Before the catastrophe, practically all land parcels worth more than $10,000 had still been in the hands of old families; by 1870, these families held barely one-quarter. A mean and brassy sky thus eventually did in the south of California what lawyers and squatters had accomplished in the north—the forced breakup of baronial holdings, their transfer to new owners, and the rise of a way of life other than ranching.


The Second Generation,
1865-1890

When the first railroad started running in southern California in November, 1869, shuttling back and forth from Los Angeles to San Pedro, vaqueros would gleefully race their horses against the locomotive. They won the short sprint, but of course lost in the long haul. The results were symbolically quite meaningful, for the civilization represented by the locomotive was bearing down on them slowly but with irresistible force. In September, 1876, the Southern Pacific arrived from the north and in March, 1887, the first Santa Fe Railroad train snaked through the San Bernardino Mountains into Los Angeles. Thereafter, as many as three and four coach trains descended on the city each day, depositing in 1887 alone more than 120,000 tourists, health seekers, farmers, artisans, and businessmen.

These developments inaugurated southern California's first major land boom—"the most extravagant in American frontier experience"—which sealed the coffin of the old California culture. Until the advent of the boom of the eighties, the embattled Californios were still fighting a desperate holding action in the south—forty years after the Mexican War, a generation removed from the gold rush, fifteen years beyond the Civil War and the great drought of the 1860's. Spanish conversation, adobe architecture, and traditional clothing, manners, and recreations had told the newest or most refractory gringo that, like it or

not, he was in "foreign" territory and could not completely brush the "natives" aside. To all this the boom put an effective end.

Between 1865 and 1890 the second generation of Californios came to maturity: those persons who were only vaguely aware of the Arcadian period and the revolutions and wars that had engrossed their parents, but acutely conscious of the consolidation of the new order. The well-being of this generation greatly depended on the amount of land it might inherit. In the north, where the original estates had been checkered with settlers, alienated from their owners, or greatly reduced in size, the transmission of a viable rancho holding from father to son was a rare event indeed. And yet in the south, islands of rancho land remained intact, at least until the 1870's. They were sometimes large and contiguous, creating the effect of a vast chain or archipelago of range-land stretching from the Tehachapis to the Mexican border.

By 1875, however, the southern rancho islands had shrunk and had lost their common boundaries. Family farms increased noticeably in their midst, and rails were approaching them from the north with the promise of commercial and real estate developments that would interfere with rancho supremacy.

From 1865 to 1885, miscellaneous ills beset the southern rancheros. At Santa Barbara their vaqueros had to crash through fences to secure access to grazing land, in a struggle reminiscent of the nester-cattleman conflict on the Great Plains. In the San Fernando Valley, a ferocious Basque squatter, Miguel Leonis, armed a hundred fellow countrymen and Mexicans at Calabasas and clung to land by brute force, staving off both Yankees and Californians with better claims than his. At Stockton, Major José Pico was arrested for alleged land-sale fraud concerning property in Baja California. But the most chronic and incurable ills still concerned finances—high mortgage interest, costly litigation, low beef prices, and out-of-state competition for stockmen—and were compounded by the high living expenses of the more aristocratic rancheros. The financial troubles were severe enough to ruin Yankees,

too—men with lower expenses, more flexible social values, and a keener sense of business tactics than the Californios. For example, Abel Stearns, the south's wealthiest landowner, whose personal empire had incorporated the defunct Bandini estate, in turn was unable to prevent creditors from eating up his property after the drought. Three examples drawn from Los Angeles County show the various economic patterns in the breakup of the ranchos. The most benign example of deterioration occurred at Rancho Camulos, in the mountains north of San Fernando Mission, near Newhall. Although in 1861 he left his plaza home and moved to Camulos with his family in order to cover his losses, Ygnacio del Valle had to whittle the property down from 48,000 acres to about 1,500. Furthermore, in 1879 he mortgaged Camulos to moneylender Newhall for $15,776. A gracious and charitable neighbor, Newhall never pressed the bill, which grew enormously each year. Ygnacio died in 1880 at the age of seventy-two, without having paid off the debt, and stipulated in his will that the place be divided among his six children at his wife's death. The early 1880's found the family still living in comfortable circumstances, at least superficially, and the rancho more or less intact, with young Reginaldo del Valle acting as overseer.

Vicente Lugo's rancho property declined more precipitously than that of Don Ygnacio, and he ended up giving his sons much less of it. As a youth Vicente had once branded 48,000 head of cattle on his father's vast holdings, and as recently as 1850 he had owned a 2-league rancho fully stocked with cattle. After the drought, however, he found himself without a single steer, whereupon he leased some land to Yankee sheepmen and started over again modestly, with cows and chickens, saving his profits until he had recovered control of 800 acres around the old casa. Half of these acres he sold in 1869 and 1870 at $8 to $10 an acre; in addition, he gave 40 acres to his son Blas.

Don Julio Verdugo’s situation was the most disheartening of all.

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* Annie L. Morrison and John H. Haydon, History of San Luis Obispo County and Environs . . . (Los Angeles, 1917), pp. 81-85.
* San Jose-Pioneer and Historical Review, Dec. 1, 1877.
* Unsigned letter to N. J. Stone, Dec. 18, 1888, in Bancroft, Reference Notes, spring binder, "Biography and Reference," No. 55532, MS, Bancroft Library (Berkeley, Calif.).
Feeling in a bullish mood in 1861, Don Julio decided to mortgage Rancho San Rafael (today's Glendale and part of Burbank) and use the money for sprucing up his casa, buying provisions, and paying taxes. He signed for a $3,445.37 loan at 3 percent monthly interest, which by 1870 had ballooned into a debt of $58,750 and ended in foreclosure, sheriff's sale, and ruination. At the public auction Verdugo's lawyers bought the 36,000-acre San Rafael for themselves, and under court restraint Verdugo also had to yield Rancho La Cañada to other gringos. In the settlement of other debts and taxes, Don Julio traded his remaining land for neighboring Rancho Los Feliz and began deeding 100 acres of it here and 200 acres there, until twenty or so gringo creditors and lawyers owned undivided slices of it. He was still not solvent when a court divided the 6,600-acre Los Feliz in 1871, leaving the former land baron with 200 acres, a gift from one Yankee purchaser who took pity on him. Verdugo thus deserved the penalty for the worst real estate deal of the decade, and his children inherited very little.

