

The Indelible Stamp

Spanish influence in Santa Clara Valley



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Preface

Writing this story opened the door for me to learn more of the history of Spain and the history of California. I grew up in the East and was certainly aware of Spain. I knew its location, even studied its language. However, while researching this essay, I was surprised at Spain's wealth at the time, around 1700, and was shocked at the Spanish determination to spread the Catholic religion. The Spaniards worked tirelessly traveling up the California coast establishing missions and spreading their faith.

I don't think Father Junipero Serra, when he established the Santa Clara Mission could ever have imagined the size and growth the mission would enjoy today. The church is now the center for Santa Clara University. The surrounding town and county are named after St. Clare, too. Silicon Valley, the noted active computer business hub, is the main business occupant of Santa Clara County with its diverse and innovative population.

I've always loved Spanish architecture; we still see some Spanish style houses in the area today.

Eventually, Spain had to retreat from building and spreading its religion so enthusiastically when England and other European countries moved into the area. However, today we still have their "sello indeleble", the indelible stamp of Spanish saints and secular names in our Santa Clara Valley back yard.

New York

I grew up in the 1920s and 30s in New York and never gave much thought to California, except I did note that most of the movie stars lived in Los Angeles and that the climate was sunny and warm.

Now, to my surprise I've been here about fifteen years. The last five years I've lived in Los Gatos. When I first arrived, my son, Jimmy asked me if I wanted to play golf one day. Sure, it was o.k. with me. I was amazed when we drove up to the Santa Teresa Golf Course. Why would a golf course be named after Santa Teresa? Was she a good golfer? She must have parred the 11th hole. I thought about this briefly then forgot about it.

When Jim received his masters, I was asked up to Santa Clara University for the ceremony. I started to wonder why there were so many saints' names used in this area. Plus, I had just driven up San Tomas Aquino Rd. When I fly in from New York, I always land at the San Jose airport. Spanish saints' names became a steady ringing in my ears.

Most of my life, I lived in Floral Park, a small suburban town outside New York City. In the summer, the town is filled with flowers and many green trees and shrubs. As a result many of the streets are named after flowers. There are Carnation, Verbena and Tulip Avenues. We knew why these streets were named. But in Santa Clara County, where I live now, why are there so many sainted streets?

The saints of Santa Clara County are not John Chambers, CEO of Cisco, Paul Ottellini, CEO of Intel, you nor I. We're still alive. The saints I'm writing about have all gone but were said to have lived their lives in a holy, ideal and memorable way. Most of

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the saints' names start with San or Santa which makes me think of Spain. Delving deeper, I soon discovered that there were a group of Spaniards who reached San Diego in 1767 intent on establishing a mission.

Spain and Saints

What really started that push was the fact that Madrid had found out that the Russians had just crossed the Bering Strait. They were establishing forts in North America, not far from what we now know as San Francisco.

In Spain at that time locations, mountains and bays were named after church martyrs and crusaders. Time itself was measured by saints' days and feast days. The government, though, was really interested in gold and trade. The padres (Catholic fathers or priests) were looking for souls.

The view of the Spanish government with regard to the missions was cost effective. The padres received no pay and had few needs. The conversion of the local "Indians" was crucial to the plan of the empire. They may have received their orders from the king or queen but looked to God for their authority. They wanted to establish their Catholic religion through the missions which they dedicated to the saints.

Where did the saints come from? In the tenets of Christianity, the central spiritual figure, Jesus Christ, preceded the concept of sainthood when he made Peter the first Pope. Only popes would later declare saints. Jesus had asked his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter was quick to respond, "You are the Messiah, the son of the living God." With this answer, Jesus established the Catholic church with Simon Peter designated the first Pope.

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The Christian Bible states, “Blessed are you Simon, son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of the netherland shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Peter’s new name was now “the rock.” There have been 265 popes in direct succession to Peter.

Peter was not canonized. He was proclaimed Pope by the early Christians because of his martyrdom about the year 64 A.D. The canonization process came into existence in the 12th century.

Today only the Pope can declare saints after years of study of the individual’s life by the “Sacred Congregation for the causes of saints” in the Vatican. A number of miracles must be verified before a person can be declared a saint.

Now I know that the tradition of using saints’ names spread beyond Rome when Spain became Catholic and did everything possible to spread its faith, especially in California.

