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The Society, a non-profit corporation, meets the fourth Monday monthly except July, August and December. Membership includes subscriptions to the *San Joaquin Historian* and the monthly newsletter, *News and Notes*. Additional copies may be purchased at the Museum.

The Society operates the **San Joaquin County Historical Museum** at Micke Grove Regional Park in partnership with San Joaquin County. The Society maintains an office at the Museum.

Manuscripts relating to the history of San Joaquin County or the Delta will always be considered. The editor reserves the right to shorten material based on local interest and space considerations. Inquiry should be made through the Museum office.

**San Joaquin County
Historical Society and Museum**

Michael W. Bennett
Director

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This Issue...

If you are under forty or a new-comer to our Valley, it is probable the only Filipino-Americans you might know are professionals or technicians.

Older residents will remember the first generation—the admired work crews that were the backbone of our agricultural economy in the twenties and the thirties. Courted by the farmer because of their reliability and work ethic, feared by other ethnic labor groups, subjected to social intolerance and racist laws that even forbade they marry, they persisted in their pursuit for acceptance. Today these pioneers are “Manong,” a Filipino title of respect for their elders.

The story of the pioneer Filipinos in San Joaquin County is one of courage and perseverance. Perhaps no other group better illustrates the xenophobia and racial schizophrenia that is a dark aspect of our heritage.

Today those pioneers that remain are old men and many have found the security they pursued so arduously. But there is bitterness still over their treatment in their pioneering years. They want the new generations to understand “what it was like then” and to better appreciate the opportunities of today.

Their story is real history.

Lest we forget, author Frank Perez, in collaboration with his wife Leatrice, gives us a personal recounting of the early hardships and triumphs of the Filipino pioneers.

No one better—he is one of them.

On The Cover...

Portion of a Filipino asparagus crew, working the Delta in the mid 1930s. The Filipinos were the only group that turned this difficult job into a profession. At their peak, they could cut ten acres per day per man—twice that of other crews. Their team work, pride, reliability, and work ethic left them unchallenged. Some growers said that when the Filipinos stopped cutting ‘gras, they would stop growing it. And that is what happened.

Photo: Filipinos: Forgotten Asian Americans

The Long Struggle for Acceptance

Filipinos in San Joaquin County

by

*Frank Ramos Perez
Leatrice Bantillo Perez*

To know the Filipinos who settled in San Joaquin County is to understand their history as an oppressed people, first ruled with iron hands by the Spaniards and then by Americans with discriminating laws and racism, not only in the Philippines but here in the United States. One must understand that these Filipino problems are common to most Filipinos in the USA and not just San Joaquin County. In spite of these problems, the Filipinos persevered and became a positive work force in this country, contributing greatly to this country's economy and its strength, especially here in California up through Oregon, Washington, and Alaska.

Early Philippine History

The Spanish Occupation

Spain occupied the Philippines for three centuries, from 1598 to 1898. The Filipino people suffered untold hardships and cruelty under their rule. For example, three Filipino priests, Fr. Mariano Gomez, Fr. Jose Burgos, and Fr. Jacinto Zamora were accused of fomenting a mutiny in Cavite causing a "revolt" and were sentenced on February 15, 1872, by a Spanish military court to die by the garrote (strangulation machine). Dr. Jose Rizal, the most memorialized of all the martyrs and heroes of the Philippines, was tried on charges of "rebellion, sedition, and illicit association." He was executed by a firing squad on December 30, 1896. He followed many other great men who were tortured and killed by the Spaniards.

The Spanish-American War

The Spanish-American War began May 1, 1898. Commodore George Dewey, Commander of the U.S. Asiatic Squadron, entered Manila Bay and sank the Spanish Fleet without losing a ship or a man. A few months later, Filipino and American troops attacked and captured towns around Manila from the Spaniards. The American troops entered Manila, but the Filipinos were kept outside the walls. The Spanish flag was hauled down the flagpole of Fort Santiago and the American flag hoisted.

Protestantism followed the American flag to the Philippines. The first Presbyterian mission arrived in Manila on April 21, 1899. Other Protestant faiths came in subsequent years.

War of Philippine Independence 1901–1902

America fired the first shot on February 4, 1899. An American soldier shot and killed a Filipino soldier crossing a bridge. That shot ignited the War of Philippine Independence. American troops, under General Arthur MacArthur, captured Malolos, the capital of the First Philippine Republic.

On March 23, 1901, General Aguinaldo was captured. General Malvar was the last Filipino general to surrender to the Americans. On May 6, 1902, he proclaimed the end of the war.

The American Era

In 1903, the first group of Philippine government *pensionados* arrived in the United States to study in American colleges and universities. In 1914 the system was abolished due to World War I but was revived in 1919 and discontinued again in 1928. The Commonwealth of the Philippines was restored in 1938.

A *pensionado* was a student scholar who was selected by the Philippine government and given a pension to study in a major American university with the purpose of returning to the Philippines and applying his attained knowledge for the betterment of the country.

The *pensionados* encouraged other students, who were referred to as "fountain pen boys," to come to the States to study.

This first migration of Filipinos to the United States occurred after the Spanish-American War, encouraged by the "sweet-talk" of their teachers and the missionaries about "the land of the free," "beautiful America," "land of opportunity, peace, kind and loving people," etc.

Some had Engineering degrees (Architecture, Civil, Chemical, etc.), Ph.Ds in Anthropology, M.A. in Education, and so on, but found they could not be hired in schools or industries because of their race.

It is not surprising that the majority were forced to accept the one alternative that had always been offered the newcomer—agricultural labor. In this endeavor they proved to be superb.

Of course, besides the "sweet talk" and the beautiful picture of America painted by the missionaries and teachers, the pioneers of the early 1900s also encouraged their relatives and friends to join them in their new found "land of opportunity." They rarely described the difficulties under which they were living. They, too, painted a pretty picture and wanted to

show their folks back home they were successes and didn't want to worry them.

These were major reasons for the success of exploiting employers—looking for cheap labor to work the sugar and pineapple plantations of Hawaii and the fields of California—in recruiting crews of men with promises of good pay.