Even when the rancho went into economic decline, the traditional rancho culture persisted stubbornly, in between mortgage payments, and afforded the children a glimpse of life in "antedeluvian" times. Even the miserably dry years did not completely preclude fiestas on the grand scale. When the rains returned, or when the owners received patents, took out new loans, or leased land to gringos and pocketed some cash, they had all the more reason to celebrate. In months when work was slack during the 1870's, the Pico, Arellanes, and Moraga families of the San Fernando Valley would entertain one another in round-robin fashion, feasting for a day and a night, going home for a rest, and ten days later showing up at the next casa for more of the same. Eugenio R. Plummer names at least sixty-eight families or branches of families which mingled at "fiestas large and small all over the county [of Los Angeles] and up Ventura and Santa Barbara way." Men, women, and children danced in traditional finery—rebozos, lace gowns, and slippers for women and straight-brimmed sombreros, ruffled shirts, velvet suits, and soft boots for men. Chaperons still protected the young people on social occasions and, in a sense, the adults too, for the women generally accompanied their men when they traveled to keep them out of mischief. To the bitter end the rancheros clung to their old ways; even when all talk centered on the coming of the railroad, Eugenio Plummer eschewed any means of Sunday driving faster than the careta.9

Rancho Camulos in particular, exuded a deceptive air of well-being in the 1880's, considering its financial condition. The del Valles' annual July Fourth fiesta, a four-day affair, brought together as many as seventy-five invited guests, each of whom was personally welcomed by Señor del Valle and conducted to a comfortable room. A servant summoned the guests to the first day's lunch, served at a shaded garden table with Ygnacio's eldest son, Reginaldo, presiding as host. The menu featured roast pig, pickled olives, chilis, claret and white wine, and black coffee. The afternoon included riding, singing, reading, conversation, mountain climbing—whatever pleased the guests on a summer afternoon; watermelon and other refreshments were available on call. At seven the visitors reassembled for dinner at a table lighted by lanterns dangling from grape clusters; the main course was roast kid. Then followed an hour's stroll and return for more entertainment—piano, organ, and guitar music, singing, and fireworks. On Sunday morning the widow del Valle attended chapel with her Catholic guests; a Sabbath meal followed.10

This latter-day effort to retain the opulent form of the fiesta left a great deal to the imagination, however, since the grounds were filled predominantly with gringos. The cockfights, bull baiting, and horse races of former days were missing, as were the patriotic Mexican and French songs such as had enlivened the memorable San Pedro celebration of July 4, 1853. But the gringos generally enjoyed the festivities at Camulos, and at least one delighted guest was to immortalize the rancho as it then stood; Helen Hunt Jackson used Camulos as the setting for Ramona, published in 1883.

The post–Civil War Yankee immigrants who acquired the subdivided ranchos from the Verdugos, the Lugos, and the del Valles significantly altered the uses of the soil. For one thing, they introduced sheep in a big way, generally renting vacant rancho land for grazing

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purposes and simultaneously managing the ranchero’s own stock; some land they bought outright. While the sheep craze lasted, it helped the Californios recoup their cattle losses.

The Americans also promoted agriculture, particularly wheat farming. Rancheros irrevocably wedded to pastoral agriculture could scarcely comprehend, much less use, the new farm techniques and never got into the swim of things. When Antonio Maria Lugo first saw a mowing machine, he lifted a bony finger and exclaimed in Spanish: “The Yankee is but one finger shy of the devil!”¹¹ The rancheros’ sons and grandsons, however, did wield the devil’s instruments. José M. Ramírez experimented with wheat as early as 1872; Rómulo Pico raised a crop near former Mission San Fernando in 1880; and in the same year C. Castro of Santa Clara shipped to San Francisco 400 tons of hay which he had grown on his 250-acre farm. Two years later Señores Olvera, Machado, Higuera, and M. Coronel planted the grain near La Ballona. Truck gardening also increased among the Spanish-speaking.¹² At Los Nietos, east of Los Angeles, more than 120 men ran farms in 1880, including scores of men with Spanish surnames who called themselves “farmer,” “small farmer,” or “farm laborer,” depending on whether they had sons as helpers, worked for a Yankee, or worked for themselves. Few of the 120 owned much land, and several rented parcels or sharecropped on plots of from 15 to 75 acres.¹³

Rancheros and vaqueros uprooted by the drought or by poor finances had to take work they would ordinarily disdain. Able-bodied gentry of the lower and middle ranks went on a sheep-shearing circuit in the 1870’s. Fifty or sixty strong—with silver-trimmed bridles and stirrups, tooled leather saddles, broadcloth suits, ruffled shirts, dark sombreros—they rode from one sheep ranch to another looking for work. When hired, these original migratory laborers put away their finery and reappeared in brown overalls and red bandanas, ready for action. They supplied their own bedding and meals and stayed for a month or so at each stop.

The conversion to sheep provided only seasonal labor, however, lasting three to eight months in the year, and it generally made the vaquero a supernumerary. Majordomo Juan Canedo of Rancho Los Cerritos, a dignified person who understood but never deigned to speak English, grew melancholy as the cattle died and the place changed hands and became a sheep pasture. Yet he claimed that he “belonged” to the property when Jonathan Bixby bought it, and refused to leave. To Bixby’s daughter he “looked like a bronze statue, with brown face, brown clothes, brown horse and infinite repose.” Bixby’s son comforted Juan on his deathbed and supported Juan’s widow—to repay the old man, as the boy said, for having taught him horsemanship.¹⁴

Apart from agricultural work, California’s Spanish-speaking lower class performed only one other main semiskilled job, mining. “By far the larger portion of work-people in California mines are Mexicans,” an expert observed in 1867.¹⁵ Several hundred Mexican gold miners worked in Soledad Canyon in 1880. More important, until 1887 more than half of the world’s mercury supply came from California, the greater proportion from the New Almadén Quicksilver Mine near Santa Clara. For this tedious and deadly work, employers rated the Mexicans “more adventurous than Cornishmen,” who were generally reputed to be the world’s best miners. Using techniques reminiscent of their ancestors three hundred years earlier, the 1,500 Mexicans at New Almadén clambered upward hundreds of feet, on groaning ladders, supporting 200-pound sacks of ore strapped to their foreheads and resting precariously on their backs. Above ground the smelters were often exposed to the fatal mercury fumes and died violently from it. Drinking, gambling, whoring, and murderous brawls erupted every payday, because, as one lady observer explained, New Almadén had “no advantages of church or school.” A paternalistic management later organized a model company town, lining the streets with flowers and

¹³ United States Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census, 1880, Enumerator’s Roll Book, Los Angeles County (microfilm).
whitewashing the miners’ cottages, until it became a sightseer’s “must.” For some unaccountable reason, fashionably attired wedding parties came from San Jose to gape at the men emerging from the pithead.