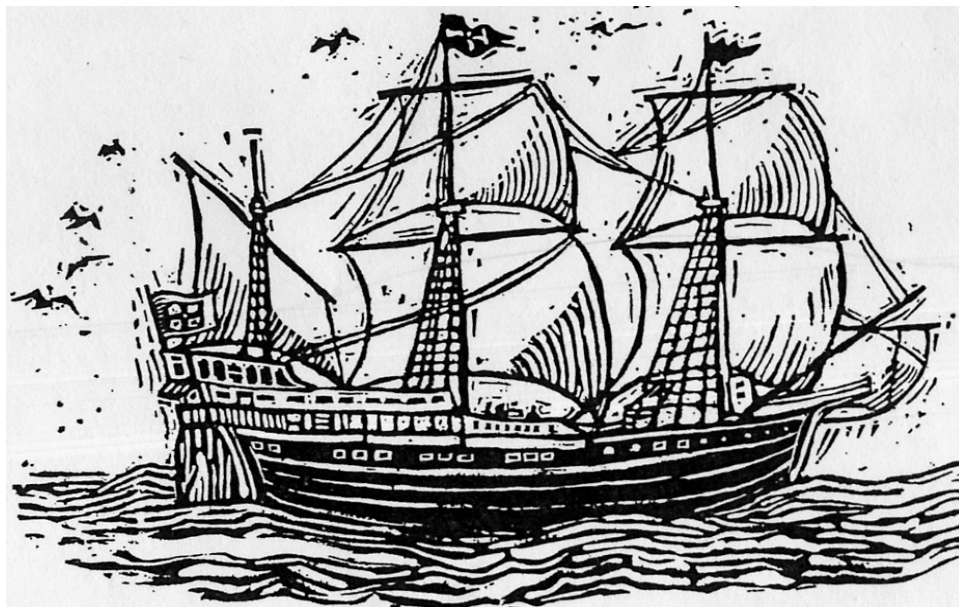
Junipero Serra

In June 1769 Father Junipero Serra sat atop a mule that picked its way along the marshy shore of San Diego Bay. Serra, a brilliant teacher, devout missionary and skilled administrator had been asked by the government to serve as head of the California missions. The job had been transferred from the Jesuits to his order, the Franciscans. Shortly afterwards, Serra got another assignment. He now had to assist in the founding

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of a new settlement. He was a dedicated Franciscan, willing to live singly and endure hardships in order to serve the ideals of his faith. The Franciscans were established by Saint Francis of Assisi. In the twelfth century he brought the church back to its origins in order to minister to the poor and outcast. Now, Fr. Serra had to assist in the founding of a new settlement to the north, in Alta California. He would bring this Christian message to the native peoples there.

Fr. Serra was in for a shock when he reached San Diego. A ship had arrived there a few months before. Very few from that ship were alive. All but two of the crew of the ship had perished. All the sailors from another ship were very ill too. There were no hospitals or doctors. Many had died from scurvy on the long voyage from La Paz, Mexico. The disease affects the muscles and joints. The cure was fresh vegetables and fruits but there were no cultivated fruits or vegetables in San Diego.



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However, Father Serra triumphantly raised a cross on this site of the first mission in San Diego, California. He sang High Mass. He dedicated the mission to St. Dadacus of Alcala, a Franciscan friar who had been made a saint in 1588. A few “Indians” or “heathens” watched from a distance. They were understandably suspicious and cautious and they did not respond to the appeal of the padres to enter the mission life but seemed to like all the beads and clothing offered to them. Soon they were comfortable with the padres and became quite bold. The soldiers claimed they stole everything in sight, even snatched blankets off the sick. Many such soldiers abused native peoples; they built a stockade around the mission and forbade the Indians to enter.

Serra now turned over the San Diego mission to two other padres. Father Serra boarded the ship, San Antonio, and cruised up the coast to Monterey. He arrived June 3, 1770. He met his friend, Portola¹, who had been there the year before and had planted a cross then. Around the cross to the surprise of all was meat, shell fish, feathers and arrows as well as a string of sardines. The Indians had seen how the Spanish revered the cross and made similar offerings to their Great Spirit.

As the ceremonies started to make Monterey a mission, the Native Americans (then still known as Indians) watched silently from the woods. Bells were hung and blessed. An altar was erected under an oak tree. A statue of Christ’s Beloved Mother (now in the Carmel Mission) was placed on the altar. Father Serra consecrated the site of the new Monterey Mission and dedicated it to St. Charles of Borromeo. Serra delivered an eloquent sermon and Governor Portola claimed the land for the crown.

¹ Gaspar de Portola (1716 - 1784) was an important and influential governor of Alta and Baja California.