I'll never forget when a picture of my cousin, Joe, arrived in my village. His parents were showing us how successful he looked. There he stood with his Stetson hat on his well-groomed head, clad in a handsome Macintosh suit, an expensive overcoat draped over one arm, an impressive cane in one hand and leather gloves on his hands. He was a picture of success. All of us young lads had dreams of following him to America and being as successful as he. This was one of the reasons I wanted to migrate to the USA, and being only 16 years old, I also wanted to complete my education, because schooling was more available and affordable than in the Philippines. The ultimate goal was to complete higher education and attain a professional career. My story is only one of many others who had the same dreams.



All Spiffed Up

Immigrant Joe Palacpac sent this photo home to reassure his family he was doing well in California, c.1927. It convinced author Frank Perez, his cousin, to follow him.

Photo courtesy of Author

When I found my cousin in San Francisco, he was working in a restaurant. He was sweating with a white apron on. He was not the same person. That was just one of the surprises I had.

Early Anti-Filipino Legislation

1924

Immigration Act. Excluded all aliens (not including Filipinos). Filipinos are ineligible for American citizenship.

1930

Anti-Miscegenation Act. Illegal for Negroes, Mongolians, Mulattos, and Malaysians to marry within the white race. (Filipinos were considered Malays).

1932

Congress passes Hawes-Cutting Act excluding Filipinos from citizenship and limiting Filipino immigration to 100 annually.

1934

Tydings-McDuffie Act granted Philippine Independence within 10 years. All Filipinos in the United States would automatically be considered aliens under the 1924 Philippines Immigration Act.

1935

Repatriation Act. Any Filipino in the United States would receive free passage back to the Philippines granted that the person foregoes any right to return. The Act was a miserable failure. Of approximately 45,000 Filipinos in the U.S., only 2,290 chose to return to the Philippines.

W.W. II and Post-War Acts Bring Change

1943

Filipino Nationals and Philippine citizens allowed to own land in California ending a 1920 law.

1945

War Bride Act passed enabling Filipino veterans to bring wives and children to the USA.

July 4, 1946

Birth of the Third Philippine Republic. This marked the culmination of the three hundred year struggle for Filipino freedom and of four decades of American rule.

1946

Filipino Naturalization Act over-ruled Tydings-McDuffie Act and enabled Filipinos to become naturalized citizens if they entered the USA before March 1943.

1948

Anti-Miscegenation Act declared unconstitutional.

1952

McCarran-Walter Act revises 1924 Immigration Act to allow skilled aliens and their descendants entrance into the USA.

Few Women Migrated

In those early years, 1900 to 1930, there were few women in the migration. Firstly, it was all a family could afford to pay for one to have a chance at a better life in America with the hope that the rest of the family could follow. They usually had to sell whatever they owned to pay for the passage. In my family, my father had to sell our only carabao (water buffalo used on the farm like an ox), to buy my ticket just to travel in steerage class (the lowest) on the the *USS President Lincoln*. Another reason was the traditional Filipino belief that a woman's place is in the home and not to be venturing out until the man has found a place to live. Also, a very major reason was the contract provisions of exploiting employers recruiting field crews of men. Also, I believe there was an Act that established a quota on Filipina women.

The 1930 US Census counted 42,500 Filipino-Americans, of which only 2,500 were women.

Why They Stayed

Despite disillusionment we stayed. Although we faced many hardships, we were in many ways better off, except for the discrimination, because we could at least find some kind of work no matter how menial the job. Yes, some longed to return home, especially those who had come in the early 1920s and found their life to become a very meaningless and dreary round of toil and sweat. So when the Repatriation Act was passed in 1935, a few desperate men, who longed for their wives and families and could never save enough money to return home, readily accepted the offer of passage back to the Philippines for a mere \$95.00, realizing too late that repatriation was actually deportation with no chance of return. Most had too much pride to return under those terms and saw through the reason for America's generosity.



Photo: Filipino American National Historical Society



The Image

Here a group of townmates pose for a group photo to be sent back home to reassure family and friends they were doing well. In truth, many of the recent arrivals had to rent or borrow a suit for their first photo. Sometimes there was joint ownership of a fine suit. (c. 1920) Photo: Filipino American National Historical Society



The Reality

This photo, taken at Terminous in 1939, includes some of these same men. Here they are planting celery. Most of the crews were itinerant, following field work up and down the state, but Filipinos were most famous as asparagus workers.

Photo: Filipino American National Historical Society

The Field Hands

In the field of agriculture, Filipinos were known to be the best, fastest and hardest farm workers ever to be contracted. The growers knew they could rely on the Filipino to bring in their healthy crops without too much loss from careless mishandling and with good quality. No one knew that better than the asparagus, tomato, and grape growers, because then, these crops were manually picked.

During the 1920s and 1930s, many Filipinos found they could not continue their education or obtain jobs because of the Great Depression and discrimination so they found themselves working on the farm. Here, at least, they earned a living, although meager, and usually had their own cot-beds and blankets to sleep on in the bunkhouses provided by the grower, no matter how humble (putting it mildly), it may have been. Bunkhouses were usually old train cabooses or freight cars lined with cardboard or thin wooden planks or metal sheets to keep out the wind and cold.

Those who already had college degrees could not obtain work suitable to their chosen career and they, too, found that to eat and have shelter, their last resort was either hotel bell-hop jobs, janitorial work, or restaurant help if they stayed in the city, or else they traveled the agricultural belt. Very few stood in bread-lines or sought welfare because Filipino organizations and/or Filipino families would share whatever they had, no matter how little.

The Filipinos who followed the crops endured the hardships of stoop labor and made many sacrifices. If they married and had families, many would try to settle in a small rented house in town (Filipinos could not buy land then), because usually there was no house provided on the farm. They would have to leave their families to work and live where jobs were available because they wanted their children to be raised with a sense of stability and security by establishing roots, as well as the fact their education would not be interrupted.

Some women who married farm workers would also help on the farm by either working in the fields with their husbands (especially if they were paid by piece-work), or end up helping in the kitchen, cooking the meals for the workers. If they could move into town after the children came, many did so.

