

River Street Historic District
Bounded by W. Saint James Street,
W. Santa Clara Street, Pleasant Street
Highway 87, and the Guadalupe River

HABS No. CA-2355

San Jose
Santa Clara County
California

HABS
CAL
43-SANJOS
54-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94107

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

RIVER STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

HABS No. CA-2355

HABS
CAL
43-SAN JOSE,
54-

Location:

Bounded by W. St James Street to the north, W. Santa Clara Street to the south, Pleasant Street and Highway 87 to the east, and the Guadalupe River to the west--just east of downtown San Jose, Santa Clara County, California.

U.S.G.S. San Jose West 7.5' Quadrangle
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
10-597720-4132360

Present Owner:

Multiple Owners

Present Occupants:

Multiple Occupants

Present Use:

Residential with some commercial

Significance:

The period of significance of the River Street Historic District is 1875-1925. At this time, the area was a working class neighborhood inhabited mostly by newly arrived Italian immigrants. The district also includes a remarkably diverse group of late nineteenth and early twentieth century building types. The architectural detail reflects the domestic choices made by the Italian population and the creativity achieved with relatively limited finances.

The district is currently populated mostly by Hispanics, and continues to function much as it did in the past when it was inhabited mostly by the Italians. The cutoff date of 1925 was selected as a watershed between two generations of inhabitants. The proportion of Italian immigrants peaked in 1925, and began to dwindle shortly thereafter. This population decline was due to the deaths of the older immigrants and the relocation to other areas of the city. Mikesell also attributes the decline to an unnamed 1924 immigration law which successfully restricted immigration into the United States, especially from Southern Europe.

The district is remarkable unchanged since its period of significance and clearly illustrates the physical layout of such a community. It is a very rare intact working class community in San Jose.

Historian:

Hardlines: Design & Delineation
Columbus, Ohio and Bethesda, Maryland

PART I. PURPOSE OF THIS PROJECT

The following documentation was designed to record to National Park Service, Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) Level III standards the history and architecture of the River Street Historic District, in order to mitigate the effects of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer flood control project for the Guadalupe River. The goal of this recording project was not to determine whether the buildings should be preserved or demolished, but strictly to record and preserve the architecture and history through written, graphic, and photographic documentation. This project was completed by Hardlines: Design & Delineation between July of 1993 and May of 1994.

The project recorded 43 buildings with written histories, sketch floor plans, and large format photographs. The entire district was documented with an overall narrative report, large format contextual photographs, and location maps. The 43 buildings recorded include 34 houses, seven contributing outbuildings, and two commercial structures. Out of the 43 buildings, two could not be fully documented. The house at 149 Pleasant Street was found to have already been demolished between the last survey of the area in 1988 and the start of this project in 1993. Consequently, no drawing or photographs were produced. The occupant of 347 W. St. John Street refused to allow anyone into his home unless financially compensated. Hardlines believed that to do so would set an unfortunate precedent for future documentation work. Thus, no interior photographs or floor plan was produced of this house.

As stated in the Scope of Work for this contract, much of the historical information has already been produced, and that the HABS written information need only to reformat the information into one comprehensive narrative report and to properly credit this existing data. The previous reports produced of the area include a narrative history of the entire district by Stephen D. Mikesell in 1988, inventory forms with brief historical and descriptive information for each contributing structure by Stephen D. Mikesell in 1988, and a description and evaluation of all outbuildings by Michael R. Fong, et al of Basin Research Associates in 1990.

The previous reports disagreed over the evaluation results for the structures on the property at 47-49 N. River Street. The main house (a duplex) was constructed in the historic period but had been greatly altered in the 1930s. Mikesell felt that the modifications rendered it inappropriate for inclusion in the historic district. The Basin Research Associates outbuildings report listed the two-story cottage behind this house as contributing. Mikesell felt that due to its extreme dilapidation, its integrity had been compromised and further study was unnecessary. For this project, the outbuilding was documented with a sketch plan, written report with photocopies of Basin Research Associates photographs, and a large format photograph of the exterior.

PART II. PHYSICAL SETTING OF THE RIVER STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

The original plan for this area of San Jose can barely be detected, owing to the disruptive impact of redevelopment and transportation improvement activities.

The River Street Historic District was not part of the mid-nineteenth century grid plan for San Jose.¹ The streets within the district were laid out relatively late in the city's history, probably in the 1870s and 1880s, and were developed in response to need, not according to a comprehensive city plan. For these reasons, the street pattern within this district only approximates the regular grid found elsewhere in San Jose.

Santa Clara is the only street near the district that is on a true alignment with the streets in the rest of the city. W. St. John (historically San Augustine) and W. St. James streets are far out of alignment with the same-named streets in the rest of the city. N. River Street follows with the Guadalupe River, not with the city's existing grid. The cross streets (Carlisle, Martel, W. St. John, W. St. James) do not divide River Street into regularly sized blocks.