The Spanish-speaking did not readily gravitate into newer industries. The oil refinery at Newhall had not a single Mexican hand in 1880. By then, Chinese hands harvested the fruit crops and did other menial jobs the Spanish-speaking might have hired out for previously. Southern California’s most important new employer, the Southern Pacific Railroad, used Chinese gangs to bore the mammoth tunnel through the mountains and into the San Fernando Valley in 1875. Only on the last leg of the construction, from the valley to Los Angeles, did Mexicans and Indians join the work gangs, but the hundred railroad hands permanently employed at the downtown switching yard, a stone’s throw from Sonoratown, came mainly from the eastern United States, not from Mexico or California.

For many Spanish-American youths, California represented a place that had robbed them of their birthright, but had meanwhile provided innumerable opportunities to steal back parts of it. In any event, many of the disaffected still turned badmen. From 16 to 20 percent of San Quentin inmates from 1854 to 1885 were Mexicans or Californians—a high figure in view of the relative numerical decline of the Spanish-speaking, even when correcting for Yankee prejudice in law enforcement. Mexicans engaged in numerous and brutal individual crimes, but their forte was highway robbery, stage holdups, and rustling, activities in which they continued to surpass all other nationalities, even after the gold rush. As late as 1875 the most notorious characters in the state still wore sombreros.

Spanish surnames headed every sheriff’s wanted list, as a new bumper crop of badmen emerged in the 1860’s to replace the old ones who were either locked up or had been lynched or chased back into Mexico. Many were immigrants, like the Mexican, Narciso Bojorques, for example, wanted for wiping out a family of three Yankees in 1863 and then hanging the family’s vaquero and burning its cabin, and for killing one of his own confederates in a cattle-rustling operation. Bojorques narrowly escaped capture for years but finally died at the hands of an American badman, Jesús Tejada, also a Mexican, and Norratto Ponce, a Chilean, were sought for wanton murder and rustling, as was Tomasio Redundo, alias “Procopio” or “Murieta’s Cousin,” a horse thief, stage-holdup man, and San Quentin escapee. Aside from the immigrants, a good many headliner criminals came from renowned local families and caused immeasurable grief to their more upstanding relatives. Among the native-born badmen were Reyes Duarte, Andrés and Agustín Castro, José and Nicolás Sepúlveda, Pedro Vallejo, Ramón Amador, and Chico Lugo, who never went straight after the Lugo incident of 1851 and was sent away to San Quentin, from which he eventually escaped. Others such as Tiburcio Vasquez and Juan Soto came from lesser clans. The press had two standard comments on the California badmen: either that they were besmirching illustrious families, or that they were following the footsteps of their evil fathers. Soto, with a huge frame, long black hair, dark complexion, thick black beard, heavy brows, and cross-eyes, had the reputation of the “most fearsome figure of an outlaw that ever roamed California hills.” Mestizoid, ugly, and homicidal, he stood as low as was possible in the social hierarchy and cast fear even among the Spanish-speaking. Vasquez was equally dangerous but less gruesome and became the most famous hero-villain of his day.

The operations of Spanish-American badmen still begat the familiar response of lynching. Sometimes an individual crime touched off a hanging, as when the aged José Claudio Alvitre murdered his wife and was lynched at El Monte in April, 1861, the second person of that surname so executed in Los Angeles County. More often, it was the organized crime that provoked the vigilantes. One classic hanging epi-
sode began with the murder of John Rains, prominent rancher of San Bernardino in November, 1862, and the arrest of José Ramón Carrillo and Manuel Cerrada as suspects. A Los Angeles judge released the first for insufficient evidence and sentenced the second to ten years in San Quentin. Thereupon, the Los Angeles vigilantes came aboard the vessel bearing Manuel to jail, overpowered the sheriff, and hanged him from the yardarm. Two years later, a person or persons unknown ambushed and killed Carrillo.22

The renewed clashes between bandidos and vigilantes in the cow counties had most of the familiar old ingredients: unsolved murders, night riders, incendiary accusations against "evil Spaniards," moribund law courts, and recriminations from the Spanish Americans about prejudiced enforcers. The only factor lately missing was a mass meeting to dignify and sanctify the work of the vigilantes—now precluded by Civil War disunity in Los Angeles. The "struggle for law and order" resumed in the months following November, 1863, with the discovery of unexplained but seemingly interconnected murders in Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, and Las Cruces. A gang of Los Angeles thieves using a Las Cruces hideout seemed at fault in these crimes, and the vigilantes of El Monte, Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, and San Bernardino were determined to annihilate its members. The enforcers had no luck capturing the three Californians who had robbed and murdered a Los Angeles Yankee on January 5, 1864. When, however, the bodies of Mr. and Mrs. Corliss of Las Cruces were found on January 17, the vigilantes seized three Californios, Quatez, Ruiz, and Santiago Olvera, all in their twenties. Ruiz was "a short, yellow, half-Indian looking fellow, and has a hard name in the lower country." 33 Nonetheless, the Santa Barbara vigilantes could not pin the Corliss murder on the trio and let them off; the crime was later traced to a Mexican shepherd.

