

The Others

The Unknown Settlers of
Santa Clara Valley

Presented by:

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Jose Maria Alviso, Joaquin Bernal, Mariano Castro, Francisco Pacheco, Antonio Maria Sunol. Why do we know these names? One is a community now. Another is a well known street. Two of these names we know are passes spread thick with modern highways. A sign, an address, a wayside; something today to remind us of the names of the great early Californian landholders.

Basilio Nunez, Rufino Robles, Antonio Luna, Pedro Ascerro. Why do we not know these names? No towns, no streets, no mailbox hold a remembrance of these men and their families, people who worked hard to settle a wild and isolated country. People who created through their labor the wealth that others are remembered for. Miners, farmers, laborers and servants; do we know them? Uneducated, illiterate, ignored, what is left of these peoples' lives?

The history of the United States is filled with stories of men and women, extraordinary and ordinary. School children learn about presidents, statesmen, generals, inventors and business people. We do not stop here, however. Pioneers on the Oregon trail, cowboys, outlaws, forty-niners, homesteaders, slaves and ex-slaves are also a part of our collective conscious. We grow up knowing about the big and the little.

This is not the case with the early Hispanic settlers in California. Histories of this state during the Spanish, Mexican and early American periods are sadly lacking on the subject of the "little" guy. Most any one can tell you of the Franciscan Padres and the missions. Some people may even know of the bucolic lifestyle of the Californio landholders, families who ruled over huge cattle fiefdoms and on Sundays had equally huge fandangos.

However great their contributions to the history of California, these people only represented at most twenty-five percent of the Californio

population.¹ What about the other seventy-five percent?

This paper will begin to tell the "other side." The geographic focus will be the Santa Clara Valley. This area was selected for five main reasons. First, the diversity of the economy, (ranching, mining, farming, trade and business) allowed the more "ordinary" of the Californio population to become historically significant. Second, it was an area which maintained continual settlement through out the Spanish, Mexican and early American periods. San Jose was in fact the first official Pueblo into which "commoners" were brought to settle. Third, a larger population makes statistical analysis somewhat more complete. Fourth, the availability of research materials in this area make such a study possible. Finally, there is a need for this story to be told for this region. The early history of Santa Clara Valley is not complete if we fail to remember the strong arms and backs which helped build it.

This paper deals with those Spanish/Mexican settlers in California who were not members of the landed class (rancheros) or the Franciscan missions. Perhaps it is best if we recognize these people as the "civil class." It must be understood that many people who became rancheros started out in the civil class, becoming part of the landed gentry with the acquisition of a land grant.

The advent of the civil class in California dates back as early as 1776. It was in this year that Felipe Neve was appointed governor of Baja and Alta California. Neve was faced with major supply problems for the military presidios in Alta California. His solution was to establish secular farming communities which could raise the necessary supplies.²

"Each settler. . . should be paid twelve pesos a month and rations and should be assigned two cows, two oxen, two mares, two she goats, two ewes, and equipment such as plows, spades, colters, field knife, hatchet, sword and lance."³ "In return for these benefits the colonists agreed not to sell his land to outsiders without permission, to work on community projects as irrigation ditches, and to deliver to the nearest presidio, at prices fixed by the government, any surplus food he raised."⁴

The idea sounded very good. It is reminiscent of an early "homestead" arrangement. Unfortunately, no one wanted to go to California. Neve was forced to find an assortment of soldiers and a few hanger-ons at the presidios of San Francisco and Monterey and on November 29, 1777 brought a total of 68 persons to the banks of the Guadalupe River and the Pueblo of San Jose de Guadalupe was founded.⁵

Other pueblos were founded in Los Angeles and Santa Cruz. The civil population was established, but of what character? James Rawls describes nearly all of the settlers as, "men convicted of petty crimes, now sentenced

to life in a Spanish version of Botany Bay."⁶ John Caughey states, "Most who came were convicts. A few proved vicious and incorrigible; many others, though more unfortunate than hardened in crime, were feeble, diseased, or unskilled."⁷

