

# HISTORY

## EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE SANTA CLARA VALLEY

The Santa Clara Valley was first investigated by Europeans in the late 1760s. The reports of several exploratory parties, particularly that of Juan Bautista de Anza and Father Pedro Font in 1776, resulted in the establishment in 1777 of Mission Santa Clara and Pueblo San Jose de Guadalupe in the vicinity of what is now San Jose (Beck and Haase 1974:17). The Project area is located to the north and east of the Pueblo's original location. One of the settlement's economic mainstays was raising herds of cattle for the hide and tallow trade. Thus, the Project area may have been in use during the Spanish and Mexican periods for pasturing cattle.

The Gold Rush and the subsequent economic and population boom of the San Francisco Bay area led to the rapid development of livestock and grain-farming ventures—particularly wheat, oats, and barley—throughout the Santa Clara Valley. The valley was not only fertile and well watered, but close to important Bay area markets. The growth of agriculture in the valley was assisted by the development of a railroad link to San Francisco in 1864 and the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. It quickly became apparent that rather than grain crops, the Santa Clara Valley could be more profitably used for growing fruit, and acreage dedicated to fruit production began to increase from the 1870s. Successful experiments in fruit drying and canning led to the establishment of a modern fruit-drying plant, the Alden Fruit and Vegetable Preserving Company in 1874, and Dr. James Dawson's fruit cannery at 21st and Julian streets by 1872. These experiments prompted the establishment of dozens of small-scale canneries and processors. The availability of land and subsurface water for irrigation encouraged many small-scale entrepreneurs to plant orchards. Between 1890 and 1900 the number of small farms (less than 100 acres in size) in Santa Clara County doubled, from 1,427 to 3,057 (Lukes and Okihiro 1985:15). By 1880 Santa Clara County was the preeminent California county in terms of the value of its orchard products. Orchards, canneries, and packinghouses were among the major employers for San Jose's workers (Chan 1986:227).

## DEVELOPMENT OF HEINLENVILLE CHINATOWN

### Chinese Settlement in the Santa Clara Valley

Among these workers were significant numbers of Chinese immigrants. The Chinese had first come to California in large numbers during the Gold Rush. Most came from the Kwangtung or Guangdong province of China, driven to immigrate by droughts, floods, and social upheaval. The majority came from impoverished, rural backgrounds. They planned to send money home and to ultimately return themselves to their villages with wealth gained from working in *Gum San*, or Gold Mountain (Young Yu 1991:4). Chinese immigrants to the Pacific Coast were generally from the Sze Yup (mostly from Toisan), Heungsan (later known as Chungsan), and Sam Yup districts of Kwangtung province. Stepping off the boat in ports such as San Francisco, they were met by representatives from their *hui guin*, or district association, who would guide them into employment opportunities. Once immigrants arrived in America, "Where they came from, their villages, their dialect, their district determined where they would live and work" (Young Yu

**Table 1. Chinese and Japanese Populations  
in Santa Clara County, 1860–1940**

Year	Chinese	Japanese
1860	22	-
1870	1,525	-
1880	2,695	-
1890	2,723	27
1900	1,738	284
1910	1,064	2,299
1920	839	2,981
1930	761	4,320
1940	555	4,049

From Lukes and Okihiro (1985:19)

1991:4). Immigrants quickly transferred clan kinship and loyalties from home into family and district associations and tongs, which were to become such important organizing institutions within American Chinatowns (Young Yu 1991:4).

From the 1860s to the 1880s, Chinese workers came in large numbers to the Santa Clara Valley seeking work in orchards, strawberry fields, farms, mining, manufacturing, and as domestic help (Allen et al. 2002:12; Chan 1986:129). They became a crucial source of cheap labor to the valley's embryonic fruit-growing industry. The Chinese population in the Santa Clara Valley grew rapidly from the 1860s through the 1890s, as indicated by the biennial U.S. Census (Table 1). The actual population at any one time, however, could vary considerably. Since many Chinese were itinerant seasonal workers in the construction or agricultural industries, it is likely that Santa Clara's population was much higher during the summer harvest season. Most of these workers were men, either single or with wives and families waiting in China for their return. They were an attractive workforce for farmers and developers, willing to work for significantly smaller wages than their Euroamerican counterparts, and with the reputation of dependability, adeptness, and efficiency (Daniels 1988:19). Many found work in the Santa Clara Valley orchards and fields: it has been estimated that in 1880, 32.8 percent of farm labor in the county was provided by Chinese (Chan 1986:306, Table 25).

### Early Chinese Settlement in San Jose

#### Market Street and Vine Street Chinatowns.

The first Chinatown in San Jose was developed at the intersection of Market and San Fernando streets by the late 1860s. When this was destroyed by fire in 1870, the Chinese community relocated to Vine Street, adjacent to the Guadalupe River. The 1870 Census revealed that this Chinatown was the home of over 500 Chinese, including several families with young children, and 75 female prostitutes. By 1872, however, the Vine Street Chinese community had returned to its original central location on Market Street. This reoccupied Chinatown contained an array of shops and services and served as an important civic and social center for Chinese workers in the Santa Clara Valley. San Jose residents from

the 1870s remembered that, on weekends, Chinese employed on Alviso strawberry farms came into Chinatown to socialize and pick up supplies (Young Yu 1991:23).