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Once the Spanish found out that they didn't have to stay close to the Pacific to depend on food from ships landing in the area, they noticed some of the missions were growing their own food and would share it with them. They started to move inland, to the north and east. Eventually, they walked into an enchanted valley approximately 50 miles from the Pacific Ocean.

Father Junipero Serra, in 1777, liked this valley so much he decided to establish a mission in the area and named it after St. Francis' companion, Saint Clare.



It was the first mission named after a woman, and became the companion mission to Mission San Francisco de Assisi. Mission Santa Clara was needed because, according to Burrill and Rogers, authors of *Alviso, San Jose*, “the padres found their farms foggy. They scouted south to feed their mission and fulfill the Viceroy’s mandate of a second port establishment.” Made of tule grass and logs, the new mission in Santa Clara sent food to San Francisco via the landing dock of Alviso.

St. Francis and St. Clare

Father Tomas de la Pena, a soldier who was also a priest, found a copiously flowing creek in the valley and planted a cross. Serra had come with Crespi, his assistant, to bless the cross and the cornerstone in an impressive and solemn rite. This was all done in honor of St. Clare who wasn't from Spain but from Assisi, Italy.

Assisi is a beautiful city with green trees, aqueducts, baths, and theater. It sits in a group of high hills on one side. On the other side there are steep slopes that plunge into a river. Whereas today, the atmosphere speaks of solitude, once it was a city of temples. The memory of Roman gods linger, with their names on gates and in buildings in town. It was an attractive, comfortable town and Christianity had become the religion of the town and, in fact, was the religion of the Empire. It's here that Clare Scifi and Francisco Bernardone grew up.

On July 16, 1194, a daughter was born to Ortolana, the wife of Favorino Scifi. Ortolana had prayed ardently before the birth that the baby would be fine. She received her answer. "Fear not for thou wilt safely give birth to a light which will shine on all the earth." The baby was delivered and named Chiara, or "clear light," she was often known as Clare. Fifteen year old Francisco Bernardone, also called Francis, lived nearby. In the future Clare and Francis would become closely linked as spiritual companions.

When it came to the education of Clare, Ortolana followed the procedure at the time. The advice given parents was "if the child be a girl set her to sew and not to read unless she wished to become a nun." Clare did not show any sign of wanting to become a nun but she certainly learned to read and write as well as to knit. It was an age, too, of

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much singing and playing. She enjoyed the French and Italian melodies and dance tunes which were played on little portable organs. Sometimes Ortolana would wonder how this little girl would turn out, so beautiful and charming, but given to prayer and always ready to give her candy to poor children.

There was a war at that time between Assisi and Perugia. When it was won by Perugia, Francisco's name came up. He had been imprisoned but acted so wild and happy while there that the other prisoners asked him "Why, so gay?" He said, "Because I see the day when the whole world will bow before me." That probably triggered a good laugh.

As time went on the wealthy charismatic Francisco continued to behave, according to some, like a mad man. He returned from war, sick with fever. Francisco went to his father's home and saw the birds on the rooftop in a new light. He turned his purpose toward the forgotten and poor, those treated unjustly, in the spirit of trust in God exemplified by the birds or the lilies of the field.

He threw off his father's cloth of gold and set off much like Santa Clara Valley "hippie" youth centuries later. A parallel can be drawn to the 1960s when affluent Palo Alto youth, some the children of Stanford professors, gave up privilege to follow ideals of civil rights, peace and simple living and ecology. Francis, who similarly had given up privilege to help the poor and oppressed, was constantly begging for stones to help with the restoration of a mud and thatch chapel devoted to Mary. One time he leaped onto a wall and addressed some peasant folks who were standing nearby. He spoke French in a high tone saying "Come and help me in the work on this convent, for here there will dwell devout women." By this time, a band of men, much like King Arthur's mythical

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knights, had come to follow Francis. One man said, “Brother Francis I want to be with you for the love of God.”

By this time Clare was 16 and stunning, with an oval face. Everyone looked at her and wondered whom she would marry. No one knew she wore a hair shirt under her very fine clothes. She charmed everyone with her good looks and kindness. She followed her mother’s teaching and example. Her family and friends thought she would make a magnificent marriage to some great and powerful lord. But Clare constantly opposed the plan. She would always give an evasive answer and completely committed her heart to serving God’s forgotten ones.

Francis was still preaching in the region. His appearance was awful. He always wore a dirty habit but God must have given him such powerful words because more and more people began to follow him. Some people said, “He seemed to those who beheld him as a man from another world, whose heart was set on Heaven, and his face turned upwards towards it seeking to draw others upwards with him.”