The success of the Filipinos in the field brought the envy of other groups seeking work during the Great Depression era. They were accused of "stealing" jobs from needy "Americans" and this led to further discrimination and unrest.

In 1926 tensions between Filipinos and whites in Stockton resulted in a brawl that resulted in eight people stabbed.

On October 24, 1929, a riot in Exeter, California, erupted in reaction to hiring Filipino workers and inter-racial dating. The rioters burned the barn of the farmer who had hired them.

During an anti-Filipino riot in Watsonville, California on January 19, 1930, Fermin Tuvera, a farm laborer, was asleep in his bunk bed when a stray bullet from white invaders killed him.

The Stockton Filipino Federation building was bombed after midnight on January 29, 1930. The forty occupants were unhurt.

Filipinos contributed greatly to the success of the big growers by their dedication and sweat to harvest their crops. In San Joaquin County, however, the Filipino farm worker had to finally protest the very low wages and poor living and working conditions by calling a strike during the peak of the asparagus season in 1939. The Filipino Agriculture Labor Association (FALA) was formed and became the union to negotiate with the growers.

Because many Filipinos left the farms to serve in the armed forces during World War II, the growers of San Joaquin County saw the need to replenish their work force with Mexican Nationals (the Braceros program). When the war ended, many of the former Filipino farm laborers did not return to agriculture, but sought jobs that gave them more security, employee benefits, and steady employment which helped these men establish homes for their war brides and start their families.

Those who returned to the farms resumed their routine of trekking the agricultural belt. Some spent the months of May through September in Alaska during the salmon season. Few complained of the work because they appreciated the opportunity of earning an honest living regardless of the hardships (the peat dirt, inclement weather, poor accommodations, no employee benefits and low wages). They worked hard to support and raise their families, determined that their children would not have to do stoop labor and they encouraged them to strive for higher education, which many did.

Today these children are educators, school principals, music teachers, pharmacists, dentists, doctors, nurses, accountants, lawyers, journalists, authors, financial consultants, engineers, office managers, government employees, politicians, etc.

...1927...\$2.75 a day...ten hours at the time...it's hardly daylight when we moved to the fields and come back after sundown...it was hard...at night, I'd feel all kinds of pain in my body...my back, my arm...imagine, less than 15 years old...after I got to my bed...I'd be crying...

Filipinos: Forgotten Asian Americans

A Voice of Fear and Prejudice...

The following are excerpts from an article titled *Filipino Immigration Viewed As a Peril* by C.M. Goethe, President of the Immigration Study Commission. The paper was published in *Current History*, Vol. 34, June 1931. Goethe was a Sacramento millionaire developer, philanthropist and nature lover. He—like Adolph Hitler—was devoted to the theory of Eugenics, i.e., humans should breed with the same care as thoroughbred animals. Races should be kept “pure.” The best and brightest should be encouraged to marry and raise large families. The “lower classes” should be discouraged from both. Obviously, he regarded most non-white alien genes as unsuitable. He founded the Immigration Study Commission to advance the theory of Eugenics and was its first and only president. (Eugenics has been thoroughly discredited by modern science.) His comments fairly represent the misinformation and prejudice the Filipino pioneers faced.

- ✓ “The difference between daily wages for unskilled labor in the Philippines and in the continental United States constitutes a menace to the American standard of living which will continue until we solve the Filipino immigration problem.”
- ✓ “The report maintained that Filipinos are vain, unreliable and of a rather low mentality, since labor agents in the islands tend to select those of lower mentality as being more docile.”
- ✓ “During the 1930 asparagus season, says another official report, there were approximately 360 asparagus camps in the Delta with probably 7,000 harvesters. Of these about 5,500 are Filipinos.”
- ✓ “When ranch work is not available in the winter, the Filipinos flock to the city. Many gravitate to charitable institutions, where, if penniless, they are fed and lodged free. Investigation shows that “they avoid the Salvation Army, too lazy to do required work for bed or meal.”
- ✓ “They are very vain. When going to wash windows in private houses, they carry their window rags in a brief case, so as to appear as lawyers.”
- ✓ “While Mexican peons and Filipino coolies pour in, farm wages drop.”
- ✓ “Filipino immigrants are mostly men; 93% of the islanders admitted to California in 1920-29 were males. These men are jungle folk, and their primitive moral code accentuates the race problem even more than the economic difficulty. The first notable riot between whites and Filipinos occurred in Exeter, California on October 24, 1929, after a carnival stabbing affray. Whites threw missiles at Filipinos who were escorting white women. One Filipino stabbed a white with a bolo. The assailant made away, but the attack infuriated the mob, 300 strong, which then burned a hay barn on a ranch where Filipinos were harvesting figs. The owner formerly had employed whites.”
- ✓ “The Filipino tends to interbreed with near-moron white girls. The resulting Hybrid is almost invariably undesirable. The ever increasing brood of children of Filipino coolie fathers and low-grade white mothers may in time constitute a serious social burden.”
- ✓ “Primitive island folk such as Filipinos do not hesitate to have nine children, while parents of white stock find educating three a problem of finance. Filipinos, at a theoretical rate of nine children to the family, will have 1,729 great-grandchildren as against the white parents’ twenty-seven. Thus, after an emergency stopgap in the nature of a quota against the Filipinos, we may find we may have to decide between the rights of our future generations and the danger that lurks in granting the Filipinos the status of American citizenship.”

Pioneer Filipino Families and Leaders

Listed below are some of the first Filipino families and leaders who settled in Stockton in the early 1920s and 1930s and experienced the hardships of not only strong discriminations but also the Depression and in spite of these adversities contributed greatly to the economy of San Joaquin County:

Vicente Acoba was the first Filipino farmer to own land and a farm in the Lathrop area. He arrived in the United States in 1927 with the first wave of Filipino workers looking for better job opportunities. His initial destination was Hawaii where he worked in the pineapple plantations. Later he and his first wife, the former Margarita Vallesteros, settled in Lathrop where he farmed. They had eight children and after his wife died, he remarried and had another daughter. All of his children still live in the San Joaquin County area.

