

University of Nevada, Reno

**The Golden Age and the Age of Gold:
Memory and the Alchemy of History in California, 1877-1888**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
History

by

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May, 2012

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THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

We recommend that the thesis
prepared under our supervision by

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entitled

**The Golden Age And The Age Of Gold: Memory And The Alchemy Of History In
California, 1877-1888**

be accepted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes the process by which Hubert Howe Bancroft and his assistant Thomas Savage collected and preserved a primary cultural memory of California from the aging populations of Alta California (1769-1846) in the form of dictated oral memoirs. The diversity of the testators included in the project mirrored the diversity of Alta California, producing a multi-ethnic cultural memory of California that, in spite of that diversity, emphasized continuity between the Alta Californian past and the state of California in the late 1870s. That primary memory of Alta California's transformation contrasted with the real ways in which the U.S. annexation had robbed many of the testators of their property and wealth. In spite of their fall from the social status many of them had enjoyed in Alta California, a decline well-documented by historians, the testators collectively argued for an historical link between the California they recalled creating and the one in which Thomas Savage interviewed them in 1877 and 1878.

Bancroft eventually contributed to the emerging secondary memory of California's founding, which emphasized historical rupture between Alta California and the modern state, beginning with the Gold Rush. That fundamental disagreement of memory did not result from Bancroft or Savage ignoring the oral sources that they had labored to collect. Rather, it resulted from the pair's tendency to dismiss the narratives of the dictations and to use them only for the facts that they contained based on their belief that oral sources contained historical information in the same way that archival documents do: facts buried within otherwise superfluous information. They wrote an early manifestation of the emerging secondary memory of California's transition, now its founding, that drew significantly from the individual memories of the dictations while

rejecting the overarching narrative of continuity, positing absolute historical rupture instead. Thus, this thesis explains how and why Bancroft and Savage labored to preserve the primary cultural memory of Alta California and its transition to U.S. rule even as they eventually helped to rewrite a secondary cultural memory of California that posited the opposite: California, created *ex nihilo*.

Acknowledgments

Many wonderful people have contributed to the completion of this project. First, I must thank my family for their support. Dennis and Deborah Ross, Timothy and Corinne Skalitzky, and Amanda Ross have all supported me in ways for which I cannot begin to thank them. Janita Jobe managed to provide me an office in the library in the summer of 2011 without which I cannot imagine having completed this project. Finally, my friends and colleagues in the Departments of History at the University of Nevada, Reno and at the University of Utah have helped me to work through many of the conceptual questions that arose in the process of researching and writing this thesis. I owe them thanks not only for their careful and thoughtful responses to deep intellectual dilemmas, but also, and perhaps more importantly, for their ability to set those questions aside from time to time in order to discuss any number of the important topics that have nothing to do with cultural memory in California.

I owe much gratitude to the members of my advisory committee for the roles they played in the development of this project. Dr. Linda Curcio-Nagy first directed me to the Bancroft dictations as potential sources for this project. She was the first to ask me some form of the question that this thesis set out to answer: why did Bancroft collect these dictations only to seemingly ignore them when he wrote his histories of California? Dr. William Rowley deserves the credit for introducing me to Bancroft's voluminous histories in his seminar Nevada and the Far West. Reading Bancroft for that course convinced me of the need to take his role in the construction of memory in California seriously. Dr. Michael Branch helped me to understand the possibilities and the limits of analyzing narratives as an historian. Finally, Dr. Scott Casper advised this project with

the patience and care that only those who know him can understand. His careful scrutiny and thoughtful suggestions helped this project take shape from the jumbled mess of questions with which it began. Any attempt to list his contributions to this project and to my intellectual development would fall short, so I shall finish by simply saying, thank you.

I must close by thanking my patient and loving wife Julie for her support not only in the completion of this project, but throughout my academic training to date. Thank you for moving to three new cities with three new jobs in less than four years. I could not begin to thank you for the innumerable ways that you have made me a better student. More importantly, I am a better person for every minute that I have spent with you and I look forward to continuing that improvement over the rest of our lives, though perhaps with a bit less moving in the future. I love you Julie and it is to you that this project is dedicated.