This irregular, partial grid pattern adds to the character of the district, attesting to its nineteenth century roots and its creation at the fringe of downtown.

Modern development, especially the elevated freeway (Highway 87-Guadalupe Expressway) built in the 1970s detract from the historic character of the city by breaking up the street pattern and adding visual intrusions. In a sense, however, the freeway defines the district by separating it from the rest of the city, much as Interstate 5 helps define the boundaries of old Sacramento in Sacramento, California. In this case, the Guadalupe River and the freeway define the east and west boundaries of the district. W. St. James and Santa Clara define the north-south boundaries.

The buildings surveyed within the River Street Historic District were built throughout the 1875-1925 period of significance. Fifteen buildings were constructed before 1900, eighteen between 1900 and 1915, and three were built in from the early to mid 1920s. In addition to these primary structures, seven outbuildings built between 1880 and 1925 were also considered as contributing; in many instances the outbuilding pre-dated the main house by several years.

The vast majority of buildings within the district were constructed and used historically as single-family homes, although many were immediately used as rental units or eventually converted into rental units. Thirty two district buildings were used historically as single family homes. One building was constructed specifically as a duplex. Of the two commercial buildings surveyed in the district one was a hotel and the other a bakery. The seven outbuildings consisted of three carriage houses/garages and four cottage units.

PART III. ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER OF THE DISTRICT

There is no evidence that any of the buildings in the district were designed by the commission of an architect; all buildings for which the designer is known were actually builder-designed. The range of definitions of the stylistic term "vernacular" applies to the buildings in the district: designed by anyone other than a trained and licensed architect² and/or constructed according to the building methods traditional within a specific locality or for a particular group of people.³ However, many residents (mostly European immigrants) chose to build in the latest architectural fashion of their adopted country.

Nineteenth century buildings in the district take several forms. The earliest building style or form in the district is represented in the Italianate residences at 65 and 83 N. River Street, and at 83 Pleasant Street. The house at 79 N. River Street was also apparently an Italianate cottage in its original form but was modified in the early twentieth century to include Craftsman elements. The Hotel Torino (c.1900) is also best described as Italianate in its proportions. However, its very plainness suggests that the developer had in mind Old World Italian designs, not the fashionable American interpretation of those designs.

The identical homes at 339 and 347 W. St. John Street display elements of Italianate design--especially in the bracketed cornices and corner quoins--but may not be nineteenth century buildings. Both of these houses do not appear on a 1915 Sanborn Fire Insurance map and the city directories do not list residents until the 1920s. One explanation of their nineteenth century style is that they were built elsewhere and moved to this site in the 1920s. Another may be that they were built to the "retardare" taste of the developer. These two buildings were owned by Bartolomeo Vinassa in 1924, who was also the proprietor of the Italianate Hotel Torino just a few buildings away.

Two other nineteenth century building forms share several characteristics: most were built speculatively, occupy long, narrow parcels, possessed a full front porch, and were usually built more than one at a time. One of these type is a gable front building and the other is similar but with a hipped roof.

The "gable-front" form⁴ is seen most clearly in the three identical buildings on Pleasant Street (all c.1880s) and the house at 338 W. St. John Street (c.1880s). These homes are similar to but wider than the southern "shotgun" house in their linear orientation to the lot and the simple front facade with full porch. The proportions of the elevation indicate that this form was derived from the Greek Revival style.

The hipped roof variation of the "gable-end" form is found at 352 W. St. John Street, 324 W. St. John Street, and the three identical buildings on W. St. James Street. The house at 352 W. St. John Street was built in the 1880s and was originally paired with an identical building next door (now no longer standing). The house at 324 W. St. John Street is a small 1880s cottage. The houses on W. St. James Street (numbered 338, 352, and 366) were built sometime between 1891 and 1915. In general, these buildings are wider and squarer in plan than the "gable-front" ones, except for the house at 324 W. St. John, which is built on an extremely narrow lot. The hipped roof variation of the "gable-end" type also

utilizes neo-classical detailing and proportion that derive from the Greek Revival style.

The final nineteenth century building form found in the district is represented by 71 N. River Street, a two-story "gabled ell" house. This type of house is usually found in rural areas, and is particularly common in the midwest. However, since it was probably the first house built in this area (c. 1875), it may have enjoyed a somewhat rural setting before development began in the immediate neighborhood.

Among the twentieth century buildings in the district, the most common type is the Queen Anne cottage. The several excellent examples of this type appear to have been built mostly by the more successful families in the neighborhood. One of the most interesting examples of this type is the house at 70 N. River Street, which was built for Frank Pozzo, an early Italian immigrant who ran a cigar and tobacco store in the downtown market. The home at 340 W. St James Street, another handsome example, was built for the Prindiville family, a prosperous English family that owned several parcels in the district. Altogether, there are 10 such cottages within the district.

