

News from

The Monterey County Historical Society

August 2005



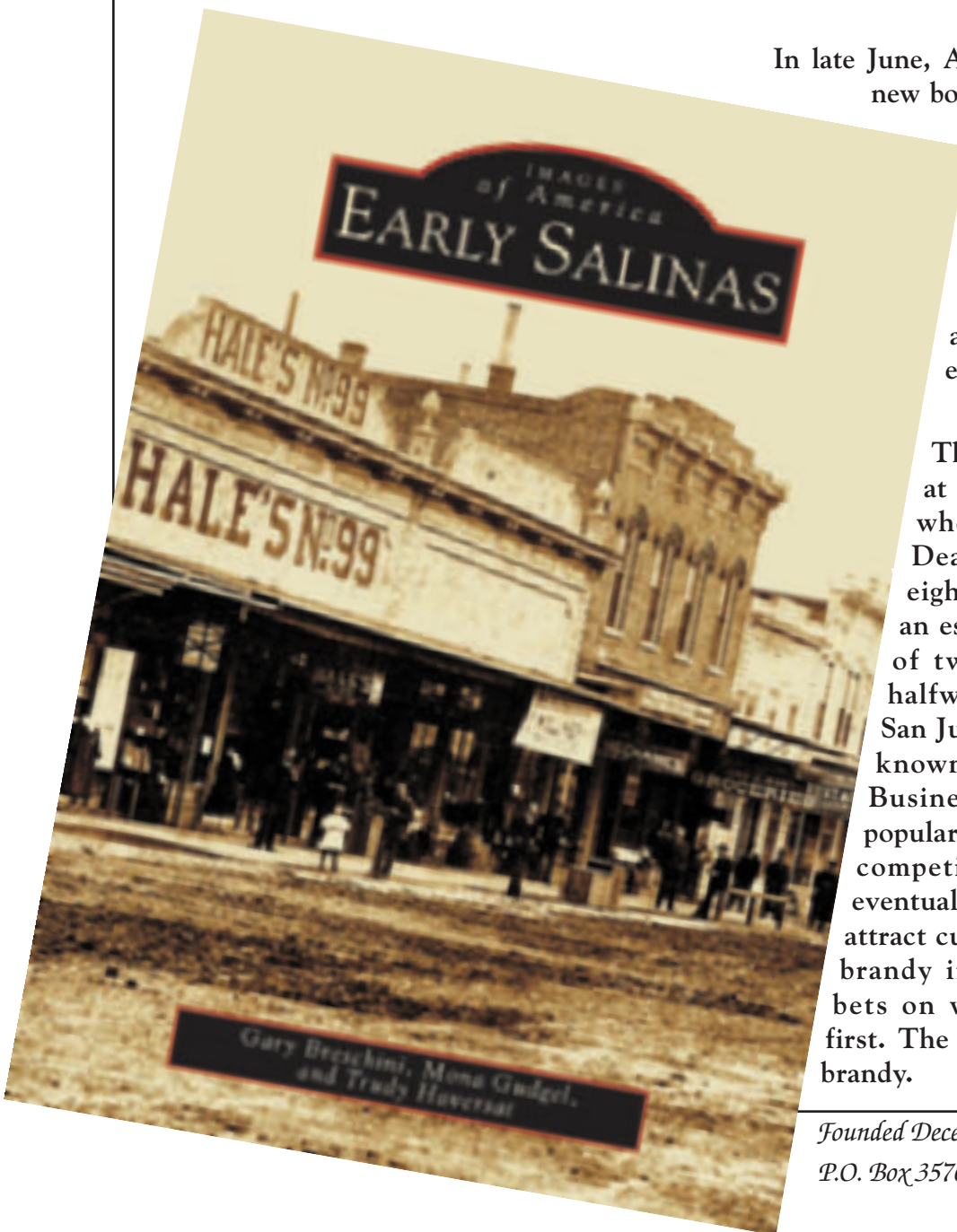
A New Book on the History of Salinas!

In late June, Arcadia Publishing released a new book in their Images of America series—*Early Salinas!*

The book was written by Gary S. Breschini, and Trudy Haversat, board members of the Monterey County Historical Society, and Mona Gudgel, the Society's Director.

From the Introduction:

The history of Salinas begins at the Big Bend in the slough, when an entrepreneur named Deacon Elias Howe acquired eighty acres of land and built an establishment at the junction of two stage routes. Situated halfway between Monterey and San Juan Bautista, it soon became known as the Half Way House. Business boomed as it became a popular stage stop, beating out the competition at Natividad, which eventually closed. Howe was able to attract customers by serving the best brandy in the area and setting up bets on which stage would arrive first. The winners would receive free brandy.