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INTRODUCTION

Collective memory, like culture, is collective in the sense that it is the shared site of debate and negotiation rather than a consensus about the past.¹ Beginning in the late 1870s, Californians began a discourse over the cultural memory of California's origins. In an attempt to define what it meant to be California in the late nineteenth century, and what it would mean into the twentieth, California's diverse population increasingly attempted to define its past. Hubert Howe Bancroft, whose chronicles of the western United States helped to define the history of that region by the early twentieth century, did a great deal to spur on the discourse of memory in California as he sent his assistants around the state in 1877 and 1878 in search of historical materials. Bancroft's project, however, only capitalized on an existing desire to preserve the past among Californians at all levels of the society. Everywhere they went, Bancroft's assistants recorded encountering Californians already preserving and compiling historical documents and who were quite willing to dictate their personal accounts of California's history.²

In his quest for historical sources between 1877 and 1879, Bancroft and his assistants captured a cultural memory of Alta California that emphasized the continuity between Alta California under Spain (1769 to 1821), Mexico (1821 to 1846), and the United States (1850). Though the individual dictations differ significantly in their

¹ I use the terms "collective memory" and "cultural memory" interchangeably. Following Phoebe S. Kropp, I tend to favor cultural memory because it better "links memories with an array of cultural products and practices." Phoebe S. Kropp, *California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 272–273, n. 2.

² Historian Michael Kammen traces "a major shift in sensibility during the four and a half decades following 1870. The Party of Memory gained ascendancy then, at least in defining cultural norms. Americans slowly improved their skills at celebrating all manner of things, past and present. History in general became the core of civil religion during the spiritual crisis of the Gilded Age. And national history in particular became the means used to transform un-American identities into those of compliant citizens with shared values." Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1991), 11–12.

content, perspectives, and assertions, the testators insisted on a common plot: that a diverse group of Californians³ had made California against the threat of outside domination by both Mexico and the United States and that, through a series of compromises, they had preserved the cultural core of Alta California in the new state. Thus, Bancroft's agents consistently recorded competing versions of the same story. The testators told of California's birth in the 1830s and of its transformation in the 1840s, but none posited an historical break between Alta California and California in the 1870s.

None, save Bancroft himself, that is. Bancroft's histories of California told a story of rupture rather than of continuity. Thus, this project explores a primary cultural memory, articulated by those who had lived in California before U.S. rule, and how Bancroft recorded, preserved, and eventually promoted its opposite: California, created *ex nihilo*. Because the Alta Californians' memory preceded Bancroft's narrative of discontinuity, I attempt to understand how Bancroft and his assistants constructed a counter-narrative of memory in opposition to the sources that they had labored so tirelessly to collect. I argue that Bancroft and his assistants went in search of historical facts in the manner of dates, names, and numbers of troops; the testators provided, however, intentionally constructed narratives in which they attempted to tie the present to the past.⁴

³ I use "Californians" to refer to the diverse population of Alta California, which included people who identified themselves with labels like American, Mexican, Spanish, or Californio but who also understood themselves to be Californians. I use Californio/Californiana and Anglo Californian only when referring to those specific groups in contradistinction to other Californians. However, when I draw from specific dictations I always mirror the designations of the testator in question.

⁴ In this sense, this project is an attempt to read Bancroft's oral history project not only for its content, but for what it reveals about the act of archiving and the prejudices of its compilers. Thus, it attempts to examine "archiving-as-process rather than archives-as-things" in the way that anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler suggests. Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 20.

Historians read cultural memory through a variety of sources, material culture or commemorative rites. That this project focuses on an oral history project requires a distinction between two possible meanings of “memory” within this study. In the most obvious sense, the individuals who gave oral memoirs to Bancroft’s agents literally remembered events that happened earlier in their own lifetimes. Cultural memory differs in kind from the sum of its parts, those individual, cognitive memories of the past collected through conversations between Bancroft’s agents and the aging Californians of the 1870s. The oral histories contain memories, but the interaction between the historiographical agents and the testators constructs those individual memories into a narrative that transforms them. Cultural memory is not the sum, or even the average, of those individual memories, but rather the common narrative arcs into which individual testators fit their distinct, sometimes contradictory memories of the past.

Dominick LaCapra divides cultural memory into two categories based upon the actors involved: primary memories and secondary memories. When people who experienced particular events recount those events in narrative form, they contribute to a primary memory of those events. When others who did not directly experience those events relate memories remember them, they put forth a secondary narrative. The latter includes professional historians, like Bancroft and Savage, and the non-professionals alike.⁵ Rather than divide memories based upon identity markers like nationality or ethnicity, this study examines how and why Bancroft and his assistants wrote a secondary memory of Alta California that drew upon and significantly revised the primary memory that Savage had collected in the dictations he took in the late 1870s.