Clare hadn’t met Francis but she knew him by sight and Francis knew her by sight. Though younger, she was religious in her own right. Of course, they both wanted to meet each other. Finally, one day Francis did meet Clare and then she visited him many times. Sometimes she would leave her home in secret with an intimate female friend to see him. It is said that Clare was so “enlightened by the flaming torch of his speech,” she caught, as it were a “glimpse of the Beatific Vision.” From then on the things in the world seemed to her like dung. She decided to lay aside all thought of earthly marriage. After her meeting with Francis she decided to sell her possessions and distribute the proceeds to the poor.

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After Palm Sunday's liturgy, she fled from her father's house with one trusted companion and went to Santa Maria degli Angeli where the friars were keeping watch and singing the divine praises. She went to the chapel where the other knights of Francis' Round Table were waiting and knelt before the altar and made her profession, "I want only Jesus Christ and to live by the gospel owning nothing..." To seal this vow, Francis cut off her long blonde hair. Her fine clothes were taken off and he gave her the rough habit of poverty. Francis covered her head with the white veil of chastity and the coarse black veil of penance. Immediately after the ceremony, Francis took her to the Benedictine² monastery at Bastia.

When Clare's flight was discovered by her family, they were furious. The scandal was enormous and everyone said exactly what they would say today were the circumstances repeated. Except for the few who could understand, Francis and Clare appeared headstrong, selfish and unscrupulous. Men in the family besieged the convent. From their point of view Clare, at eighteen, had no right to choose something which they considered preposterous. Women then had little right to choose their own course. From this point on, Clare fought the constraints against religious women, even corresponding with the Pope.

Even after beginning her new life as a young woman following Francis, Clare had to defend herself from being dragged back by force. She spent lots of time in the chapel, there no one could touch her without committing a sacrilege.

The nuns in the convent were shaken by these scenes, especially during Holy

² Benedictine monks and nuns took orders to follow the "peace, prayer and work" ethic of Saint Benedict (Italy, ca 500 A.D.)

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Week. Clare was removed to another Benedictine convent in Panso. Francis, and two other brothers, Bernard and Philip, went with her. Within a few days after Clare's arrival in Panso, she was joined by her younger sister, Agnes, another runaway. Again the men took off to get Agnes. They entered the court yard of Panso and coldly demanded to see her. What did she think she was doing? They roughly asked her to go with them. Agnes answered that she would never leave Clare. They dragged her to the gate while she screamed for help. Peasants came running up at the sound of the tumult. By this time Agnes was lying on the ground, hardly conscious, her clothes torn. When one of the men tried to lift her to her feet, this fifteen year old girl was so strangely heavy that no one could lift her. The men gave up and turned away.

Now the Benedictine Dames sheltered Clare and Agnes and gave them their first experience of the religious life. Francis had felt called by God to the empty chapel in San Damiano which needed repair. The Bishop had given it to the sisters who were joined by five other men. It became a magnet. Some of the richest families in Assisi saw their daughters cast away all worldly advantages to follow Clare. Parents in Assisi were aghast that their young people would give up wealthy lives for a path devoted to Lady Poverty.

In the 1960s according to author Lynn Rogers, the youth of Santa Clara county, embracing folk music and Quaker ideals, were pioneers in a social movement for peace, that swept the nation. Though the negative influence of drugs was later introduced, some scholars assert, to stop the social movements for change, the original ideals have had far reaching influence. Just like in Clare's Assisi, droves of Santa Clara county young people followed an alternate and controversial path of idealism.

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To medieval Francis and Clare, from the beginning and always, poverty was the key note of their vocation. Clare even wrote to Pope Innocent III begging for this privilege. He was greatly gladdened at the fervor of this virgin and said no one had ever asked the Holy See for such a singular privilege.

Franciscan author Murray Bodo described Assisi as a wondrous place because of the timeless spiritual love between Francis and Clare. Francis called himself and Clare Brother Sun and Sister moon. “The sun and moon complemented each other and belonged together, and in Assisi they hung together in a cloudless sky every day.” Both Assisi and Santa Clara Valley have been described in very similar effusive terms.

Through the efforts of Francis, Clare and her sisters acquired the name of Poor Ladies of San Damiano. Together with Francis, they focused throughout the remainder of their respective lives, on the followings of Christ along the path of poverty, obedience and simplicity. Santa Clara Valley youth were given many privileges and advantages by parents who had endured the Great Depression and World War II. Many parents were distressed when their children adopted such extreme social justice paths, refusing to shop at the Stanford shopping center for example, in favor of dressing like Native Americans and sleeping on the ground.