He was one of the founders of the United Bacarreneos of America. He recalled when interviewed in 1984 how in the year 1932 a townmate (a Bacarreneo) had died penniless. So he and other townmates in the area collected donations to provide a decent burial for their fellow countryman. After the funeral, the Good Samaritans held a meeting and decided to organize that they may be able to help each other. "There were about 30 to 40 of us who got together to charter. They made me the head so I couldn't refuse." He served as the group's president from 1932 to 1950. The Stockton Bacarreneos later joined forces with the Salinas group and then invited the Santa Maria group to join them.



Mr. and Mrs. Vicente Acoba, respected pioneer leaders of the Filipino-American community.

Photo: Courtesy of the Acoba Family

Mr. Acoba's oldest son, Frank Acoba, is Postmaster in Wallace, California. His second son, the late Robert Acoba, retired from the Post Office. Third son, Benny Acoba, with his wife, Val, are members of the Asian American Repertory Theatre and the S.J. County Arts Council.

Mr. Leo and Mrs. Camila (Labor) Carido, in the early years of their marriage, lived and worked on the farms in the Delta and in the mid-thirties moved into Stockton, raised and educated their children whose chosen careers are in education, finance, administration and the military and federal services.

In the early twenties, Mr. Sebastian and Mrs. Mary (Arca) Inosanto lived and worked at Terminous and in the early thirties moved into Stockton. He was a founder of the Filipinos Agricultural Labor Association, California's first farm labor union. Sebastian Inosanto retired as a major farm labor contractor in San Joaquin County. Mary helped the war effort by working on Rough and Ready Island. After WW II ended, Mary resumed her education at the College of the Pacific, graduated and later retired as a Stockton elementary school teacher. Their son, Daniel, became a History teacher and is presently the owner and instructor of a well-known martial arts studio in Los Angeles area and is an author of several books on martial arts, a consultant and lecturer, not only to Hollywood stars and producers, but worldwide. The daughter, Lilia, was a music coordinator and teacher for a Southern California school district.

Mr. Primo and Mrs. Rita Villarruz made their first home in Stockton during the mid-1920s. Primo Villarruz was selected by the Philippine government *pensionado* program to study in a major American university with the purpose of returning to the Philippines and apply his attained knowledge for the betterment of the country. He graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in the mid-1930s as a chemical engineer. Like many of his fellow *pensionados* who had dreams of returning to their homeland to improve the quality of life, Primo hoped to improve the water and sanitation system of his area in Capiz in the Visayan Islands. He never got to fulfill that dream, because America became his new home.

Primo was very fortunate that upon graduating he was befriended by the president of the California Water Service Company who hired him as a chemist in the city of Stockton. He was the first professional Filipino chemist hired in Stockton, if not in the State of California. In 1939 he was transferred to the San Jose Water Works and continued there in his profession as chemist for over forty years. During his tenure, he introduced a number of testing methods that were used nationally and internationally. He worked with other chemists throughout the world in refining testing and purification procedures for safe drinking water that are still referred to today. (Continued page 13).



Photo: Filipino American Historical Society

1930

Stockton Filipino Center Bombed

Shortly after midnight, January 29, 1930, a dynamite bomb exploded under the Filipino Federation of American building at 2049 S. San Joaquin Street in Stockton. The blast totally destroyed the porch and badly damaged the rest of the structure (see photo above). Homes 200 feet distant had windows shattered by the force of the blast.

About forty people were sleeping in the building at the time of the bombing, including several women and children. Fortunately, only one occupant was slightly injured.

The bombing followed two weeks of racial tension throughout the State that began with riots in Watsonville and subsequent clashes between whites and Filipinos in San Jose, San Francisco, and Santa Rosa.

Community Responds

By noon, on the day of the bombing, the community was responding. The Stockton Ministerial Association, for example, called the attack "dastardly and cowardly," stating further that the city was victimized, as well as the "defenseless Filipinos."

Public officials and community leaders joined in condemning the violence.

Filipinos Rally

On February 8, 1930, little more than a week after their headquarters was bombed, members of the Filipino Federation of American rallied behind efforts to repair their building. They commemorated the event with this photo.

The building was repaired and still serves the Filipino Federation today.



Photo: Courtesy John Wentz

1994

From Bombs to Ballroom

Iloilo, Stockton's Sister City

In 1965, Iloilo City, Philippines, became Stockton's second sister city. The late Jose Alba, activist in the Filipino-American community, made the original proposal to the Stockton City Council.

Sister Cities

The purpose of the Sister Cities program is "the fostering of world peace by establishing and promoting programs of mutual understanding between the people of the City of Stockton and the people of similar cities of foreign nations."

The choice of Iloilo City was not random. Not only are the two cities similar in economy and size, but many of our Filipino-American citizens originally came from this island and this district.

A New Era

In the case of Iloilo, the Sister City program has also resulted in better understanding between our own ethnic communities here in San Joaquin County.

This new era of friendship and understanding is perfectly illustrated above where John Wentz, president of the Stockton Sister City Association and former Stockton City Manager, is pictured dancing with another guest at a reception for the visiting Stockton Association held in Iloilo earlier this year.

This was the latest in a series of visits and exchanges that have occurred since the program was inaugurated. Current emphasis is on possible economic cooperation between the Sisters, to the benefit of both.

Filipino Immigration—A Short Primer

The first Filipinos to set foot in California were "Luzon Indians" who accompanied explorer Pedro de Unamuno when he landed at Morro Bay in 1587.

When Spain established the galleon trade between the Philippines and Mexico and California, Filipino sailors and artisans were stationed in the New World, joined by others who "jumped ship." At the conclusion of the galleon trade, these people were absorbed into the general Californio/Mexican population. One may have been a co-founder of Los Angeles.

After the American conquest of the Philippines, *pensionados* were sent to America on government scholarships to earn degrees and return to serve "the public interest." Some were sent to earn advanced degrees in order to establish the University of the Philippines in 1908. This scholarship activity persuaded others, called "the fountain pen boys," to come to the U.S. for study at their own cost.

Student immigrants averaged about 200 per year and most returned home at the end of their studies. Many who ran out of money stayed and worked.

