



**JOHN STEINBECK'S
PROGRESSIVE CALIFORNIA**

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PREFACE

This is a story of immigration of people to America seeking a better life and a place to call home. It is a story about John Steinbeck's maternal ancestors, the Hamilton family; his grandfather Samuel, great aunt Mary and great uncle Robert Hamilton, the three of whom emigrated from Ireland destined for California.

It is also a story of their children, first generation Americans, several of whom were provided the opportunity to attend higher academic institutions. One child became a famous judge serving as an Associate Justice of the California Supreme Court. Other children of the Hamilton clan became teachers in the most rural of Monterey County's one-room schoolhouses, which at the time were little more than board and batten shacks. One of these teachers, Steinbeck's mother Olive Hamilton Steinbeck, became a charter member of one of California's many progressive women's club of the early nineteenth century, the Salinas Wanderers Study Club.

Intertwined in this story is the telling of New England Protestant values that arrived during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and shaped of the morals and ethics of Californians, including those of the author, John Steinbeck.

CHAPTER 1

STEINBECK AND THE PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT

John Steinbeck was born during a time when the Protestant - based progressive reform movement had taken hold of the nation. He grew up in one of California's many vibrant progressive communities, surrounded by strong women who were civic leaders of the community. During his youth, in what was then small town Salinas, the Steinbeck's Central Avenue home served as a meeting place for the well-educated middle-class women of the society. Many of these women, including his mother Olive Steinbeck, were members of one or both of the community's progressive women's clubs, the Salinas Civic Club and the Salinas Wanderers Study Club. Among these women were supporters of the California suffrage vote of 1911 and the national suffrage movement vote of 1920. Olive Steinbeck, a former schoolteacher, became both a prominent member of the Wanderers Study Club and a strong supporter of women's suffrage movement.

Steinbeck's youth was informed by the progressive women of Salinas California, many of whom were his mother's closest friends. Beyond the Episcopalian Church, which the author was a lifelong member, Olive Steinbeck and her friends had a profound influence on how her son understood the moral values associated with his community and America at large. In fact, the moral values associated with the progressive reform movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century became the foundation of the works of the author throughout much of his life. His later years as an author ventured into the question of what was America and what it was to be an American citizen, an inquiry likely the result of the values that informed him growing up in rural Salinas, California.

Beyond the women's suffrage movement, other Protestant based reform efforts established by the progressive women of this era addressed such issues as poverty, alcoholism, gambling, prostitution and immigration.

Steinbeck writings, largely directed at America's Protestant majority, present the nation's social ills in a manner that evoked from his readers a level of compassion for those living on the fringes of society. The bordellos of Salinas that appeared in *East of Eden*, the mixed blood, promiscuous, drunken paisanos of *Tortilla Flats*, and the gamblers, bums, winos and prostitutes of *Cannery Row* helped to raise the American consciousness to the downtrodden.

Some of Steinbeck's most recognized work portray characters in search of a place to call home. A home that provided comfort, love, peace and security. The migrant struggle became a prominent part of Steinbeck's writing with George and Lennie in *Of Mice and Men*, and the Joad's in *The Grapes of Wrath*, the paisanos of *Tortilla Flats*, and his characters unending quest to find a home.

Scholars have often recognized that Steinbeck's writings went well beyond that of simple social criticisms to represent the moral consciousness of America in the twentieth century. Many of the characters in Steinbeck's writings represented the lower class and their longing for the socialist-utopian American dream. In all likelihood Steinbeck's moral utilitarian philosophy was imprinted upon him during his youth, at which time he was surrounded by a community of progressive women that held strong to their Protestant values.

CALIFORNIA'S PROGRESSIVE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Braided into the tapestry of American history are the threads of the extended influence of the progressive women's club movement. Originating after the Civil War, women's clubs formed when the nation's colleges and universities were not open to women. Initially, these clubs concentrated on literary and cultural studies. With the Protestant based reform movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the focus of women's club efforts shifted toward addressing the civic and social well-being of the community.

In California, by the mid-1890's, a well-organized progressive women's movement based in Los Angeles and San Francisco had emerged. This movement - initiated primarily by native-born, white, middle-class Protestant women who had settled in the State after 1848 - soon expanded to smaller communities throughout the California.

In 1900, women's clubs scattered around the State organized as the California Federation of Women's Clubs. As a unified political force, these Protestant Christian women's clubs campaigned for progressive reforms such as woman suffrage, temperance, civil rights and social welfare. Other efforts associated with the women's club movement involved social settlement work, city beautification, and civic education.²

California's progressive women's movement found its way to Salinas California with the establishing of the Salinas Wanderers Study Club in the 1905, the Salinas Civic Club in 1906, and the Salinas Suffrage League in 1911.

John Steinbeck, in his book *East of Eden*, with a bit of wry humor, described the efforts taken up, first by the community church, followed by the Salinas Civic Club.

At intervals Salinas suffered from a mild eruption of morality. The process never varied much. One burst was like another. Sometimes it started in the pulpit and sometimes with a new ambitious president of the Women's Civic Club. Gambling was invariably the sin to be eradicated. There were certain advantages in attacking gambling. One could discuss it, which was not true of prostitution. It was an obvious evil and most of the games were operated by Chinese. There was little chance of treading on the toes of a relative.

