

*News from*

# *The Monterey County Historical Society*

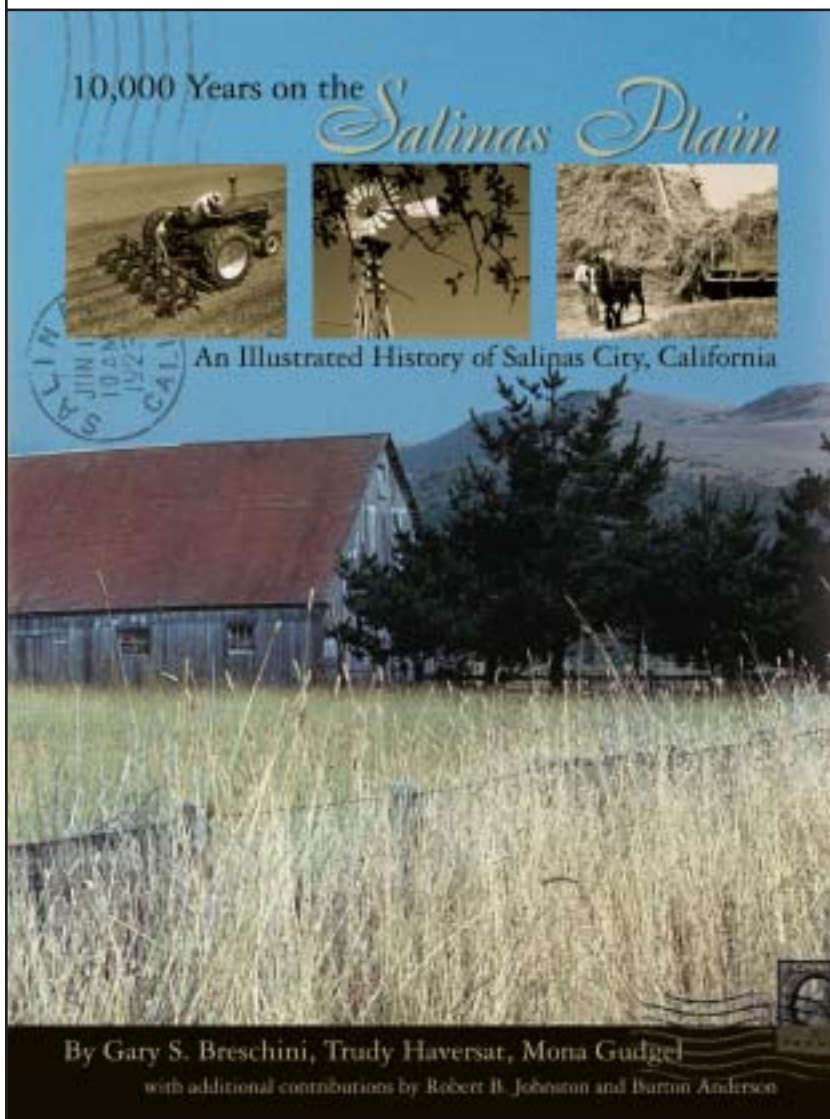
*March 2000*



## ***10,000 YEARS ON THE SALINAS PLAIN:***

***An Illustrated History of Salinas City, California***

**by Gary S. Breschini, Trudy Haversat & Mona Gudgel**



**Published by Heritage  
Media Corp., March 2000**

**Sponsored by the Monterey  
County Historical Society**

**On March 10, 2000 the Society received its first copies of the book we sponsored. It was written by Gary S. Breschini, Trudy Haversat and Mona Gudgel.**

**Copies may be purchased directly from the Society, and proceeds will benefit the Society's new Publication Fund. Contact Mona at 757-8085 to reserve your copy.**

**In Salinas, copies may also be purchased at Star Market, Gatherings on Main Street, and the Steinbeck House, with many more outlets to come soon.**

**On the Monterey Peninsula, visit Thunderbird Books, Carmel & Borders, Sand City.**

**10,000 YEARS ON THE SALINAS PLAIN:**  
**An Illustrated History of Salinas City, California**  
**by Gary S. Breschini, Trudy Haversat & Mona Gudgel**

**Introduction**

Any book that includes Vinegar Joe Stilwell, John Steinbeck and Gaspar de Portolá among its cast of characters must be interesting. If one considers that it also covers 100 centuries—from the mists of prehistory to the end of World War II—in and around Salinas, it becomes a volume that one must have.