A less common twentieth century type building in the district is the Craftsman bungalow. All but one were located at the southern end of N. River Street, on land controlled primarily by Felix Savio, a house builder who lived at number 44 N. River Street. It is known that Savio built his own house, and also appears likely that, as a local builder, he also constructed some or all of the other houses that he and his family owned. The particular form of the bungalow represented in these buildings may represent the interpretation of a single builder--Felix Savio. Savio's own home and the ones he owned appear to be well constructed with just enough of the Craftsman vocabulary to make the buildings recognizable as that fashionable early twentieth century type.

Ironically, several buildings constructed or modified by Felix Savio were not considered as "contributing" structures eligible for HABS documentation. In addition to his skills as a carpenter and career as a building contractor, Savio was also an industrious real estate developer. He was responsible for many of the modifications to historic buildings within the district. These modifications and remodeling jobs were consistently well-constructed and stylistically "up-to-date." (e.g. Craftsman-influenced buildings in the early twentieth century and Mission Revival influenced buildings in the 1930s.) His second home at 51 N. River Street, as well as his remodelling of 47-49 and 55-59 N. River Street, date to about 1933 to 1935.

Breakdown of building types for the 42 buildings still standing:

Queen Anne Cottages	10	Duplex/Multi Family Houses	1
Italianate Residences	6	Commercial Structures	2
Vernacular Hipped Cottages	5	Carriage House/Garage Outbldgs.	3
Craftsman Bungalows	4	Vernacular Side Gable Cottages	2
Cottage Outbuildings	4	Gabled Ell	1
Vernacular Gable Front Cottages	3	Vernacular Saltbox Cottages	1

TABLE OF PROPERTIES SURVEYED FOR THIS REPORT

Address	Principle Historic Name	Approx. Date	Bldg. Type
328 Carlisle	Nicholas Cornetti	1910	Side Gable
83 Pleasant	Alice McNally	1885	Italianate
99 Pleasant	Alameda French Bakery	1925	Commercial
139/141 Pleasant	Saltino Silva	1885	Gable Front
143 Pleasant	John S. Cano	1885	Gable Front
149 Pleasant	Antonio Cano	1885	DEMOLISHED
39 N. River	Robert Loader	1910	Crft.Bungalow
39 N. River	Robert Loader Outbldg.	1910	Cottage
40 N. River	Pietro Bava	1905	Crft.Bungalow
44 N. River	Felix Savio	1910	Crft.Bungalow
45 N. River	Walter Nelson	1907	Crft.Bungalow
47-49 N. River	Silvia Roncetti Outbldg.	1890	Garage
54 N. River	Harriet Prindiville	1910	Q.A.Cottage
65 N. River	Frederick Wissman	1875	Italianate
65 N. River	Frederick Wissman Outbldg.	1890	Cottage
68 N. River	Frank Pozzo Outbldg.	1880	Cottage
70 N. River	Frank Pozzo	1900	Q.A. Cottage
71 N. River	Frederick Rudolph	1875	Gabled Ell
78 N. River	Etta Estrabou	1885	Side Gable
78 N. River	Etta Estrabou Outbldg.	1880	Carriage
79 N. River	Fred W. Corey	1885	Italianate
80 N. River	Grace Pedemonte	1900	Q.A. Cottage
81 N. River	Julia M. Lawson	1910	Duplex
82 N. River	Antonio Rossi	1910	Q.A. Cottage
83 N. River	Joseph Apra	1885	Italianate
85 N. River	John McKean	1885	Q.A. Cottage
85 N. River	John McKean Outbldg.	1880	Cottage
148 N. River	Antone Prola	1910	Q.A. Cottage
301 W. St. John	Hotel Torino	1900	Commercial
323 W. St. John	Lencio Beltramo	1910	Q.A. Cottage
324 W. St. John	Michael Zoppi	1885	Hipped
325 W. St. John	Frank Simondi	1910	Q.A. Cottage
328 W. St. John	J.L. Moranto	1880	Saltbox
331 W. St. John	Margaret J. Simondi	1910	Q.A. Cottage
338 W. St. John	Charles Hill	1880	Gable Front
339/341 W. St. John	Bartolomeo Vinassa	1921	Italianate
340 W. St. John	Hannah Prindiville	1890	Q.A. Cottage
347 W. St. John	Arduino "King" Bocca	1921	Italianate
352 W. St. John	Abraham Franklin	1885	Hipped
338 W. St. James	Lena Cano	1910	Hipped
352 W. St. James	Eugene Parra	1910	Hipped
366 W. St. James	Frank Porro	1910	Hipped

PART IV. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In assessing the history of immigration in California in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, many scholars have focused upon the experiences of immigrants from Mexico, China, and Japan. The emphasis placed upon these three groups can be explained, at least in part, by the fact that they settled in California in greater numbers than in nearly any other state, and because these groups were singled out for legal and economic discrimination in California.⁵

This emphasis, however, should not obscure the fact that the vast majority of foreign-born immigrants in California in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries came from Europe. In this respect, California was part of larger national trends. While studies of European immigrants have focused largely on the Eastern seaboard, California was clearly a major theater for the assimilation and acculturation of the millions of European immigrants, the process popularized by Oscar Handlin in his study The Uprooted.⁶ While the so-called "melting pot" operated somewhat differently in California than in the major Eastern cities, the central fact is that European immigration was a major factor in the settling of California and the development of the modern California economy and culture.