Actually the efforts of the Salinas Civic Club were not so much concerned with the eradication of prostitution or gambling, but advancing the literary education of the citizens of the community. At the turn of the nineteenth century, women's clubs throughout the nation served as the primary civic organizations responsible for establishing a community's first public library.³ Such was the case for the Salinas Civic Club with the first effort taken up by the organization was directed toward establishing the Salinas Public Library.

THE SALINAS FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Salinas Free Public Library was established on December 18, 1905, with Mrs. C. J. Whisman acting as Secretary Library Trustee. At the time of its founding, a Salinas public library building did not exist, and the collection held not a single book.³

On August 25, 1906, the women of the community formed the Salinas Civic Club, an organization which many years later was renamed the Salinas Women's Club.⁴ Before the close of the first year, the club had selected as their initial civic effort, the construction of a public library for the community.

In early 1907, the Salinas Civic Club wrote to Andrew Carnegie requesting ten thousand dollars to create a public library. Several months later, the Civic Club received a response from Carnegie stating that he had granted their request for funds for a library.⁵ Later that year, the Salinas Civic Club recruited Mrs. Carrie E. Striening for the librarian position at the public library, several years before construction of the facility had even begun.⁶ Mrs. Striening's career as the librarian at the Salinas public library continued for the next thirty years.

Over the next two years the Salinas Civic Club raised an additional four thousand dollars, acquired a site on which to construct the building, and received as a gift, the complete collection of three thousand five hundred books from the Salinas Odd Fellows Library.⁷ Other contributions to the public library collection soon followed with gifts from the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Daughters of the American West libraries, and Salinas Wanderers Study Club, a women's group that each year, selected a different foreign country to review.

In 1907, according to the periodical *News Notes of California Libraries* the Salinas Wanderers Study Club donated forty-eight books to the yet to be constructed public library: “*They are on Italian life and history and a few are Italian novels.*”⁸ This Wanderers’ donation to the library reflects the fact that the Club’s previous years’ foreign country of study was the nation of Italy.

The Salinas Public Library, designed in the Classical Revival style by architect Jacob Lenzen, opened in 1909 at the corner of Main and East San Luis Street. In 1911, the Wanderers’ Club continued their contribution to the library, donating several books about the nation of France.⁹

By the year 1914, the library had amassed a collection that contained more than four thousand volumes.¹⁰ One can only imagine the books available on the shelves of the Salinas Free Public Library to a young John Steinbeck, a full decade before his attending Stanford University.

In 1939, a group of upstanding citizens of Salinas gathered at the corner of San Luis and Main Street, in front of the grand Carnegie library building, and burned copies of John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*. On September 21, 1956, in a letter to his friend Dennis Murphy, Steinbeck wrote “*After I had written The Grapes of Wrath and it had been to a large extent read and sometimes burned, the librarians at the Salinas Public Library, who had known my folks - remarked that it was lucky my parents were dead so that they did not have to suffer this shame.*”

In 1959, the author received a proposal from the City of Salinas to name a room in the new public library in his honor. Steinbeck replied “*I must say that in the old library*

where Mrs. (Carry) Striening, for so many years presided over the stacks, I've browsed the product practically to the roots.”¹¹

Beyond the influence of the Salinas Public Library in shaping Steinbeck as a writer, scholars have often commented on the role his mother, Mrs. Olive Steinbeck played. In the book *A John Steinbeck Encyclopedia* Stephen K. George provided the following mention of Mrs. Steinbeck's influence “*Many critics, including Jay Parinin and Jackson J. Benson, attribute Steinbeck's love of language, clear sense of right and wrong, and outrage at social injustice to his mother's curious mix of artistic and religious values. Olive, though a devoted mother, was also involved in any number of charitable and society organizations—the Eastern Star and the Salinas Wanderers.*”¹²

SALINAS WANDERERS STUDY CLUB

Formed on August 2, 1905, at the home of Amelia Black, the Salinas Wanderers Study Club was one of hundreds of women's clubs established during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. A little more than a year later, in September of 1906, the Wanderers' became one of more than a hundred such organizations to join the California Federation of Women's Club (CFWC).¹

The aim of the Wanderers Study Club was to gain a more thorough knowledge of the history, literature, and art of the United States and foreign countries. Limited to forty members, the group held its meetings the first, third and fifth Wednesday evening of every month at the homes of its members. During each of these programs, members provided a talk on the topic related to the year's chosen country of study.² Presentations were followed by discussion amongst the club members. Membership was by the invitation of an existing member with approval from the club. During the years of Olive Steinbeck's participation, the membership was considerably stable, with members remaining for decades.

The Wanderers' Study Club was likewise a member of the San Francisco District of the California Federation of Women's Clubs. This federation comprised those women's club of the following thirteen counties - San Francisco, Monterey, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Napa, Mendocino, Del Norte, San Benito, Lake, San Mateo, Marin, Sonoma and Humboldt. Each year, one or several Wanderers were selected to attend the District Federation's annual convention. The District Federations annual conference provided the members of various clubs the opportunity to gather and report their organization's recent activities.

SALINAS WANDERERS' CLUB MEMBERS

During the period of Olive Steinbeck's participation in the Study Club, the membership was comprised of the well-educated progressive women of the Salinas community. Club members included graduates of Stanford University, the University of California, Berkeley, several Salinas public schoolteachers, the first librarian of the Salinas public library, Mrs. Carrie Striening, and the first librarian of the Monterey County Free Libraries, Miss Mary Anne Hadden.

