and ranchers lost their cattle again. “

“When gold was found in 1849, the vaqueros or cowboys, drove a thousand head of cattle to San Francisco to supply the miners. This continued until the railroads came in 1872.”

“Did you know that the lariat or reata was invented by the vaqueros in the Salinas Valley? To make a reata, a vaquero scraped a cow hide and dried it. Then he started cutting one long strand about an inch wide around and around the hide. One hide could make a strand about 200 inches long. It was stretched out so the hair could be scraped off, soaked again and wrapped in wet canvas. The long strip was split in two and then into four before braiding could begin. Up to 24 strands could be braided at a time. When finished, beef brains were rubbed on the reata to preserve the rawhide and give it a nice color. Lariats are used to lasso or catch cattle or to tie a cow or horse so it can't move.”

Grandfather went on, “In 1846, at the end of the Mexican-American war, California became a territory of the United States. Two years later, gold was found in the Sierra Nevada Mountains and the “Gold Rush” began. In 1850, California became the 31st state in the United States. Soon after that, our family began our journey west. “ Grandpa yawned, which told Florence that he had told enough stories for one night.



Early Pioneer, James McDougall , hauling water

Chapter Four Our Family Roots

Florence and her grandfather did visit an adobe and she saw how the early Californians lived. Now she was curious about other things.

On Sunday, the family always had a large noon meal followed by a quiet afternoon of resting, reading, or playing board games. This seemed like a good time to talk with Grandpa again.

“Where did our family come from?” Florence questioned.

“Our family started out in North Carolina. Your grandmother’s parents were from the part of Virginia that is now West Virginia. Her family were Quakers and didn’t believe in slavery, so they moved to Illinois. I met your grandmother when she was a young girl and decided then and there that I would marry her when she grew up!”

My father had a farm and wanted me to be a farmer but I was always curious and wanted to try new things.

“ When gold was discovered in California in 1849, I decided to go west. After two years, I went back to Illinois and brought the rest of our family to California. In 1868, we moved to Salinas City! Now, there are people here from all over the world.”

Florence thought about what her grandfather had been telling her. She had friends who said their grandparents were born in Switzerland and Denmark, Italy and Mexico. Others said their parents came to California on wagon trains from back East. She also knew that there were Chinese families who lived between North Main and East Lake Streets. But she still wondered what Salinas was like in the old days.”

Chapter Five The Beginnings of Salinas

“Grandpa, tell me more about what Salinas was like when you got here.”

He answered, “Let me start a few years before we got here.”

“ When California became a state in 1850, there was no City of Salinas. The important town in Monterey County was Monterey. It was even the capital of California at first.

Where Salinas is now, there was a slough surrounded by wheat and mustard fields. Two dirt roads crossed near there. One went from Monterey to Hollister and the other went from San Francisco in the north to San Diego in the south. It was called the Camino Real or the King’s Highway. It linked all of the missions in California, even if it was only a dirt road.

If a farmer wanted to sell his crops, he had to take them by wagon all the way to Monterey to the port. When someone in San Juan Bautista wanted to go to the bank, he had to go to Monterey. It took a long time and was difficult. Roads were rough and when it rained, they turned from dusty to muddy.



On the road from San Juan Bautista to Salinas in the 1870s.

Jacob Leese owned Rancho Sausal. In 1856, he sold 80 acres to

Deacon Elias Howe. According to the stories, Howe was moving a wagon of lumber. The bumps in the road kept shaking the boards loose, so he had to keep stopping to get out and fix the load. This began to make him angry. When he was half way to Monterey, where the two roads crossed, he thought to himself, "If there were a store and tavern here, people could stop and rest and I wouldn't have to haul this lumber to Monterey. I think I will build one!" He dumped the lumber on the ground, bought a piece of land, and built a store and tavern right there where the roads crossed. It was half way between Hollister and Monterey and half way between San Francisco and Los Angeles on El Camino Real so he called it the Half Way House. In those days, it took up to three days to travel from San Jose to Monterey in a hot, dusty stagecoach or a bumpy wagon. People were glad for a place to get out and rest. The horses could rest and eat too. The tavern was a success!

Mr. Trescony bought the Half Way House from Mr. Howe and also built a blacksmith shop, stable, and a hotel. The crossroads became an important stagecoach stop. In 1864 a post office was moved into the hotel. Now people didn't have to go all the way to Monterey to get their mail! Soon people like me began to hear about the fertile land in the Salinas Valley so dairymen and other farmers began to move here.