⁵ Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory After Auschwitz* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 20–21.

While racial and ethnic categories correlate to the divide between the competing memories of California, they differ most directly from one another based upon the types of memory that each contains. Nothing about either memory necessitated that its adherents be a part of one ethnic group or another. Rather, they differ insofar as the memory of historical rupture between Alta California and the new American state was a secondary memory in which the second generation of California's Anglo population rewrote the cultural memory of California. They did so in opposition to the primary memory of California's past as told by those Californios and Anglos who had lived in Alta California.

Both primary and secondary memories constitute cultural memories, though. Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka distinguish between cultural memory and the memories of individuals in their article "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity." The actual physical memories of Californios who told their stories constitute the "potentiality of the archive" upon which cultural memory is based.⁶ While everyone who lived in Alta California potentially had memories of it, the testators who dictated oral memoirs produced cultural memories by selectively drawing upon their recollections in order to tell a story with one narrative arc rather than another. When Californians fit distinct, even oppositional memories into similar narratives of Californian history, they preserved "the store of knowledge from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and

⁶ Assmann and Czaplicka argue, "cultural memory works by reconstructing, that is, it always relates its knowledge to an actual and contemporary situation. True, it is fixed in immovable figures of memory and stores of knowledge, but every contemporary context relates to these differently, sometimes by appropriation, sometimes by criticism, sometimes by preservation or by transformation." Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique*, no. 65 (April 1995): 130.

peculiarity.”⁷ Thus, the cultural memory with which this project is concerned, whether primary or secondary by LaCapra’s division, is not the sum total of the individual memories. Rather, individual memories become a part of the cultural memory when a subject, whether a testator in the case of primary memory or an historian in the case of secondary, selectively constructs a narrative from those individual memories. This project examines oral memoirs and Bancroft’s published histories as manifestations of cultural memory that contributed to a “concretion of identity” through which successive generations identified what it meant to be Californian.⁸

In this thesis, I draw upon the oral memoirs produced by an historiographical project conducted by Thomas Savage, an agent of Hubert Howe Bancroft, and his assistants around California between 1877 and 1879. Savage and his assistants spent the Spring of 1877 traveling California, procuring manuscripts and records from local repositories for Bancroft’s growing collection of sources. While in Santa Clara, Savage’s assistant Vicente P. Gómez began to solicit dictations from local “native Californians.”⁹ Over the following two years, Savage and a small group of assistants made two circuits around California following the same pattern, collecting oral histories from people whom Savage deemed desirable in the areas surrounding whichever town they happened to be in for the purposes of securing archival sources. The majority of the interviewees were Spanish-speaking Californios, just as the majority of the residents of Alta California had

⁷ Assmann and Czaplicka, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” 130.

⁸ Assmann and Czaplicka, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” 130.

⁹ Thomas Savage, “Report of Labors in Archives and Procuring Material for History of California: And Related Material”, 1879, 11, MSS C-E 191, Bancroft Library; Savage’s notebook has also been transcribed and published as an appendix to Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz, *Testimonios: Early California Through the Eyes of Women, 1815-1848* (Berkeley, California: Heyday, 2006).

been. However, Savage collected at least thirteen dictations from Anglo Californians.¹⁰

In total, I have chosen to use all thirteen of the Anglo interviews conducted by Savage. Nine of those come from Southern California and the remaining four from the north. Savage recorded thirty-seven dictations given by Californios. Of those, I have limited my research to the twenty-four that have been translated into English, thirteen of which are from Southern California.¹¹ Eight Californio women gave dictations, but no Anglo women did. This selection reduces the total number of dictations to a more reasonable number for the scope of this project while roughly preserving the geographical and numerical distributions and without losing the minority voices, namely those of the Anglo American men and the Californio women.