Meantime, desperado Jesús Arellanes was detained at San Pedro for a Santa Barbara murder committed months earlier. Jesús was a native of Santa Barbara, a four-time escapee from the law, and a killer of a fellow thief. Hearing of his capture, the still frustrated Los Angeles vigilantes went down to San Pedro and hanged him on February 18,

before he could be sent to his home town. Unaware of this event, the Santa Barbara Californios, expecting Arellanes to disembark from a steamer when it dropped anchor in the channel, had conspired to rescue him from the town authorities. The news of Arellanes' death evoked a "very bitter state of feeling" among the "natives," who accused the Yankees of consistently executing "Spanish culprits, and letting off Americans." Eventually the bandidos, characterized as "half or quarter-Indian bloods of Mexico and California . . . the creatures and tools of the American gamblers and villains who have so long cursed the Southern mines and the cow counties," fled the country, presumably to "rob and eat up" the poor rancheros of Baja California.24 Premonitions of trouble in Baja California came true in May, as a matter of fact, when a Yankee sheriff went there to find stolen cattle, tangled with bandido Andronico Sepúlveda, and was killed.25

Northern communities resembling Los Angeles and Santa Barbara in ethnic and economic makeup also had to endure the familiar "struggle for justice." One man who escaped the grasp of the Los Angeles vigilantes, the deranged neophyte Indian Gregorio Oroso, nevertheless ended up in a noose in Monterey in January, 1864. He had shot a white man without provocation—"thirsting, apparently for blood," according to one learned diagnosis. The Yankees of Monterey called for his life, but some Californios, "armed and excited, opposed the proposition to hang," and provoked a melee in which several persons were injured. This venture did Oroso little good, however, since the gringos felt convinced that he was one of the "incarnate devils who place themselves—morally—without the pale of law." Explained the Monterey Gazette: "We are not disposed to question the mode or manner of punishment, provided it be effectual." Thus, Oroso got the rope treatment, "without expense to the county." 26

The next month vigilantes took prisoners in the murder of a Chileño at nearby Natividad, quickly fixed the blame on Patricio Lopez, and dispatched him. A year later "a party of citizens" seized bandidos Francisco Alviso and Juan Igera. The first escaped, but the second, "an

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22 Los Angeles Star, May 28, Aug. 20, 1864; Shinn, op. cit., pp. 63-64.
23 San Francisco Bulletin, Apr. 24, 1864. See also Monterey Gazette, Dec. 18, 1863.
24 San Francisco Daily Alta California, n.d., quoted in Bancroft, Reference Notes, spring binder no. 16, MS, Bancroft Library.
25 Los Angeles Star, June 4, 11, 18, 1864.
26 Jan. 8, 15, 1864.
abandoned wretch only twenty years of age but old in crime," did not. Juan's father had been lynched for murder a decade earlier, and Juan died accused of killing a Santa Clara deputy some months before his capture.27

Probably the last old-fashioned mob lynching in California of a person of Spanish-American background occurred in San Jose in 1877, when a pair of confessed murderers and robbers were snatched from the jail and strung from the Upper San Lorenzo Bridge.28 As popular tribunals gave way to regular law enforcement, banditry in the old manner also declined; gold and livestock were now shipped more securely by railroad, and sheriffs' telegrams flashing up and down the state made a badman's escape more difficult.

A sheriff now could succeed without vigilante aid, particularly if, like Alameda Sheriff Harry Morse, archenemy of bandidos, he possessed perseverance to match their bravado. So closely did Morse hound bandidos that they took him for a demon. Between 1864 and 1874 he trailed Borjorques mercilessly (but never laid eyes on him); killed Norrate Ponce (although killing was not his specialty); captured Tejada; and simply strole up to Procopio in a San Francisco dance hall, laid a hand on the bandido's shoulder, calmly declared, "Procopio, you're my man," and took him to jail.29 For sheer drama nothing surpassed his single-handed showdown with Juan Soto, whom he began tracking after the bandit had robbed and killed a Sufol shopkeeper in January, 1871. With customary aplomb Morse hiked directly into Soto's mountain fastness south of Gilroy, masquerading as a weary and lost traveler. His disguise gained Morse easy entry into Soto's casa for "a rest." When the bandit and his crew discovered the ruse, they began shooting it out with the Sheriff. A Mexican amazon momentarily pinioned Morse's arms, but he broke her grip and got safely outside. Finally the wounded Soto burst from the shack, "bareheaded, his long black hair streaming behind him, a cocked revolver in each hand," and flying suicidally at Morse. At this, the sheriff raised his rifle and shot Soto in the head.30

Although brazenly admitting many evil deeds, the Spanish-speaking still claimed—and with good cause—that the guardians of Yankee justice discriminated against them. The native Californian Ramón Amador, imprisoned in 1871 for murdering an American, made this point to a newspaper reporter:

I have no show. There is no course at all for a poor man. They are down on Spaniards. There are hundreds of cold murderers, but they don't hang them. There was Bill Powers, he killed a man while they played cards. Look at that other man that killed a man and brought him in a wagon. He got off because he had thirty one thousand dollars. Now because I got no friends they going to hang me . . . by J—— C——! Others go to State Prison only, and are pardoned out. Now, sir, the first time they hang, they hang me. I seen other men, they do lots of murders; they rob, they burn the house down, and they would shoot men, not hang me. . . . Well, if the Bible is no more true than the newspapers I no believe it.

Ramón's self-pity—"I wish I was outside now; oh I wish I was outside. . . . I wish I kill him and they never find me"—violated the heroic tradition of the badman, but his indictment of the judicial process would have brought hearty approval not only from his compatriots but also from many Yankees.

"It is almost a disgrace," a Yankee editor complained, "to hang a [poor] man for what rich men and women can escape from by the judicious use of money. The justice that is being administered in California law is a mockery." He was talking about Francisco García, tried in San Jose in 1872 for horse rustling, robbery, and murder committed in 1855, seventeen years earlier. At sixty years of age García naively thought it safe to return from Mexico to his native soil, only to find a zealous Los Angeles policeman waiting to haul him away to San Jose to stand trial for the misdeeds of his youth. There the prosecutor dredged up one of García's former confederates in crime who had meanwhile turned state's evidence. Guilty or innocent, the accused had evidently gone straight for seventeen years and lived an industrious life—but argued the editor. Besides, the trial of the "well connected" García would torment "a circle of relatives who are among the respected of Santa Clara," would probably result in acquittal and thus in needless expense to the county. The increasing professionalism of the law en-

27 Ibid., May 19, 1865.
28 Pioneer and Historical Review, May 5, 1877.
29 Shim, op. cit., p. 64.
31 Call, Sept. 23, 1871.
forcers, therefore, did not automatically guarantee the Spanish-speaking criminals a better break; the case of García and others created in embryo the issue of "police brutality." 82

After Juan Soto's death, only one important bandido remained at large—Tiburcio Vasquez, a Californio. A long and checkered career as cattle rustler, stage robber, and jailbird lay behind him when he engineered his final spree against the shopkeepers of Tres Pinos. A wanton killing aroused the authorities of several counties to weave a net around him. In a scenario-like episode appropriately played out near present-day Hollywood, a brigade of sheriffs and deputies tightened the net and caught Vasquez. Bound in irons, he seemed at close range as vicious and gallant as the Yankees had expected. When asked for the motives for his crimes, he recalled a boyhood scene in which he bade his mother good-by and set out to avenge Yankee injustice—a touching and believable explanation, but altogether irrelevant to the judge and the jury that had him executed. 83 Bandido depredations soon subsided in California, partly as a function of Mexico's subsiding political turmoil. The archetypal California badman of the 1880's, Black Bart, wore a dark bowler instead of a sombrero.