Michael Hughes' Harness Shop, opened in 1868.

There was still no town of Salinas. In 1867, Mr. Trescony, Alan Riker and

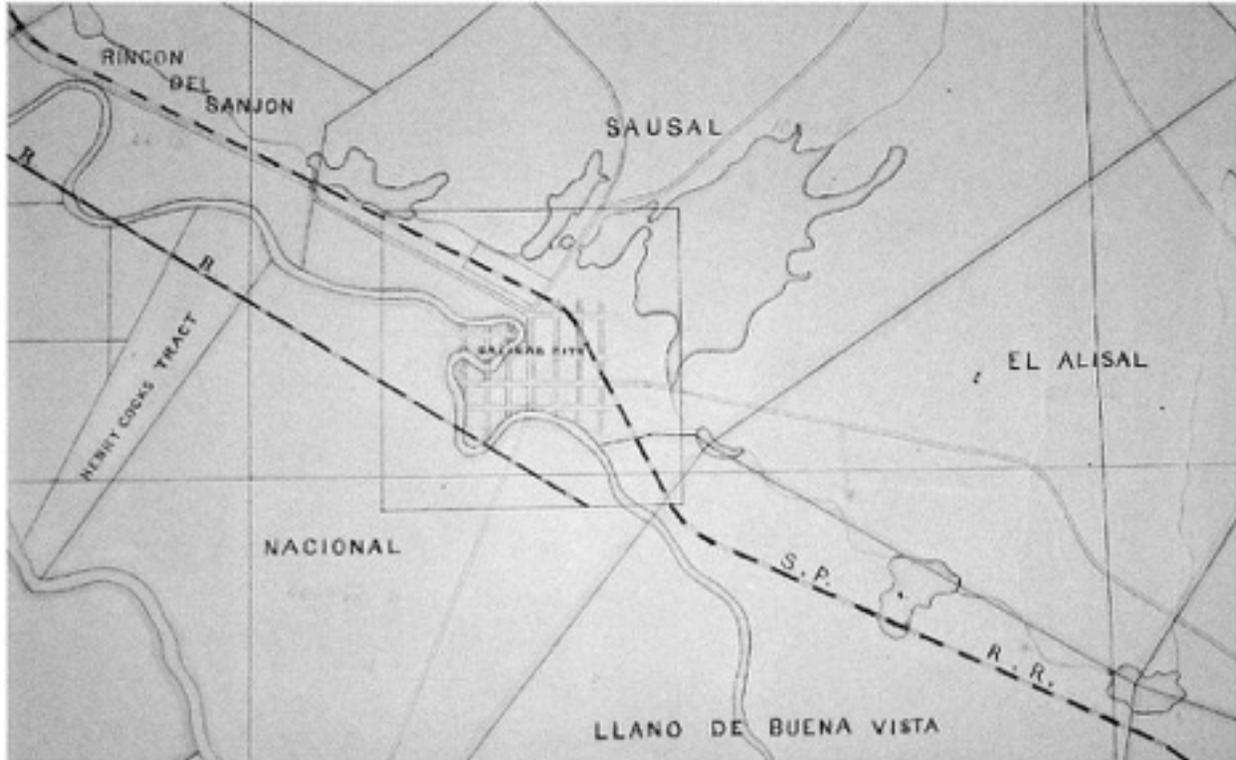
William Jackson began to plan with cattle rancher, Eugene Sherwood. Mr. Riker and Mr. Jackson owned the land west of the Half-Way House and Mr. Sherwood owned the land to the east. There was a fence between their lands. They decided there should be a town, so in 1868 they took down the fence and the fence line became Main Street. They drew lines for other streets and divided the land into lots. They put the lots up for sale on March 1, 1868. They called their new town Salinas City, after the river. They laid out a city plan of a half-mile square. Mr. Riker built another, bigger hotel next to the Half-Way House which he called the American Hotel. Would you like to see what Salinas looked like in 1872?"

Grandpa took out a roll of maps. When Florence saw the first map of Salinas City, she was surprised. There were only 36 blocks! Salinas City had already grown so much in just 30 years.

"When we arrived in Salinas in July 1868, the town only had 12 buildings and some were still under construction. I built a store with this house behind it, but a few years later I moved the house to this bigger lot around the corner. Your grandmother insisted on having an outside kitchen like they did when she was a girl."



<S



Salinas in 1872

Florence was happy to know she lived in one of the oldest houses in Salinas. Her parents and grandfather had the two downstairs bedrooms. Florence, her sister and brother had small bedrooms upstairs. It was not as large as some of the new houses on Central Avenue but it was big enough for her family.