For the first seven years of the Wanderers', Mrs. Richmond Wheeler was the guiding president of the organization. Alice Clara Wheeler graduated from high school in Portland, Maine; followed by her graduating from The Boston School of Oratory in 1887. In 1898, she married Richmond Wheeler, when both were attending Stanford University. The couple graduated from Stanford, Richmond with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Science and Mathematics in 1901, and Alice with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English in 1902.

As a teacher of elocution, Alice Wheeler provided lessons for those interested in improving their oral presentation skills or singing talent - first in Maine, then Oregon and finally California with her efforts in the Salinas Wanderers Club.³ Richmond and Alice moved to Monterey County, shortly after their graduating from Stanford, having accepted teaching positions at Salinas High School. Richmond Wheeler later served for years as vice-principal of the high school. Besides the Wanderers, Mrs. Wheeler was a member of the Presbyterian Church, a supporter of women's suffrage, and for a time served as president of the Salinas Civic Club and Pacific Grove's Shakespeare Reading Club.

During Olive Steinbeck's years of participation, numerous other members of the Wanderers were the graduates of prominent academic institutions. Hazel Bardin graduated from Stanford with a Bachelor of Arts in Drawing (1910).

Myrtle G. Kilkenny graduated from Stanford with Bachelor of Art in Latin (1904). Mrs. Kilkenny was the wife of Salinas High School Principal Lucas Edward Kilkenny. Principal Kilkenny, himself, graduated with a Bachelor of Philosophy degree from UC Berkeley (1898).

Blanche Beatrice Byxbee, who graduated from Stanford with a Bachelor of Arts in English (1898). She served as a teacher of English at Paso Robles, Monterey, and Salinas High School.

Miss Mabel Coulter who graduated from Stanford with a Bachelor of Arts in English (1901). She was a teacher in Salinas from 1902 through 1904. Miss Coulter later graduated from California State Library School (1914), and became a librarian at UC Berkeley's Lange Library of Education.

Miss Mary Anne Hadden, who graduated from Stanford with a Bachelor of Arts in German and Roman Language (1901). Hadden became the first County librarian of Monterey County Free Libraries.

Other Wanderers Club members during Olive Steinbeck's years of membership included Mrs. J. A. Armstrong who graduated from the University of the Pacific (1885); Mrs. W. P. Austin, who after graduating from UC Berkeley (1906), became a teacher of history and drawing at Salinas High School. Clara Adelaide Healy who graduated from UC Berkeley with a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture (1909). Mrs. A. G. Andresen, the wife of District Attorney J. H. Andresen, graduated from the Training School for Nurses

in San Francisco, California (1905). For a time, Mrs. Andresen was Secretary of the Salinas Equal Suffrage League, while another member of the Wanderer's Club, Dr. T. H. Crabtree, served as President. Clara E. Boyce (Mrs. Ashley M. Walker) of Salinas, California, who graduated from California State Normal School in June 1899 and became a teacher at Salinas High School. Addie M. Lemon who graduated from California State Normal School in 1900 and taught in the rural community of Jamesburg in Monterey County.

Beyond the wives of the Salinas High School principal and vice-principal, four of John Steinbeck's high school teachers were members of the Wanderers during Olive Steinbeck's years of participation. These women included Louise A. Holbrook, Itylene Lewis, Ora M. Cupp and Emma Frances Hawkins.

Louise A. Holbrook, was the Head of the Art Department and Librarian at Salinas High School graduated from Stanford University with a Bachelor of Arts in History in 1904. Emma Frances Hawkins graduated UC Berkeley in 1905 with a Bachelor of Science. Ora Cupp graduated from the University of Chicago, with a Bachelor of Philosophy in 1912

Scholars have often mentioned Ora Cupp and Emma Hawkins as two Salinas High school teachers who recognized John Steinbeck's exceptional writing abilities. According to Steinbeck biographer, Jackson J. Benson ... *One was his freshman composition teacher, Miss Cupp, who thought of him as her prize student. She praised him and encouraged him, reading his compositions to the class and holding them up as models. Although discomfiting, the experience apparently helped to give him confidence,*

*for shortly afterward he made up his mind to become a writer and started writing stories on his own.*⁴

Regarding Emma Hawkins, Jackson J. Benson wrote *Miss Hawkins, was encountered later in math and economics classes. She was young and attractive, and he fell in love with her, worshiping her from afar. He also admired her because she was a maverick who went her own way, earning the hostility of several of the other teachers. Sensing his admiration, she used it in order to encourage him to chart his own course and persist with his ambition. Steinbeck was not much of a math student, but he felt he learned more from Miss Hawkins than from any of his other teachers.*⁵

According to Steinbeck, Miss Emma Hawkins left an indelible impression on his future as a writer. *“I’ve had many teachers who taught us soon forgotten things, but only a few like her who created in me a new thing, a new attitude, a new hunger. I suppose that to a large extent I am the unsigned manuscript of that teacher. What deathless power lies in the hands of such a person.”*⁶

BEYOND A QUAIN T WOMEN’S CLUB

The Salinas Wanderers’ Club has often been described as simply a quaint women’s club that gathered in a member’s parlor with China tea cups and linens napkins to enjoy each other’s company and discuss travel books. The following pages suggest the members went well beyond discussions of travel as each year’s program entailed in-depth discussions of the history and culture of a foreign country or region chosen for study.