*10,000 years on the Salinas Plain* is such a book. It might well have been another dry-as-dust recitation of facts, figures and personages, but the authors—Gary S. Breschini, Trudy Haversat and Mona Gudgel—have breathed life into it so that we might have well been among the party of 62 led by John C. Fremont to the area in the dangerous spring of 1845, withstood the terrible drought of 1863 and 1864, or looked on helplessly while our Japanese neighbors were ordered from their homes and put in internment camps early in World War II.

The cynical may well read it as a series of exploitations, starting with the Ohlone Indians being subjugated by the Spanish, the Mexicans seizing the land from the Spanish, and the Americans taking it from the Californios. But the book is far more than one culture supplanting another. It represents elation, heartbreak and human dreams—many fading before they were fully realized, some dashed to earth very early, but others that grew until they exceeded the expectation of the dreamer.

As a student of Central Coast history and the author of two books about south San Benito County, I appreciate the vast amount of work that the authors have put into amassing the facts necessary for the compilation of such a volume, and the discernment to select from those facts enough for a balanced picture without overweighing the reader's patience.

Still on a personal note, as a lifelong rancher I am naturally drawn to that part of the agricultural scene that has been vital in the flourishing of modern Salinas. I was slightly shocked to read of a judge's charge to some men who had caught a horse thief in the act and had summarily executed him. It was more interesting to me because it happened in Tres Pinos, my hometown (no parallels, please!), when what is now San Benito County was still part of Monterey County.

Each of us, whatever our background or circum-

stances, leaves some evidence of his life beyond a tombstone. Some people have been able to influence a movement for good, others have acted decisively at a crucial time in history, and most of us have gone to work each day, paid our taxes, obeyed the laws and instilled in our sons and daughters the necessity of being good persons. That latter group is by far the largest and most powerful.

In *10,000 Years on the Salinas Plain*, you will read of heroes, villains and of the everyday people who contributed to the emergence of a modern city.

If you enjoy reading of how diverse groups faced each other in hostility, then in peace and of how they eventually merged, of people finding their way to a community that they immediately recognized as their permanent home, and of their struggle to embrace their dreams, why, then, this is just the kind of book for you as it is for me.

Peter C. Frusetta, Assemblyman  
28th Assembly District

**Prologue**

We will never know who first set foot on the Salinas Plain, but when the first Spanish explorers arrived in the winter of 1769, pushing northward with scant supplies into a territory completely unknown, they found village after village of peaceful, industrious Indians, who greeted them with signs of peace and offerings of food. Little could those Indians know the vast changes which would soon follow.

**Explorers and Settlers, 1769 - 1851**

The first Spanish explorers were followed closely by soldiers and settlers who came to conquer the vast new land, by force if necessary, and missionaries zealous for spiritual conquests. Prior to 1820, Monterey, although the capitol, remained a remote outpost and the surrounding area was sparsely settled. After Mexican rule replaced Spanish rule in the 1820s, settlement expanded rapidly. In the 1830s the mission system collapsed, but by then the Indian population had been reduced by nearly 90%. California was taken over by Americans in 1846.

**The Beginnings of Salinas, 1852 - 1874**

Following the Gold Rush, American settlement expanded rapidly, with new towns springing up throughout the state. The Salinas Plain was largely unoccupied during the Mexican era, but many small communities sprang up in the 1850s. With the

demise of the cattle industry in the mid-1860s, and the switch to agriculture which followed, one of these, Salinas City, thrived and prospered. First laid out in 1868, the town boasted a population of nearly 600 by 1870. The Southern Pacific Railroad arrived in 1872, the same year Salinas City was named the county seat.

### **Hard Times for Salinas City, 1875 - 1909**

After the promising beginning came hard times. Drought, flood, discontent with both major political parties, financial panic, depression, and social unrest began in the 1870s and lasted until the turn of the century. In spite of these problems, the city continued to expand, reaching a population of 3,304 by 1900.