### Anti-Chinese Activism

Chinese immigrants had faced prejudice and hostility since their first arrival in California during the Gold Rush. Exacerbated by widespread economic depression in the 1870s, labor and political agitators stirred public feeling against Chinese workers and Chinese immigration. Nativist organizations such as the Anti-Coolie Association and the Supreme Order of the Caucasians lobbied for boycotts of Chinese labor. The Chinese workers' reputation for cheapness and dependability stood them in good stead, however, and they continued to find employment with West Coast manufacturers and farmers, who needed their low-priced labor to compete with East Coast counterparts. Heightened public emotions, however, led to numerous riots and attacks on Chinatowns throughout the American West, including Denver, Tacoma, Eureka, Chico, and Truckee (Young Yu 1991:13). In 1882 the U.S. Government passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which prohibited immigration of Chinese laborers, and prevented those already in the country from easily returning after visits home.

San Jose proved to be no exception to the rising tide of anti-Chinese sentiment. Incidents of public abuse and even stoning became commonplace, encouraging San Jose's Chinese residents to stick closely to the security of Chinatown. Many of San Jose's most prominent businesses boasted that they only employed "first class white labor" (Young Yu 1991:25, 27). The anti-coolie movement's pressure to only hire white labor made little impact on Santa Clara farmers, who not only could not afford to do without low-cost Chinese labor; many had also developed close working relationships with their long-term Chinese employees. Plans in the early 1880s by the City of San Jose to modernize the town led to calls to remove the Market Street Chinatown from its prominent downtown location, but on 4 May 1887, arson completely destroyed the quarter. The *San Jose Daily Herald* of the following day announced that, "Chinatown is dead. It is dead forever" (cited in Young Yu 1991:30). Reports of Chinatown's demise however, were much exaggerated, since within 10 days prominent Chinese merchants, working with local businessman John Heinlen, were already making plans for a new Chinatown on Heinlen's land at Fifth and Taylor streets. At the same time, some of the displaced Market Street community moved to the vicinity of the San Jose Woolen Mills factory, which employed large numbers of Chinese. The Woolen Mills Chinatown, buoyed by employment opportunities in nearby factories and canneries, survived until 1902, when it was destroyed by fire (Allen et al. 2002:9–11).

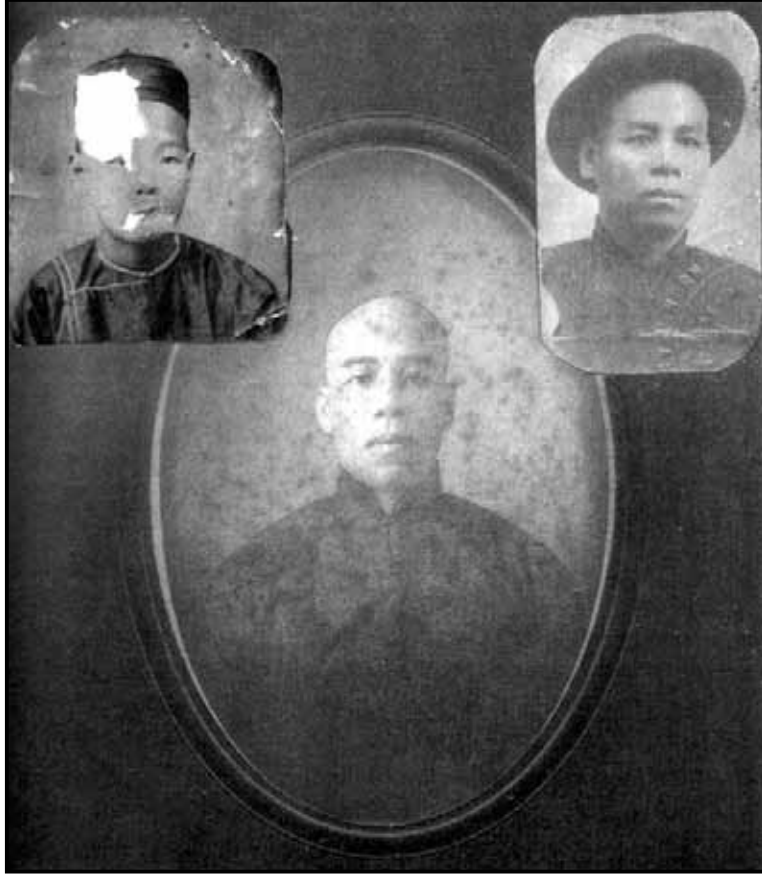
### Establishment of Heinlenville

John Heinlen was a German immigrant who established himself in San Jose as a farmer and businessman. His assistance to the Chinese provoked immense public outrage. At a time when those whites who supported the Chinese were seen as race-traitors, Heinlen's actions seemed inexplicable to many (Young Yu 1991:13). An intensely private man, neither he nor his family ever expressed the reason behind his steady support for San Jose's Chinese. Despite public meetings, lawsuits, and threats, in mid-1887 Heinlen retained prominent local architect Theodore Lenzen, who was also commissioned to design San Jose's new City Hall, to design what he and the Chinese merchants intended to be a

permanent home for San Jose's Chinese population. Aware of the history of arson attacks against San Jose's Chinatowns, and seeking to avoid furnishing the public with further ammunition, Heinlen and his Chinese collaborators specified that the new Chinatown was to be built in brick, and would be supplied with both piped water and sewers. Quen Hing Tong signed the master lease with Heinlen for \$1,500 per month (Pfaelzer 2007:238).