Bandido Vasquez personified a major motif among the Spanish Americans in California—alienation of the second generation. Nevertheless, a good many of his contemporaries responded altogether differently to recent events by picking themselves up, resettling in the towns, and making a new life for themselves. In the town environment, the younger generation came in contact with new cultural influences and adjusted accordingly. Submergence of the Spanish-speaking thus entailed various possibilities: for some, an irrational armed resistance through crime; for a few, assimilation into the mainstream of Yankee culture; and for still others, assimilation into the Mexican community.

In the rural hamlets of Los Angeles County, a quarter of the inhabitants had Spanish surnames as late as 1880. Of course, in some townships Yankees reigned supreme. At Pasadena not one of the 392 occupants was Spanish American (the Chinese did all the menial labor); at Santa Ana only 4 of the 714 were Spanish-speaking; and at the beach suburb of Santa Monica, 7 of the 418. Elsewhere, on the other hand, Spanish Americans clustered so thickly as to alienate gringos. New Mexicans were still entrenched at isolated, self-contained, culturally preserved San Jose township. Also, near former mission San Juan Capistrano, there were 345 Spanish-speaking residents, as indigenous as the famous sparrows, born in California of California parents (some perhaps of neophyte Indian background); the remaining 31 residents were Europeans.

Most communities in Los Angeles County in 1880 came nearer the average of 25 percent Spanish-speaking. At the Texas stronghold of El Monte lived about 390 persons with Spanish surnames among a total of 1,300 residents; the new railroad town of San Fernando had about 460 of a total of 1,120, and kept nearly that ratio in the twentieth century. At the sheep ranches and farms of La Ballona (now Culver City), about 660 of 2,075 had Spanish surnames; at Azusa, 165 of 640; in the predominantly German community of Anaheim, 180 of 1,440; around Soledad, 200 of 350 miners and farmers hailed from California and Mexico. 84

Within the confines of the town of Los Angeles, Spanish-American influence also proved durable. Spectators of the centennial parade of September 5, 1881, marveled at a careta bearing the sole surviving "founding fathers," two neophyte Indian women aged 102 and 117 years, respectively, both older than the town itself—a tribute to the hardiness of the stock. The view from Fort Hill still revealed the wide use of adobe brick, the prevalence of businesses dealing in pastoral goods such as wool and hides. The old vineyards still flourished within city limits, east of Main Street, from Macy Street south, near the tracks. An occasional careta creaked by; somewhere a vendor shouted, "Tamales, calientes, aguiles" 85 The total population in the town reached 10,000 in 1870 and surpassed 11,000 in 1880, of which the largest minority, 21 percent, had Spanish surnames.

Of course, on the newer Los Angeles streets stretching away to the

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82 Redwood City Gazette, Oct. 27, 1872.
84 U.S. Bureau of the Census, op. cit.
The faces and the homes looked Anglo-Saxon for blocks on end. Only the middle-class Spanish Americans could afford to live there: the Spanish physician Fernandez, a Mexican jeweler, a store clerk (living in his employer’s shop), attorney Estudillo, farmer Joaquín Sepúlveda, a harness-maker, La Crónica editor de Celis, livery operator Covarrubias, and the California women married to Yankees. All these Spanish Americans could maintain their children at boarding school and employ domestic servants (Sonorans, never Chinese). In the midst of three or four hundred residents on fashionable Main Street lived only a handful of Spanish Americans. On the more mixed streets, amid French, German, Chinese, Irish, Bohemian, and Yankee immigrants, dwelled the Spanish Americans of more modest circumstances. On such a street lived the forty-one-year-old widow Ignacia Alvarado with her five children, ranging in age from twelve to twenty years and supported by her earnings as a seamstress and by those of her eldest boys who were barbers. Judge Ignacio Sepúlveda (living alone and boarding several Germans) and Pío Pico lived nearby.56

When a hamlet acquires a railroad, cheap labor, and slums, it is well launched toward cityhood. These requisites for maturity Los Angeles had attained by 1876. Nigger Alley, north of the plaza had undergone the most striking change since epidemic smallpox had killed off so many Spanish Americans a decade earlier; excepting some French traders, every inhabitant was Chinese. This area was one of two slums. As the town updated itself, the neighborhood east and south of the plaza, as far east as the river and as far south as the railroad, remained a Mexican village and thus, by comparison, a slum. There the shops, saloons, brothels, and gambling dens crowded one another in overwhelming disarray. “Sonoratown” provided all the amusements, comforts, and vices of a ghetto except work, which lay in the better parts of town. The underworld of all nationalities gravitated to Sonoratown, and axe murders, shootings, beatings, and knifings commonly occurred there. Should the police seek an out-of-town villain, they knew where to look, perhaps at Francisco Carmona’s disorderly house on Buena Vista Street. Gringo citizens once tried to close the place, but a judge dismissed their case as legally weak although morally sound.57 Sud-
Spanish surnames. Although familial warmth obviously had its satisfying aspects for a sick person, the universal practice of home nursing cost lives in time of epidemic, until doctors prevailed on the Spanish-speaking to isolate victims of disease at a makeshift hospital in Chavez Ravine, called the "Pest house." 

As California influence waned in Los Angeles, immigrant Mexicans assured the continuance of Spanish-American culture, which therefore never died. In San Francisco and other northern localities the Mexican community evolved independently of the native-born, but in Los Angeles it merged gradually and imperceptibly with them. The number of Mexicans slowly increased until they were ready to overtake the Californios, probably by the turn of the century. The Mexican community, moreover, attained a sense of respectability it formerly had lacked. As the memories of Manifest Destiny waned, Yankees thought better of Mexico and, at least for the record, had some good words for the sister republic—perhaps that it was finally "waking up" and "uniting with our country [in] the spread of civilization in the West." Respectable Mexican patriotic organizations formed, disbanded, and re-formed, such as the Hispano-American Society of Los Angeles, dedicated to combating the "decadent" state of the community, the Mexican Progressive Society; the Juarez Patriotic Society (with a branch in San Juan Capistrano in 1872); and Botello's Cavalry and the Mexican Lancers, which appeared on festive occasions.