Building on advances in the previous decades, Salinas continued to grow slowly. The Southern Pacific Railroad's coastline route was finally completed, with Salinas as a major stop. At the same time the age of the automobile began. Vast irrigation projects sponsored by Claus Spreckels and others led to large scale agriculture. Salinas was no longer isolated, but took its place in an expanding network of commerce and industry. Even the earthquake of 1906 did little to slow the expansion.

### **Consolidation, Growth and War, 1910 - 1918**

Salinas continued to grow slowly throughout this decade; indeed from 1880 to 1920 the town's population just barely doubled. The advent of World War I spurred the agricultural industry, and for a while prices soared. The California rodeo was organized. Salinas was brought into the war more directly in 1917, when Troop C of the National Guard was mobilized and marched to the train station. Irrigation agriculture expanded, but by the end of the war sugar beets and grains were still dominant in the Salinas Valley, with barley, wheat, oats, and corn the most important grain crops.

### **The Roaring Twenties and the Depression Years, 1919 - 1939**

Major changes followed the war. This period began with 95,000 acres planted in grains, over 20,000 acres in sugar beets, and only 60 acres planted in lettuce. Ten years later beets were down to 200 acres and lettuce planting had soared to over 40,000 acres. With the huge jump in lettuce output came economic expansion and a corresponding increase in population. The Roaring Twenties brought construction of an airport and many other improvements, as well as prohibition and rum running, but in the long run the agricultural revolution was truly the most important event.

The Roaring Twenties ended with the stock market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression of

the 1930s. While the city benefited from the Public Works Administration and other government assistance, the economy of the area was also kept stable during the Depression by the increasing productivity of agricultural crops. The 1930s also saw the beginning of the labor movement and the agricultural strikes. By the end of the decade the population had nearly tripled from its 1920 level, and most of this growth was directly related to the agricultural revolution.

### **World War II and the Following Years, 1940 - 1945**

As the country moved to a war footing many changes occurred in the Salinas area. In October of 1941, ground was broken for the first permanent USO building in the country, but the attack on Pearl Harbor occurred two days before it could be dedicated. Fort Ord was one of the largest training bases in the country, and the Army Air Corps built a facility at the airport. Even the Rodeo grounds were used, first as a branch garrison for Fort Ord then as an internment center for Japanese Americans. Salinas' Company C of the 194th Battalion was sent to the Philippines—to Corregidor and Bataan. Only 46 returned. In spite of the tragedy of war, Salinas continued to expand, largely due to agriculture; the vegetable industry became the world's largest, joining the Spreckels sugar factory, which was the world's largest refinery. After the war Salinas experienced another period of growth and expansion, which has continued to this day.

Appendix, Bibliography, Index.

### **Partners in Salinas**

We would like to thank the following Partners in Salinas who helped make the book possible. Their fascinating histories are included as well.

- |  |                              |
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**THIS NEWSLETTER IS DEDICATED TO**

**BETTY WAR BRUSA**

May 30, 1920 - February 8, 2000

Betty War Brusa, a published author and past president of the Monterey County Historical Society was born May 30, 1920, in Monrovia. She lived in Salinas for 52 years.

Betty's love of history went far beyond serving as president of the Monterey County Historical Society. She dedicated herself in seeing that history was preserved for those of us today and for future generations.

When Betty's children were in grammar school she was amazed at the lack of history in the history books on the local Indians. With great determination to correct the atrocity, as she saw it, she began extensive research on local Indians and wrote the book *Salinan Indians of California and their Neighbors* (Naturegraph, 1975). The book is still in demand today by students and teachers alike. She also wrote the book called *The Bracero* (Pageant Press, 1966), the story of a young Mexican boy who journeys to the United States.