Lenzen's plans outlined six blocks of structures, some two-storied, with restaurants and stores lining Cleveland Street (referred to by residents as Cleveland Avenue – pers. com. Young Yu 2007), and dwellings and tenements along the secondary Clay, Dupont and Kearney streets (named after streets in San Francisco's Chinatown). Streets were dirt with wooden boardwalks. A water tank and artesian well on Seventh Street supplied piped water. Rents were set for each of the buildings according to their size and use, with Heinlen paying the necessary property taxes. Sanborn Company fire insurance maps (1884/1887, 1884/1889, 1891, 1884/1897, 1891/1901, 1915, 1891/1921, 1915/1929, 1915/1930, 1915/1932, 1915/1939, 1915/1950, 1915/1956, 1915/1957, 1915/61, and 1915/1969) provide detailed information on the physical configuration and development of the settlement. Tenants of the new buildings included general merchandise stores, butchers, and tongs and district associations. Families lived in the back or above their stores, while headquarters of district associations such as the Sze Yup and Yeung Wo housed many of the bachelor workers (Young Yu 1991:39–40). In order to ensure both security and privacy for the residents, Heinlen requested that the new Chinatown be surrounded by a high wooden fence topped with barbed wire. Gates in the fence, located on Taylor, Sixth, and Seventh streets, were locked each night, and the area patrolled by a white guard hired by the Chinese community leaders. Signs in English were posted at each entrance announcing "No Entrance" and "Private Grounds"; under trespass common law, the Chinese, being legal tenants, could control access to Chinatown. White agitators tore down signs and parts of the fence, which were always rebuilt (Pfaelzer 2007:238). Chinese workers also constructed a large temple for the five deities, the Ng Shing Gung on Cleveland near Taylor Street, to serve all districts and dialects represented in the town. For the Chinese community of San Jose, it was a promising new start, at a time when anti-Chinese laws and regulations were curtailing the options of other Chinese immigrants throughout the United States.

Heinlenville (also called the "Sixth Street Chinatown," "Cleveland Avenue," or *San-Doy-Say Tong Yun Fow* by its Chinese residents) quickly became the center for Chinese life in San Jose. It contained not only the Ng Shing Gung temple, but a variety of merchants, butchers, barbers, traditional doctors, and medicinal herb shops. By the early part of the 20th century, the main stores were Sing Chong (groceries and meat), Tuck Wo (merchandise and groceries), Kwong Wo Jan (merchandise, groceries, and some herbs; Figure 11), and Kow Kee (which sold roast pork from pigs butchered in town). Other stores included an herb and drug store operated by Wong Lo Shun; Kwong Sang Wo (fish, meat, poultry, and vegetables); and Kwong Lun Hing (dry goods). By the 1920s, three small clothing manufacturing businesses, along with at least three restaurants, operated in Heinlenville—the best known of them being the Ken Ying Low Restaurant operated by the Ng family. Many of the Heinlenville stores were associated either with a particular clan or Chinese region, such as the Sze Yup. For instance, the Ken Ying Low restaurant's owners sponsored the immigration of many Ng clan members, who would work in the



**Figure 11.** Passport and identification photographs of Young Soong Quong. A long term resident of Heinlerville, he came to the United States as a laborer in 1881 at the age of 11, and eventually opened the Kwong Wo Jan store at 34 Cleveland Avenue (Young Yu 1991:66–67). *Courtesy of Connie Young Yu.*

restaurant for a time to pay off the cost of their passage from the home country (Young Yu 1991:63, 65).

### Ng Shing Gung Temple

The heart of the new community was the Ng Shing Gung Temple. As a Taoist temple it did not hold organized services, but was a place to pray and make offerings of food or whiskey (Chan 1990:3). The temple altar was on the second story, while community activities including a Chinese language school were located on the ground floor. The temple building also housed a caretaker (Chan 1990:4). Religion was the center of many Chinese festivities in Heinlerville, including the preeminent annual festival of *Da Jiu* that drew people from Chinese communities across northern California (Figure 12). This event, celebrated in the summer, was based on a traditional Cantonese village festival, and honored the departed; its name literally meant ‘feeding the hungry ghosts’ (Young Yu 1991:57). The festival, which ran for four days and three nights, included Chinese opera staged with hired singers and an orchestra, as well as feasts and the parading and hanging outside of the temple of 8- to 10-foot-tall papier-mâché effigies of deities, which were later burned. Community members and businesses, particularly gambling houses, contributed the funds required to stage the festival (Eng 1990:4; Lee 1990:2).



**Figure 12.** The Ng Shing Gung temple hung with papier-mâché guardian effigies during Da Jui “Feast of Hungry Ghosts” (Young Yu 1991:56). *Courtesy of History San José*

### Agricultural Workers and Heinlerville

Heinlerville operated as a support center for Chinese farmers and farmworkers in Santa Clara Valley, who visited town regularly for supplies, social contact, and entertainment. Most of the actual residents of Heinlerville owned stores, restaurants, or gambling parlors. Many of the merchants were in partnership with merchants from San Francisco Chinatown (District Court of the U.S. in and for the Northern District of California 1894). People often lived behind or above their businesses rather than having a separate dwelling: “The front part is the store, the back part is the living quarters, the kitchen, the bedroom” (Wong 1990:3, 5, 7). Connie Young Yu recounts an old saying among Overseas Chinese: there were three types of businesses open to them: laundries, restaurants, and gambling. Although laundries and restaurants were indeed important in Heinlerville, gambling was the economic mainstay of the community (Young Yu 1991:71). It played not only a crucial economic role, but was an important social activity. Gambling parlors provided free food and snacks, increasing their appeal to workers (Lee 1990:10). Gambling games included not only *fan-tan*, but *pai gow*, a domino game, and the lottery, also known as *baakgapbiu*, or ‘pigeon ticket.’ Although there were dedicated gambling parlors, it was not uncommon for stores such as the Sing Chong store to include a partitioned gambling

section. Customers included Chinese and Asian agricultural workers, Japantown residents, and also white men. While gambling was illegal in San Jose, authorities generally turned a blind eye to the gambling in Heinlenville (Young Yu 1991:72, 75).