Over the past two decades, several significant studies of memory in California have demonstrated the ways in which the cultural memory of the Gold Rush era became the founding myth of California. Scholars have done a great deal to demonstrate the ways in which late nineteenth and early twentieth century Californians came to see California history as beginning with the Gold Rush, thus divorcing the history of modern California from its Spanish and Mexican antecedents. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the secondary cultural memory of California coalesced around a memory of the Gold Rush era that emphasized white Pioneers who claimed the region from semi-barbarous neglect in order to construct a new, civilized society.¹² That reorientation of the

¹⁰ This number relies upon Savage's consistency in beginning each dictation with an introduction in which he identified himself and often an assistant who physically recorded the dictation.

¹¹ I also have access to the Spanish versions and will consult them as the need arises.

¹² Historian Glen Gendzel argues that competing "Euro-American versions of California history" emerged as Southern Californians rejected the Gold Rush memory, turning instead to Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* as their founding myth. Glen Gendzel, "Pioneers and Padres: Competing Mythologies in Northern and Southern California, 1850-1930," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (April 2001): 58-59, 63, 65.

cultural memory in California posited California as a new state, established entirely by pioneers who were simultaneously white and American.

David Glassberg traces the development of California's cultural memory from the 1850s into the final decades of the twentieth century in his essay "Making Places in California" (2001). Glassberg argues that state agencies, funded by the Works Progress Administration, began in the mid-1930s to institutionalize collective memories of California that had been established over the previous eighty years by private organizations like the Society of California Pioneers.¹³ That memory, according to Glassberg, allowed all "white" new arrivals in California during the 1930s and 1940s to recast their relocation "as the ritual reenactment of an earlier westward migration, the quintessentially American story of place and displacement."¹⁴ Thus, by the centennial celebration of the Gold Rush, Glassberg argues that the '49er myth had come to define the secondary cultural memory of California.

The coalescence of Californians' secondary memory around the Gold Rush era developed existing strands of memory even as it simplified that source material. Glassberg notes that the constitution of the Society of California Pioneers, established in 1850, distinguished between those who had arrived in California before 1849 and those who came afterward.¹⁵ Savage and his assistants set out specifically to solicit oral memoirs, dictations of primary memory, from those who had lived in Alta California under Spanish and Mexican rule. Those dictations never had much influence on the secondary memory of California over the long term, as organizations like the Native Sons

¹³ David Glassberg, *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 198–199.

¹⁴ Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 199.

¹⁵ Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 171.

and Daughters of the Golden West arose during the 1870s and 1880s to preserve the memory of the Gold Rush era in which their parents had participated.¹⁶ Through the institutional efforts of such private societies, the memories of Gold Rush California came to dominate the popular imagination of California history in northern California, leaving little room for the memories of Alta California, as collected by Bancroft's agents.

While the memory of the Gold Rush dominated the cultural memory in Northern California, those in the south selectively appropriated a romanticized memory of the Spanish era as their founding myth. Glen Gendzel and Phoebe S. Kropp each emphasize the importance of Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* (1884) to Southern Californians. Kropp argues, the "dreamy pasts that Anglo Californians recalled were not their own. Local residents with longer tenures—Indians and Mexicans—played starring roles" in those versions of California's mythic history.¹⁷ That appropriation coincided with the fading of Californios from social power.¹⁸ In this way, Anglo Californians in the southern region created a romanticized past for California that depended upon remembering, but also forgetting, upon seeing, but also rendering invisible, the Californios and their society.

The historiography of memory in California thus highlights the growth of a white supremacist, American nationalist memory that revolved around the Pioneers and the Gold Rush in the north and around a romanticized but distant Spanish era in the South. Kropp connects the desire among Californians to commemorate their history in the late nineteenth century to the "hunger for tradition [that] grew in cities and towns across the

¹⁶ Glassberg, *Sense of History*, 175.

¹⁷ Kropp, *California Vieja*, 2.

¹⁸ Kropp, *California Vieja*, 20.

country” in the period between the Civil War and the Progressive Era.¹⁹ Along with that general hunger for tradition, Anglo Californians also shared with their white peers across the country a desire for whitewashed memories of the nineteenth century in which racialized groups could only play romanticized roles. In the period following Reconstruction in the South, white Americans across the country romanticized Native Americans, African Americans, and Mexican Americans, sealing them within limited memories of the past in order to preserve a white supremacist racial order into the future.²⁰

The historiographical emphasis on Anglo Californians’ tendency to remember the history of their state in ways that highlighted heroic, Anglo American actors while rendering populations like the Californios invisible within those memories fits with the existing historiography of race and memory across the United States at the end of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. However, historiography of California focuses exclusively on pioneers who came to California during the Gold Rush, ignoring the presence of Anglo American residents in Alta California.