When she was President of the Society Betty fought strong and hard to save the Cominos Hotel. Hours and hours of her personal time was devoted in seeing that the City of Salinas would not demolish the building. An attorney was hired by the Society, with her and Gary Breschini leading the charge to sue the City of Salinas to keep the building from demolition. The Society won the suit and the building was saved, but then as fate would have it the Loma Prieta Earthquake of 1989 hit Salinas hard. An emergency meeting was held by City Council and the Cominos Hotel was deemed unsafe and a danger. The wrecking balls were brought out, and as Betty watched with tears in her eyes, she couldn't help but chuckle when the wrecking ball hit the building over and over again with no luck...the old building that housed Presidents, and dignitaries from all over the world, the building that served Salinas so well for a century and more, fought back with proudness unwilling, to cooperate with those so foolish.

Betty was fun to be with. There never was a job too much or too hard for her. She had a wonderful sense of humor, and she was a story teller. She could make the history of Monterey County come alive as you sat in awe listening to her. Betty will be missed.

**MEMORIALS**

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Jesse J. Irvine . . . . .In honor of Dorothy Hare Frost Celebrating Her 100th Birthday

**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

- Mary Feliz
- Cloyed Masengill
- Peter Uhrowczik
- James & Kathy Bricker

## Oral Interview with Virginia Lee Porter

by Mona Rae Gudgel, August 23, 1999

Virginia: My name is Virginia Lee Porter.

Mona: Virginia, you will be how old in October?

Virginia: One with two zeros.

Mona: That is wonderful.

Virginia: But, I don't believe in age.

Mona: I don't either.

Virginia: It is on paper that I will be 100, but it is not in my mind.

Mona: That is why you are still young.

Virginia: Yes, and I can still fight.

Mona: Good for you!

Mona: Were you born in Salinas?

Virginia: I was born in Half Moon Bay. When I was born my Dad had a butcher shop at the time.

Mona: And, your Dad's name.

Virginia: Quilla, Q-u-i-l-l-a, Daniel Quilla...you got that?

Mona: Your Dad came from where?

Virginia: My Dad came from Portugal when he was 14 years old and when he entered this country he went into business, when he was 21 he went into business. My Dad was very, very bright. He got on the ship, he worked his way on the ship, he was a poor little boy in Portugal, he worked his way over, and when he landed he said nobody talked my language, I am going to learn American language. He was very smart and he didn't let anybody talk a foreign language. He learned the English language very quickly. He was in business at 21.

Mona: Do you have brothers and sisters?

Virginia: I have two brothers, but one is gone.

Mona: And, your Mother came from?

Virginia: At three years old she came from Italy. Her folks had ships on the ocean, cargo ships, that's the kind of business they were in on my Mother's side.

Mona: What was your Mother's maiden name?

Virginia: I will have to spell it: Y-o-l-e.

Mona: Is that her last name?

Virginia: That is her first name.

Mona: What was her last name?

Virginia: I don't know, I don't pay attention to that sort of thing.

Mona: That's okay, but Yole was her first name and she came here when she was very, very young.

Virginia: Yes, like that.

Mona: You were born in Half Moon Bay, and you lived there until what age?

Virginia: I don't know what age, but finally my Dad moved to Salinas and made cheese. My Dad made cheese. He went on a cow ranch, Sugar Loaf. Do you know where Sugar Loaf is?

Mona: Yes.

Virginia: Well that was our ranch at one time. Two thousand acres. And my Dad made cheese!

Mona: That is great. Your Dad had dairy cattle.

Virginia: Well, yes he had 200 of them. He made lots of cheese. My Dad wouldn't farm. He didn't believe in it, in farming. He said you had to wait too long for your money. The cheese, he would get paid every week. He shipped the cheese to San Francisco, and he got top price. It was very good cheese.

Mona: So, you lived on the ranch...

Virginia: I went to that country school until I graduated from 8th grade, and then my Dad bought property in town so that the girls could go to high school, and college.

Mona: So, then you moved into Salinas, into town?

Virginia: After high school I went to college. My sisters, myself and Mother moved into town and my Father stayed on the ranch for a while and then he closed down the cheese factory. Then he came into town.

Mona: What was Salinas like when you moved into town?

Virginia: When I was living in Salinas? Well, I grew up in Salinas and I had a good home, if you want to know that? A happy home.

Mona: A happy home.

Virginia: A very, very happy home. I had a lovely Father and a lovely Mother.

Mona: What about the town. What did the town look like when you were real young? Did you have a horse and buggy?