With such auspicious beginnings, one might wonder if these pueblos could ever succeed. In fact, Santa Cruz did not. San Jose however, maintained a steady increase in both population and production throughout the early period. From 1790-1800, the population increased from ninety to one hundred and seventy-one. By 1810, this had increased to two hundred and thirty people.⁸

Of the original inhabitants of San Jose, only five heads of family were officially recognized as settlers. These were Manuel Amestica, Ignacio Archuleta, Manuel Gonzalez, Jose Romero and Jose Tiburcio Vasquez.⁹ A vaquero, Jose Sinola and his wife Gertrudis were considered servants and wage earners and were not entitled to an allotment of land.¹⁰ Nine other men were soldiers who were paid a military salary, but were expected to not only defend the settlement, but also make a contribution to agricultural production. These soldiers were Valerio de Mesa, Manuel Ramirez de Arellano, Xavier Beltran, Joaquin Castro, Jose Manuel Higuera, Zeferino Lugo, Gabriel Peralta, Felipe Tapia and Juan Manuel Villela.¹¹

These men and their families were the founding pioneers of San Jose. They were the ones who laid the foundations for the city that we know today. As we have seen, some historians have been quick to generalize about these settlers labeling them as "hanger-ons," "infirm," or "incorrigible." As is usually the case with a generalization about a group of people, it turns out that in many individual cases it simply was not true. A closer look at the nature and character of these people is required.

One thing that we do know is that they were not formally educated. Even as late as 1845 statewide "the number of Californians who were literate even by the loosest definition, was probably no more than 100."¹² If necessity is the mother of invention, perhaps it is unjustified to evaluate these early Californians by the educational standards of "Yankee America." The bucolic isolated lifestyle certainly did not demand a formal education. The point made however, is that practically the entire population could not read or write their native language.

Despite their lack of a formal education, the early inhabitants were able to build functional houses of adobe brick walls and thatched roofs supported by rough axe hewed beams. A few benches, a table and a trunk to store clothes were all the furniture needed.¹³

Richard Henry Dana offered his own insight into the personality of the early Californio. He stated, "The men are thriftless, proud, and extravagant and very much given to gaming; and the women have but little education, and a good deal of beauty, and their morality, of course, is none of the best."¹⁴ In his most famous passage Dana declared, "In the hands of an enterprising people, what a country this might be! we are ready to say. Yet how long would a people remain so in such a country! The Americans. . . and Englishman. . . are indeed more industrious and effective than the Spaniards; yet their children are brought up Spaniards, in every respect, and if the California fever (laziness) spares the first generation, it always attacks the second."¹⁵

The often misinterpreted Dana has described a rather modern concept called environmental determinism. The population of California was not inherently lazy because of their race, rather because they happen to live in California. Even if an industrious Yankee did come to California to

make something of the region, his children would end up wasting away their days taking siestas in between dancing fandangos.

All lightness aside, most Anglo-Americans who visited California during this early period did so with a cultural filter which may have blinded them to a lifestyle which was responding well to its environment. Historians Edwin Bielharz and Donald DeMers stated it well:

The picture from Anglo-Americans who saw San Jose in that period is sometimes distorted. Unfortunately, there was a cultural miasma which made Anglo-Americans see the worst and overlook the best in Hispanic culture. Anglo-American observers were rarely conscious of the Mexican's innate dignity, the almost complete absence of malice, the strong family bonds, the warm hearts and quick smile which distinguished most of them as a people.¹⁶

The early settlers of San Jose evolved into a close knit noncompetitive society. There was very little class consciousness.¹⁷ A general feeling of goodwill seems to have been prevalent. Even the settlers' relations with the native population seems to have been a mutually beneficial arrangement. According to John Findlay, "Although Indians often resisted the discipline of the mission, relations between pobladores and natives were more typically a business arrangement. Indians were in large part responsible for the remarkable productivity of the pueblo."¹⁸

The Hispanic population did have their standards of behavior. Laws were passed, policeing did go on, citizens were fined and jailed for indiscretions. One particular incident illustrates this point very well. In 1790, Francisco Avila and Sebastian Alvitre came to San Jose. They had been found guilty of assualting two Indian girls, one of whom died,

in Baja California. As punishment they were banished to the settlements of Alta California. Apparently, the citizens of the pueblo did not appreciate these men in their community. Avila was expelled from San Jose in 1792 followed by Alvitre in 1806.¹⁹

Chroniclers of the early days of San Jose (1777-1810) have done fairly well in describing the nature of government, crime and punishment, agricultural production, and other aspects of daily life. Frederick Hall, Oscar Winther, Frances Fox and particularly Beilharz and Demers have all provided insightful information on this period. With the advent of the Mexican period and the creation of the Ranchero lifestyle, the portion of the population that this essay addresses has become increasingly silent. Also, little is said about those who settled outside of San Jose in the greater Santa Clara Valley.