“By the end of 1868, there were 125 buildings and a school. Would you believe there were 27 taverns on Main Street and no churches!”

Mother called Florence to set the table for supper, so that was the end of the day’s discussion.



Above- The Harvey-Baker House where Florence and her Grandfather lived.

Below- A lithograph of Salinas in 1880

Chapter Six Aunt Fronie

As Florence thought about the stories of the beginning of Salinas, she couldn't help but think of her aunt, Sophronia Harvey Clark or Aunt Fronie. "Grandpa," Florence asked the next day after dinner, "didn't Aunt Fronie have something to do with the first school?"

Her grandfather stroked his beard as he thought about the past. "As soon as we got to Salinas, we looked for a school for your mother to attend. She was only 8 and needed to learn a lot more! There wasn't a school and there wasn't even a building to house a school, so Fronie started one! She had received her teachers' certificate in Marysville and she became the first teacher in Salinas. There was an unused store with a few old pieces of furniture. In September, Fronie started class with 11 students, including your mother. By the next year, there were 125 children, so the parents decided to build a school, which they called East End. They also built your school, West End, on Capitol Street. Your aunt continued to teach until she married your Uncle in 1874.

The subjects in school in those days were Literature, Writing, Mathematics, History, Science, Music, Drawing and Etiquette.

Your aunt earned \$60 per month. She still has the bell she used to call the children in to class and from recess. It is the one sitting in my bedroom on the desk.



Sophonra Harvey was the first teacher in Salinas City.



East End School was on Front Street. West End was built two years later on Capitol Street.

Chapter Seven

Salinas becomes a City

Florence knew that Salinas City had grown quickly.

“Grandpa,” she asked as they walked to the store, “when did Salinas City become a city?”

“It actually happened quite quickly. By 1872, there were almost 700 people living in the area called Salinas City, but it wasn’t a city yet. The citizens asked Monterey County to be incorporated which means given a charter to be a City. On September 17, 1872, the Board of Supervisors approved the request to give Salinas City limited status as an incorporated city. I was part of the committee that was selected to guide our new city but we weren’t official yet.

At the same time, the supervisors were trying to decide where to put the county seat. Castroville, Monterey and Salinas City all wanted to be the county seat. The people in the Hollister area wanted to be their own county. The people in Salinas City agreed to support the Hollister plan to become a separate county and the Hollister people supported Salinas’ goal of becoming the county seat! Salinas City won!

Salinas City finally became a chartered city on March 4, 1874. Just six years from its beginning, Salinas City was incorporated and was the county seat. “

More important to her, Florence knew that her Grandpa had been elected as the first Mayor!

Grandpa continued, “In 1877, the Courthouse burned down and the County seat almost moved back to Monterey. To stop that from happening, Jesse Carr provided land for a new county building at a cost of \$1. The City continued to grow quickly as people came here to work and live.”

“Soon we had telegraph, a city gas works, macadamized paving along Main Street, a water company, electric ARC lighting, and 3 newspapers. In the big history book that I showed you, the authors said that Salinas was a true, enterprising, progressive, permanent American city.” Florence could