Virginia: I had two saddle horses. There weren't too many girls who had saddle horses and my Dad bought saddle horses for my brothers and then he bought my brother an automobile and he bought me a bicycle.

Mona: He bought you a bicycle?

Virginia: I had a horse and buggy for a while. I drove a horse and buggy for a while. But, then, after that, my Dad got an automobile, one of the very first automobiles, a Studebaker. A great big one be-

cause we were a big family. My Dad bought a nice brand new Studebaker. And, I didn't do any work when I was at home. I came from a big family and I didn't have to do any work.

Mona: How come?

Virginia: Because my Father had a hired man, and my Mother had help, and all I did was play. That is the truth! And my Father built a nice big house so that we could put our toys in it and my doll, and everything in this little house. We did not have the toys in the house, my Mother said there were too many.

Mona: And, where was this home in Salinas?

Virginia: It is still there. It is as big as John Steinbeck's house, and looks just like. It is on North Main Street. Did you know John Steinbeck?

Mona: No, I did not know John Steinbeck.

Virginia: Well, we did. My sister Agnes was in the same grade as John Steinbeck and he use to carry her books home. I remember that.

Mona: No kidding.

Virginia: He went with her in grammar school.

Mona: What did you think of John Steinbeck?

Virginia: He was a nice little boy and rather bashful. He was a very quiet, nice little boy. Yes, he was.

Mona: Do you remember some of your school mates, or friends or what you liked about school?

Virginia: Well, I can tell you what I did in school. I never was a kid. I was grown up, because my Dad never talked baby talk to me, so I grew up very fast. When I was in school it was a country school. The teacher had a little grade, she didn't have much time. She use to put me in the library with the little kids, and I taught the little kids.

Mona: Was the name of the school the Lagunita School?

Virginia: Yes.

Mona: Did you know that we have the old Lagunita School out where we are?

Virginia: No, that school is still there.

Mona: No, they built a new one to look like it.

Virginia: Well, it sure looks like it.

Mona: It looks exactly like it and we have the old one.

Virginia: Oh, they did?

Mona: Yes, you will have to come and see it.

Virginia: That is up to my driver. She's the boss. She's my driver, she's the boss. She is a good driver. Number one! She is a lovely person. There is noth-

ing better than these two, you can be with them.

Mona: Well, thank you. When you went walking down town, can you tell me what it was like?

Virginia: The town was small, it was muddy, they had many stores. During my vacation I used to get a job in any store. I always got a job during vacation. It was easy for me to get a job, because as I told you I was very serious. I did not talk like I do now.

Mona: You were always serious.

Virginia: Every summer I got a job.

Mona: And, you did what?

Virginia: Working in the store for pennies, for Woolworths, and you know what? When the time come to let them out, they always kept me till last. And you know what? They always wanted me to be a manager. They offered me a managers job. "Virginia, we want to keep you and have you be the manager." I didn't want to work for nobody else. I said no, I don't want to be no manager.

Mona: You wanted to be your own boss.

Virginia: Yes, I was.

Mona: Did you have your own business?

Virginia: Of course!

Mona: What was your business?

Virginia: Oh, Lord, I have to tell that. Well, I had an office at the First National Bank. I rented an office and subletted an office. I did a telephone answering service, I had mail service, I had this typing service. At five o'clock I would shut off my phones because they rang all day. From five o'clock until midnight I would do typing for an architect and do all of his specifications. And I couldn't type in the day because the phones were ringing so I had to work at night. Then one time I forgot the time and the janitor came in and it was two o'clock. I didn't know it was two o'clock, I was so busy. The janitor came in and said if you don't leave now we are going to lock you in. They locked the doors at twelve. So, I got out.

Mona: My, goodness. Do you remember the 1906 earthquake?

Virginia: Oh, yes.

Mona: Please, tell me about it.