Actually, it is little wonder that historians have not made more progress. With the almost 100% illiteracy among the Mexican/Californio population, there simply does not exist the wealth of first hand historical accounts such as were created by American settlers (primarily female) during the opening of the American frontier.

This is not to say that evidence does not exist which can give us clues as to how these people lived. The California State Census of 1852 and the U.S. Census of 1860 are two of the most important pieces of evidence available to us today. These two documents are important keys to unraveling the mystery of this "lost population."

Looking at the census of 1852, one has to be taken aback at its inaccuracy. This fact was not overlooked 140 years ago either. The Journal

of the Fourth Session of the Legislature states that:

Immediately after the adjournment of the last Legislature active measures were commenced, which have been prosecuted up to the present time, for making a correct and complete exhibit of the population and resources of the state. This object, however, has been but imperfectly accomplished, in consequence, in some degree, of the intrinsic difficulties of so complicated and extensive an undertaking, but mainly owing to the mixed, unsettled and fluctuating character of our population, . . . and the mistaken supposition on the part of many that the business of the Census Agent was in some way connected with taxation. There can be no doubt, however, that in consequence of the difficulties previously mentioned, not more than five-sixths of the whole population of the State was taken.²⁰

In addition to this original problem, the census was transcribed in 1933 from the original copy by the Daughters of the American Revolution. In many cases important data was lost due to the ravages of time on the original documentation.²¹ Regardless of these problems, the document does provide an enourmous wealth of historical information.

The population of Santa Clara County in 1852 to the best of our knowledge was 6,664. This number breaks down into the following categories:

Whites

Male	4,096
Female	2,062

Citizens of U.S. over age 21	1,717
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Negroes

Male	53
Female	39

Mulattoes

Male	0
Female	3

Indians (domesticated)

Male	388
Female	162

Foreign Residents

Male	1,059
Female	276

It should be noted even from these figures that only three racial categories are recognized; White, Negroe/Mulattoe (sic) and Indian. The Mexican/Californio population was officially classified as White. This creates a problem when one attempts to identify racial classifications more in line with today's thinking. Fortunately, the census also lists a person's residence and birthplace, in addition to his or her name. I do not believe that it is statistically inaccurate to assume that if a person has an Hispanic name accompanied by a Latin American or Californian birthplace, that he should be classified as "Hispanic" in culture. Using these guidelines, we discover that there were approximately 1,968 Hispanic people living in Santa Clara at the time.

We must, however, narrow this population even further since our focus is on those early settlers of California, not recent immigrants from Mexico or other Latin American countries. I believe that this population is identified by those who claimed California to be both their residence and birthplace. The total number of people that this amounts to is 1,204. Two hundred and eighty-eight of this number are members of families that claimed to have the occupation of ranchero. This leaves a total of nine hundred and sixteen souls who made no claim to the landed status of the ranchero. In all, seventy-two heads of household claimed to be rancheros. Forty-four of these were born in California. This compares with three hundred and sixty-nine non-ranchero families all born in California.

From another perspective, the Californio population of Santa Clara County in 1852 was about eighteen percent of the total. Twenty-four percent of the Californios were members of the landed class, but only ten percent of all families.

The Census also lists occupations, but these too must be held suspect in terms of accuracy. For instance, one can find an infant listed as a ranchero, and a male white claiming to be a widow. Be that as it may, it is still possible to arrive at some general trends in regards to how these people were making a living in 1852. One can only speculate about how people were working in the 1830s and 1840s. It can be assumed that the advent of the American period provided a greater diversity of occupations than had been available previously. Agriculture and ranching being the only industries for the area in the earlier period.