Through the 1920s, European immigration was the second most important factor in populating California, after migration from other states. Immigration from Italy dates to the Gold Rush but peaked in the years 1900-1925. San Jose and the rest of Santa Clara County were major destination points for Italian immigrants. By 1920, San Jose had the fourth largest Italian immigrant population of any city in California, following only San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Oakland. San Jose's 1920 Italian-born population comprised 45 percent of its "white" (chiefly European) foreign-born, and was larger than the combined Chinese- and Japanese-born immigrant population of the entire Santa Clara County. By 1920, the Italian immigrants comprised the largest single immigrant group in San Jose and Santa Clara County.⁷

There exists numerous studies which attempt to characterize the experiences of Italian immigrants in San Jose, Santa Clara County, and California in general.⁸ These studies draw few hard conclusions because the experience differed widely from one individual to another and from one part of the state to another. For the sake of simplicity, most scholars discuss two basic life experiences for Italian immigrants in California--urban and rural--because Italian-Americans in California settled in both urban and rural areas and were successful in both urban and rural occupations. In Santa Clara County, this distinction is somewhat blurred because the sizable and growing city of San Jose was situated in one of the state's premier agricultural areas, and Italian immigrants shifted easily from one environment to the other. Indeed, many of the "urban" occupations within San Jose were actually agriculturally based, such as work in the many local canneries, the firms that built and serviced farm machinery,⁹ or as fruit growers/vendors.

The River Street Historic District illustrates one aspect of Italian-American life in San Jose and Santa Clara County--the urban neighborhood in which the newest arrivals could reside and in which more established immigrants could settle and raise families. This little neighborhood, situated between the commercial and industrial cores of the city, developed at the turn of the century as a home for the newly arrived immigrant. Although it was never exclusively Italian, the neighborhood was clearly dominated by Italian immigrants and centered on Italian-dominated institutions. By 1925, most of the properties were owned and occupied by Italian immigrants. Further, by 1925, the neighborhood had taken on essentially the appearance it has today. In short, this district offers tangible, physical evidence of how the thousands of Italian immigrants in San Jose made the adjustment from one economy and culture to another.

The River Street Historic District did not begin as an Italian immigrant community. Rather, it began as a sparsely settled community of other European immigrant groups and evolved into a predominantly Italian community between 1900 and 1925. A study of the Guadalupe area of San Jose by the Archaeological Resource Management group summarizes well the earliest history of this area.¹⁰ Portions of the historic district were divided into suertes, or garden plots, by Spanish and Mexican administrators of the San Jose pueblo prior to 1848. While used agriculturally, the area was not inhabited during the Spanish-Mexican era of San Jose's history.

The area was subdivided by American settlers, beginning in the 1850s and, again, was used agriculturally. While some farm structures may have been here in the 1850s and 1860s, no residences were built here until the mid- to late-1870s. By 1884, when the first Sanborn Fire Insurance Map was produced for this area, the historic district was sparsely occupied by residences, outbuildings, and small industrial buildings. Fourteen residences existed within the historic district in 1884, along with two industrial buildings.

Of the fourteen 1884 residences, four still stand--65 and 71 N. River Street; 328 and 338 W. St. John Street; and 83 Pleasant Street. In addition, four outbuildings from the pre-1884 era still stand--behind 47-49, 70, 78, and 85 N. River Street. The history of the houses--nearly half of what existed in 1884--illustrates the history of the district *prior* to the arrival of the Italian immigrants.

Probably the first house built in the area was 71 N. River Street, constructed around 1875 by Frederick Rudolph (Mikesell also refers to this man as "John" Rudolph.)¹¹ Rudolph was a soap maker from Prussia. Some time in the 1870s, he built a small soap making factory along the Guadalupe River, behind what is now 51 N. River Street. The factory still stood but was vacant by 1884. By 1891, it had been demolished. The Mikesell report states that Rudolph died some time around 1900, but his widow continued to live in 71 N. River Street through 1925, and was listed as the property owner in 1924. The directory listings for the city of San Jose list a Mrs. Johanna C. Rudolph, widow of *Christian* (not Frederick or John) Rudolph, as the occupant in 1911 through 1925, and as the owner in 1924.¹² At this time the house was occupied by a series of tenants, many of whom appear to have been Italian immigrants.