Virginia: I was very young, but I remember it. We lived in the country at that time. My Father made cheese, I told you about that. The earthquake shook so bad that all of the cheese in the warehouse went on the floor. I wasn't afraid of it. My Mother had a wood stove at that time and it didn't even effect the stove, and the house shook terrible. Us kids were all in bed, and my Mother said, "Get up

kids, there is an earthquake.” And us kids said, we didn’t want to get up, Mother, and it was just shaking. But she said, “You have to get up.” It was four o’clock in the morning. It didn’t scare me. I never was scared of anything. I had two horses. One was sassy. He use to buck me off and throw me on the ground. Stubborn old horse. He was a man, a male. The female horse was sweet. Just like a female. One horse was so sweet and gentle, and the other one was so mean and cranky. But, I rode both of them. There were so many of us kids my Father had to have two horses for us.

Mona: Where were you with the kids, the oldest, youngest, or in the middle.

Virginia: I am the oldest and the loudest. We were only 16 months apart. I got twin sisters.

Mona: You do. Are they still alive?

Virginia: Yes, we are all alive. We don’t believe in dying.

Mona: You know, that’s good. I like your attitude. I like that!

Virginia: You are a sweet lady.

Mona: Thank you. Can you tell me about World War I.

Virginia: World War I. Yes, I remember that. I was young. My brother was 16 months older than I. He was 16 years old when the war broke out. He wanted to go to war. My Father didn’t want him to go because if he didn’t stay on the ranch to make cheese he would be short of men. But, my brother wanted to go so my Father signed, and at 16 years he went into the Army. He was gone two years. He was on the firing line. He came back and never got a scratch, when he was in the war. He had a man friend. And they were down in the fox hole, he and his friend. They were shelling very heavy that night. The commander said stay in your fox hole. So everybody got down in the fox hole. This fellow was so nervous, he jumped up, and a bullet hit him and it killed him. And, my brother saw that. He was so nervous he couldn’t stay down in the hole.

Mona: That is so sad.

Virginia: And when my brother came back he felt so bad about that war for one year he wouldn’t talk about it. My father would ask him questions. The working men would ask him questions. He wouldn’t answer. He just wouldn’t talk. He felt terrible.. One year my brother was that way.

Mona: I guess we never know the horrors of war unless we are there. And, you have gone through World War I and also World War II.

Virginia: Oh, I’ve got relatives in every war. I have nephews up to the present time, Vietnam, you

name the wars, and I’ve got a relative in it. Nephews, and nephews, and nephews.

Mona: Of all of the wars you have been through. Which one seemed the worst?

Virginia: I didn’t worry about it. I was at home. I had a good home. The war didn’t effect our family. It didn’t effect us at all. We just didn’t worry about it. We were a happy family. War or no war. I told you after graduating from college about starting my own business?

Mona: Yes, you did. What college did you graduate from?

Virginia: Notre Dame. Sister Ignatius was my teacher. She was a lovely person. Are you a Catholic?

Mona: No, I am not.

Virginia: I’m not a Catholic either but I had to be a Catholic while I went to the school. The teacher said you gotta be a Catholic, and I didn’t want to be no Catholic. I did not want to be any Catholic, but I had to be while I went to the convent. They use to make us go to confessions. The Catholics believe in confessions. I had to do that too. I said to the priest why do I have to confess? I don’t do anything bad, I never hurt my parents, I don’t do bad, why do I have to tell you what I am doing, I told the priest.

Mona: What did he say?

Virginia: You know something. You know that water he’s got in there, well I’m going to tell you something. I’m going to tell you something. Church is right next to the school and us kids are in the church a lot. You know how he blesses the water. You understand the Catholic religion how they bless the water. I am going to tell you how I saw him bless it. The water was there, he come in dada-da, dadada, he passed it around and said we have to make a toast, and that is the truth. When I got out of that school I was no more a Catholic. I have nothing against the Catholics. I just didn’t want to be a Catholic. I didn’t like the priest. I played on the basketball team. Shall I tell what the girl did to me?

Mona: Yes.

Virginia: I was on the Salinas basketball team and we played the Watsonville basketball team. The girl on the Watsonville team was a good player, and I was a good player. We were both good players, and she was very envious of me, because I was as good as her, and she was good! Guess what she did?

Mona: What?