WANDERERS' STUDY CLUB ANNUAL PROGRAM

Each year the Wanderers' printed a pamphlet listing the current club members, honorary members, board members and officers. The pamphlet then outlined the subject of study for the year, complete with meeting date, location, hostess, and title of each assigned members' presentation. During the gatherings each speaker was allotted anywhere from ten to twenty minutes for their presentation.

The pamphlet presented a list of books related to the subject that were available at the public library. During the first decades of the Wanderers Club, the pamphlet also listed several *Bay View Magazines* which held articles written specifically on the foreign country of study.

In his teens, a young John Steinbeck may have read portions of the study material assigned to the Wanderers Study Club as this reading material was presumably held in the parlor room of the Steinbeck family home. During his high school years, he had taken to writing short stories in his attic bedroom above. The close proximity and permitted access to the material that was the subject of study of the Wanderers Club may well have influenced Steinbeck as a writer and his chosen topics.

On the wall of the Steinbeck house in Salinas hangs a photograph of a young John Steinbeck reading near the fireplace. It was taken Christmas Day, 1919, just after the aspiring author had spent his first quarter at Stanford University. Gathered with him in the photo, all intently reading, are several members of the family-- his father John Ernst, his mother Olive, and his sister, Mary.

FIRST YEARS OF STUDY

The first years of the Wanderers Club were spent studying the countries of Northern Europe, which represented the ancestral origin of many, if not all, of the members. First came the study of Italy, then a year spent studying Germany, followed by a year studying Denmark and then Scandinavia. Next, two years were directed to the study of France, followed by a year studying Great Britain. These years mark the tenure of Mrs. Alice Wheeler as president of the Wanderers.

The Wanderers' selected foreign counties of study, during this period mirrored a portion of the immigrant population that had arrived to the city of Salinas during the past several decades. The federal census for 1910 documented the residents of Salinas, California as a diversified community of recently arrived immigrants, as well as first and second generation Americans of Danish, English, Irish, Italian, German, Japanese, Mexican, Portuguese, Russian, Scottish, Spanish or Swiss ancestry.

In the fall of 1910, John Steinbeck began grammar school entering the third grade at the Salinas West End School, just a few blocks from his home. Two years later Steinbeck was permitted to skip the fifth grade and entered the sixth grade. It was during this year that Olive Steinbeck followed Alice Wheeler as the next president of the Wanderers Study Club, a position she held from August 1912 through June 1914.

**OLIVE STEINBECK’S TENURE AS PRESIDENT
OF THE WANDERERS**

As the years progressed the Wanderers Study Club expanded the study topics beyond history, literature, and art to include current topics of the social life, politics and immigration from the foreign country of study. The addition of the “current topics” began during Mrs. Olive Steinbeck’s first year as president, when Carrie Striening spoke on the topic “The Irish as an Immigrant.”

A STUDY OF IRELAND

According to the Wanderers Club program for August 1912 – May 1913, the selected subject was “A Study of Ireland.” The selection of Ireland suggests the incoming president may have been encouraged to select their preferred foreign country for study during their tenure. An idea strengthened by the fact that Ireland was the origin of Olive Steinbeck’s paternal and maternal ancestors.

Special to the Mercury Herald. Salinas, May 24. [1913] After an enjoyable series of winter meetings devoted to the study of Irish history and customs the Wanderers’ Literary club brought its season to a close Wednesday evening at the residence of the club’s president, Mrs. J. E. Steinbeck. Mrs. J. H. Andresen gave a talk on “Irish Poets and Irish Poetry,” and Mrs. Carrie Striening spoke on “The Irish as an Immigrant.” On roll call, the members recited quotations from the works of Irish poets.

In appreciation of her faithful service as president of the club, Mrs. Steinbeck was the recipient of an elegant vase, the presentation being made by Mrs. J. H. Andresen on behalf of the members.⁷

**A STUDY OF RUSSIA AND SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE. PRESENTING THE
PROBLEM OF THEIR EMIGRANTS TO THE PACIFIC COAST**

During Mrs. Steinbeck's second and final year as president (August 1913 - June 1914), the Wanderers study became more directed toward immigration as the Club had selected as the subject "*A Study of Russia and Southeastern Europe. Presenting the Problem of Their Emigrants to the Pacific Coast.*" As suggested by the title, the topic of immigration took a prominent position in the study.

The selection of these foreign countries for study was quite timely, especially in regards to immigration. During the first decades of the twentieth century, over fifteen million immigrants arrived in the United States; a figure roughly equal to the number of immigrants who had arrived in the previous forty years combined. Unlike earlier immigrants, most of the newcomers after 1900 came from non-English speaking southern and eastern European countries. Most of these immigrants arrived from Russia, Poland and Austria-Hungary, countries much different in language and culture than the United States.

A STUDY OF RUSSIA

During the fall of 1913, the following mention appeared in *Mercury Herald* outlining a Wanderers' Club meeting and the chosen topics for the study of Russia.

Special to the Mercury Herald. Salinas, Oct. 4. [1913] The Wanderers club at an interesting meeting held Wednesday evening resumed the study of Russia and the Balkan states. The program was: Paper, "The Renaissance of Russia," Miss Itylene Lewis; paper, "Siberia and Its Colonization as Compared with England and Its Systems," Miss Ruth Abbott; paper, "Political Exiles," Miss Nellie Armstrong; paper, "Mineral Wealth and Resources," Miss Jennie Garrigus; paper, "Nationalism, Socialism and Nihilism," Miss Ora Cupp.