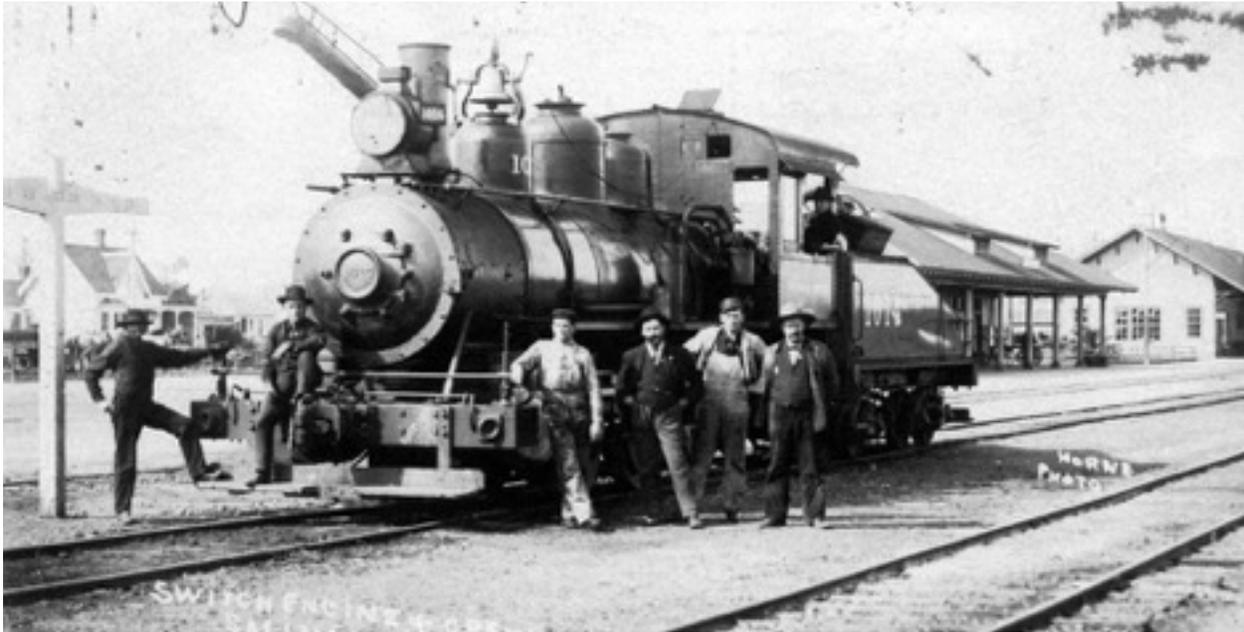
tell that her grandpa was proud of the work they had done to give the City a good start.

Below: The staff of the Salinas Index newspaper



Salinas City in 1880

Chapter Eight The Railroad



Florence knew that the railroad had made a big difference in the growth of Salinas City. She wondered why the tracks came here and not somewhere else. “Grandpa, why did the train come to Salinas City?”

“Well, my dear, that is a long story.”

“ Before the trains came, products had to be moved by water or wagon. Did you know that our piano came from Boston and took almost a year to get here? The order was mailed to the piano company in Boston, they made the piano and shipped it to San Francisco. It had to go by boat all the way around South America. When it arrived in San Francisco, it was put onto a smaller coastal steamer and shipped to Moss Landing. When it arrived there, the box was put onto the shore. The harbor workers sent word to Salinas that a large box had arrived. We had to take a wagon and horses to Moss Landing, load up the piano and haul it back to Salinas City, then unpack it and put it in the house.” Florence thought that was a long time to wait for something she wanted. Grandpa went on...

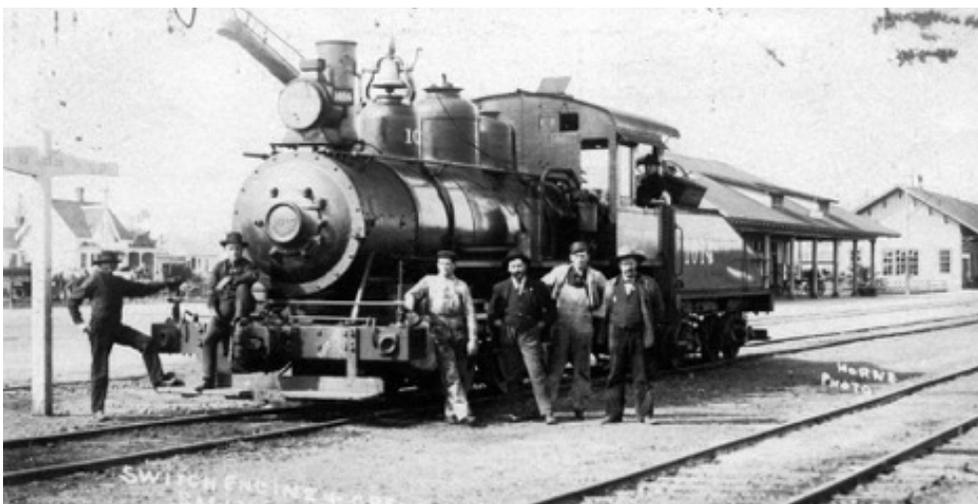
“ The Wells Fargo stagecoach line had offices in Salinas City, Castroville, and Monterey but the roads were used by everyone and no one was

responsible for taking care of them, so they were muddy in winter and filled with ruts and holes in summer. “

“ When the Southern Pacific railroad began talking about building tracks into Monterey County, I went to see Leland Stanford. We had worked together on projects during the Gold Rush years. I suggested that Salinas City would make an ideal location for a station since it was in the middle of the Salinas Valley. Eugene Sherwood donated land for the station. In 1872, the tracks came to Salinas City. On the day the first train arrived, the brakes didn't work and the engine kept going, past the end of the tracks into a nearby field!”