65 N. River Street was also constructed prior to 1884. The property was developed by German-born Frederick Wissman, who had this house built some time around 1875. His American-born wife continued to live here after his death. Another long-term resident of the property was George Asselin, an immigrant from England who married Wissman's daughter Sarah. Asselin worked as a clerk at the Red Cross Drug Store in downtown San Jose. The directories list Sarah Asselin, widow of George, as the sole occupant from 1917 to 1919. At around this time the property was acquired by John and Elizabeth Silveria (farmers) who are listed as the owners in 1924.

The two pre-1884 buildings on W. St. John Street--328 and 338--may have been built speculatively by the Prindiville family, an industrious British immigrant family long associated with the River Street Historic District. Several Prindiville families lived in to the area, including James Prindiville (a detective with the San Jose police); George Prindiville (a "collector"); and Maurice Prindiville (a typesetter for the San Jose Mercury). At various points, the Prindiville family owned and/or occupied many of the buildings in the district. By 1924, for example, they owned seven houses in the neighborhood. The last Prindiville moved out of the area in the mid-1950s.

Some time after the 1884 cut-off date, the Italians began to arrive into San Jose. It is difficult to say exactly when Italian immigrants began to move into the historic district. The ethnic composition of the area cannot be established firmly until 1915, when Polk's City Directories began to inventory residents by street address in addition to name. By that year, the area was already chiefly Italian. It is likely, however, that the transition began much earlier.

We get some idea of when and how the transition occurred by tracing back some of the Italians who lived in the district in 1915. Pietro Bava, who lived at 40 N. River Street for many years, immigrated to the United States in 1902, coming almost immediately to San Jose. In 1905, he was living in the Italian Hotel at San Pedro and San Augustine (now St. John) streets and working as a cook at the LaMolle Grill. The Mikesell report states that by 1910, he was living at 40 N. River Street with his Italian born wife (Olympia) and his sister. The San Jose city directories list the Bavas (Pedro, Lorenzo, and Peter) at 21 Garden. In 1915, he was listed as part owner of Zaro's Grill at 31 W. Santa Clara. He continued to live in the area until 1925, when the Savios, who lived at 44 N. River Street next door, bought the property.

Joseph Beltramo lived for many years at 366 W. St. John Street. A laborer, Beltramo was in the city of San Jose in 1910, but lived outside the River Street area. Antone Feriroli immigrated to the United States in 1892 and moved to 51 N. River Street between 1905 and 1910. Part owner of a saloon on Market Street, Feriroli lived in the district until the 1920s. In 1910, Feriroli shared his house with his wife, three American-born children, and three Italian-born borders. His wife continued to live here until the 1930s. Angelo Pedemonte moved into his home at 80 N. River Street (which was actually owned by his wife Grace) before 1910. A cook at the Swiss Hotel, Pedemonte continued to live here until he died in the 1940s, and his widow continued to live in the house until 1955. In 1925, a large group of males names Pedemonte were living at this address including Andrew, a clerk; Charles, a salesman; and Angelo. Michael Zoppi, who moved to the district some time between 1910 and 1915, worked as a

waiter. He originally lived at 326 Carlisle Street and moved to 324 W. St. John Street in 1915, where he lived until 1955. Frank Pozzo, who ran a cigar store at 25 N. Market Street, moved into the area around 1905. Pozzo immigrated to the United States in 1848 and was apparently a very early arrival to San Jose since he appears in the 1870 directory. His son, also named Frank, occupied the cottage in the rear, and owned the property in 1924. Frank Pozzo, Jr. continued to live here until he died in 1940, and his widow Gertrude continued to live in the house until 1945.

The experience of Felix Savio, who lived at 44 N. River Street from about 1910 to 1930 and at 51 N. River Street from 1930 to 1950, probably typifies that of many first generation Italian-Americans in this district. Savio, born near Turin in the Piedmont region of northern Italy, immigrated to the United States in 1902 as a single man of twenty-one. He moved immediately to San Jose to work with an uncle (probably named Battista, since he is the only Savio listed in the 1905 city directory), who had immigrated earlier. His first big job was the construction of the Holy Family Church in 1906. He utilized his savings to send for his fiancée Josie. They married and settled in the house he built at 44 N. River Street.¹³