Yet, like Francis and Clare and their young followers, these “60s” youth brought national attention to values of ecology and honoring earth based people that continue to have positive influences today. Friendship between the genders was celebrated. Charismatic figures like John and Yoko Lennon asked the youth through song to imagine a world of peace. Similarly, in the rare times they could be fully together, Francis and Clare rejoiced in the natural world. They created canticles or songs to honor all creatures

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as well as our earth and its natural elements.

“Praise be to our sister water, who is very serviceable to us, and humble and precious and clean.”

Unfortunately, in the tradition of religion at that time Clare was also very harsh on herself. (As was Francis). Both longed for love and family but punished themselves for this wish. (Francis once created seven figures out of snow, imagining they were a wife and children. Then he scourged himself with a rough rope, rebuking himself for his wish for a family.) Clare had two hair shirts and one of boar’s hide and one of knotted horsehair. She slept on vine twigs with a stone as her pillow. She had one tunic made of cheap, common, harsh cloth and no shoes, this was on the cold, stone floors of Assisi. Three days a week she ate and drank nothing.

Francis and his local Bishop went together to San Damiano and ordered Clare, by holy obedience, to eat at least one and half ounces of bread a day. No wonder after a few years she became a chronic invalid. She was strong enough, however, to repel invaders from Assisi through “miraculous prayers.” Clare later petitioned the Pope on womens’ religious rights to be able to live according to their own consciences.

In 1215 the Poor Ladies were recognized as a religious community and that year saw Francis in Rome for the Fourth Lateran³ Council. The Pope approved the new order of Friars. At this point in his life Francis was not in great health. He was always in great pain, almost blind, unable to walk but he wished to start on another mission. However,

³ The Lateran Palace in Rome was the site of a huge Papal council in 1215. More than 70 Papal decrees were discussed with Orthodox patriarchs and bishops, Catholic bishops, abbots, and friars, and representative of nobility.

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the Cardinal insisted that he go to Rieti to see an eye specialist. On his way, he stopped at Clare's and she made shoes for him as he could no longer go barefooted. The eye doctors he saw in Assisi and other places did not help. His sight never improved. He asked the last doctor to tell him the truth about his health. The doctor then told him he didn't have much time to live.

In the weeks Francis had left, he sent messages to all the Friars commending the Poor Ladies to their care. He sent notes to Clare and the nuns. Clare was not well herself at that time. She probably begged to go visit him. He didn't last and the funereal procession up to Assisi was one of triumph with songs and waving olive branches and lighted candles.

At the time of Francis's death, Ortolana, Clare's mother, joined the community of San Damiano where she took a vow of obedience to her own daughter. Many times Clare was too ill to follow the usual difficulties of community life. She had to face the daily question of poverty. As one nun said, "She lived in purity, humility, patience, correcting nuns when necessary but admonishing her sisters tenderly. She was assiduous in prayer and contemplation, in abstinence and fasting, harshness of bed and clothing, despising herself in favor of the love of God, in the desire for martyrdom and in love with the privilege of poverty."

The life in San Damiano flowed on. Clare's self-denying, but charismatic influence radiated in wide circles. The mission of simplicity spread in every direction. The Franciscans too were everywhere. New convents were continually being opened. In many places, several houses of Poor Ladies were built in the same town, especially in Europe.

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Clare was nearing fifty and her health was deteriorating but she still led the community life. She was described as one who healed the sick and cared for all in need. One day in May, the Pope arrived in Assisi. He consecrated a basilica⁴, canonized St. Stanislaus of Poland and went to San Damiano to see Clare. She was worn from her illness and then she was attacked with another affliction. As the summer came on Clare became weaker. The devotion and faith of the people increased. More and more thought she was a great saint. For 17 days she was unable to eat but the Lord gave her strength. Slowly, but still speaking to the nuns, Sister Clare passed away on Monday, August 11, 1243 at the age of 59.

Twenty seven years had passed since the death of Francis, 42 years had passed since Clare and Agnes, her sister, entered San Damiano. Miracles abounded at Clare's tomb. A raving lunatic was cured. A twelve year old boy who was blind got his sight back after touching Clare's tomb.

Both Francis and Clare had been warmly devoted to those society had forgotten and to earth's ecology. Their influence is echoed everywhere in our area, from Francis' namesake San Francisco to Santa Clara Valley, with university, city and county named after St. Clare.