“Having rail transportation meant farmers could send their crops to any part of the United States much more quickly. The railroad men knew how important they were to the farmers' success and raised their rates. If farmers wanted their crops shipped, they had to pay. This caused farmers to be angry with the owners of the railroad. ”

“There were many different businesses in Salinas. When wheat became an important crop, the Salinas Flour Mill opened. Soon they were producing 500 barrels of flour per day. A brewery, lumber yards, dry goods and grocery stores, photographers, saddlery, meat markets, blacksmiths, lawyers, doctors and even five cigar factories were here.”



Train Station

Chapter Nine Immigration

Florence loved keeping a journal. She liked to write about her life and the lives of those she met. This is what she said about growing up in Salinas City.

“ Our life was much like that of every other family in Salinas. One luxury we enjoyed, however, was Mow Lee. He was our Chinese laundryman and was paid one dollar each week to remove this task from Mother. She never did a family wash in all her life. Mow Lee lived by the railroad in ChinaTown and came faithfully to pick up the family wash each week.

I never remember going to his shop. Most white people did not go into ChinaTown except on Chinese New Year. We always knew when their holiday was coming because Mow Lee would bring us gifts of Chinese nuts and candy. The candy was sugared coconut in long strips.

During their celebration, they had open house and their stores were open and everything was on display. The Joss House, which was their church, was decorated. Most spoke little English, but we spoke no Chinese at all!

We also had a Chinese cook named Jon Sing. People thought his name was Mr. Johnson. He lived in a corner of our woodshed which was fitted with a bunk. He wore a long braid down his back and dressed in Chinese fashion.

I never recall attending school with any of the Chinese children. I was fascinated with watching the women. They wore black satin pants and a jacket that reached below their hips. Some of the women had tiny bound feet. They combed their hair straight back and used a pomade to make it stay down. They used jade pins in their hair as ornaments.

My playmates were children of foreign families and it was their connection with the “old country” that made me want to know more about my own family. I was fascinated when they received packages from Europe. I challenged my mother and grandfather to tell me what was my “old country”. They patiently explained that we had been in America for many generations and they, my friends’ parents, had only arrived a few

years before. Somehow that didn't satisfy me."

(Photo left - Sam Guay with the Kellogg girls.)

Florence asked, "What kinds of work did the Chinese immigrants do?"

Grandpa reminded her, "A major contribution to the success of Salinas City in the 1870s was land reclamation. The Chinese labored to clear and drain the swamps and sloughs that surrounded the town. After clearing the



swamps, the Chinese leased 1000 acres for agriculture where they grew mostly vegetables to be taken to San Francisco for sale."

It seemed to Florence that many people came to the Salinas Valley as workers in the fields and then, after years of hard work, they bought their own land and began to farm for themselves or went into some kind of business. She knew that the Chinese had originally come to work on the

railroads. She also knew that farming took a lot of labor and that the owners of the farms wanted to pay as little as possible.

"Grandpa," Florence asked the next day, "who else has come to California to work in the fields?"

"Well," Grandpa replied, "looking for workers started when the Spanish brought the Indians onto the missions. Then the Chinese were brought to work on the railroads and then in the fields. Next, the Japanese came. Just last year 200 Japanese workers came to Salinas to work for Claus Spreckels' sugar beet operation. They are good farmers and are also growing celery, broccoli and strawberries."

"Now, it is people from the Philippines who are coming to farm sugar beets. Some are also coming from Mexico, because they have heard that

there is work here.”

He concluded, “ As long as Salinas City is a center for agriculture, there will be people who come here to work in the fields. Farmers are always looking for cheap labor so immigration will probably continue for a long time.”



*“Shorty” Yin Lee, de facto mayor of
China Town, Salinas*

Chapter Ten Agriculture

Florence thought about what her grandfather had said about Salinas City being an agricultural town. The new Spreckels sugar factory was just one example of how farming was growing and changing in the Valley.

“Grandpa, how has farming changed since the early days?”

“ If you think back to the Costanoans, they didn’t farm at all. The Spanish brought farming here. They grew the foods they needed to survive on the missions and supply passing ships.

The first major agricultural industry was cattle and sheep. Then farmers began to plant wheat. When that was successful, they added other grains.