Virginia: When we were slapping the ball she deliberately didn’t hit the ball she slapped me in the face. And she gave me such a slap my face started



to swell. So, I went over to Sister Ignatius. Oh, I said, she slapped my face. The teacher couldn't take part. She didn't have any sympathy for me. But, you know what? I never hated that girl. You know why? I didn't do anything wrong, she did wrong. She did wrong. She is the one that is going to pay, not me. And I had no animosity for that girl.

Mona: Did she ever pay?

Virginia: Yes she did. Later on...yes she did. Do you want to hear what went on? This boy was in my class...a nice boy. She got stuck on this boy and he kind of went with her. Well, she was so crazy about him they got married. After they got married they had a very sad life. She had a very sad, sad life. So, yes I'd say she got paid back.

Mona: Do you remember anything about the Great Depression?

Virginia: Yes, of course I do. I didn't even know there was a depression until they told us. We always had plenty, plenty of everything.

Mona: What about other people around you?

Virginia: Oh, they were starving. Oh, yes, my Mother had to feed four men. They were hungry and these men said to my Mother, "When we get a job we will come back and pay you." Long, long after that they did come back and pay my Mother.

Mona: They were good people.

Virginia: But, Mother was very generous. She was kind. Yes, they came back and paid. Another thing about the depression. Right on the very end of depression, just before, I built an apartment house. Six apartments for depression prices, \$8,000.00 for six lovely apartments. In a few weeks after the depression went out I sold them for \$40,000.00.

Mona: Oh, wow! You made some good money.

[A picture is shown to Virginia...she describes it:]

Virginia: This picture here of high school kids. This picture is when I had an office and these kids were going to school. For recreation I took tap dancing with the kids. The teacher had a night class and he was teaching, well everyone would go. So, I took tap dancing and Mexican and Hawaiian. I was in the class and these were all the kids in the class. I was a business woman at that time.

Mona: Did you ever get married?

Virginia: Now that is another question. I was in business for 20 years. And I tended to business. I didn't have no boyfriend, I didn't want one, because they would distract my attention. I couldn't do both. Give him attention. So, I didn't want to. So I was all by myself. That is how I did it. I built my apartments by myself. Well, one day just before depression went out. My husband was family. He was

from the east, middle west, and he was highly educated, more so than I was. On the bulletin board downstairs in the building it said Virginia Lee types. He wanted a letter typed. So he come in for a letter, it was a short letter, he paid me and he went. When he was going down the elevator he asked the elevator boy, "Is that girl in the office married." And the boy said, no. About a week he came back and he said, Virginia will you go to lunch with me, just lunch. So twelve o'clock I went to lunch with him. And that was the start of the romance. And, after a while he said, I want to get married and I don't want you to work no more. He would not allow me to work no more. So, I didn't work. So, I sold my business at the end of twenty years because my husband came along. And, my husband, he supported me very good, very good.

Mona: And his name was...

Virginia: Porter.

Mona: His first name?

Virginia: Robert, Robert Porter. Yeah, he didn't want me to work. I even had a housekeeper. I didn't have to work.

Mona: You are one lucky lady. And what did your husband do?

Virginia: He was an accountant. But he didn't want to do that no more. So, when we got married he sold his business. He wanted to go out on a ranch and play. He said, "I want to get out in the atmosphere, I want to be out in the country. I want no more books and no more papers." So we bought 200 acres in the country.

Mona: Where did you buy your acres?

Virginia: Morgan Hill, Yubas road. When we bought these 200 acres, there was a little country school joining our property, about 6 or 7 students. I could walk across the field to the school. Then they had three trustees for the school board. The children's parents would run. Well, I had no children and they came to me and they said, Virginia you have to run as a trustee. And I said what for? Well, I will tell you what for. The man that was running, he was married, he had children, but he was a very hateful man. They said you have got to run against him. And all of the people in the neighborhood are going to vote for you. We all got together and you have our vote. I was a trustee for three years until they closed the school down.

Mona: Now this is in Morgan Hill. How long were you there before you moved back here?

Virginia: On the ranch. Maybe sixteen years. We had to move back because my husband got too old to live on the ranch. We decided to live on that ranch until he couldn't go no anymore. He couldn't drive



no more, so we came back to town. Now this was San Jose. Then he went to the hospital, and then he died of course, many years ago.