Three – minute talks on Russian cities were made as follows: "Nizhny Novgorod," Mrs. H. C. Murphy; "Kief," Mrs. R. L. Porter; "Warsaw," Mrs. Ben Graves; "Odessa," Mrs. John Parker; "Pultava" Mrs. L. E. Kilkenny; "Omel," Mrs. G. E. Lacey; Vladivostok," Mrs. J. H. Andresen.

Mrs. Striening, Mrs. Kilkenny and Mrs. Armstrong were appointed a committee to make plans for Peace-day exercises. Mrs. W. M. Vanderhurst was elected an active members and Mrs. E. T. Harris as an honorary member.⁸

A STUDY OF POLAND

After several programs related to Russia, the Wanderers shifted to Poland as the first region of North Eastern Europe to study. Appearing in the San Jose Mercury Herald was the following mention outlining a Wanderers meeting held several weeks later on the subject.

Special to the Mercury Herald. Salinas, Oct. 18. [1913]. The Wanderers club met Wednesday evening at the home of Mrs. H. C. Murphy. The program was as follows: Paper, "Poland," Mrs. W. P. Austin; reading, "The Fall of Poland," Mrs. C. Striening; paper, "Peter the Great and His Works," Mrs. C. J. Whisman; violin solo, Miss Helen Murphy; papers, "Catherine II Compared with Elizabeth" and "The Acquisition of Crimean," Miss Eva Thomas; paper, Territorial Growth and Physical Features of Russia," Miss Julia Lemon⁹

IMMIGRATION OF RUSSIAN JEWISH COMMUNITIES

Appearing in the San Jose Mercury Herald in December 1913 was a description of the Wanderers meeting on the subject of the immigration of Russian Jewish communities to America. During this gathering Mrs. J. H. Andresen discussed her volunteer work with settlement efforts in New York City and San Francisco.

Special to the Mercury Herald. Salinas, Dec. 6. [1913] The Wanderers' club held another of its profitable sessions Thursday evening. The subject of the discussion was the Russian Jew at home and abroad. One of the most interesting papers was given by Mrs. J. H. Andresen, "Settlement Work Among the Russian Jew in East Side, New York," in

*which she gave her personal experience in the settlement work on Henry street, New York, in 1907. Other numbers on the program were “The Russian Jew in His Old World Home” and a reading from Jacob Riis “How the Other Half Live.”*¹⁰

SOCIAL SETTLEMENT WORK

Several months later, the Monterey Civic Club held a meeting on the topic of social settlement work. According to a short article in the *Grizzly Bear*, Mrs. J. H. Andresen spoke to the Monterey Club about her experience in settlement work.

*Mrs. Andresen told them of her work in New York and San Francisco, emphasizing the need for settlement houses in the small towns, and urging those in affluent circumstances to take up this work, with the idea of bettering the condition of the poorer classes, helping them by supplying opportunities for employment enjoyment and happiness. This meeting followed a general movement to secure a clubhouse as a civic center for settlement work.*¹¹

Besides Mrs. Andresen’s settlement work in New York City and San Francisco, Wanderers’ club member Miss Ora Cupp, while attending the University of Chicago, contributed two years volunteering at Hull House with Miss Jane Addams.¹² The volunteer work performed by these Wanderers members exemplifies the progressive reform efforts directed toward helping those living on the fringes of society.

THE PANAMA CANAL

In January of 1914, the Wanderers subject of study shifted from Russia and Jewish Immigration to the Panama Canal, which was scheduled to open to travel in the summer of that year. Appearing in the San Jose Mercury Herald, the following mention described the first Wanderers meeting of 1914.

Special to the Mercury Herald. Salinas, Jan. 10. [1914] Dr. H.T. Crabtree lectured Wednesday evening before the Wanderers club, her subject being the "Panama Canal". The doctor visited the canal zone last summer, and took many interesting views of the work being done there. These were exhibited to the audience by means of stereopticon.

The meeting was presided over by Mrs. J. E. Steinbeck, president of the club. Music was furnished by the high school orchestra, and Miss Marguerite Alexander rendered a pleasing vocal solo.¹³

SOUTHEASTERN EUROPEANS EMIGRANTS

AND THE PANAMA CANAL

Beyond discussions related to the Panama Canal, the Wanderers Club debated the various issues associated with Southeastern Europeans immigrating to the Pacific Coast. Emphasis of the study focused on the expected immigration of Southern Europeans through the Panama Canal to the Pacific Coast.¹⁴ This chosen subject of study by the Wanderers' coincided with the growing worry of the expected wave of Southern European immigrants entering California. A concern that was well - publicized in the newspapers and popular periodicals of the day.

In 1913, a proposed wave of unwanted settlers concerned then Progressive Governor of California Hiram Johnson to where he established a State Immigration Commission. The purpose of the commission was to consider the dangers of increased immigration of Jewish, Italian, Russian, and other Southern Europeans to California, which was to coincide with, and a direct result of, the opening of the Panama Canal.¹⁵

During the next several meetings, the Wanderers' discussions went outside the general discussion of history, literature, and art, venturing into the controversial and contested topic of immigrants arriving from Southern Europe.

In late of January 1914, the Salinas Wanderers discussed the Panama Canal and the question of immigration as outlined in the following mention published in San Jose Mercury Herald.