¹⁹ Kropp, *California Vieja*, 2; Perhaps the best studied cultivation of memory during this time period revolved around the legacy of the Civil War. David W. Blight has demonstrated the great lengths to which Americans went not only to commemorate the Civil War and the lives that it claimed, but to do so in ways that posited competing legacies for the war. David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001).

²⁰ Grace Elizabeth Hale, David W. Blight, and Frederick E. Hoxie demonstrate the ways in which white Americans recast African Americans or Native Americans in romanticized roles in their memories of the nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century, white Americans constructed memories of a romanticized past in which the loyal slaves of the Lost Cause mythology or the savage Indians of the frontier bolstered emerging definitions of whiteness. Like the Native American depicted in James Earle Fraser’s sculpture “The End of the Trail,” displayed at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, racialized minorities could only exist as stereotypical memories for most white Americans, they could occupy no space in the present. Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage, 1999); Blight, *Race and Reunion*; Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 93–94.

Scholarly treatments of the Californio dictations have isolated them from their Anglo-American counterparts, thereby rendering Anglo Alta Californians invisible. In their admirable attempts to give voice to the potential counter-narrative of California history, scholars have created a false distinction between the history of Alta California as remembered by Californios and by Anglo Californians. Reading the Californio dictations in isolation has allowed scholars to make strong claims about the ways in which they challenged dominant narratives of California history in their own time and today. The continuing division between the Californio and Anglo American dictations has obscured the ways in which Anglo Americans who had come to California in the decades before the Gold Rush participated in that counter narrative of memory.

Leonard Pitt's *The Decline of the Californios* (1966) remains the premier social history of the Spanish speaking residents of California.²¹ Pitt, drawing extensively from many of the same dictations as this study, struggled to harvest from those narratives historical facts, "submerged in a veritable quagmire of sentimentality and myth."²² Pitt used these documents to understand the historical period that they narrated, and thus attempted to separate memory from fact. While Pitt relied upon the Californio dictations taken by Savage and his assistants, he excluded their Anglo-American dictated counterparts from his study. While more recent works have focused on the "quagmire"

²¹ In *The Other Californians*, Robert F. Heizer and Alan J. Almquist provide a "social history of non-Anglo ethnic groups in California's past as illustrated by attitudes of prejudice and acts of discrimination directed against these groups." Almquist and Heizer do for California roughly what Charles Gibson did for the Central Valley of Mexico a few years earlier: they told the story of Native Americans' life under Euro-American rule, though they found less continuity to emphasize in the societal structure of California than Gibson did in Mexico. Robert Fleming Heizer and Alan F. Almquist, *The Other Californians: Prejudice and Discrimination Under Spain, Mexico, and the United States to 1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), vii; Charles Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule: A History of the Indians of the Valley of Mexico, 1519-1810* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1964).

²² Leonard Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-Speaking Californians, 1846-1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), xv.

itself, those studies have not rejected the other long-standing tradition that Pitt began, that of dividing the Anglo-Californian and Californio dictations.

Genaro M. Padilla did a great deal in *My History, Not Yours: The Formation of Mexican-American Autobiography* (1993) to reveal the ways in which these narratives functioned within the growing genre of Mexican American autobiography.²³ Padilla necessarily focuses on the Californio dictations while entirely neglecting the existence of their English counterparts. He argues that the dictations served as a challenge to developing stereotypes of the Californios, providing an opportunity to make a preemptive strike against the developing historiography of California.²⁴ Padilla argues that women also subverted the interview process as they “invariably voiced resistance to the patriarchal domination that characterized social relations in Mexican California and assertively figured themselves as agents in the social world they inhabited along with, not at the side of, men.”²⁵ Thus, Padilla demonstrates the value of reading these dictations for their content as cultural memory, shaped by the circumstances in which they were remembered as much as by actual experiences in the past.

Because he reads these dictations as collaboratively produced autobiographies, Padilla necessarily struggles with the question of authorship, a concern he shares with Rosaura Sánchez. Sánchez argues in *Telling Identities: The Californio Testimonios* (1995) that the dictations constitute “historical and literary contestations of contemporary nineteenth-century historiography, which often portrayed the Californios as lazy,

²³ Genaro M. Padilla, *My History, Not Yours: The Formation of Mexican American Autobiography* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993).