Many workers in the seasonal business of farm laboring paid for room and board in Heinlenville stores and businesses during their down periods: “People who work on the farms, they use that like a headquarters. When they’re not working, they board, room and board there. Of course, when the season’s on, then they stay at the ranches. So [Heinlenville] it’s more or less like a boarding house. . . . There’s no families. And . . . they just wait out the season till the next season comes around” (Lee 1990:3–4). Seasonal workers clustered around the stores and businesses that were closely associated with their district association or clan. Such stores often operated as labor contractors and offered the men small services such as lending money, pawning goods, storing possessions, and providing an address at which to receive mail: “one of the most important things in those times were receiving mail from their families in China” (Lee 1990:4; Young Yu 1991:63).

### District Associations and Tongs

For many such bachelor immigrants, tongs and district associations took the place of family in providing security, companionship, and a sense of identity. District associations were open to all from a particular Chinese region. They assisted in immigration and legal matters, facilitated the return of a member’s remains to China in the event of death, and were local liaisons with the Chinese Six Companies, which was the group of district associations that coordinated Chinese immigrant protests against discriminatory state and federal laws. The three major district associations in Heinlenville were the Sze Yup, Sam Yup, and Yeung Wo (mostly Heungsan people). The Sze Yup had their headquarters on Clay Street, with the first floor being a boarding house for single men, and the district association rooms, located on the second floor, containing an altar (Young Yu 1991:68). Disputes in Heinlenville were customarily settled by a council of male elders made up of heads of stores, associations and tongs. Similar to the Chinese district associations was the Chee Kong Tong or Chinese Free Masons. This organization, which took members regardless of their origin region in China, was prominent not only in Heinlenville but also in the Chinatowns of Monterey, Salinas, and Watsonville (Young Yu 1991:69).

Tongs however became the most notorious manifestation of group societies in U.S. Chinatowns: former residents of Heinlenville noted that they played a substantial role in the community’s life (Wong 1990:4). Tongs were essentially racketeering organizations, prominent particularly in the gambling business. There were two main tongs in San Jose: the Hop Sing and the Hip Sing. Each maintained headquarters in Heinlenville, with the Hop Sing Headquarters being located, ca. 1912, at 28 Cleveland Street. The tongs were deeply involved in the gambling business in Heinlenville, resulting in several so-called Tong wars, including the most famous incident in 1923, when armed tong members drove down Cleveland Street and two men were killed. Most gambling operators would join one of the tongs for their own protection, although coercion was not involved (Eng 1996:10–11): unlike other racketeering organizations, tongs did not exhort protection money or otherwise prey on the community. In Heinlenville, tong heads and members lived as part of the community and were major contributors to community organizations and ventures (Young Yu 1991:70). Each tong would hold an annual feast in a local restaurant (Lee 1990:10–11).



**Figure 13.** Mr. And Mrs. Young Soong Quong and their sons, Ming (George) and Jun (John). Young Soong Quong and his wife were reunited after a separation of sixteen years when she was permitted to immigrate to the U.S. (Young Yu 1991:68). *Courtesy of Connie Young Yu.*

## Women and Families in Heinlerville

By the 1920s, the bachelor society that had characterized Heinlerville's early years was all but gone. James Chan, who was born in 1917 in Heinlerville, remembers only four or five elderly single men remaining in the town (Chan 1990:7). Chinese merchants, who were the bulk of Heinlerville's householders, had been allowed under the 1882 Exclusion Act to bring their families from China (Figure 13). The role of women and children in increasing the permanence of Chinese communities was decried by many Euroamerican commentators. Judge Lorenzo Sawyer, who presided over the case resulting from the expulsion of the Chinese community from Eureka in 1885, noted that if Chinese immigrants "never bring their women here and never multiply . . . , their presence would always be an advantage to the State. . . . When the Chinaman . . . don't bring his wife here, sooner or later he dies like a worn out steam engine, he is simply a machine, and don't leave two or three or half a dozen children to fill his place" (Sawyer, cited in Pfaelzer 2007:208). The growing presence of women and children

did change the character of Heinlerville (Figure 14). Wives helped run stores, and looked after children. While many who had come from China in the early years continued to wear traditional clothing, later wives and their daughters increasingly adopted more westernized styles. The town's children, who attended Chinese language school from 5 to 8 p.m. in the temple, also attended American school during the day (Chan 1990:4). They played baseball and other games in a small field across from the temple, and often played baseball against kids from Japantown (Eng 1990:4; Lee 1990:6). Only a few Chinese families lived outside of the protection and familiarity offered by Heinlerville (Wong 1990:3). One that did was the family of Pauline Wong; she notes that her father was very Americanized and although the family visited in Heinlerville, he chose to distance himself from the community (Wong 1990:3).

## Heinlerville and the Broader San Jose Community

Heinlerville flourished despite continued political and public harassment, including the federal Geary Act in 1892 that extended the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act for another 10 years, and required all Chinese residents to file for a certificate of registration—the hated *chak chee*, or photo passport which had to be carried everywhere—or to face deportation (Young Yu 1991:45). The passage of the Geary Act, fought against ferociously by the San Francisco Six Companies, was seen as an enormous blow to the U.S. Chinese community—



**Figure 14.** Sam (Wah Leh) Lee and James (Mun Gai) Chan playing in Heinlerville, ca. 1918. Sam Lee's father owned two stores in Heinlerville, while James Chan's father worked as a cook at the Ken Ying Low Restaurant (Young Yu 1991:63). *Courtesy of Connie Young Yu*

local San Jose papers recorded “Mourning in two Chinatowns” upon its passing. The community also faced local harassment. In the fall of 1891, Heinlerville merchant Quen Hing Tong sued the mayor and police commissioner of San Jose, accusing them of using three “Special Police Officers” to patrol Chinatown stores, and intimidate residents and customers. The plaintiffs submitted affidavits from 10 Chinese merchants who claimed that because of the constant presence of the three officers, they were two months behind in rent and owed two thousand dollars (Circuit Court of the United States, Ninth Judicial Circuit and Northern District of California v.d.; Pfaelzer 2007:241). The case, although ultimately unsuccessful, did place anti-Chinese activists on notice that the Heinlerville community would resist any attempts to drive them from their homes and businesses.