Mexican nationalism provided an ideological solvent for the entire community. Commemorations of Mexican independence during the 1880's grew increasingly elaborate in scope and spirit until the floats and pretty girls, the ringing speeches, the band music, and the tramping feet rivaled the displays on July Fourth. Californians, Yankees, and Mexicans usually teamed up to organize them. The independence festivities of 1883 illustrate the extent of organization and planning. The town's mounted police led the parade, followed by Grand Marshal Eulogio F. de Celis and his aides, then J. D. and Alacala Machado, and

Chief of Staff Bernardo Yorba and his aides. Next came a marching band. The president of the Juarez Society was flanked by flag bearers and followed by a carriage bearing Senator Reginaldo del Valle, poet Gregorio Gonzales, and speakers F. H. Howard and J. M. Obando. The Mexican Progressive Society preceded the triumphal car displaying three señoritas bedecked as "America," "Liberty," and "Justice." Judge Sepulveda had a car to himself. Then came a float of cheerfully waving maidens representing Mexico's twenty-seven states and territories; and finally another carriage conveying the mayor and the French consul. The Vigilance Hook and Ladder Company turned out in full; a float representing "Progress" followed; then Botello's Cavalry and the Mexican Lancers; and, finally, ordinary citizens marching or riding. The celebrants started too late to reach the "American part of town" but wandered through the old town and halted to hear the Mexican national anthem, poet Gonzales' ode, and spontaneous comments from the crowd.

Newspapers tried to serve the new and enlarged Hispanic community. La Unión succeeded La Voz de México in San Francisco in 1873; La Crónica in 1872 took over in Los Angeles the role vacated by El Clamor Público; and for each election campaign, the Los Angeles Times and the San Francisco Herald printed ephemeral Spanish-language sheets to galvanize the Spanish vote. In Monterey, the Mexican editor José Arzaga teamed up with J. M. Soto in establishing the bilingual New Republic Journal, which ran only seventeen issues (June to August, 1872) and then had to cease publication for lack of readership. These examples of journalistic demise again indicate the persistence of illiteracy and indifference to contemporary affairs among the Spanish-speaking.

As part of the old-line community blended imperceptibly with the Mexicans, however, another merged into the dominant gringo culture. Thus, in a sense, the Californios were ground down between the upper and lower milestones of two immigrant groups.

The old upper class, particularly the Californios of Caucasian origin, continued to mingle with the new. After Abel Stearns died his widow,
Arcadia (Bandini), married the prosperous Rhode Islander, Robert S. Baker; James Winston, M.D., wed Arcadia’s sister Margarita; jailer James Thompson of Kentucky married Francisca Sepúlveda; and Henry V. Lindsey married Judge Sepúlveda’s daughter in Mexico in 1890.

Marriages between Yankee men and mestizo women, although rare, did occur. For example, George Carson married Victoria Domínguez in 1857 and in 1864 moved to her father-in-law’s rancho to manage the old man’s tangled affairs. More commonly in this generation than in earlier ones, a Californio male might take a gringo bride, as when Ramón Sepúlveda married a girl of Irish background and Blas Lugo married Sophie Charles in 1885.46 Two of Mariano Vallejo’s daughters married Yankees, the Frisbie brothers, and his son Platón returned from a New York medical school with a bride born in Syracuse. For fifty-five years Dr. Vallejo practiced near Sonoma and acquired the storybook reputation of a physician who healed but never rendered bills.47 These and many other second-generation Californios made the grade in Yankee society, for their faces peer out stolidly from the fashionable “mug books” of the 1870’s, the status symbols of the Gilded Age.

Contrary to expectation, old and young Californios alike tried their hand at business and the professions. Jeronimo Lopez and his wife, former students of Mexican teacher Ignacio Coronel, opened a boarding school in the San Fernando Valley which existed for thirty years, and simultaneously ran an inn at “Lopez Station,” to catch the north-south traffic in the valley. On the east-west valley route, the Osos Encino also converted their casa into an inn. Andrés Pico promoted a scheme to build a road from San Fernando Pass to Los Angeles. The grocery of Juan J. Carrillo was a familiar landmark in the Los Angeles of the 1870’s. Emile Ortega opened a chili-packing plant in town in 1898. In 1873 Miguel de Pedreona, José G. Estudillo, and Chico Foster of San Diego pooled their resources to exploit a gravel vein. Blas Lugo tried his hand at law and business but, failing at both, eventually turned to farming 70 acres given him by his father.48 As ranchos became towns, some of the young gentry found themselves in the realty business. Two Sepúlveda brothers owned 4,000 acres of the most salable San Pedro land, worth $500 to $2,000 an acre. They successfully resisted encroaching monopolists who wanted to purchase it and thus control access to the town. In 1887 Ramón Sepúlveda sold $75,000 worth of land, repaired the roads and built a reservoir, and moved into the finest residence in San Pedro. Among his accomplishments was becoming Master Workman in the I.O.U.W. and Select King of the A.O.W.48

If in olden days the dominant Mexican culture had transformed some Yankees into “Mexicanized gringos,” now the new culture created a class of “gringoized Mexicans.” This did not, however, represent a true blending of two cultures, but rather a triumph of the most aggressive and a defeat of the most recessive cultural characteristics. The socially prominent del Valle family of Los Angeles aspired toward, and in most respects attained, the status of the new “better classes.” For all their old-fashioned fiestas at Camulos, their values looked to the present. Their personal mementos give this impression unmistakably. The family photograph album captures handsome dark faces, racially indistinguishable from most Anglo-Saxon ones. The album also contains the ordinary minutiae of the Gilded Age—society column notices, dance invitations, travel brochures, pressed flowers, flowered stationery, wedding and funeral notices, calling cards, school graduation programs, and illustrations of home furnishings and women’s fashions. Except that many of the items relate to church or parochial-school functions, one can find scarcely any attributes of the older culture.49