²⁴ Padilla, *My History, Not Yours*, 25.

²⁵ Padilla, *My History, Not Yours*, 26.

cowardly, and incompetent.”²⁶ Sánchez emphasizes the Californio fall from wealth and power to the position of “social exiles” in the years that followed U.S. statehood, representing them as subalterns.²⁷ Sánchez and Padilla both read the Californio dictations as collaborative products, “mediated dictations” according to Sánchez, through which the testator demands to be heard.²⁸

For all that Padilla and Sánchez enlighten the process by which the dictations were created and the implications of that process for their interpretation, they both ignore that the testators who participated in that process differed significantly from one another according to a variety of racial, ethnic, and national identifiers. That diversity challenges Padilla’s and Sánchez’s treatment of the dictations as a part of an ethnically defined genre. That Savage and his assistants interviewed Anglo Californians within days of, and often in the same rooms as, their Californio counterparts, invites investigation into what the Californio dictations say as a part of that single historiographical project. For all that Padilla and Sánchez have illuminated in their studies of these documents as parts of particular genres of Latin American literature, but much remains to be illuminated by the reunification of the Californio and Anglo-Californian dictations within the historical

²⁶ Rosaura Sánchez, *Telling Identities: The Californio Testimonios*, 1st ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), xi.

²⁷ Sánchez, *Telling Identities*, 6; James A. Sandos challenges the label “subaltern” in his review essay, which focuses in part on Sánchez’s study. Drawing on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s article “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, Sandos argues, “not all oppressed or exploited people are subaltern. They may be merely disempowered or marginalized within their culture’s/society’s hegemonic discourse and seek a way to talk within it.” Sandos asserts that the Californios did not constitute a subaltern group specifically because they articulated themselves, even if in a mediated form, in ways that became a part of hegemonic discourse of colonial California. James A. Sandos, “Does the Term ‘Subaltern’ Apply to Colonial California? ‘Testimonios’ in Context,” *Reviews in American History* 36, no. 2 (June 2008): 161.

²⁸ Sánchez, *Telling Identities*, 3; Padilla, *My History, Not Yours*, 29.

record.²⁹

Historians of memory in California have tended to emphasize the coalescence of cultural memory around the Gold Rush as the founding myth of California, leaving room for the Spanish era only in the highly romanticized pre-history of Southern California. Latin American literary critics have analyzed the Californio dictations as political memoirs in which Californios fought the stereotypes that accompanied their roles in Anglo American memories of California. No one, however, has investigated what role Anglo residents of Alta California played in the struggle over memory. By analyzing the ways in which Anglo American and Californio memories intersect with and depart from one another, I attempt to demonstrate the ways in which Savage's dictations presented a multiethnic primary memory of California that emphasized continuity between Alta California and the U.S. state that they inhabited in the late 1870s. The historiography has demonstrated how Californians whitewashed the cultural memory of the state's history, but only by investigating Bancroft's California dictations as a unified historiographical project can we understand what they felt the need to whitewash.

In the first chapter, I examine the oral history project itself, primarily in relation to

²⁹ Beyond the realm of memory, several important works have analyzed the social relationships in post-1850 California, particularly with an emphasis on gender. Of these, María Raquéel Casas' study and Abraham F. Lowenthal and Katrina Burgess' edited volume do the most to break down divisions between Latin American and U.S. history. The others tend to limit their scope to latinos/latinas in California under U.S. governance. See: Douglas Monroy, *Thrown Among Strangers: The Making of Mexican Culture in Frontier California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Abraham Lowenthal and Katrina Burgess, *The California-Mexico Connection*, 1st ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Lisbeth Haas, *Conquests and Historical Identities in California, 1769-1936* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Virginia M. Bouvier, *Women and the Conquest of California, 1542-1840: Codes of Silence*, 1st ed. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001); Miroslava Chávez-García, *Negotiating Conquest: Gender and Power in California, 1770s to 1880s* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004); Linda Heidenreich, *"This Land Was Mexican Once": Histories of Resistance from Northern California* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007); María Raquéel Casas, *Married to a Daughter of the Land: Spanish-Mexican Women and Interethnic Marriage in California, 1820-1880* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2009).