Special to the Mercury Herald. Salinas, Jan. 24. [1914] "The Wanderers" of Salinas are still dealing with the Panama Canal, the latest phase of the question with them being its bearing on immigration. Their meeting last month was very large, opening with a talk on "Immigration," by Miss Mabel Coulter. She spoke of the large influx of Europeans to the Pacific Coast, and of the opportunities awaiting them here. Mrs. J. H. Andresen, one of the bright lights of the club, spoke on "The New Immigration or Slavic Influx" and drawing a comparison between the immigrants of Northwestern Europe and those now coming from Southeastern Europe; her talk very much favored the old immigrants from the northwestern portions. Mrs. R. L. Porter spoke on "Our Present Immigration Laws from the Viewpoint of National Eugenics"; she told of the effects of these laws on those now arriving, as well as future immigrants, presenting some very intelligent and instructive views of this question. Miss B. Porter spoke on "General

Slavic Characteristics” and Rev. A. E. Patch on “Immigration Problems in General.” As Mr. Patch has given much time to research of the immigration question, the Wanderers were especially grateful in securing his presence for the meeting. A rising vote of thanks was extended to Mr. Patch.¹⁶

For the next several weeks, the Wanderers continued their focus on the subject of Southeastern European emigrants as outlined in the following mention that appeared in the monthly women’s suffrage periodical, *Everywoman*.

The Salinas “Wanderers” are again taking up the consideration of the “Emigration of the Peasant from Southeastern Europe to the Pacific Coast.” This subject was delved into very deeply last year by the members, but believing it a subject of much interest to our State, they have again taken it up, with the argument “Is Immigration Sufficiently Restricted.” At the last meeting a debate was called for on this subject, with Mrs. Richmond Wheeler for the affirmative, who offered for her argument facts and figures which went a long way to prove the necessity for encouraging this class of immigrants. She spoke of their thrift and industry, and in this connection our need for just such people to develop our resources. Miss Evelyn for the negative was in favor of restricted immigration, classing some of these peasants with the “undesirable citizen.” Other papers offered, dealing with the question, were “The Slavs in America”; “The Bohemian and Moravian Immigrants”; “Industrial and Agricultural Opportunities of Immigrants,” all showing an extensive knowledge of the immigration question.¹⁷

IMMIGRATION FROM AUSTRIA - HUNGARY

During the first decades of the twentieth century, Austria-Hungary immigration to the U.S. comprised those emigrants from Czech, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Serbia, and Croatia and several other ethnic and national groups. Accompanying this immigration, were articles summarizing the unacceptable racial characteristics of Southern Europeans published regularly in the newspapers and popular periodicals of the day.

As reported in a newspaper editorial that appeared *San Francisco Call* in 1910, beyond racial characteristics of Southern Europeans was the concern for the immigration to America of “*the blood of races that heretofore have had nothing to do with its making.*”¹⁸ The editorial concern of the immigrants arriving to America went beyond the recent entry of Southern Europeans, with the inclusion of “*such distinctly different races as Japanese, Chinese, Mexicans, Africans.*”¹⁹

A STUDY OF AUSTRIA-HUNGARY AND BOHEMIA

In February 1914, the Salinas Wanderers subject of study shifted to the Eastern European countries of Austria-Hungary and Bohemia as described in the following mention published in *San Jose Mercury Herald*. Among the topics presented was a talk by Miss Emma Hawkins on the racial characteristics of Austria-Hungarians.

Special to the Mercury Herald. Salinas, Feb. 21. [1914] The Wanderers club met Wednesday evening at the home of Mrs. C. Z. Herbert, and took up the further study of Austria-Hungary and Bohemia. The principal papers were read by Miss Ana Zabala, Miss Emma Hawkins, Miss Itylene Lewis and Mrs. Ora Haynam.

Miss Ana Zabala's topic was "Francis Joseph, Emperor of Austria," and she gave an interesting account of the life of this aged monarch. Miss Hawkins described the racial characteristics of the Austria-Hungarians, and the literature of Austria-Hungary and its place in the world's literature was discussed by Mrs. Haynam. Miss Lewis spoke of the people of Monrovia and Bohemia.

The following responded to roll call "King John," Miss Evelyn Mason; "John Huss," Mrs. G. B. Duncan; "John Sisk," Miss Nellie Armstrong; "Prokop, the Great," Miss Hazel Bardin; "Jerome of Prague," Miss J. P. Nichols.²⁰

THE SUCCEEDING DECADE OF THE WANDERERS STUDY CLUB

In August of 1914, Mrs. J. H. Andresen, an authority on California history, was selected as the next president of the Wanderers Club for a term of two years (1914 - 1916). Beyond her participation in the Wanderers, Anna Geil Andresen served as chairman of California History Committee, Native Daughters of the Golden West, and state chairperson of the California History and Landmarks Department. During the first year of her tenure, the subject of study for the Wanderers Club was the state of California and the second year of her tenure, the study of the North America. In the coming years, these two subjects – California and America –became integral parts of John Steinbeck's writings.

Miss Beatrice Porter (Mrs. D. B. Wylie – wife of a local physician) was the next member of the Wanderers' club elected as president, serving a two-year term from 1916-1918. According to The Wanderers Club Program, for August 1916 – June 1917 the

chosen subject was a study of South America, and for August 1917 - June 1918, the subject of study was the nation of India.

Mrs. J. T. Riley was the next elected president of the Wanderers Club, serving a one-year term from 1918-1919. According to The Wanderers Club Program, for August 1918 - June 1919, the subject of study was “America and the World War.”