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This 1876 Cox map of Monterey County shows Salinas-area land grants (ranchos) and the beginnings of the town at the big bend in the slough. Important land grants are Rancho Nacional, the site of Hilltown; Rancho Llano de Buena Vista, where Spreckels and the famous sugar factory were built; Rancho El Alisal, site of Hartnell's first college and the country home of Gov. Juan Alvarado; Rancho El Sausal, site of the Sherwood/Castro Adobe and major portions of Salinas today; and Rancho Rincón del Sanjón, west of Salinas, the site of the Boronda Adobe.

Charley Parkhurst was frequently the winning stage driver. Whole cases of whiskey were bet on Charley's prowess. Only after Parkhurst's death in 1879 was it discovered that "Charley" was actually a woman by the name of Charlotte Parkhurst.

After owning his successful Half Way House for only 18 months, Deacon Howe sold it, and the surrounding eighty acres to Alberto Trescony. Born in Italy, Trescony had a fascinating career prior to his arrival in Monterey in 1842, and his life history has become some-

what of a legend in Monterey County. One of his skills was as a tinsmith, and he was able to sell his wares to prospectors for high prices. Within a short time he saved enough to start purchasing properties, and he acquired hotels in both Monterey and San Juan Bautista. Near the Half Way House, at the edge of the slough, he built a small hotel, general merchandise store, blacksmith shop, and stable. This expansion marks the true beginnings of Salinas—the small wooden hotel stood on the site of the future Abbott House, later the Cominos Hotel. For



James McDougall was one of the earliest Salinas pioneers. He is pictured here hauling water from Gabilan Creek into Salinas. His brother, John, wrote an extensive diary titled *Looking Back Down an Old Trail Through the Eyes of a Pioneer*. This diary, which was originally published in 35 installments in the *Salinas Index-Journal* in 1930-1931, contains many important details, and some very entertaining stories, concerning early Monterey County history. It will be published by the Monterey County Historical Society in the near future.

years this hotel dominated the 100 block of Salinas and formed the heart of the community—until it was demolished in 1989 to make room for a parking lot.

As Salinas grew, it became the economic center of the valley, fueled by agriculture and eventually encompassing several outlying communities such as Natividad, Santa Rita, and the site of Salinas' first post office, Hilltown.

Trescony hired Austin Smith and Charles McFadden to manage the hotel in the early 1860s, and Smith accepted the job as postmaster when the Salinas Post Office was moved

from Hilltown in 1864. Later, Smith and McFadden operated the general merchandise store.

The initial expansion of Salinas coincided with the drastic reduction in the Spanish-style cattle industry, partially due to the growing availability of American beef in the late 1850s. Then, on December 24, 1861, heavy rains began that lasted for nearly a month, and many cattle drowned. John Steinbeck included a graphic description of cattle washing down the Salinas River in the opening chapter of his classic novel, *East of Eden*. The winter was severe everywhere, and snows were frequent; even





This 1897 photograph shows Main Street, facing south from Gabilan Street.



The James Bardin Hospital was built by James Bardin II shortly after the earthquake of April 18, 1906. It stood at the corner of John and South Main streets, and accommodated 22 patients.

Below: The Abbott House, with the opera house to the right.





This September 1911 photograph features the students of the Spring School with their teacher, Amelia Bottcher. From left to right they are (front row) Helen Nissen, Darold Hitchcock, Louise Nissen, Bert Foreman, Bertha Brunken, John Nissen, Harry Kita, and Walter Giottonini; (second row) Johnnie Church, Elton Morehouse, Matsu Kita, William Church, Arthur Fenton, Leroy Hitchcock, Jimmie Giottonini; (third row) Cecil Breese, Bruce Church, Clarence Church, Bertha Foreman, Elsie Anderson, Elsine Nissen, ? Yoshita, Howard Holmes. Back row: George Fenton, Henry Brunken, Ruth Smith, Amelia Bottcher (teacher), and Fred Brunken.

Monterey experienced six inches of snow. Then, in 1863 and 1864, the valley was struck by a drought. Within two years, the cattle population dropped from between 70,000 and 100,000, to only 13,000.

In spite of the disastrous effect on the Spanish range cattle, a few foresighted individuals saw where the future would lead. In about 1865, William Bardin, Sr. noted that very soon, dairy cattle would be brought into the Salinas

Valley and there would be a great many farmers. True to his vision, in that same year Carlisle S. Abbott, a well-known dairyman from Marin County, drove 500 dairy cattle to the Salinas Valley. He rented 9,000 acres of land in the area of Rancho Llano de Buena Vista, southeast of Salinas, including the area which would become the town of Spreckels. By 1875, he was milking 1,500 cows and producing 200,000 pounds of butter annually, and he



This photograph of Main Street (looking south from Market Street) is undated, but is probably



from the early 1930s.



Two unidentified young girls.