Thomas Savage, its lead historian. I argue that Savage made no distinction between his efforts to collect scattered facts from the chaotic repositories of California's official documents and his labors to cull useful facts from the equally chaotic first hand recollections of the Californians he interviewed. Ironically, that imagined relationship between himself as the critical historian and his interlocutors as passive repositories of jumbled information helped to preserve their voices in the dictations insofar as he felt no more need to correct their perceived errors than he did to edit incomplete or inaccurate historical documents.

In the second chapter I examine the collective memory of the 1830s, a time of particular political upheaval in California. I argue that the testators identified in the deep divisions of that decade and the near constant state of revolution the origins of California as a place distinct from the Mexican metropole. They did so by recalling, often in ways that conflicted with the memories of other testators, how the Californian people had struggled for their independence from outside rule over the course of a decade. They recounted that progress as inconsistent and internally conflicted, which resulted from its popular rather than elite origins. Thus, when Savage sought facts concerning the political upheavals of the 1830s, the testators responded by explaining how those events showed Californians united against outside dominion, even when their specific local allegiances put them into temporary conflict with other Californian independence causes.

The third chapter explores the cultural memory of the 1840s and the transition to U.S. rule. I argue that the testators all recounted the various, often conflicting, ways in which multi-ethnic alliances of Californians struggled to preserve California during the transition to U.S. statehood. Again, though their explanations conflicted with one

another's, they all posited a similar plot: the Californians who had made their country an autonomous region in the 1830s intentionally negotiated its survival under U.S. occupation and statehood. The testators differed significantly in their assessments of how well California had been saved for its people in the years after 1850, but they recalled the 1840s as a time of their own making rather than of their alienation from their homeland.

I conclude with an examination of Bancroft's *California Pastoral* (1888). That work, which drew significantly from the dictations examined in this study, reveals the fate of the cultural memory Bancroft captured in his oral history project. In particular, I highlight Bancroft's contributions to the emerging Anglo American memory of California's origins in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thus, this project identifies and analyzes the cultural memory that California's second generation of Anglo Americans had to overcome in order to identify the Gold Rush as the founding of California. It also attempts to explain why Bancroft contributed to that Anglo American myth of California's founding in spite of his and his assistants' tireless efforts to collect the recollections of Alta California's aging residents in the 1870s.

CHAPTER ONE

Constructing an Archive of Memory

Between March 1877 and July 1879, Thomas Savage and several of his assistants traveled around California, securing documents from local repositories for Hubert Howe Bancroft's growing archive of sources for California history. Born in Cuba in 1823, Savage joined Bancroft's company in 1873 after two decades working at the American consulate in Cuba.³⁰ Savage detailed his efforts in a notebook that, along with the records and dictations that he procured, now resides at the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley. That document, titled "Reports of Labors in Archives and Procuring Material for History of California: And Related Material," which he completed in September 1879, recounted the circumstances of his two trips around California in pursuit of historical sources.³¹

Savage's report, completed shortly after his final return in 1879, served not only as the record of his labors, but also as the justification for his significant expenditures of time and money over the previous two years. He consistently framed his encounters in ways that would assure his employer that he had "made every possible effort to procure the needed material."³² But he also lamented "that he found quite a number who were totally indifferent to the country's history being written," which prevented him from

³⁰ Savage also contributed significantly to Bancroft's Works, writing Central America II and portions of Central America III as well as Mexico III, IV, V, and VI. Harry Clark, *A Venture in History: The Production, Publication, and Sale of the Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 17, 35; Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, xxvii .

³¹ Savage, "Report of Labors in Archives and Procuring Material for History of California;" Beebe and Senkewicz transcribed and published a copy of Savage's report in their edited volume. Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 345. It will be my practice in the case of this and all other archival sources to cite the manuscript, but to provide page numbers for any published versions of the material whenever possible.

³² Savage, "Report of Labors in Archives and Procuring Material for History of California;" Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 383.

securing information from them.³³ Thus, Savage intentionally portrayed his own role in this project as favorably as possible, always describing himself as the tireless, critical historian who had wrangled the facts of California history from the messy memories of the past, both human and documentary.³⁴ He did so not only based upon his understanding of the past, but also in order to justify his continued employment.