Mrs. Jennie Garrigus was the next elected president of the Wanderers Club, serving a two-year term from 1919-1921. During August 1919 - June 1920, the subject of study for the Wanderers Study Club was the country of Portugal. According to The Wanderers Club Program, for August 1920 - June 1921, the subject was “A Study of Mexico.”

Mrs. Lacey was the next elected president of the Wanderers Club, serving a two-year term from 1921-1923. According to The Wanderers Club Program, for August 1921- June 1922, the subject of study was “A Study of Canada.”

A STUDY OF CHINA

According to The Wanderers Club Program, for August 1922 - June 1923, the subject was “A Study of China”

On September 20, 1922 during the Wanderers’ meeting held at the home of Mrs. A. L. Bulline, members discussed inviting with Dr. Ng Poon Chew, a Presbyterian minister and a spokesman and advocate of civil rights for the Chinese Americans, to speak to the Wanderers. Topics discussed during this meeting included Sages: Confucius, Lao-tzu, Mencius by Mrs. Harris, Chinese Language by Mrs. Riley, and the Great Wall, Mrs. J.D. Kalar

Dr. Ng Poon Chew did indeed speak to the Wanderers on the topic of Modern China, at the Central Grammar School in Salinas on November 8, 1922.

On October 4, 1922 during the Wanderers' meeting held at the home of Mrs. J. E. Steinbeck, members presented the following talks, the Opium Trail by Mrs. Andresen; Shanghai - The Paris of the East by Mrs. Warnock, and Chinese Architecture by Mrs. C. E. Striening.

On May 2, 1923, the Wanderers met at the home of Mrs. Norris and the following program was presented. Peking by Miss Armstrong, When the Mountains, Walked by Mrs. Lacey, the Chinese in California by Mrs. Garrigus.

A STUDY OF JAPAN

According to The Wanderers Club Program, for August 1923 - June 1924, the subject was "A Study of Japan." On October 31, 1923, the Wanderers met at the Salinas Central Grammar School where the program began with motion pictures of Japan shown by courtesy of Mr. Arthur Walter. Under the direction of Mrs. Rovilla Bates, the following program was given. Halloween song, members of the seventh and eight grades. Japanese Song by Miss Sada Onaye, the Japanese National hymn sung by Japanese pupils of West End School.

On November 21, 1923 the Wanderers met at the home of Mrs. Walter Norris where the following program was presented. Christianity in Japan by Mrs. Armstrong, The Dual Government by Miss Walleron, Current events by Mrs. Riley, which touched on repatriation questions, Turkish situation, Japanese re-building from the earthquake of 1923, Presidential candidates, and alien immigration.

On February 6, 1924 the Wanderers met at the home of Mrs. Graves. The program included the following topics. Japanese immigration – Mrs. Garrigus; Nikko-ko by Mrs. Graves, Japanese language by Mrs. Riley, China-Japan War by Miss Armstrong, Kobo Daishi by Mrs. Warnock. Roll Call - Famous Japanese (1922_52).

On March 5, 1924 the Wanderers met at the home of Mrs. Rossi where the following program was presented. American appreciation of Japanese art by Mrs. Bates, The commercial rise of Japan by Mrs. Porter, morals and moral ideals by Mrs. Water

On April 2, 1924 the Wanderers met at the home of Mrs. Lacey. On a motion by Mrs. J. E. Steinbeck it was ordered that a letter be sent to Senator Shortridge asking for his consideration for a child labor amendment. The program for the meeting included Japan and Washington conference by Mrs. K. Y Harris, Japanese and Americanization by Mrs. J.E. Steinbeck, and Japan's mandate in the Pacific by Mrs. Walter. (1922_58).

On April 30, 1924 the Wanderers met at the home of Mrs. Towne where the following program was presented. Japanese in California by Mrs. Garrigus, Japanese-Chinese Relations by Miss Eager, and Japanese industries by Mrs. Murphy.

FROM IMMIGRATION TO EXCLUSION

The Salinas Wanderers Study Club provided the members with an appreciation for the history, art, and way of life of each foreign country chosen for study. A number of these countries represented the ancestral home of many of the Wanderers' Club members with the study of Germany, France, Denmark, Great Britain, Ireland, Norway and Sweden. Other countries selected for study represented the origin of other immigrant families settling in Monterey County, those from Southern Europe (Italy and Portugal), Russia, Poland, Southeastern Europe (Austria-Hungary), India, China, Japan, and Mexico.

Beyond their talks of history, art, and culture, the Wanderers' explored current topics of the social life, politics, and immigration associated with these foreign countries. These current topics of study resonated with members of the Wanderers club as Monterey County experienced an influx of immigrants from the various foreign countries chosen for study.

The early immigrants to California of Northern European ancestry were allowed to purchase or homestead property and establish a permanent residence in a welcoming community. A much different reception awaited immigrants who arrived to California not of Northern European descent. These new arrivals were regularly met with scorn, intimidation, the threat of deportation, and exclusion.

The first immigrants subjected to such prejudice were the Chinese, whom, from the time of their arrival during the Gold Rush, encountered discrimination, overt racism, and exclusion. In 1853, Chinese were denied the right to vote. A decade later Chinese immigrants were banned from testifying in court, and shortly thereafter subjected to a

poll tax. Other discriminatory acts against the Chinese included their denial of U. S. citizenship, the right to lease or own property, and exempted from the opportunity to homestead land.