These individuals paved the way for establishing the River Street area as an Italian community. Two other factors helped solidify the Italian character of the area. The first of these was the construction of the Hotel Torino around 1900, at the corner of W. St. John and Pleasant Streets. This building, now called Henry's Hi-Life, is a two story structure with seventeen rentable rooms on the second floor, and a kitchen, dining area, bar, and lounge on the first story. The Hotel Torino provided a cultural center for the Italians in the area, complete with a bocce ball court and inexpensive residences for the newest arrivals. The Torino was not firmly established until 1915, when Bartolomeo Vinassa became the proprietor and an area resident. Prior the 1915, the hotel was known as the New Progress Hotel (owned by L.A. Villata) and the Piedmont Hotel (owned by G. Marazzo). The Hotel Torino, as owned and operated by Vinassa, remained in operation until the mid-1950s.¹⁴

The second development that helped solidify the Italian character of the neighborhood occurred just outside of the historic district. In 1906, the Archdiocese of San Francisco created a "national" church, Holy Family, at the corner of River and Park, three blocks south of the district. The church structure was constructed by Felix Savio, a long time resident of the River Street Historic District. This church conducted masses, taught the catechism, and conducted confessions, baptisms, marriages, and funerals in Italian. The church was torn down in 1969.¹⁵ St. Joseph's grammar and high schools were located near the Holy Family.

The River Street Historic District was never completely occupied by Italian immigrants. The older families mentioned earlier, such as the Prindiville and Rudolphs, persisted in the area after Italian immigrants arrived, and other non-Italian families moved in even during the peak period for Italian influx. The Asian population has historically been very small in the district. There was never more than one or two Asians listed in the directories--the one listed in 1932 did not receive a name (the listing simply states "Oriental") and it listed just one in 1943. The African-American population for this district has not been

conclusively tallied, but it does not appear to have constituted a ratio any higher than that for the Asian population.

In 1915 and 1920, exactly half of the "heads of household" within the district, as denoted in city directories, were Italian immigrants. Ironically, many of the homes were owned by the wives of the "heads of households." The total population of Italian families probably constituted more than half of the district population, however, since many of the non-Italians were either single men or widows, while most of the Italian men were married with children. 1925 was the peak year for Italian residency, with Italians comprising two-thirds of the heads of household there. The figure declined somewhat between 1925 and 1945, and began a precipitous decline thereafter. Much of the decline can be attributed to the enactment of strict immigration laws that especially restricted immigration from southern Europe.¹⁶

As suggested in the brief biographical sketches provided earlier, the residents of the River Street Historic District were employed in a variety of occupations. The table below presents the occupational breakdown for "heads of household" in the 1915, 1920 and 1925 city directories.

	Shop Owners	Skilled Labor	Laborers	White Collar	Rail Workers	Other
1915	5	7	6	2	2	2
1920	3	7	9	0	1	5
1925	4	9	8	5	0	5

The occupational structure of the neighborhood was fairly consistent over this ten-year span. Shop owners included the owners of the Hotel Torino and the grocery store within the district, as well as the owners of various shops outside. Skilled laborers included butchers, carpenters, auto repairmen, cooks, drill pressmen, and printers. Unskilled laborers were identified simply as "laborers" in the directories. The "other" category includes occupations that can be considered unskilled, such as waiter, peddler, and service station worker.

Two major groups of residents were excluded from this table. One groups includes the widows of the district, who were heads of households but held no listed occupations. There were two widows in 1915, four in 1920, and five in 1925. Most rented out rooms to supplement their incomes--often to other widows.

Also excluded from the above table are the residents of the Hotel Torino who were not listed in the directories. These young, single men, numbering up to 17, would probably swell the numbers of unskilled laborers. Our one glimpse of the residents of the Torino comes from the 1910 U.S. Census manuscript. Only eight residents are listed there, in addition to the family of the proprietor. All eight were single Italian-born men. Most were young men in their twenties or thirties, except for the 83-year-old father-in-law of the proprietor and another 60 year-old man. Half listed their occupations as "laborers." The other occupations included a baker, a wine maker, and a presser in a tailor shop. The 83-year-old did not list an occupation.

The proprietor and workers in the Alameda French Bakery were also not included. Although Mikesell believes the bakery was built in 1925, it was not listed in the directories until 1928; thus the listing appears too late to be counted. The first proprietor of the bakery, Basile Murillo, also resided in the building. This bakery, according to current tenants, made the bread that was served in many of the downtown San Jose hotels. The enormous brick oven (approximately 25 feet long by 18-1/2 feet deep) contained multiple chamber openings for baking different items at once.

One should also note that individual fortunes could move an individual from one occupational rank to another. Pietro Bava, mentioned earlier, was a cook for many years before acquiring his own restaurant. Felix Savio, also mentioned earlier, was a trained carpenter before he arrived. By the time of his death in 1950, he was a building contractor. Savio lived nearly 50 years in the River Street area, and his homes were owned, although not occupied, by his children well into the 1980s.