In the 1850s, farmers began to pump water out of the ground for irrigation. That changed what they could grow. Small farmers produced vegetables which they took to the towns to sell. Mr. Spreckels decided that our valley would be the perfect place to grow sugar beets. He contracted with many farmers and now everyone seems to be growing beets. “

“Now that we have trains and can ship vegetables in refrigerated rail cars, some farmers think that growing lettuce would make more money. Did you know that Salinas is already growing 10% of the country’s vegetables? I think that Salinas will continue to be an agricultural town because of the rich farmland, water, and good coastal climate. Of course, there are times when we have little rain for several years in a row and other times when we have so much rain that the river floods. Still, this is a wonderful place for growing things.”



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Courtesy Monterey County Agricultural & Rural Life Museum



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Chapter Eleven Social Life

Salinas had always had activities to keep the young people busy. Florence was curious about what they did during her mother's childhood. She asked her grandpa to tell her more.

“Grandpa, what did Mother do for fun when she was young?”

“ Your Mother was young when Salinas City was just beginning to grow, but we had many ways of entertaining ourselves! In 1871, we worked together to create the Salinas Skating Rink Company, which everyone enjoyed. Churches provided concerts throughout the year- some for the holidays, some patriotic and some for revivals. By 1878 we had the California Theatre and brought in live shows. Of course, church socials and lotteries were very popular.”

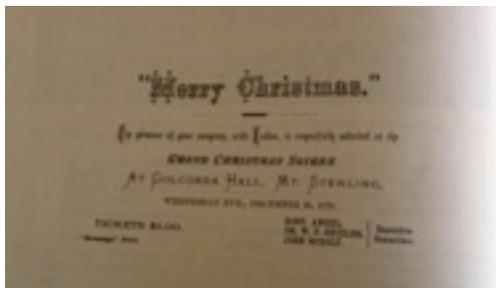
“Did you know that when we arrived in Salinas, your Aunt Sophronia helped to organize a Union Sunday School because there were no scheduled religious services. To help raise money and have some fun doing it, they planned an ice cream social. In the spring, they had a big picnic in the Alisal, using the Harvey horse and buggy and other farm vehicles to carry the crowds.”

“People also started ‘at home’ drama clubs. Young people also visited each others’ homes and, while one person played the piano, the rest danced or sang along.”

“On Sunday afternoon, the young people gathered together and had a box supper. Each girl would make a “shoe box” with sandwiches, cakes and cookies. The boys would draw names. The girl whose box they drew would be their partner for the evening. “

Florence thought about how much things had changed since the early days of Salinas City, even though she was looking back only 30 years!

Below: Invitations for Florence’s Mother to attend an young ladies event and a Christmas party.





Salinas Fire Department with their fire wagon. They were organized in 1874 but this picture is in 1890.



Strothers Alex Cooper and his wife were one of the first African-American families to come to Salinas. In 1880 the census showed: 973 white males, 782 white females, 97 Chinese males, 5 Chinese females, 5 black males and 3 black females.

Chapter Twelve

How has Salinas changed since becoming a city?





Salinas in 1900.

Florence was happy to be alive in 1899, the last year of the century. She thought it was a good time to look back and to look ahead. She tried to imagine what life was like for the early settlers in California and what it would be like in the coming years.

Her Grandpa was slowing down and it was becoming difficult for him to get around. One afternoon, as he sat by the fire in the back parlor, Florence asked him how Salinas had changed in the 25 years since it had become a city.

Grandpa Harvey closed his eyes and thought for awhile. Finally he said, "Well, I guess we have changed like the rest of the country has changed. We have had terrible droughts and floods. Times have been good and bad, but we have gas and electric lights and paved roads. We have a library and telephones. Products can go across the United States in days

instead of months. When we arrived here, Salinas had dozens of people, and now we have over 3000. Florence, you will see even more changes in your life than I saw in mine. Keep your eyes open and see what you can learn.”

Isaac Julian Harvey died in August 1899. His obituary in the *Salinas Daily Index* said, “Judge Harvey was a man of strong and well poised intellect. He was a great reader and his mind was stored with a vast fund of general information. On the political history of the United States, he was one of the most informed men with whom we ever conversed... He had the honor of serving as the first Mayor of Salinas and filled the office of Justice of the Peace here. “

In her diary Florence wrote, “*My grandfather had not been well for quite some time, but he always sat in the sitting room by the fireplace in the velvet covered chair. When Mother told me he was gone, I burst out crying. I had lost my dear friend and confidant.* “

Florence would go on to become a librarian and writer. She and her sister Helen worked hard to preserve the letters, photographs and artifacts in the House. They thought it was important to remember our history. Thanks to them, we can visit the First Mayor’s House today.

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