The First Wave

The 1924 Immigration Act cut off the traditional supply of immigrant farm labor—all except Filipinos, who were considered American wards and exempt from quotas. In anticipation of the Act, Hawaiian cane and pineapple growers began recruiting workers in the Philippines on three-year contracts. At the end of the contracts, a majority

migrated to the Mainland to settle into farm work in California. After 1924, most immigrants came directly to California to fill the labor demands here. Filipino immigration averaged over 4,000 per year between 1923 and 1929. Virtually all were young, single, males.

The Second Wave

After World War II, Filipino-American veterans of the Pacific Campaign brought home their wives and dependents. For the first time, more women than men migrated to the States some years. The influx of women and families changed Filipino social and economic life. Aging First Wave migrants, many finally settling into family life, turned from the fields to new opportunities made possible by post-war civil rights and anti-discrimination legislation.

The Third Wave

The 1965 Immigration Act abolished the old quota system based on national origin for one based on needed skills. The Filipino quota was raised from 200 to 20,000 annually. (Actual immigration jumped to about 11,000 per year). This opened the door for the Third Wave. Prior immigrants had been laborers, students, and service men. Under the new act, Filipino migrants tended to be trained technicians and professionals with advanced education and, unlike other Asian immigrants, with a good knowledge of English and the American System. Political unrest and economic uncertainty in the Philippines abetted this later emigration, with the result that many professionals—particularly in the medical and scientific fields—chose to emigrate, causing a "brain drain" in the Republic.



Photo: Stockton Chapter, Filipino American National Historical Society

Pensive little Filipinas pose prettily before a memorial to Abraham Lincoln at an American Legion celebration. (post WWID)

(Continued from page 9)

While living in Stockton during 1932-1933 (depression years), he was the first president of the Filipino Community of Stockton and vicinity. He helped to establish the first Filipino Home by purchasing a small three-story hotel on Hunter Street between Washington and Market streets. It housed about four or five Filipino families and some single men who had nowhere else to live. He undertook this project mainly on his own and lavished what little time and money he had on it very unselfishly. With the advent of better times, it had to be given up because people lost interest in welfare work and the Filipino Community had no more funds to maintain it.

Primo Villarruz was a very caring human being. Whether it was the Filipino Community of Stockton or San Jose, where he also served as a president and leader, or speaking out during World War II against the incarceration of Japanese-Americans. He served on the City of San Jose's Human Relations Council and on the Council of Churches. He continued being an "ambassador" throughout his life, representing the ideals that were instilled in him through education and religion.

Mr. A.B. Pagala (dec.) lived on and farmed his land in French Camp.

Mr. Pascual Fidel (dec.), successful farm labor contractor and produce shipper, also leased farmland in California, Arizona, and Mexico.

Mr. Cecil Bonzo farms in Lathrop and was one of the founders of the Stockton Farmers Market under the Crosstown Freeway and the Weberstown Mall Farmers Market. He is also an advisor to the neighborhood community gardens.

Other leaders of the Stockton Filipino community included the late Dr. Macario D. Bautista, the only practicing Filipino physician from the 1930s until about the late 1960s. He was elected president of the Filipino community several times and served the Filipinos in a very unassuming manner and very humbly. He was highly respected and admired by the Filipino community as well as the Stockton community at large.

Some of the others who took on the leadership of the Filipino community during the 1930s through 1940s were Vicente S. Roldan, a Filipino newsman who published a monthly newspaper; then there was Mr. Teofilo S. Suarez who believed in anticipating hard times and wanted the Filipino community to be in a position to render whatever assistance any needy or distressed Filipino required; Pastor Engkabo, Sr. who owned a small neighborhood grocery; Claro Candelario, who had a small restaurant on East Lafayette Street between El Dorado and Hunter streets and during his administration in the early 1940's was the first president to pay attention to the youth and promised them the support of his

leadership to hold benefit athletic tournaments and dances so they could raise money to erect our own building to house a social hall and gymnasium. The Filipino Youth Association (FYA) was able to create a fund of several thousand dollars, but the next administration diverted the funds for other uses.

The later immigrants who have come since the early 1970s to the present are a different breed. Most are professionals, doctors, lawyers, accountants, technicians, nurses, educators, others in white-collar jobs, most of them earning very substantial salaries because of the changes in our labor laws—minimum wages, fair labor standards act, fair employment practices, etc.—which did not exist before. They now can be hired in offices, educational institutions, hospitals, banks, law offices, etc., as long as they qualify.

The new generation does not fully understand the "old-timers." They can't comprehend that so many were farm workers and couldn't better themselves. The "old-timers" were grateful for the work no matter how hard it was, because at least it provided shelter, clothing and food for themselves and later, their families and education for their children.

What the newcomer doesn't realize is that were it not for these "old-timers" breaking the barriers and fighting the discrimination, the newcomer would still be facing some of the hardships the Filipino pioneers experienced.

Yes, we paved the way that their journey in this country might be easier for them.

It was sad that because many Filipinos then did not have families, they were tempted by all the vices around them. The biggest problems were the gambling houses, cockfights, and taxi dance halls which were open before World War II. Many times mother gave advice to the young, single men who had no older person to give them advice.

"You should save your money," she'd say. "When you become sick or old or alone...will it be the gambler boss who will come visit you? Will the taxi dancer take care of you?" And all agreed that "Tiyang" (a respected older woman) was right.

Voices: A Filipino American Oral History

My recollections of my mother are those of her working so hard in the kitchen. She not only did the cooking for camp and family, she also worked in the fields. My poor mother worked hard all her life and I will always remember her working hard. I have feelings of resentment, love, and anger at myself for not being more helpful.

Filipinos: Forgotten Asian Americans

Business and Social Life

Then there were the grocers who provided the labor contractors with staples to feed their crews. Often times the grocer would not get paid or paid very late if the crop was not financially profitable.

Some Filipino groceries were the Visayan Market on West Washington Street, Stockton Market on the corner of Hunter and Washington streets, John and Martin Castillo's Market on Lafayette Street, the Fuertes' Grocery on El Dorado Street, the Philippine Mercantile on Commerce Street between Washington and Lafayette streets, and others. Without their help, the labor contractors would find it difficult to keep a crew together because they had to feed them.