Of all the battlefields on which the Spanish Americans fought a holding action to preserve their influence, they succeeded best on the political one. A prestigious Spanish surname (especially when combined with a Caucasian face) remained a good entrée into public office, and many Spanish Americans used it successfully. Estevan Castro became a Monterey constable and later an assemblyman, although Don José Castro’s other sons remained “without social standing”; Martin Aguirre became Los Angeles sheriff in 1885; Andrés Pico’s son Ramón ran for state treasurer in 1875 (but lost); Andronico Sepúlveda served as Los Angeles county treasurer in 1873; Andrés Castillero sat in Congress in

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44 Unsigned letter to N. J. Stone, Dec. 18, 1888, op. cit.
47 Ramón D. Sepúlveda, “Dictation,” MS, Bancroft Library
48 Del Valle Collection, Los Angeles County Museum.
1880; José G. Estudillo was state treasurer from 1875 to 1880; Santa Barbara’s Angel G. Escandon served in the legislature from 1869 to 1874; and, following in the footsteps of his father, Manuel Coronel entered politics and served one term in the state legislature.50

Of all Spanish-speaking Californians, Romualdo Pacheco accomplished the most brilliant and unusual political stroke, by seating himself in the governor’s chair. Born the son of a Santa Barbara army officer in 1831, young Romualdo received a superior Yankee schooling in the Sandwich Islands and came back with a head for figures; then he hired out as a supercargo on various trading vessels plying the California coast. After the Mexican War he managed his mother’s ranch in San Luis Obispo and at the age of twenty-two (1853) won an assembly seat. He became state senator as a Democrat in 1858, and as a Union Democrat in 1862. After a stint in the Union Army in 1863, he changed party affiliation and gained election as Republican state treasurer, serving four years (and yielding that post to his kinsman, Ramón Pacheco). Except for Unionism, no particular political views clung to Romualdo’s name, but his background made good press notices—he was an aristocratic native son, a ranchero, a bear fighter, a vigilante, a soldier, a sometime stockbroker, and the husband of an Anglo-Saxon woman. His popularity, the modest importance of the “Spanish” vote, and a desire to balance the ticket between two rival factions encouraged the Republican Party to nominate him for lieutenant governor in 1871. He came in during the Republican sweep of that year, serving routinely until 1875. In February, Governor Booth took an interim seat in the United States Senate and handed Pacheco the governorship for the balance of that year. Pacheco was little more than a figurehead in a caretaker government, but even so it gave the Spanish-speaking particular satisfaction to see their man in so exalted a position. The party managers thought better of renominating Pacheco, however, and upon leaving office he turned to selling stocks in San Francisco. Meanwhile, from 1878 to 1882, he served two terms in Washington as Santa Clara’s congressman, and spent some of his declining years in Mexico and Texas.51

That the Republican Party allowed Pacheco to go as far as he did, but no farther, suggests that they had respect for, but not an abject fear of, the “Spanish vote.” A Castroville newspaper argued in 1871 for putting a Californian on every slate, since the Californios are “as ever alert, vigilant, powerful,” and the party ignoring them would court “inevitable disaster and overthrow.” This defensive compliment greatly overstated the case, except when applied selectively, as in Los Angeles where 22 percent of the registered voters in 1873 were Californians and Mexicans, in a total of more than 5,600 registrants. They helped elect Cristóbal Aguilar mayor in 1872 and helped reelect Ignacio Sepúlveda county judge. Also, they implanted two Spanish-speaking members on the Common Council (which had nine seats), three on the city Democratic Committee, and four on the delegation to the state Democratic convention—much as they had done decades earlier. At the 1873 election, Aguilar’s opponent attacked his faulty English and defeated him, 715 to 358. The gringo mayor succeeded in blocking an ordinance to restore the bilingual printing of laws—also a familiar story.52

The current crop of native-born politicos consisted of Aguilar, Sepúlveda, Antonio Coronel, Prudencio Yorba, F. Palomares, E. Pollorena, E. F. de Celis, J. Valdez, M. Requeña, representatives of both the new and the old generations. Ignacio Sepúlveda in particular had remarkable staying power. Born in Los Angeles in 1842, educated in Eastern schools, and admitted to the bar in 1863, he was elected assemblyman in 1864, then stepped from the position of county judge (1870 to 1873) to district judge (1874 to 1879), and, finally, to superior judge (1879 to 1884). After fourteen years on the bench he resigned and went to live in Mexico City with his children, serving as Wells Fargo agent and United States chargé d’affaires. Thirty years of exile did not altogether estrange him from California, for upon his return to Los Angeles friends greeted him warmly.53

Since the political decline of Andrés Pico and Tomás Sanchez, the “man to see’ in the Los Angeles community was Antonio Coronel. Here was one Californio (technically, a Mexican-American) who adapted to the new environment so well as to defy every generalization about the decline of the Spanish Americans. By some ingenious means he had

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50 La Crónica (Los Angeles), March 12, 1873; El Demócrata (Los Angeles), Nov. 1, 1882.
51 Hubert Howe Bancroft, “Pioneer Register and Index,” in History of California (San Francisco, 1886), IV, 764.
52 La Crónica (Los Angeles), May 11, June 8, Oct. 19, Nov. 30, 1872; June 14, 21, 28, Aug. 23, Sept. 3, 1873.
53 Bancroft, op. cit., V, 716.
escaped the economic consequences of the drought, so that his solvent real estate, moneylending, and grape-growing activities could finance his other interests. Antonio's solvency encouraged the Democratic state organization to assess him $500 in 1867 and $750 in 1871; in 1874 Francisco Argüello touched him for $12 to pay a doctor's bill; in 1875 José Sepúlveda asked him for $25; in 1887 the Mexican consul requested a donation for a monument to Juárez in Mexico; and in 1881 a biographical publisher solicited $250 for a spread in Antonio's honor. Antonio served four terms on the Los Angeles Common Council during the Civil War and became state treasurer in 1867. This position made him a patronage boss, but the language difficulties involved prevented his running for a second term.  

Antonio Coronel himself never sought any political office, leaving that activity to younger men trained in English. But he did make speeches, donate money, and offer advice on the "native vote"; even the German-Americans came to him for help in organizing their minority. He served innumerable civic causes, as a railroad booster (together with Andrés Pico, F. Machado, and Tomás Sanchez), as director of the Spanish-American Mutual Benefit Society (1879), and as advisor to the Los Angeles Centennial Committee (1881). In 1873 he bought into the weekly La Crónica and remained active in its affairs until 1877. At the September Sixteenth celebration of 1880, the Juárez Society featured him as speaker. He served two terms on a state horticulture board, from 1883 to 1885, and on a water commission, fighting the cause of the right of appropriation in water rights against established riparian law. Helen Hunt Jackson sought him out on Indian lore, and he became one of her best informants on the Indian problem. One of his last public appearances was at the California Admission Day festivities in 1890.  