The Chinese community gradually expanded into the vacant land to the south of its original Heinlerville buildings, intermingling with the surrounding Japanese settlement that had begun establishing itself there in the 1890s. Relations between the two communities were cordial, even if there was little active socializing. Tuck Wo general merchandise store on the corner of Cleveland and Clay streets was popular with the Japanese, as it was the first store to extend them credit in the 1890s. Japanese families and farm workers would come into Heinlerville restaurants on the weekends for Chinese dinners (Lee 1990:7). Overall however, Heinlerville remained a true enclave within the broader San Jose community—it was very rare to see non-Chinese there: “You very seldom see Caucasians inside of Heinlerville. Mostly the Chinese, whole families, play with each other, talk to each other. They shop there, then they go back home—which is within Heinlerville itself” (Chan 1990:4).

Heinlerville was also surrounded by a sizable Italian neighborhood. The Italians and Chinese appear to have had relatively harmonious relations, with the Heinlerville children, at least, noticing little discrimination (Chan 1990:6; Lee 1990:5, 7; Wong 1990:3). The major reason for this was the integrated school system in San Jose, which was often not the case in other Asian communities, such as Sacramento Delta towns. Another ethnic

group that settled in the vicinity of Heinlenville towards the end of the 19th century were members of San Jose's gradually increasing African American community. African Americans rented rooms in Chinese-run boarding houses, and even purchased property on the fringes of Heinlenville.

John Heinlen died in December 1903. His children continued as landlords for Chinatown and maintained their father's tradition of cordial and respectful dealings with the Chinese community. Two of Heinlen's children, Mary and Marion Albert, personally walked around the stores of Heinlenville to collect rents. Heinlenville suffered damage in the 1906 earthquake although it was not comparable to Chinatown in San Francisco, which was largely destroyed. Local merchants took the opportunity to remodel and expand buildings. The period following the earthquake was one of general prosperity due to the booming times in the local agricultural industries (Young Yu 1991:60).

## DISSOLUTION OF HEINLENVILLE

Despite Heinlenville's early success, its population began to dwindle during the 1920s. Young Chinese Americans who had grown up in the community saw their future in business or industry rather than the traditional jobs of keeping stores or gambling parlors. Filipino workers were beginning to flood into the Santa Clara Valley, filling the void left as the aging Chinese farm workforce retired or returned to China. The 1882 Exclusion Act and 1892 Geary Act had prevented any new immigration of Chinese laborers to take their place. Heinlenville had traditionally operated as a service center for Chinese farm laborers. As they disappeared from Santa Clara Valley, Heinlenville began to suffer (Lee 1990:9). In addition, people found that they could increasingly afford better housing outside the confines of the original, aging Heinlenville buildings, as did James Chan's family: "we moved out. . . . find a little better place to live, and as we move out nobody would move into these shacks. . . . And one by one they boarded it up, and pretty soon there's no one there at all" (Chan 1990:4). Many moved into nearby Japantown, while others left and went to San Francisco Chinatown (Wong 1990:4). By the early 1930s, Santa Clara County's Chinese population had decreased to less than 1,000 people (Table 1). The Depression had a severe effect on the John Heinlen Company, which had remained Heinlenville's landlord. Suffering from the effects of a collapsing rental market, the Company declared bankruptcy in 1931. The Chinatown land was sold to cover the Company debts, and the buildings began to be razed the same year; many remaining residents moved to Sixth and Jackson streets, traditionally part of Japantown (Young Yu 1991:108).

The advent of World War II severely impacted San Jose's Japantown when the entire Japanese community was evacuated and sent to the assembly center at Tanforan for assignment to internment camps. The repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943 and changing social attitudes removed much of the impetus for Chinese-Americans to gather in Chinatowns for protection and support, and the community began to slowly disperse. In 1949 the Ng Shing Gung temple, the last symbol of Heinlenville was demolished. The block bounded by Taylor, Jackson, Sixth and Seventh streets was gradually taken over by the City of San Jose for use as a Corporation Yard, and the remains of Chinatown were buried under asphalt and buildings.

## DEVELOPMENT OF SIXTH STREET NIHONMACHI – JAPANTOWN

### Japanese Immigration to California

In 1853 after 200 years in which contact with foreign traders was strictly controlled, Japan was forced to open itself to U.S. trade and diplomatic relations by Commodore Matthew Perry. By 1868, the Meiji Restoration heralded a period of intense social and cultural upheaval in Japan that resulted in the rapid industrialization and modernization of the society and the imposition of westernized military reforms. During this period, many in Japan developed an enormous interest in western culture, including U.S. democratic ideals. From 1869, young Japanese men began arriving in California intent on pursuing education and cultural enrichment before returning home. These were the first Japanese immigrants to the United States. Due to social and economic upheavals wrought by the processes of modernization, however, these young men were rapidly succeeded by immigrants from Japan's traditional peasant class, who sought financial opportunities and social advance not available in their home country. From the 1880s U.S. legal barriers to Japanese immigration were relaxed, greatly encouraging the flow of immigrants to Hawaii and the West Coast (Carey & Co. 2006:3).