Mona: And then you moved back here?

Virginia: Then I came to Salinas because I had relatives in Salinas. My husband never wanted to live in Salinas because he said it got too foggy. He didn't like Salinas.

Mona: But, you liked it and moved back?

Virginia: I like it anyplace that I have to be.

Mona: Good for you.

Virginia: I don't complain and I don't fuss. And, I can adjust to anyplace I have to be.

Mona: If you could advise anyone, what do you do, and what have you done to live so long?

Virginia: I'll tell you how I live. I never drank, I never smoked, I never caroused. And people use to say to me, Virginia, what do you do for a good time? You don't drink, you don't smoke, you don't run around. What do you do for a good time? You know what I say? You don't have to kill yourself to have a good time! And, then I took up tap dancing for recreation. I had a pastime. I had dancing. I loved dancing. We use to dance on the stage just for fun. You don't have to kill yourself to have a good time.

Mona: No you don't, and I have never heard it put that way.

Virginia: That's the truth. I am telling the truth.

Mona: Yes, you are. And, you kept your mind active?

Virginia: All the time. Still as I am talking.

Mona: Did you read a lot?

Virginia: No, I don't like reading. I wish I did. I don't like to read. I manage. I always was a manager. When I had my office, with all of these men. I was a Mother to these men. You know what I mean. You know how I was a Mother, because I love people. Oh, you ought to read my stories. I was a Mother to them. One fellow had trouble at home, and another one had a drinking problem and they use to come to me for consultation. And I use to talk to them at night. When I had my apartments I didn't have any boy friends. Well, when these men would come for consultation they would come to the apartment. I had to set an example. So, I lit the whole apartment up and sat in front of the bay window so people could see what I was doing.

Mona: You are wonderful.

Virginia: They use to come for consultation. Sometimes a man, sometimes a woman. You see, I didn't have any problems because I was by myself. I didn't have no boyfriends, I didn't have any problems.

Mona: Until you got married.

Virginia: Until I got married and then I had them. My husband had a temper.

Mona: He did?

Virginia: Yes, he had a temper. But, you know what. Don't ever fight. There is nothing in fighting. I never believed in fighting. If my husband wanted the last words I let him have the last word. I don't fight. You can't fight with me. Before I fight with you I walk away and go some place else. I don't believe in fighting because when you fight nobody wins. So my husband use to say, I want the last word. You, just shut your mouth. If anybody slaps your face don't fight back. Don't fight back. They will get paid for what they did, just walk away. You won't gain anything by arguing with them. So, if anybody slaps your face just walk away.

Mona: Well, I think you have wonderful stories, and I bet you have so many more.

Virginia: I have lots of short stories about men and wives, and the boyfriend, about the man with the drinking problem, and the janitor. I might tell the story about the janitor. The janitor on our floor was always sick. I had doctors on my floor and the doctor told the janitor there was nothing wrong with you. Yes, yes doctor I am sick. So the doctor got mad, and I knew the doctor well, so he gave him a quick examination, and told him, you have nothing wrong with you. Yes, doctor, yes. So, you know what the doctor did? He had a big bowl and he filled it full of candy that looked like pills. He said when you don't feel good you take a pill from this bowl. Doctor, don't you think it would be better if I took two? The doctor said the pills were pretty strong and he advised only one. He got well. He got well. I could go on and on and on.

Mona: Do you remember during World War II when the USO was built and they had the Dancing Draftees?

Virginia: Yes, we danced every Saturday night until they closed the doors. We were popular. My sister was the best on the floor; she won prizes. My Father gave us girls a car. We went from Salinas to Gonzales. When the dance was over, our Father had us timed, and we had to be home right after the dance. And, we did. We danced every dance and we went home by ourselves.

Mona: We have some wonderful history that you have told. And, I think you are getting a little tired.

Virginia: Yes, I am but I have one cute saying to leave you with: Drive slow because the squirrels don't know one nut from another.

# TASSAJARA HOT SPRINGS

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TASSAJARA HOT SPRINGS LETTERHEAD, CA. 1932.  
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P.O. Box 3576  
Salinas, CA 93912  
831/757-8085

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