Reginaldo del Valle succeeded to Coronel's chair as "boss" of the "Spanish vote." Born in 1854 and thus even more strictly an American than Pacheco, Sepúlveda, or Coronel, "The Little One," as he was called, studied law and passed the bar in 1877. The voters made him assemblyman in 1880 (he was president of the house in 1881) and state senator in 1882. Although he failed at reelection in the state, he ran for Congress as a Cleveland Democrat against a Yankee in 1884. Few could match del Valle's ability to arouse a crowd in the Spanish precincts, and his freewheeling style of speaking prompted the opposition newspaper, La Crónica, to charge him with ungentlemanly conduct. The pro-Republican Los Angeles Times accused him of un-Americanism, not for supporting Mexico, but for boosting "free trade and other English ideas." The Times tweaked his nose by observing that he dressed his "guards" like Redcoats. Since del Valle (and R. Sepúlveda, running for county auditor) carried only the Spanish-American precincts, a Democratic stronghold, he lost. The most important political role he could later find consisted of the chairmanship of the 1888 state Democratic convention. Still, he shared with Coronel the honorary leadership of the Spanish-speaking community and served on countless government boards and civic committees until his death in 1938.  

The Spanish-speaking leaders staved off complete annihilation for a remarkably long time, considering their early economic and numerical losses. Perhaps they could have accomplished more had they not isolated themselves from their own people as they entered "society" and abandoned their traditional ways. Perhaps, too, the ethos of the Gilded Age, which resisted social reform and encouraged political cynicism, prevented them from coping with the real social ills that beset the Spanish Americans. The greatest problem of the Spanish-speaking stemmed, however, from their loss of numbers, for which none of their leaders could provide a remedy. Although about 12,000 strong in Los Angeles by 1887, the Spanish-speaking constituted less than 10 percent of the total population, and too many of them were newcomers — ignorant, indifferent, or hostile to Yankee politics.  

More or less suddenly, in the 1880's the Californians' political holding action ceased. When Ignacio Sepúlveda retired from the bench, Romualdo Pacheco from Congress, and Antonio Coronel and Regi-
naldo del Valle from active local politics, gringos replaced them. No younger brothers or sons duplicated the old Californios’ prestige. The native-born leaders were left holding honorary chairmanships in this or that committee, but little else, and their community went leaderless.

In 1885 Los Angeles awaited the railroad spike-driving ceremony at Cajon Pass, promised for November, which would greatly promote the direct rail linkup with the East. The completion on September 16 of an intermediary rail hookup with Pasadena created only minor excitement; yet, because it coincided with Mexican Independence Day, it had symbolic meaning and called for a speech by a Spanish-American orator. Not a Mexican, however, but Reginaldo del Valle, was given the honor. In his own and his father’s time, the San Gabriel Valley had burgeoned from an Indian hunting ground to a mission pasturage, then to a rancho empire, and was now sprouting farms, orchards, and towns. It turned out to be a notable September Sixteenth, although symbolically confusing; a Californian born in the American period paid tribute to Mexican liberty by speaking in English to a gringo crowd about Yankee progress. As expected, “The Little One” peppered his remarks with humorous anecdotes of the past thirty years, but the unfunny fact was that the same railroad he was commemorating would soon obliterate practically everything connected with the pastoral era, even his own political career.

The boom of the eighties contributed vastly to the ongoing process of “Americanization.” The sheer volume of immigration brought to southern California the very transformations the northerners had witnessed a generation earlier. In two years or so the population of Los Angeles jumped 500 percent, automatically transforming the electorate into an Anglo-American one. The mores changed equally radically. The type of consumer goods advertised for sale, the tastes in food and dress, the prevalence of English over Spanish in daily and official conversation, the Gilded Age recreations, and the style of commerce—all changed rapidly and irreversibly. While describing the changing ethos of real estate promotion and commerce, Professor Glenn S. Dumke notes that “from 1888 onward, the southern counties were imbued with Anglo-American aggressiveness.”

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THE SECOND GENERATION

until a decade ago and is only now slowly being urbanized, through carefully controlled regional planning.

More than a hundred towns and thousands of orchards and farms were platted out in southern California before the boom of the eighties collapsed in 1888. But even those evanescent communities, which disappeared as quickly as they arose, had gone through financial and legal gyrations which permanently disrupted the legal basis of most ranchos, much as the drought of the sixties had disrupted the way of life and the economy of those same estates.

Schizoid Heritage

WHEN Benjamin Hayes reflected that the Lugo family of southern California had possessed $150,000 in 1852 but had practically no wealth by 1865, he concluded that "the finger of Providence seems to mark the decay of the old Californian families." Why God's wrath?

"We must not judge," Hayes answered. "But the Indians have suffered great crimes and injustices from the later Mexican governors and people." 1 In explaining the fall of the Californians, Hayes thus supplied the "unrequited toil" theory which Abraham Lincoln suggested in his second inaugural as an explanation of the Civil War. Since by Hayes's own reckoning the Yankees, too, should have felt the Lord's wrath for abusing Indians, the theory sounds smug and lacking in substance. Yet the question of the fall was a good one and perplexed both contemporary and later students of the California scene.

In Hayes's time the Yankee still felt sufficiently free of guilt to regard the Californians' defeat as self-inflicted. The oldest and perhaps most highly respected Yankee pioneer in the state, Alfred Robinson, in a late postscript to his famous Life in California, described the downfall as inevitable and regrettable, but as altogether the product of the Californians' passivity. His argument supposes a belief in the idea of progress:

The early Californians, having lived a life of indolence without any aspiration beyond the immediate requirement of the day, naturally fell behind their more energetic successors, and became impoverished and gradually dispossessed of their fortunes as they idly stood by, lookers-on upon the bustle and enterprise of the new world before them, with its go-aheadativeness and push-on keep-moving celebrity. 2

1 Benjamin D. Hayes, Pioneer Notes ... 1849–1875, ed. by Marjorie Tisdale Wolcott (Los Angeles, 1929), p. 280.
2 Life in California during a Residence of Several Years in That Territory ... (San Francisco, 1891), p. 254.