### The Japanese in Santa Clara County Agriculture

While Chinese labor was an essential component in the early development of Santa Clara's fruit-growing and processing industries, the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act halted the flow of new Chinese laborers into California. This shift presented a crisis for fruit growers, who initially tried to cope with the decreased availability of Chinese workers by hiring white labor, namely Portuguese and Italians. The growers found that "it was more inconvenient to obtain them [white men] than it had been to obtain the Chinese because they were not organized into groups, did not remain on the ranch year after year as the typical Chinese had done, and were not so skillful in their work" (U.S. Immigration Commission, *Reports: Immigrants in Industries XXIV* 1911:200, cited in Lukes and Okihiro 1985:20). Growers and fruit packers eventually turned to Asian immigrant groups many of which came from agricultural backgrounds, such as those from Japan and the Philippines, to provide handwork while they retained white workers (including ethnic whites such as southern European immigrants) for supervisory and teamster roles (Lukes and Okihiro 1985:20). Japanese immigrants began to move into the valley in large numbers after 1900 (Table 1). These new workers readily found work in the seed farms, orchards, and strawberry fields of the valley, alongside members of the gradually dwindling Chinese labor force.

The Issei, or first-generation Japanese immigrants, were largely a mobile, bachelor society, whose members generally intended to work and then return to Japan, a practice that came to be called *dekasegi rodo*, from the phrase for traditional trips of country dwellers to the city in search of temporary, seasonal work (Aoki 1998:Footnote 25). California's Japanese immigrants followed the crops alongside other immigrant laborers—the Chinese, Filipinos or southern Europeans. They worked either through the Sacramento Delta and Central Valley, or south through coastal valleys to Salinas and San Luis Obispo. Workers might arrive in the Santa Clara Valley to work the strawberry crop from April through June, staying on through August for the apricot, pear, and prune harvest, and then on to Fresno in the late summer to pick grapes (Lukes and Okihiro 1985:21). Aiding the Japanese

workers in their search for work in Santa Clara Valley was the traditional method of using labor contractors to obtain necessary workers. The Japanese, like the Chinese and other immigrant groups such as the Italians, readily participated in systems of ethnicity-based labor contracting and labor gangs (Lukes and Okihiro 1985:21).

Until about 1907, Japanese labor was welcomed in the United States as an alternative to the Chinese; in 1905 the *San Jose Mercury* could state that “we are learning to dissociate the Chinese and the Japanese—and to the later [sic] we now attribute many of the national characteristics that the European nations admire and possess” (*San Jose Mercury* 18 January 1905, cited in Lukes and Okihiro 1985:50). In the aftermath of the 1905 Russo-Sino War, however, as America began to recognize the military potential of the Japanese, many began to reevaluate their desirability as immigrants. This was exacerbated on the local level in areas such as Santa Clara Valley where Japanese farm labor became dominant, even replacing white women and children in fruit picking and packing work. Just over two years after its glowing report of Japanese labor in 1905, the *San Jose Mercury*, in speaking of the “Japanese problem,” claimed that: “John Chinaman, once believed to be the greatest menace that confronted the future of the Pacific coast, has become, by contrast with his Mongolian neighbors, quite a respectable citizen. The Chinaman is content to earn his living as a laborer, a cook, and is seldom in competition with white merchants . . . he has never presumed to dare the wrath of the whites as the later-arriving Jap is now doing” (*San Jose Mercury* 21 September 1907, cited in Lukes and Okihiro 1985:51–52). Like the Chinese, the Japanese were the subject of numerous acts of harassment and violence from the larger community, as they began to develop a permanent presence in the county. In response to the growth of anti-Japanese feeling throughout the western United States, in 1907–1908, Japan and the United States made the Gentlemen’s Agreement, in which Japan agreed to halt emigration of male laborers to America, in return for the United States providing protection for existing Japanese immigrants, and for permitting the immigration of wives, children, and parents of existing U.S. Japanese residents (Daniels 1988:125).

Despite discriminatory legislation—including California’s Alien Land Laws in 1913 and 1920, which were intended to prevent Japanese ownership of land—Japanese workers managed to acquire a degree of permanence in the Santa Clara agricultural community. They worked not only as hand labor, but increasingly achieved a degree of autonomy by entering into tenancy or sharecropping arrangements, often by leasing land from former employers. Rather than presenting an insurmountable obstacle to Japanese farming interests, the 1913 Alien Land Law was circumvented by leasing land or by subterfuges such as purchasing it in the name of native-born children (Daniels 1988:143). Strawberries, pears, prunes, apricots, and truck-farming crops were among those sectors of the local agricultural industry increasingly identified with Japanese farmers in the early decades of the 20th century. These farmers would at times supplement their farm income by working in the winter at the canneries (Carey & Co 2006:13).

### **Immigration of Japanese Women between 1907 and 1924**

The immigration of Japanese women was an important part of the development of permanent Japanese settlements in the United States. The 1907 Gentlemen’s Agreement prevented the immigration of any Japanese with the exception of existing wives, children, and parents. Many of the Issei generation had been young single men when they left for America. Under the popular “picture-bride” system, however, in which photographs were

exchanged between immigrant men and women in Japan, Japanese men in the United States could marry by proxy and bring their new brides out to America. Such marriages were recognized under the 1907 Agreement and became one of the most frequent ways in which Japanese women came to the United States between 1907 and the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924, which halted all Japanese immigration. The picture-bride system rapidly changed the demographic makeup of the American Japanese community. Whereas the immigrant community had originally been predominantly male, by 1924, the ratio between the sexes was approaching one to one (Daniels 1988:126). The 1924 Immigration Act had a temporary shrinking effect on America's Japanese communities, as many Issei—fearing the increasing anti-Japanese sentiment—decided to return to Japan, often taking their American-born children with them. Because the rates of Japanese female immigration between 1907 and 1924 had been so high, however, and because American-born Japanese continued to be accorded American citizenship, the Japanese-American population did continue to grow, albeit more slowly than before (Daniels 1988:151). This was true of the Santa Clara Valley, whose Japanese population increased markedly in the 1920s even after the passage of the 1924 Immigration Act, from 2,981 in 1920 to 4,320 in 1930 (Table 1).