Other Filipino businesses which served the Filipino community in "Filipino town", sometimes referred to as "Little Manila", were the many Filipino barbers, billiard halls and a few Filipino restaurants.

After living and working on the farm for several weeks, the Filipino laborer would come into town to visit his favorite barber for a good grooming for either a big weekend or just to feel human again. You would be able to find three to four barbershops with more than two chairs along El Dorado Street on each block from Sonora to Main Street and a couple shops each on Lafayette, Washington, Market and Main streets between Hunter and Center streets. Most of the barbers made a substantial living and were able to provide good homes for their families and fine education for their children who are today very productive citizens in various careers.

There were several Filipino restaurants that came and went. But the most popular and the one that lasted the longest starting from the mid-1930s up through the war years and until the late 1970s, was the Lafayette Lunch Counter located at 50 East Lafayette Street.

Pablo Mabalon was the proprietor and at first served mainly the single Filipino men who came into town from the farms longing for good Filipino home-cooking. During the war years many Filipino servicemen on furlough sought out his restaurant because they yearned for Filipino food.

He was a very kind-hearted and generous man who never turned away anyone who came to him for a little help. He was always willing to feed them or loan them a few dollars to tide them over between jobs. He knew most of them would pay him back. After World War II ended, he was able to send for his wife, two sons and a daughter and her family of seven children.

Many Filipino-owned billiard halls and card clubs could also be found along El Dorado Street scattered between the barber shops. These pool halls and card rooms were successful businesses and popular meeting places where the fellows congregated to socialize after a hard week's work, because there was hardly any other recreation in which a Filipino could participate.

There were at least two social clubs owned by Filipino business men. The first one was the Rizal Social Club, Inc., located on East Lafayette Street between El Dorado and Hunter streets. The second, the Lu-Vi-Min Social Club, Inc., was in the first block of East Lafayette Street between Center and El Dorado streets. The Rizal Club was owned by Demetrio Ente and the Lu-Vi-Min by Gonzalo E. Lagrimas. These clubs flourished from the late 1930s through about the end of World War II, in 1946. These "dime-a-dance" clubs were open almost every night and were the only dance clubs Filipinos could attend and enjoy some social life. Live music was provided by Filipino Jazz Bands consisting of seven to nine band members.

The *Los Filipinos Tailoring Shop* of Placido Lazaro at 232 South El Dorado Street in Stockton was a Filipino favorite in the 1930s.

Photo: Filipinos: Forgotten
Asian Americans



The one and only bowling alley in Stockton, located at the corner of Channel and Hunter streets did not allow Filipinos, and unless you made the rounds of all eight or nine movie houses in town (about half of them located in the "skid-row" area), there was not much else to do but find rest in Washington Park across from St. Mary's Catholic Church (bordered by Washington, San Joaquin, Lafayette and Hunter streets). Many a hot summer afternoon and weekends you would see the park filled with groups of men and some families enjoying each others company.

The Crosstown Freeway and redevelopment abolished the park and the buildings that housed the bars, pool halls, and the Filipino restaurants as well as the Chinese and Japanese restaurants, grocery stores, and novelty shops.

Cockfights in Stockton was number one. Everybody used to go to cockfights...They go out where the asparagus ranches are and that's where they get all their cockfights. I remember around the '30s and '40s a lot of places used to get raided.

Filipinos: Forgotten Asian Americans

And gambling was wide open in Stockton before, on El Dorado, Washington, Market. There was blackjack, sikoy, high-q,...a lot of Chinese and American gambling houses. Sometimes the city raids the gambling house. They pick up about 15 guys, go to court. Pretty soon, gambling houses would open again.

Voices: A Filipino American Oral History

Rizal Social Club Inc.

138 E. Lafayette Street Stockton, Calif.

Owned and operated only by Filipinos with an

Investment of \$25,000

**The ONLY EXCLUSIVE and
AIR-CONDITIONED STREAM LINED CLUB
IN AMERICA!**

Filipino Organizations

There were many organizations and associations created by the Filipinos for different reasons. Many were for the people who came from a particular town (townmates), or province in the Philippines and were for mainly social reasons and benefit purposes. But the three largest organizations established in the United States were the fraternal organizations which had their roots in the Philippines. There was the Caballeros de Dimas-Alang, Inc., founded in 1921, in San Francisco, which at its peak had more than 2,000 members with over one hundred lodges and women's auxiliary lodges. The next was the Legionarios del

Trabajo, Inc., founded in 1924 in San Francisco, its membership totaling 3,000 with over 86 lodges and women's auxiliary lodges. Its Grand Lodge office is located in Stockton. The third was the Gran Oriente Filipino, it also began in San Francisco. Its membership included approximately 700, among them 100 women.

There was yet a fourth organization, the Filipino Federation of America, Inc., which is one of the biggest Filipino organizations. It was founded in Los Angeles in 1925 by Dr. Hilario Camino Moncado. The organization grew by leaps and bounds and has branches in the Hawaiian Islands and in the Philippines. Dr. Moncado had unique philosophic beliefs which he imparted to his members, including a strict behavioral code governing dietary, matrimonial, tonorial, and other practices. The organization functions well and is seldom heard much in the Filipino Community. Usually they live and work independently and apart from the Filipino Community in general.

In 1930, voicing his objections to the bill presented by Congressman Welch of California for the exclusion of Filipinos, Moncado said in his address before the Immigration Committee, "As long as the Philippine Islands have not yet been granted Independence by the United States, I bitterly oppose the passage of the Filipino Exclusion Law. To exclude the Filipinos without giving them their independence would be utterly at variance with American principles of square dealing and ideals of democracy! Filipino exclusion, without independence first, would picture to the world, the United States as a breaker of faith. Exclusion without independence would be a racial affront. Filipinos are not "aliens" or citizens of a foreign country, but are under the jurisdiction of the United States, which prescribes their form of government and enacts their immigration laws. It is to be remembered that the Filipinos became subjects of the United States without their volition."

A scholar, Dr. Moncado held many degrees and was an alumnus of the University of Southern California. He was author of several books and was editor of the *Filipino Nation*, which once had a circulation of 25,000. Being very sociable, he belonged to many Country Clubs (he loved golf), and Chambers of Commerce throughout California. A world traveler, he had the distinction of being the first Filipino to ride the Hawaii Clipper from Honolulu to Manila and return to Alameda, California.