⁴ After ancient Roman times, large and important churches were designated as basilicas, where special rites and ceremonies could be held.

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Santa Clara County is one of the most active counties in the United States, with many famous computer firms and our new addition, Mark Zuckerberg, developer of Facebook. Some busy valley residents, however, who are called away from nature and quietude, (so important to Clare) still work on behalf of causes she would have espoused.

Saint Clare, today most beloved by the Hispanic population of Santa Clara Valley, will always be remembered with her constant help of the poor. Even today, the Santa Clara Valley Medical Center welcomes the valley poor as patients, very much in the tradition of St. Clare.

Of course, Clare's namesake, Mission Santa Clara, blossomed with related place names. Most notable is the Santa Clara University which surrounds the original mission.

More Saints and Missions

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As part of the Spanish influence, many other saints' names join Saint Clare's in Santa Clara County. Their names are on streets (like San Tomas Aquino Rd--after the medieval scholar), parks, schools, children's centers, sports stadiums and clubs, hospitals, clinics and medical foundations, businesses of all kinds, on government entities like the Chamber of Commerce, on cemeteries, charitable foundations and of course, the popular Santa Teresa golf course and park. These were named by Jose Joaquin Bernal. He passed through the site in 1776, then returned in 1826 and established a ranch and called it Santa Teresa. He even established four to six adobes.

The Muwekma Ohlone Indians lived in the Santa Teresa area before the arrival of the Europeans. When Jose Bernal heard an Ohlone legend that credited a female spirit for creating a Santa Teresa Spring, thereby saving a tribe from disease, Bernal assumed the spirit of the Indian legend to be the Spanish Saint Teresa de Avila.

Like Clare, the Spanish Teresa was born into a prominent family in 16th Century Spain. After entering a contemplative Carmelite monastery, she became known for her visions and for her discourses on the oppressed. When golfers roam over the hillsides at "her" course, they enjoy nature. Teresa authored writings about God and nature; her Meditations were published by Bear and Company in 1985. Fr. Matthew Fox was the catalyst in reviving her work and was featured in San Jose State's fundraising efforts on behalf of disabled, autistic youth. San Jose was named after St. Joseph⁵.

The following poem by St. Teresa of Avila could reflect current efforts to honor nature in our valley.

⁵ Saint Joseph, patron saint of the universal church, has a Cathedral Basilica dedicated to him in downtown San Jose, California. Construction began in 1803.

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Preserving the Beauty:

It should be kept in mind here
That this shining fount,
the shining sun that is in the
center of the soul,
does not lose its
beauty and splendor

For just as the streams that form
A crystal fount are also clear,
The works of a soul in grace
Are most pleasing in the eyes of both
God and humankind
because they flow from the fount of life
in which the soul
is planted like a tree

There would be no freshness,
no fruit if it were not for
this fount sustaining the tree
preventing it from drying up
and causing it to
produce good fruit

When Bernal named the spring and ranch for the saint, rather than for the Native American deity, he followed many Christians who laid their traditions on top of those of early earth-based, native people. Today we are reexamining the Native American's roles and sufferings in the mission system. Their lives are written in trace pottery shards, seeds, and burial grounds.

With the sweat of their brow, the Native Americans Indians, called "Clarenos" here, built Mission Santa Clara. After it's first construction, it was moved several times due to earthquakes and floods.

The first mission lay near the old Guadalupe River at the site of today's San Jose

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airport. Goods taken by sea to Mission San Francisco de Asis were loaded onto oxcarts by “Clarenos” Indians who worked at Mission Santa Clara, heading for the dock at Alviso. After the river floods forced relocation, the mission relocated to the corner of today’s Martin and DeLa Cruz Roads.”

In 1926, the mission church built in 1825 burned, damaging bells once given by the King of Spain in 1799. The Santa Clara Mission influence can be seen today throughout the valley.

The Spanish founders would be astonished to see not only the beauty of some of the restored mission churches but the fantastic growth of the Santa Clara valley. The very large business center of Silicon Valley is producing the new world of computers and cellular phones.

Thus the county named after Saint Clare is one of the important business centers of the United States. President Obama visited recently to have dinner with the heads of the big firms. The area continues to explode with action and achievement that sometimes seems the very opposite of the contemplative, holy lives of saints introduced by the Spanish.