### The Development of Nihonmachi

Originally there was no cultural center for Japanese workers in Santa Clara Valley. Migrant workers lived in bunkhouses at the farms and orchards where they were temporarily employed. Many of these workers, however, found their way to Heinlerville for food, supplies, and entertainment. By the early 1900s, a community of Issei was beginning to establish itself near Heinlerville, around the intersection of Jackson and Sixth streets, on land leased from the Heinlen Company. A collection of wood-frame buildings grew along the Sixth Street frontage of the Project area between Clay and Jackson streets, containing both Japanese and Chinese homes and businesses. By 1915 the Sanborn map delineated this stretch of Sixth Street frontage as being "Japanese." Although it remained centered around the Sixth and Jackson streets intersection, Nihonmachi, or 'Japan Town,' began to expand, eventually extending from Seventh down to Third streets.

The first Japanese buildings in the Nihonmachi area may have been cheap bunkhouses that acted as centralized recruiting centers for farm labor gangs. From Nihonmachi, workers would be taken to Santa Clara's fields and orchards for work, or to the large canneries that began to develop nearby to the east of the railroad tracks (Lukes and Okihiro 1985:24). The early businesses of Nihonmachi catered largely to the needs of these itinerant, male workers. Boarding houses, pool halls, bathhouses, gambling houses, and brothels developed, a pattern that continued for the first 10 to 15 years of the settlement. As immigrant and Nihonmachi resident Masuo Akizuki noted: "When I came to San Jose the day after my arrival, everybody was working in the countryside. The boarding houses in San Jose Japantown found jobs for us. They brought us by horse carriage to the place to work. . . . Our living conditions were miserable at that time. We slept next to a horse stable on our blankets and some straw. . . . When we finished the work, we went back to the boarding house and rested there until the next job came around" (Misawa 1981:12, cited in Lukes and Okihiro 1985:24).

The Sixth Street frontage of the Project area included some of the earliest commercial buildings in Nihonmachi. A memory map of Nihonmachi as it existed from 1910 to 1920



**Figure 15.** Yamato Bath House, 1911 (later known as the Minato-Yu Bath House), within the Project area on Sixth Street. The bath house included pool tables, and had rooms upstairs for boarders (Lukes and Okihiro 1985:40). *Courtesy of Kanemoto Collection, California History Center Archives*

included markets, five or six gambling houses, two restaurants, several bars, a bath house (Figure 15), barbershop, rooming house, a photo studio, and a few homes belonging to both Chinese and Japanese along the Sixth Street frontage of the Project area between Taylor and Jackson streets (Lukes and Okihiro 1985:22–23). These businesses included the Kani family’s grocery store, Ishimaru’s barber shop, Minato bath house, Sashi Shokai general merchandise store, the Ito family’s restaurant with its tatami floors and shoji walls, and the Yamaguchi-ya boarding house. Also on the Project area block was the Nippon Sake Company at the corner of Jackson and Seventh streets (Ishikawa 1996:3). Nihonmachi resident, Masuo Akizuki noted that, “Most of the men were single, and they

played around whenever they had some money. The main entertainment was billiards and *hanafuda* [a Japanese card game] . . . the first floor of each [boarding house] had a billiard parlor” (Misawa 1981:12, 14). For health needs, the community had the Kuwabara Hospital, built in 1910, which was staffed by Japanese-educated doctors (Carey & Co. 2006:19). New migrants to California often gravitated towards work or geographical areas in which a family member, friend, or immigrants from their same village or prefecture were already established. Thus, Japanese agricultural laborers in Santa Clara County were often from the Hiroshima, Yamaguchi, Kumamoto, and Fukuoka prefectures. The prefecture, or *ken*, origins of immigrants could also influence which businesses in Nihonmachi an immigrant might prefer to frequent; the Nankai-ya boarding house, for instance, was run by immigrants from the Wakayama prefecture, and catered primarily to boarders from the same area (Carey & Co. 2006:5).

The increasing prominence and autonomy of Japanese immigrants in Santa Clara Valley’s agriculture led to the development of smaller Japanese settlements at local farming communities, such as Alviso, Agnew, Berryessa, Milpitas, and in the Trimble Road area (Lukes and Okihiro 1985:29). Oral histories of Japanese Issei, together with reports from the 1908 U.S. Immigration Commission, indicate that unlike elsewhere in California, the majority of Japanese immigrant men in the Santa Clara Valley had been already married before coming to the United States. Their wives were quickly sent for, and were instrumental in not only enabling the early development of these smaller farming communities, but also in giving them the possibility of permanence through the birth of Nisei or second-generation Japanese. The labor of women and children were often crucial factors in the early years of Japanese tenant and sharecropping farms in the valley (Lukes and Okihiro 1985:56). These small farming communities were very different in tenor from the San Jose Nihonmachi, with the former being characterized by settled families, while Nihonmachi remained the preserve primarily of bachelor, migrant men, and stores and businesses that catered to their needs. The smaller settlements retained quite distinct identities, with residents, usually only the men, visiting Nihonmachi only occasionally (Lukes and Okihiro 1985:63). Thus, the Japanese community in the Santa Clara Valley was not homogeneous but included families and single men, farmers and merchants, tenants and itinerant workers.