Since his death, there has been no other president. The leadership is assumed by the second in command. He will always be their president. During the July 4th celebrations in Stockton, his organization sponsors an annual golf tournament at Swenson Park. Upon his death, the leadership fell to his Vice President, the late Evaristo C. Pecson, who was also a scholar, author, composer, and philosopher.

World War II

Sacrifice and Change

On December 7, 1941, Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii and the bombing of the Philippines on December 8, 1941, brought us into the war. This dastardly act of Japan angered the total population. In the days and weeks after the Pearl Harbor and the Philippines attacks, the recruiting centers were jammed with Filipinos volunteering for military service. In San Joaquin County many Filipinos who volunteered for military service were rejected because of their age and/or the need for them to continue to work in the fields harvesting the crops to feed the armed forces. Filipino women and their teenage daughters and sons worked during school vacations in the Delta Islands, such as McDonald, Rindge Tract, Roberts Island, Terminous, Holt, etc., to plant, harvest and process the crops during the war years.

In 1942, the First and Second Filipino Infantry Regiments were activated. The war helped change the attitudes of the whites. The "brown monkeys" and "goo-goos," et al, were now referred to as "brown brothers" and accompanied with friendlier smiles.

The unwelcome signs in windows and entrances with the words "No Filipinos Allowed," or "We do not serve Filipinos" gradually disappeared. Theater ushers were no longer showing the "brown folks" only to the left or right side of the better theaters, but allowing them now to sit in the center seats.

It was not until after World War II ended that Flora Arca Mata was the first Filipina to be hired in the Stockton Unified School District. This opened the doors for other Filipino educators.

The Great War Bond Drive

Filipino organizations like the Caballeros de Dimas-Alang (CDA) jointly sponsored a huge project approved by the U.S. government of selling U.S. War Bonds to raise funds to buy a fighter plane to be donated to the Philippine government for the war effort. Stockton's Regidor Lodge #5 of the CDA built a portable stage and a booth *ala* Philippines style with capiz shell windows which they set up on the corner of Lafayette and El Dorado streets, from which bonds would be sold. On that corner stage, for several weekends during the summer months, from 6:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., a musical program was broadcast over local radio station, KGDM, inviting people to buy U.S. War Bonds.

The musical program was headed by the choir of the Trinity Presbyterian Church, directed by Norma Bantillo; Angelina Bantillo was the pianist and members were Leatrice Bantillo, Nancy Lillian Bantillo, Lilia Inosanto, Susanna Caballero, Eleanor

Baldivia, and Eleanor Engkabo. They sang Filipino folk songs as a chorus or sang solos and duets accompanied by guitar or piano. A few members of the Stockton Filipino Community also participated by either saying a few patriotic words or rendering some musical numbers. It was my honor to serve as Program Director and announcer.

When the program ended, the young ladies helped the people fill out bond applications. It was a hugely successful project and the radio program was anxiously received every weekend. Filipinos from as far as Southern California—Los Angeles area, Long Beach, San Pedro, Santa Maria—and cities and towns from Bakersfield up to Marysville, Roseville and Sacramento as well as west to the Bay Area would come to buy War Bonds and witness an entertaining Filipino musical program.



Photo courtesy of Author

The patriotic young entertainers who helped the Filipino Community's Successful War Bond Drive.
L-R (standing) Lily Bantillo, Sue Caballero, Norma Bantillo
L-R (front) Leatrice Bantillo, Eleanor Baldiva

The War Bond Fighter Plane Project that the CDA organized along with their other lodges throughout California and the Northwest far exceeded their goal for purchasing one plane and ended up buying two planes. From the Stockton area, Mr. and Mrs. Anastacio Bantillo (Mr. Bantillo was a charter member of the CDA), were the designated re-presentatives of the Regidor Lodge #5, CDA, to present a check for \$10,000 (a portion of the total raised), to Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, in a San Francisco ceremony.



Photo courtesy of Author

Secretary of War Stimson (right), presents award to (L-R) Anastacio and Virginia Bantillo (both of Stockton), (unknown), Celestino Alfara, Grand Master of CDA, at the conclusion of the Filipino War Bond Drive. All of the Filipino lodges and organizations on the West Coast cooperated in this enormously successful effort.

Some Filipino-American Veterans

The Filipino Community of Stockton was not spared the casualties of war. San Joaquin County had its own Filipino-American heroes, children of the early Filipino pioneers. To name a few:

Anastacio Bantillo, Jr., Seaman 1/c, U.S. Navy, died January 23, 1945, (age of 19 years) on the USS Kwajalein, an Aircraft Carrier, in Lingayen Gulf.

Eddie Enebrad was the first Filipino from Stockton to be captured on Corregidor. Of the seven boys and seven girls in the Enebrad family in Stockton, all seven sons—George, Ed, John, Tino, Leonard, Victor and Emelio—and one daughter, Mary, served in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Sgt. Julian G. Ramos of Lodi and Paulino A. Rosales of Stockton were each awarded the Bronze Star for bravery.

Rocky Omalza served in both the Armed Forces and the Merchant Marine.

Tom Espineda, of Filipino-Japanese ancestry, served in the famed 442nd "Go for Broke" Battalion. He was wounded and received the Purple Heart.

Manuel Gesulga, the first Filipino-American to join the paratroopers, was awarded a Purple Heart.

Bill Marcigan was the first Filipino-American to make the beachhead at Anzio, Italy.

Manuel Marcigan, recipient of the Purple Heart, and John Enebrad followed M. Gesulga and joined the paratroopers.

Albert Liwanag, Sgt. Major, retired from the Army after 30 years of service, and also received the Purple Heart.

Lucas Achay flew many bombing missions over Germany as a tail gunner.

Rev. Maurice B.S. Legare was a captain in the Army Chaplain Corps, served in North Africa, Sicily, Italy and Germany. His decorations included a Purple Heart and the French Croix de Guerre. He received three battle stars for his European-African campaign medal. He was the first, if not the only, Filipino Chaplain to serve in the European Theater.