The following represents listed occupations for all Californio civil class adults over the age of eighteen. There were seventy females and twenty-three males who had no designation.

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Number</u>
Farmer	43
Housewife*	25
Laborer	43
Widow	19
Vaquero	15
Carpenter	1
Trader	3
Policeman	1
Saddler	1
Bartender	1
Sister	1
Gentleman	1

Merchant	1
Teamster	1
Musician	1
Mason	3

*The census does not list housewife as an occupation. All nondesignated females who are listed beneath a designated male of approximately the same age followed by a listing of children, I have assumed to be "housewife."

There may appear to be a dichotomy in regards to this list. Would not the occupation of "farmer" assume land ownership? I do not doubt that there is a certain number of these people who might have owned a small piece of property. Three factors must, however, be kept in mind. First, a ranchero is most commonly thought of as one who received a governmental land grant of many thousands of acres. Some of those "farmers" who owned land purchased a small tract from a ranchero who subdivided one of these grants. Second, these "farmers" did have the opportunity to declare themselves "rancheros" officially. Such a label must have carried with it a certain degree of status. Third, the rancheros themselves made most of their cash money during this time renting out their property to tenants. Probate records show that Bruno Bernal's estate, for example, generated a yearly income in the amount of \$6,281.00 which was derived from animal and timber sales and monthly rents.²²

The U.S. Census of 1860 is quite a disparate document from the California State Census. One major difference is that the population schedules for Santa Clara County are broken down into townships. San Jose was by far the largest city of record, but also included were Gilroy, Alviso, Burnett, Almaden, Fremont, Redwood, and Santa Clara.

A second difference between the two documents is that in 1860

respondents were asked the value of their estates. Again, as with the 1852 census, it must be assumed that many people probably felt that this question might have something to do with taxation, and so perhaps did not respond truthfully. As long as we keep this limitation in mind it really doesn't diminish the historical value of the information.

As with the earlier document, the 1860 census also listed the birthplace, race, gender and occupation. Once again, the only races which were recognized were White, Black, Indian and Mulatto.

The names of the Hispanic Californio civil populations listed in the two censuses were compared in an effort to trace which individuals could be found in both. There were sixteen families which could be so traced with some degree of accuracy. While there were many more individual names which matched, this study took into account the ages of each person. If the ages were in conjunction, then a match was assumed. For example, Vincenzo Aguila lived in Gilroy in 1860. He was listed as being 39 in 1852 and 48 in 1860. His children were Jose M., Jose A., Remigio, and Camilio. Their ages also matched the eight year span except for Camilio who was an infant in 1852 and listed as only six years old in 1860. Still enough points matched between the two population schedules to assume that this was the same family.

Vincento was unmarried in 1852. He did marry a woman named Paula, aged forty-seven, sometime before 1860. Paula worked as a midwife and Vincento was a day laborer. The family had an estate of \$650.00 in 1860 which was a nice tidy sum of money for that day and age.

The 1860 census also lists a Guadalupe Aguila aged 23 who did not appear in 1852. One can only speculate on who this person was. Perhaps a child brought to a new marriage by Paula?

The 1852 and 1860 censuses have provided valuable historic insight. Most important is the fact that by comparing names, ages and other pertinent data we can create a historic time line for our "lost population." The sixteen "matched" families will become a working foundation for further research. Other historical records can be cross checked in order to expand the story of these early pioneers of San Jose. The Great Records of Santa Clara County are very helpful population records. These books which were started in the mid 1860s even have physical descriptions in later editions. In addition, birth, marriage and death records located in the archives of the Mission Santa Clara will provide even more insight.

With all this information, we can begin to unravel the mystery of the lives of these early settlers. A compilation of official records, however, is not the best way to try and get to know someone. We still are faced with the task of trying to humanize a collection of data.

As mentioned earlier, nearly all of these people were illiterate and did not leave their own written record. However, many did make their mark on the society and culture of Santa Clara Valley; enough of a mark to have later generations of their families or friends remember them.