The Society has hundreds of photographs in which the people are unidentified. If anyone knows the identity of these young girls, please contact us.

We will be including additional unidentified photographs in future *Newsletters*.

owned the land. Abbott was not alone; as early as 1869 there was a total of 30 dairymen with 5,500 milk cows. The wharf at Moss Landing allowed products for the first time to be shipped long distances, and the acreage planted in grains increased drastically. The sheep population around Salinas declined, but up the Salinas Valley where land was cheaper, huge herds continued to prosper. Monterey County was the leading wool producer in the state in both the 1870 and 1880 censuses.

By 1869, Bardin was able to write to a friend that

Now you see extensive fields of grain in place of immense herds of stock. Nearly every acre of arable land of the mouth of the Salinas River and full width of the valley to the stage road leading from Hilltown...to Natividad is under cultivation and most to...Soledad...and occasionally a farm...for twenty miles [beyond]...in one or two years...all the land on Salinas [Plain] will be farmed.

Leese sold the rest of Rancho El Sausal to Eugene Sherwood in either 1859 or 1860. Sherwood converted the rancho to farming and raised wheat. He leased all but 2,000 acres of the original rancho and became an active leader in the development of the now prosperous agricultural region of the Salinas Valley.

The same year, in a move precisely opposite that of Sherwood, Alberto Trescony sold his Salinas property—the Half Way House and about 160 acres—to developers A.B. Jackson and Alanson Riker. He wanted to concentrate on ranching in southern Monterey County.

Sherwood entered into a partnership with the new owners of the Half Way House, and in 1868 they laid out Salinas City on adjoining portions of El Sausal and Rancho Nacional, granting a road right-of-way and land for a depot. This persuaded the Southern Pacific Railroad Company to locate their tracks and depot in Salinas, rather than in Santa Rita.

No sooner was the town laid out than settlers began to arrive. The first new business was Michael Hughes' Harness Shop. The I.J. Harvey family, arriving in 1868, counted only 12 to 14 buildings, some not yet completed. They were the American Hotel, a livery stable, two blacksmith shops (one with a residence), a butcher shop, two saloons, two general stores (one unfinished), and three other buildings. By the end of the year there were 125 buildings, with half again as many under construction. Ford & Sanborn's lumber mills were hard-pressed to meet the demand. But the expansion was uneven. A visitor in August of 1869 reported 17 saloons, with another being built, but no church!



Autographed copies of this new book are available from the society.

MEMORIALS

DonorIn Memory Of
Marie M. CheekTom F. Cheek
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CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER WELCOMED

The editors of the *Newsletter* are always seeking photographs, historical recipes, articles, and other items for these pages. Please contact us if you have any appropriate materials.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Barbara & Derek Brown Lu Diaz
Eade Family Ranch Andrea Brooks
Mike Ford, Jr Marjorie McCarthy
Matthew Hammer Frank Muther
Mrs. Louise Angulo

WEBSITE

Gary Breschini continues to upgrade and to add new material to the Society's Website. The site has generated researchers, new members and many donations of artifacts for our archival vault. *And we have a new website address* (our own personal domain, which hopefully is easier to remember). It is:

<http://www.mchsmuseum.com>

MUSEUM UPDATE

Finally, we are ready to begin construction on our asphalt roads, new parking lot, handicap ramp to the Adobe and landscaping. We cannot thank John Silva of Ausonio Construction enough for his diligence in working with the county to obtain the permits (there were several different county permits that were required) in order for us to proceed. It is time-consuming and requires a special person with patience that goes above and beyond the call of duty. Thank you John!!!

WELCOME ABOARD

Please welcome Barbara Brown, our new Administrative Assistant. Barbara is a long time Salinas resident, retired after 22 years of service with the Salinas Elementary School District. She supervises visitations for non-custodial parents that have been court ordered for visitations, and she is currently chairperson for the restoration of the historic Santa Rita Chapel located at North Main Street in Salinas. With her experience working with youth and the public, she truly will be an asset to our office.

THANK YOU

A warm thank you to Joyce McBride who spent an entire month working with the burial records at the archives of the Diocese of Monterey. Joyce input burials from the records of Santa Rita cemetery and the Calvary cemetery in their computer to be placed on the cemetery sites of the Diocese, with records also coming to the Society to help complete the research for both cemeteries.

We also thank Brother Lawrence Serivani, SM, archivist for the Diocese, for his expertise and taking from his busy schedule to provide records and assist in the on going project. The Society will be referring inquiries on burials to the Diocese and once the work is completed we will be placing a link on our web site to the Diocese web site; this is the beginning of a working partnership with the Diocese of Monterey.



Local Promotion Circular. These color letter-size sheets were provided to businesses by local Chambers of Commerce. Businesses then printed their letterheads on the opposite sides. This particular example was on the back of a letter dated February, 1932.