In Catholic saint lore, Clare is the patron of television. This association developed because, though sequestered, she had a knowledge of events at a distance, particularly those involving Francis. In addition, her impassioned prayers were believed to lead to miraculous events--could this have been a saintly form of networking? Other more substantial contrasts and comparisons can, however, be clearly drawn between the ideals surrounding St. Clare and the more recent developments in “her” valley.

Rogers asserts that Clare and Francis lived lives in parallel with Bay Area youth

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in the 1960s. The movie made in the 70s about Francis and Clare, Brother Sun and Sister Moon, influenced many Santa Clara youth of that time. In 2011, PBS filmmakers suggest that those Santa Clara Valley 1960s movements which emphasized the individual over corporation and military power, culminated with early electronic innovators designing the personal computer. Yet Immanuel Lutheran Pastor Lynn Bailey, asserted in April of 2011, that industry has taken us from quiet communion with nature to a cacophony of information overload. “We need times of contemplative silence.”

Today Santa Clara County is a wonderful mixture of individual creativity and technical overload, over-paving and ecological advances. Saints were seen as models for human spiritual potential. From Santa Clara Valley new ideas and ideals have emerged as world wide models. Although the Spanish, and Yankee (east coast Americans who exercised the “right” of eminent domain), cost many Native American their lives, today there is a high degree of racial harmony in Santa Clara Valley. San Jose has long been dubbed “the most integrated city in the nation.” Hispanic, white, black, Asian, and Native American residents live, work and play and worship together.

Despite tapping artesian wells, destroying orchards and the influx of smog, the valley is a leader in ecological restoration. The Don Edwards Wildlife Reserve and other wetlands preservations, for example, were established through legislation in 1968. Similarly, emphasis on animals rights have come to the forefront in Santa Clara Valley, recently with the new model animal shelter in Milpitas focusing on the unique human-animal bond. Saint Clare who wrote with Francis about all of God’s creatures, would be proud.

Los Gatos

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Los Gatos is Spanish for “the cats.” Thus the town bears one of countless examples of secular Spanish names stamped on Santa Clara Valley’s culture and community. Since Clare was devoted to “creatures” it is interesting that one of the most charming towns in Santa Clara Valley was named after animals.

The saga of Los Gatos, the town where I live, was shaped in 1839, when Jose Hernandez left San Jose to seek more land. He and his party stayed overnight in the Santa Cruz Mountains. While there they heard the frightening noise of two wild cats. They decided then to call the area “Rinconada de Los Gatos” meaning the corner of the cats.

Later the mission padres made their way from Monterey to the Santa Clara mission by way of the Santa Cruz Mountains. At night they made camp beside a creek. Of the three padres, two woke up in the morning raving about the views. The third one hadn’t slept a wink. The wild cats kept approaching the camp and the padre kept throwing sticks of fire at them. He said, “You may call this place Grand Vista or Paradise if you like but I shall name it after the pesky varmints that kept me up most of night and call it “Los Gatos.”

The name has stuck. In 1922 Robert Paene sculpted two large statues of cats. They were to guard the home of Charles and Sara Wood who lived on the Old Santa Cruz Highway. The Woods chose cats as their subject because they believed that there was no more dignified and beautiful subject for sculptures than members of the feline family. They put the cats right in front of their house. They thought “The Cats” would impress people with the fact the sculptures can be used to beautify our highways.

Today, the sculptures are blocked from public view because Highway 17

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bypasses them, but the Spanish name for cats is stamped on all of this Los Gatos lore.



Spanish Architecture

The indelible Spanish stamp in Santa Clara County can not only be seen at Mission Santa Clara, but in other mission-inspired architecture in our area. When the Spanish were traveling through California establishing missions, the first building they made was the chapel. The padres had limited resources to work with and used readily produced adobe brick⁶. The walls had to be thick and the arches squat simply to support their own weight. The long eaves and graceful overhangs served to protect the adobe walls from the elements. The rounded roof tiles served the same purpose.

The mission churches clearly show the influence of their Spanish homeland. It was difficult for the padres to construct a four-sided bell tower in the churches. They chose, in most cases, to construct a single high wall with clean, arched spaces where the bells could hang.

The interiors were even more inventive. The padres didn't have stone cutters or masons. They *painted* three dimensional columns, niches, alcoves and balconies, a plethora of decorative trompe l'oeils that added a delightful touch to the plain plastered surfaces of their rudimentary buildings.

Within the last few decades, restoration has been accomplished with scientific accuracy. Old records, drawings and photographs have been studied. Archeologists have traced foundation lines, floor patterns, and outlines of buildings long since departed.