In terms of longevity in the neighborhood, the residents seem to follow one of two patterns: they either came and went quickly, or they stayed in the same house for many decades and the house was inherited by their descendants. One clear example is 141 Pleasant Street, which was owned by Saltino Silva, a cement worker, in the early 1920s and is currently owned and occupied by his son, Salvador Silva. Few obvious patterns explain why some people followed one pattern or another. Some residents (who appear to be tenants) moved frequently and tended to move from one house in the area to another. Directory listings show several names who disappear one year from an address only to reappear at another nearby house. The families with strong economic ties to the neighborhood--such as the Prindivilles who owned rental properties, the Vinassas who owned the Hotel Torino, or the Hart family, German immigrants who owned the grocery store at 350 W. St. John Street--tended to stay for many decades. But others without such strong economic ties also stayed for long periods of time, including Michael Zoppi, the waiter who lived at 324 W. St. John Street for nearly 50 years; and Silvia Roncelli, a peddler who lived in the outbuilding behind 47-49 N. River Street for many decades.

The Thomas Brothers Block Book, retained in the California Room of San Jose's main branch library, lists property owners in this and other parts of the city and gives an idea of how many residents owned or rented their homes. The Block Book was first prepared in 1909 and was corrected (or updated) in 1924. The copy in the San Jose Library lists only the 1924 date.

In comparing the list against the list of residents in the city directory for this period, we can draw two conclusions. First, it appears that almost exactly half of the heads of households owned their homes. Second, the rental properties were mostly owned by people living within the neighborhood. Thus, while many people rented their homes, they rented from neighbors and friends. Significantly, in most cases, Italian immigrants rented from other Italians. The Prindivilles, who were long-term residents of the area, and a woman named Dora Vinter, were the only non-Italian landlords operating within the boundaries of the River Street Historic District.

PART V. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

The River Street Historic District is clearly associated with the important contributions made by Italian immigrants to the economic social, political, and cultural history of Santa Clara County. This district was not the only area in San Jose where Italian immigrants lived. Not all Italians clustered in Italian-dominated neighborhoods. The 1910 census for San Jose shows Italian immigrants scattered throughout the city. The River Street Historic District does, however, appear to be the only area in San Jose that is directly associated with Italian immigration and relatively intact in character.

In her important study of Italians in San Jose, Mary Ann La Porta Herlihy reports that there were three major concentrations of Italian immigrants in the city--the River Street Historic District being one of them. Another was the "Willow Street area," presumably between First Street and the Guadalupe River. The third area included "North Tenth Street to Fourteenth Streets south of Julian."¹⁷ While some turn-of-the-century buildings remain in the other two neighborhoods, there does not appear to be any other area as compact, as neatly-defined, or with such an extremely high ratio of contributing to non-contributing structures, as is the case with the River Street Historic District.

The current appearance of the district, in its architecture and plan, does not reflect its past as a predominantly working class neighborhood. There is little, for example, that is Old World in the architecture of the buildings. Only the Hotel Torino offers evidence that the builder consciously tried to follow an Italian precedent. Nor does the layout of the neighborhood parcels appear to follow European precedents since the area was basically planned and laid out before most of the Italians arrived. However, several areas of the district illustrate its working class individuals.

First, the neighborhood appearance is largely unchanged from that in the period 1900-1925. The setting outside the district has changed dramatically through redevelopment. The district is now situated between the six lane elevated Highway 87 to the west, and the new civic arena to the east. But within the district, very few new buildings have been built and very few older buildings have been demolished or altered. The district offers tangible evidence of the preferences of these individuals.

Second, the buildings within the historic district date to several periods of construction and graphically illustrate the manner in which this community developed. Nineteenth century construction, which largely pre-dated the arrival of the Italian immigrants, is still well represented. The heart of the extant building stock dates to the period 1900-1915, when most of the Italian immigrants arrived. There are also a few scattered remnants from the 1920s, a period in which the working class neighborhood matured.

Third, the mix of residential, commercial, and industrial uses found here today is very much reflective of the historical pattern. The Hotel Torino (Henry's Hi-Life) is more than just a handsome addition to the neighborhood. It is a physical reminder of the diversity of the neighborhood in the past, in which new, poorer arrivals mingled freely with the more established families who lived in and often owned single-family houses. The corner grocery store, although much altered, is properly situated at the heart of the neighborhood at the corner of W. St. John and N. River Streets. Most of the industrial buildings have been demolished, their locations denoted by the vacant parcels within the district. Only the old bakery at Pleasant and W. St. John Streets is unmodified from its original appearance.

Fourth, the extant building stock illustrates how the predominantly Italian immigrant population responded to changing fortunes in their adopted city and country. The Hotel Torino stands as evidence of where the most recent arrivals found home. The narrow vernacular gable front and hipped roof cottage buildings illustrate the kind of rental units available to families. A few of these units were eventually purchased by the occupants, but most were not. The more successful member of the neighborhoods, those who stayed there for decades and built homes there, left a legacy of more substantial buildings. The most numerous of these are the Queen Anne cottages, although the Craftsman-influenced homes along southern N. River Street also represent this development.