Before the twentieth century, the majority of the field workers in the Salinas Valley were the Chinese. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 put an end to Chinese immigration, which ultimately resulted in a shortage of field workers. The next influx of Asian immigrants to arrive and labor the agricultural fields, and eventually subjected to exclusion, were the Japanese and, to a lesser extent, Korean, Filipino, and Hindu.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century and first quarter of the twentieth century, several hundred thousand Japanese immigrated to the U.S., settling primarily in California. Between 1900 and 1910, the Japanese became the dominant field workers of the Salinas Valley, with the majority laboring Claus Spreckels' sugar beet fields.

Shortly after their arrival, newspaper articles appeared in the *San Francisco Call* inflating the threat of Japanese immigrants to America.¹ Lobbyists from California quickly directed their attention toward drafting a bill to exclude these immigrants from entering the U. S. As early as 1903, members of U.S. Congress proposed a Japanese Exclusion Bill.² In May 1905, a large meeting held in San Francisco, California launched the Japanese and Korean Exclusion League.³ The Immigration Act of 1907 negotiated between the U. S. and Japan ended the immigration of Japanese, which swiftly diminished the numbers skilled workers for agricultural fields.

Between 1907 and 1920, some sixty-four hundred Hindu's from India immigrated to the U.S. The majority settled in California, finding work in the agricultural fields and for the railroads. The arrival of just a few of Hindu's resulted in anti-immigration

hysteria, exacerbated with editorials and essays published in newspapers and popular periodicals of the day. One such article appeared in the April 1908 issue of *Overland Monthly* was titled *The West and the Hindu Invasion*.⁴ Several years later an essay published in 1910 in the journal, *The Forum*, titled “*A Tide of Turbans*” received national attention. Later that year, an editorial appeared in the February 1, 1910, issue of the *San Francisco Call* titled “*Turn Back The Hindu Invasion*” further inflamed the anti-immigration sentiment.

In 1913, California enacted the Webb Alien Land Law, which further discouraged Asian and other immigrants from settling in the U.S. This law disproportionately impacted the Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Indian immigrant farmers in California by limiting their ability to own land or entering into leases longer than three years.

By 1916, U.S. Congress was proposing a Japanese Exclusion Act similar to that of the Chinese, which eventually led to the U.S. Congress passing an Immigration Act that incorporated the Asian Exclusion Act.⁶

Finally, during the Presidency of Calvin Coolidge (1923-1929), the Immigration Act of 1924 was enacted, which outright banned the immigration of both Arabs and Asians. Also referred to as the Johnson-Reed Act, this legislation restricted the number of immigrants from any given country to two percent of the number of residents from that same country already living in the United States. The percentage quotas enacted were strongly biased towards immigrants from North-Western Europe as opposed to those from South-Eastern Europe, or any other foreign country. As a result, eighty-seven percent of immigration visa permits went to immigrants from Britain, Germany, Ireland, and Scandinavia. The act completely excluded immigrants from Asia.

The resulting decline in the labor force, which began 1882 with the Chinese Exclusion Act and exacerbated with the Immigration Act of 1924, required the need to locate a new source of cheap labor. Protected by their colonial status as U. S. nationals, Filipinos who were exempt from immigration laws that kept most other Asians out, began immigrating California as the next cheap and exploitable labor force. Nativists quickly referred to the sharp rise in Filipinos immigration to the west coast as the third invasion of the Orient.

These efforts to exclude specific immigrant nationalities from entering the U. S. paralleled the years the Wanderers' selected several of these foreign countries for study. According to The Wanderers Study Club programs for 1913 - 1914, the countries of study were Russia, Poland and Austria Hungary; for 1917 - 1918, the country of study was India; for 1920 - 1921, the country of study was Mexico; for 1922 - 1923, the country of study was China; and for 1923 - 1924, the country of study was Japan.

On April 2, 1924 the Wanderers met at the home of Mrs. Lacey. On a motion by Mrs. J. E. Steinbeck it was ordered that a letter be sent to Senator Shortridge asking for his consideration for a Child Labor Amendment. The program for the meeting included such current topics as the recent Japan and Washington Conference by Mrs. K. Y Harris, Japanese and Americanization by Mrs. J.E. Steinbeck, and Japan's Mandate in the Pacific by Mrs. Walter. (1922_58).

In 1933, John Steinbeck wrote a letter to his friend George Albee in which he presented the idea of what soon became his vocation. *"I think I would like to write the story of this whole valley, of the little towns and all the farms and ranches in the wilder hills. I can see how I would like to do it so that it would be the valley of the world."*

After the publishing of *Grapes of Wrath* in 1939 Steinbeck never felt welcome in California again. The author's critical account of the agricultural industry and labor unions resulted in his books being burned and the author feeling uneasy in his native State. He attempted several times to come home to California, to the land he'd loved so deeply, which he expressed in a literary manner, with his writings: *To A God Unknown, Pastures of Heaven, In Dubious Battle, Grapes of Wrath, Cannery Row, Sweet Thursday, and East of Eden.*

To fully appreciate the role of the Salinas Valley in the development of John Steinbeck as an author it is helpful to become familiar with the history of immigration to California. This movement west was dominated by emigrants of Northern European decent, many who'd attempt to find their financial well-being not from gold, but from the harvest of the land. Counted among these emigrants were John Steinbeck's maternal ancestors, the Hamilton clan who arrived from Northern Ireland to America, then west to California, and eventually the Salinas Valley. These emigrants, including the Hamilton family, brought not only their Northern European ancestral heritage, but the religious and cultural values responsible for shaping progressive California and Steinbeck himself.