Now, the present day traveler can see and explore more missions than have been

⁶ A mixture of sand, clay and water, plus fiber such as dried grass, was formed into bricks and baked dry in the sun. These bricks were used to build houses and other buildings. Many of these places are now known to have an "adobe" architecture.

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accessible for nearly a century. The intrinsic interest varies from mission to mission. Viewed simply as structures, missions are interesting in their own right. Together with the Spanish ranch house, they have exerted a powerful influence over the residential and commercial architecture of California.



Spanish architecture shows up in many buildings built around patios. They featured the covered arcades common in Spain and Mexico. The wide eaves and roofed corridors are appealing features in the buildings and serve to shield the soluble walls from rain. All the exposed surfaces were plastered with lime stucco⁷. Many Silicon Valley homes and business buildings are designed in this fashion. One example is the Pruneyard Shopping Center in Campbell, completed at the onset of the 1970s. Shoppers can enjoyed mission style patios and gardens.

The padres liked the embellishment of the mission as an aid to worship. Masons

⁷ A mixture of water, lime and sand (or other similar components) was used as plaster for walls and ceilings. Stucco could be highly ornamental or merely functional.

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and artisans were imported from New Spain and set to work with Indian laborers to decorate the inside of the church and chapel.

Decorations extended to more than adornments. Benches, tables, chairs, pulpits and confessionals were decorated with interesting wood carvings. Stone masons chipped local granite into baptismal fonts. Then mission Indians shaped iron bars into filigreed gates and window gratings. Elaborate crosses were made to surmount the roof.

The missions have enriched California and to a certain degree the nation. Houses with tiled roofs, arches and adobe walls can be seen in cities as far as Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In Santa Clara Valley, old mission sites are a silent underpinning to busy valley life. Few of us fail to pass over the early mission sites in our daily activities.

From the trading vessels of New England came the first indication that the province of Spain might be doomed. The captains of the Boston ships would return home with great reports of favorable conditions in California.

Collapse of the Spanish Mission System

The mission settlements had been founded during the dying years of the Spanish empire. The Spanish in California were devoted to extending the faith. The authority of the Spanish Crown which dominated the world for two and half centuries was then being challenged within its own dominions by its colonies and outside by the growing strength of new empires being built by England and the Netherlands.

One after another, the colonies seceded from Spain. In 1810 New Spain broke away from the mother country and set itself up as the Republic of Mexico. The Mexican government decided that after the missions had fulfilled their function of “civilizing the

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Indians” in ten years time, they were to be replaced by a colonial institution called the Pueblo. The church was allowed to retain its priests’ gardens and their living quarters. The remaining mission buildings were to be used for public services for the new town. The Pueblo needed space so a piece of square open land was set aside for the Spanish town. Each Indian was at last granted land for a residence and for raising crops. In 1830 only 21 pieces of property were in private hands. But by now a huge Native population had been decimated by disease. Many of the poor “Clarenos,” ironically named after the saint who worked for the poor and downtrodden, fled her mission for the safety of the hills.

The mission system collapsed, one site after the other. The buildings were divided into public and religious segments. At times an actual wall was built through a patio. Mission orchards, herd pastures, and food stocks disappeared rapidly into private hands.

After the Yankee American occupation, some of the lands and buildings were returned to the church by Acts of Congress in the 1850s and 1860s. By then some of the structures had fallen to pieces. Other buildings had been leased out or rented to private parties to become stores, bars and inns. Junipero Serra’s chapel was used for hay storage.

Roofs collapsed when the reeds and timbers rotted out beneath the heavy tiles.

Decades later some public spirited people began to take an interest in the missions. Artists discovered their picturesque decay. They recorded their beauty in etchings, water colors and oils. The paintings and photographs attracted general interest in the missions. Early in the 1900, they became tourist destinations.

Spanish designs continue to exert a powerful influence over the residential and

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commercial architecture of California schools, libraries, courthouses, stores, universities like Stanford, railroad stations, theaters, and homes built with a Spanish mission flavor, are the cornerstones of our culture. Such copied designs usually include a building built around a patio, with decorations around doors and windows.

Some original mission churches still vibrate with “barbaric (sic) color chosen to please the Indians.” Original reds, greens and blues derived from pigments in the soil or in berries, lichens, and moss still glow on the walls and ceilings and in wreaths on windows, doors and niches.

But the echo of the mission life can be best heard in the Spanish names that still saturate Santa Clara Valley. Most are the names of saints like Santa Clara de Assisi, or Saint Clare, but some are secular. All have made an indelible stamp upon valley culture.

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