### Later Development of Nihonmachi Community

As the Japanese community in the Santa Clara Valley matured, Nihonmachi’s layout and constituent community also evolved. In the early decades of the 20th century, the location reflected its primary function as a service center and labor reserve for Santa Clara agricultural workers, and contained associated services including bath houses, boarding houses, pool halls and stores. With the increased arrival of wives and children after 1907, via the picture-bride system, individual family homes began to predominate. Reflecting its increased family-based makeup, the Kuwabara Hospital hired two midwives (Carey & Co. 2006:10, 20). Other prominent cultural institutions included the Buddhist Church (established in 1902) and the Methodist Church (built in 1913), in addition to local associations, sports groups, and festivals. Throughout its history, the community retained a very strong Japanese cultural identity. The Okida Hall, a Japanese theater located near Jackson and Sixth streets, hosted traditional *Shibai* plays; they also produced performances of historical tales called *Naniwa-bushi*, epic singing known as *Utai*, along with Japanese

vaudeville acts and, later, Japanese films (Carey & Co. 2006:21). Sports included baseball and sumo wrestling held at a dual-purpose field on Sixth Street. Visually, Nihonmachi was dominated by small, wood-frame commercial and residential structures that did not differ architecturally from other areas of San Jose, with little evidence that they housed an exclusively Japanese population. This was despite the fact that local Japanese American construction companies, including the Nishiura Brothers, were responsible for most of the building in Japantown (Carey & Co. 2006:9). Instead, it has been suggested that years of anti-Japanese discrimination prompted Japanese immigrants to minimize perceived cultural differences between them and the surrounding Euroamerican community (Dubrow 2005).

### **Impact of World War II Internments on Nihonmachi**

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, 7 December 1941, changed the lives of all Japanese residents of the United States. On the 19 February 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which provided the authority to remove people without trials or hearings on the basis of “military necessity.” This and subsequent Executive Orders allowed for the removal of U.S. citizens and residents of Japanese heritage to internment camps. By this time, approximately 27 Japanese households were living in Nihonmachi, constituting 72 percent of the non-rural Japanese living in San Jose at the time (*New World-Sun Book* 1939, cited in Carey & Co. 2006:25). Most residents from San Jose Nihonmachi were sent to the Heart Mountain internment camp in Wyoming. As was common in Japanese communities across the United States, they were given only days to prepare for a removal of unknown duration. Many abandoned or sold their assets at a loss, or sought help from non-Japanese friends or business associates to oversee homes or businesses left behind. In their absence, anti-Japanese activists in Santa Clara County campaigned to prevent any eventual resettlement by the Japanese community. As always, the objections were not to Japanese labor on farms, but to the prospect of Japanese settlements as a permanent aspect of the County’s population.

From 2 January, 1945, Japanese Americans were released from the internment camps, and gradually made their way back to their home communities. However, the internments were a major blow to Japanese-american communities, many of which never succeeded in reestablishing themselves. When Japanese families returned to Santa Clara County in 1945, they found that their financial prospects had been severely damaged, and their community decimated. During the war, the Japanese place in the local farming economy had been taken by Italian and Portuguese truck market growers, and by Filipino, Mexican, and African American hand labor. Filipino and African American workers had moved into homes within the traditional confines of Nihonmachi. Some returnees arrived home to find that their stored goods and houses had been ransacked on the assumption that the removals would become permanent. During the late 1940s and 1950s, the development of high technology industries in Santa Clara County and the growth and urbanization of its population changed the future of the county as an agricultural center. Orchards were being uprooted to make way for homes, tenant farmers were often unable to regain their leases, and the soaring land prices made it almost impossible for many Japanese farmers to recoup land that they had sold, often at reduced prices, prior to the 1942 removal. Many returnees were forced to resort to farm laboring work again. Others took a leap into the

nursery and floral businesses that continued to thrive in Santa Clara and surrounding counties (Lukes and Okihiro 1985:120).

Despite the setbacks of the war years, the Japanese population of California proceeded to double during the 1950s, largely due to the high birth rate of the Nisei generation, and the return or movement of many Japanese Americans to the state. Among the reasons for the continuing survival of San Jose Nihonmachi during this period was that many Japanese Americans began to find work in the region's burgeoning high technology industries. The open-enrollment policy of San Jose State University also attracted many of the younger Nisei generation to the city. The 1950s also saw the beginning of acceptance of Japanese Americans by the broader community; in 1952 the McCarran Bill allowed for resumed immigration from Japan, and allowed the Issei generation to finally become American citizens. In 1956 California repealed its alien land laws that had long hampered the acquisition of land by Japanese Americans. A local triumph for the San Jose Japanese community was the election of the hometown Norman Mineta in 1967 to San Jose's City Council. He later became the city's mayor, elected a U.S. Congressman, and became the first Asian American to hold a cabinet post in the White House (Carey & Co. 2006:7, White House 2007). San Jose's Nihonmachi rebuilt its cultural institutions, and maintained strong Japanese cultural traditions. It was not markedly affected by the urban-renewal projects of the 1960s and 1970s that so dramatically transformed the appearance of San Francisco and Los Angeles Japantowns. Instead, San Jose Nihonmachi retains much of the configuration, scale, and flavor that it possessed in its early pre-war years of development, and remains the cultural center for the Japanese American community in Santa Clara County. Today, it is one of only three distinct historic Japantowns—Los Angeles, San Francisco, and San Jose—to exist in the United States.