He was responsible for the charter of the Stockton Trinity Presbyterian Church, an integrated church today because he believed and taught that the church was for all peoples, not just Filipinos.

Except for his absence during the war (1942–1946) he served Trinity Presbyterian Church from 1939 until his death in 1954.

There were many other Filipinos from San Joaquin County who served in World War II, too numerous to mention in this space. Many are members of the Manuel A. Rojas American Legion Post.

Looking Ahead

Here in San Joaquin County, since World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, there are many groups who are working towards a better understanding of other races because our communities and schools are made up of so many diverse ethnic groups. It is evident in the county-wide events held annually (some for at least 30 years or more) which include the Spring Festival at Micke Grove, the Obon Festival at the Japanese Buddhist Temple, the Barrio Fiesta at the Filipino Plaza, International Friendship Day at the Civic Memorial Auditorium, the Asparagus Festival, the Delta Heritage Festival at Oak Grove Regional Park (which is just a few years old), the Chinese New Year celebrations held at the Civic Auditorium, the Cinco de Mayo celebrations by the Hispanics, the Native American, the Cambodian, and other Southeast Asian celebrations, just to name a few.

Members of the Filipino Community join with the other ethnic groups and participate in some of these events and present our culture through traditional Filipino folk dances, wearing the Filipino attire and also by preparing Filipino delicacies for those who seek to satisfy their taste buds.

As Filipino-Americans, we have a rightful place in America. We can only forge ahead and retain our Filipino values by striving for those ideals that were instilled in our early Filipino pioneers. The dreams are still there and it is a matter of imparting to our youth the importance of life and why we are here. Each of us has the potential to continue with the ideals and dreams of those pioneers.

We will never truly know or feel the pain, sadness, and the joys that the early Filipinos experienced in coming to this country. They paved the way for those today who benefit from the equal opportunities in the workplace and the professional careers they are able to pursue in our hospitals, medical offices, educational institutions, law offices, science laboratories, pharmacies, retail and wholesale businesses, the arts and entertainment fields, insurance offices, protective services and city, county, state and federal offices, etc.

The question has been asked, "What has the Filipino contributed to San Joaquin County? How has he helped the economy?"

In brief, I have tried to provide the reader with an inkling of the positive contributions made by Filipinos in the San Joaquin County community. There were many others who gave their lives for this country or were wounded in the various wars. There were many other families who played an important role in those years of the "great depression," but time and space are limited.

In conclusion, I believe the following quotation describes those early Filipino pioneers:

PRESS ON

Nothing in the world can take the place of Persistence.

Talent will not:

Nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent.

Genius will not:

Unrewarded genius is almost a proverb.

Education will not:

The world is full of educated derelicts.

Persistence and Determination alone are Omnipotent.

Author Unknown

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FANHS

Filipino American National Historical Society
Stockton Chapter

P.O. Box 30235
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Meets Second Monday 7:00 PM
Filipino Center

Dues - Individual \$25.00
Student/Senior \$ 5.00

The Authors



Frank Ramos Perez was born in the Philippines in 1913. He came to America in 1929 hoping for the opportunity to further his formal education, but hard times and prejudice kept him in the fields. He began a twenty-one year career as a civilian supply officer with the U.S. Army in 1952. Meanwhile, he says he continued his education in the proverbial "School of Hard Knocks." He became a U.S. citizen in 1947.

He began his career as a writer with the *Philippines Star Press* (Los Angeles) 1936-1941. From 1973 to 1991 he was editor-in-chief and a regular columnist for *The Philippines Press U.S.A.*, Salinas, California. Since 1992 he has been a columnist and newsman for the Stockton edition of the *Philippine Review* and *The Maharlika* of Union City. His newspaper work has brought him a long list of honors including citations from former presidents Marcos and Aquino of the Philippines, the National Press Club of the Philippines, the State of California, and San Joaquin County.

Mr. Perez was a member of the Media Advisory Staff of Carlos P. Romulo during the birth of the United Nations in San Francisco. His volunteer contributions to the Filipino community have led to many additional honors and recognitions.

His many civic efforts have included the San Bruno Planning Commission and the Mayor's Committee on Urban Redevelopment for Stockton. Always active in his church, he served as an elder for Trinity Presbyterian Church for twenty-five years.

Today, a hearty 81 years of age, he still writes his monthly column for the *Philippine Review*.

Co-author Leatrice Bantillo Perez did not intend to be credited for her collaborative efforts, but she became so involved in research, writing, and typing that her husband insisted she share the byline.

Born and raised in Stockton, "Letty" attended local schools, graduated from old Stockton High and attended Delta College.



In 1947 she began a career in personnel and payroll with the federal government at Sharpe Army Depot, that concluded with the Environmental Protection Agency in the Bay Area in 1987. She has worked as a typesetter for the Chavez Publishing Co. (Hispanic), and is currently on the staff of the *Philippine Review*.

She is a member of Tuleburg Chapter of American Business Women's Association, the Filipino-American Historical Society, and is an elder at Trinity Presbyterian Church.

Today the Perez' reside in a new home adjacent to their church. They have three sons and five grandchildren.

Ethnic Histories

We hope you enjoyed the story of the Filipino community in our county. It proves again that pioneer courage and perseverance did not disappear at the end of the Nineteenth Century. Previous local ethnic histories published in the *Historian*—all are worthy of review—include:

Chinese in San Joaquin County	Vol. 5,	No. 1
Japanese in San Joaquin County	Vol. 6, NS	No. 4
Lodi German-Russian Heritage	Vol. 6, NS	No. 3
German-Russians in Lodi	Vol. 2, NS	No. 4
The Touch of Portugal	Vol. 6, NS	No. 1

The Society has also published *To The Land Of Bright Promise*, the story of pioneer Japanese truck farmers, by Chiyo Mitori Shimamoto. It is available at the Museum gift shop.

We are anxious to publish more ethnic stories and encourage a rush of manuscripts telling the story of other groups in our community. In fact, any of the areas already covered may be reexamined, augmented—even corrected!

We often hear from aspiring authors and historians anxious to get into print. Here is their opportunity.

RS

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