One example of this is seen with a man named Jose Manuel Cantua. Jose was born in 1828. He married Ramona Buelna in 1844.²³ The 1860 Census has him and his family living in the Almaden region. The names of his children were Gabriela, Jose, Isabel, Fulgencio, Amelio, Teodora, and Teofilo. The census shows that he was employed as a day laborer. This day laborer must have worked very hard, because he became a success story. Leading teams of draft horses Jose and his sons dragged milled timber out of the Uvas Canyon region for use in the Almaden mines.²⁴ Later, the family moved

into the Uvas area acquiring a ranch of 317 acres.²⁵ One daughter lived on this property until her death in 1936.²⁶ Other family members as of 1978 still lived in San Jose, a 150 year legacy of contributions to the history of Santa Clara County!

There has been a void in our understanding of the history of Santa Clara County. Because a segment of our population has been largely ignored, we have all lost a valuable asset. That asset is no less than our understanding of who we are today as a society. I am not the one to say whether racism played a part in this lack of attention. Certainly cultural bias has a great deal to do with the subject matter writers have chosen to investigate. Perhaps more true is the fact that for a long while historians have concentrated on the big, the famous and the noisy. Gold rushes, earthquakes, railroads, eccentrics, political scandal, skyscrapers, and silicon chips are all topics which have been discussed. Time must now be set aside for the little, the common and the quiet. Laborers, vaqueros, small farmers and miners also made their contribution; a contribution which, as in the case of the Cantua family, has lasted nearly as long as the history of settlement in this area.

Appendix A

Families matched in 1852 and 1860 Censuses

<u>Family</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Age 1852</u>	<u>Age 1860</u>	<u>Estate</u>
Aguila	Vincento	39	48	\$650.00
	Jose M.	7	16	
	Jose A.	4	12	
	Remigia	2	10	
	Camilio	inf.	6	
Alviso	Margarita	16	24	
	Rasce	--	7	
Alviso	Manuela	36	43	\$6,000.00
	Angel Maria	12	20	
	Juan	8	17	
	Luisa	11	15	
	Dolores	--	8	
	Alex.	--	7	
Asaro	Pedro	30	40	
	Jesus	5	12	
	Ramon	3	10	
Cantuva	Francisco	20	28	
Figueroa	Antonio	40	45	\$200.00
	Silveria	--	31	
	Francisco	3	11	
	Patricio	--	8	
	Aurora	--	6	
	Marcina	--	5	
	Juan	--	4	
	Rafaela	--	1	
	Maria Antonia	4/12	--	
Gonzalez	Nicolas	10	19	\$325.00
	Josefa	--	18	
	Jose	--	3	
Martinez	Norberto	30	37	\$100.00
Moreno	Carmel	26	35	
	Francisca	--	5	
	Carlota	--	4	
	Raymunda	--	1	

Narvaez	Jose A.	24	30	\$300.00
	Maria	23	25	
	Guadalupe	--	6	
	Maria	--	12	
	Lorenza	--	5	
	Agustin	--	3	
	Christina	--	1	
	Ynigencia	4	--	
	Dolores	20	--	
Navarez	Jose D.	21	25	\$250.00
	Agustina	21	26	
	Maria	--	10	
	Adela	9/12	8	
	Josefa	--	3	
	Cosme	--	2	
Pico	Antonio M.	42	52	\$10,000
	Pelar	34	43	
	Ramon	21	26	
	Petra	11	18	
	Vicenta	--	16	
	Andres	3	10	
	Josefa	1	8	
	Alvin	--	6	
	Benita	8	--	
Rodriguez	Manano	35	45	
	Rufina	--	40	
	Luciano	9	17	
	Dolores	7	13	
	Simalia?	--	11	
	Alvicano?	--	7	
Salazar	Flugencio	30	30	
	Rita	32	40	
	Pedro	14	21	
	Helena	5	14	
	Adrilla	5	14	
	Christina	2	9	
	Antonia	--	8	
	Maria	3	--	
Sepulvida	Francisco	--	50	\$300.00
	Louisa	20	25	
	Clara	10	16	
	Antonia	18	23	
	Sebastian	14	19	
	Bartolo	13	21	
	Miguel	12	18	
	Juan	7	16	

Soto

Ramon
Joaquin
Celestina

18
16
8

26
24
16

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