In conclusion, this district is significant from both the social historical and architectural historical perspectives. Both the architecture and the ethnic working class population of the area remain substantially unchanged, although a new ethnic group now resides in the district. The area, once dominated by working class Italian immigrants, is now populated mostly by working class Hispanics, with a similarly small Asian population. The modern African-American population is very small and is restricted to the shelter that now occupies 350 W. St. John Street. The mix of residential to commercial remains about the same, with Henry's Hi-Life fulfilling the same function as the Hotel Torino bar/lounge did. It retains a very high degree of integrity, in terms of individual buildings and the district as a whole, and represents a very rare intact working class neighborhood in San Jose.

*FOR DISTRICT, CITY, AND STATE LOCATION MAPS SEE FIELD NOTES

PART VI. ENDNOTES

1. Thompson & West, Historical Atlas of Santa Clara County (San Francisco: Thompson & West, 1876).

2. There are many definitions for the term "vernacular architecture," but in most uses it refers to buildings constructed without the assistance of a trained architect. The term is also sometimes used to exclude buildings constructed by professional house-builders, a far more exclusive usage. See National Park Service, Keeper of the National Register, National Register Bulletin 31, "Surveying and Evaluating Vernacular Architecture," (Draft, n.d.).

3. Steve C. Gordon, How to Complete the Ohio Historic Inventory (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio Historical Center, 1992) 76. Provides an appropriate application of the term "vernacular architecture" for ethnic neighborhoods.

4. Virginia and Lee McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984) 90-91. Usage of the term "gable front."

5. One indicator of the emphasis placed on Japanese, Chinese, and Mexican immigrants is the fact that the Boyd & Fraser Golden State Series, arguably the most comprehensive series of monographs on California history, plans a separate volume on each of these groups but none on European immigrant history.

6. Oscar Handlin, The Uprooted (Boston: Little Brown, 1952).

7. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Census of the United States, 1900, 1910, 1920.

8. Joe Salameda, "Italiana of Silicon Valley." (San Jose, Joe Salameda, 1984); Ted Brecht, "The Italiano." CalToday 17 January 1982; Andrew F. Rolle, The Immigrant Upraised: Italian Adventurers and Colonists in an Expanding America (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma, 1968); Andrew F. Rolle, The Italian Americans: Troubled Roots (New York: The Free Press, 1980); Mary Ann La Porta Herlihy, "A Study of the Italians in Santa Clara County," (San Jose, California: San Jose State College Senior History Thesis, 1972); Francesca Nicosia, Italian Pioneers in California (San Francisco: Italian-American Chamber of Commerce, 1960).

9. Clyde Arbuckle's History of San Jose (San Jose: Swift & McKay, 1986); Edward A. Bieharz and Donald O. DeMars, Jr., San Jose: California's First City (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Cultural Heritage Press, 1980); Peter Farrell, San Jose & Other Famous Places (San Jose, California: San Jose Historical Museum Association, 1982).

10. Archeological Resource Management, "Prehistoric and Historic Archeological Studies of the Guadalupe River in San Jose, California." I and II (June 1984).

11. The name Frederick Rudolph (not John) is used since is the name used by the Mikesell report on the individual house.

12. The composition of this neighborhood was reconstructed by Mikesell through research in city directories, supplemented by information in census manuscripts. Directories were researched at five year intervals, beginning in 1900. Additional research by Hardlines included year-by-year directory research for each documented building from 1950 back to approximate year of construction. Only the 1920 census manuscript contains a large number of names in the River Street Historic District. Polk's Directory Company, Polk's Directory of San Jose City and Santa Clara County (1900-1986); U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Census of the United States (Various Dates).

13. Telephone interview with Aldo Savio, April 25 and 27, 1988 by Stephen D. Mikesell. Aldo Savio, 77 years old at the time, was born and raised in the River Street Historic District. His father was Felix Savio, who died in 1950.

14. Gary E. Swan, "Rooms of Memories, Cobwebs," San Jose News (April 10, 1980). This article was a story on the Hotel Torino.

15. Herlihy, 26-29; Loomis, 73-74.

16. John Higham, Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism (New York: Atheneum Press, 1965) and Milton M. Gordon, Assimilation in American Life (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

17. Herlihy, 19.

PART VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

For this project, the terms for the written information for the HABS documentation of the River Street Historic District stated that much of information had already been developed and that the HABS narrative report would "place these data in the correct format." The background information was taken and reformatted from the 1988 report titled "Report of the National Register Eligibility and Mitigation Measures for Properties Within the Area of Potential Effects for Guadalupe River Project, San Jose, Santa Clara County, California" by Stephen D. Mikesell. Additional information was added from the architectural field work and further archival research completed for this project. Sources used by Mikesell and this report include:

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