Savage and his assistants made no efforts to divide their work conceptually between archival research and recording oral histories. In this chapter, I argue that Savage's representation of his efforts gathering documents and soliciting dictations as a unified project reveals a bias toward learning "facts" about the past rather than gathering oral histories. Whether scavenging for documents in the Surveyor General's office in San Francisco or taking a dictation in Monterey, Savage imagined his project as making order out of chaos in order to cull historical facts from the disorganized records of the past. In his archival work, Savage imagined the information of historical value buried within otherwise superfluous documents that threatened to render them useless for the writing of history. Savage engaged his interlocutors similarly, seeking the facts that they might unwittingly reveal in the course of telling their stories. The stories *as* stories, however, held little value for him. Consequently, Savage left the narrative structure of his interviews largely untouched, even when he disputed their claims or distrusted the testator.

³³ Savage, "Report of Labors in Archives and Procuring Material for History of California," 383.

³⁴ For instance, in his final assessment of his labors Savage asserted, "To one uninformed on the country's history their talk appears sound enough and even interesting. But to one who has gathered his information from the best authorities, and read nearly all the official documents issued since the foundation of the first settlement, and even back of that, the effect is quite different. The latter finds that such chroniclers are not only unable to furnish dates in most cases, but that their descriptions of events are jumbled." Savage, "Report of Labors in Archives and Procuring Material for History of California," 383.

Savage began his archival work at the repository of the Archdiocese of San Francisco in 1876 when the Archbishop of San Francisco, Joseph S. Alemany, asked Bancroft to analyze the records under his care. Savage and his freshly hired assistants set to work copying some documents and extracting useful facts from others. As would be their habit throughout their project, they worked at the office of the Archdiocese because Alemany objected to the removal of the documents from the premises. Their efforts with the church records took them across town, to the Surveyor General's Office, where a disorganized collection of sources had been moved there after being hastily collected under federal order in 1851.³⁵

Not one to downplay his accomplishments, Savage expounded upon the difficulties of the project. He and his team found themselves confronted with "handwriting faded by time or difficult to decipher or understand, owing to bad penmanship, or worse grammar," which made their task seem "like an endless one requiring the expenditure of a fortune."³⁶ Within ten months, Savage and his assistants succeeded in abstracting the contents of those manuscripts, which Savage described as "merely thrown together" with "no attempt at chronological arrangement."³⁷ Savage identified Edwin M. Stanton as responsible for that condition. Stanton came to California in 1857 to represent Washington in the ongoing land title disputes in the young state before returning to serve as U.S. Attorney General from 1860 to 1861 and as Secretary of

³⁵ Savage wrote that there were "nearly 300 volumes of MSS [manuscripts], ranging from 700 to 1900 pages each, aside from a considerable quantity of unbound documents," Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 342.

³⁶ Savage, "Report of Labors in Archives and Procuring Material for History of California;" Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 342.

³⁷ Savage, "Report of Labors in Archives and Procuring Material for History of California;" Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 342.

War under Lincoln beginning in 1862. Stanton's primary interest in the documents' preservation was as evidence in those title disputes and so Savage claimed that Stanton had desired to preserve the manuscripts at any cost, including their hasty and disorganized binding, rather than risk their destruction if they remained loose.³⁸

By not blaming Stanton even as he decried the condition in which he found the documents, Savage established his ongoing self-image. Whether collecting dictations or historical documents, Savage tended to present himself as the arbiter of their historical value, based both upon his judgments of their likely truthfulness as well as their importance. As he did with Stanton, Savage intentionally avoided denigrating any of the people he encountered, whether they possessed documents or gave dictations, even when he critically evaluated their historical merit. Just as Stanton had done all he could to preserve the documents until Savage arrived, so Savage did not blame a testator for having what he estimated to be a poor memory, or for having lost or destroyed documents over the years.³⁹

Savage represented himself as the true historian, ready to take from anyone what historical information they possessed, in any form, being grateful to them for having held it in as good a condition as they did for so long. From them "the smallest favor [was] thankfully received."⁴⁰ Throughout, Savage treated the people from whom he gathered information, whether they held documents or gave dictations, generously and without

³⁸ Savage, "Report of Labors in Archives and Procuring Material for History of California;" Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 342; Paul Wallace Gates, *Land and Law in California: Essays on Land Policies* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1991), 34.

³⁹ Savage, "Report of Labors in Archives and Procuring Material for History of California;" Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 374.

⁴⁰ Savage, "Report of Labors in Archives and Procuring Material for History of California;" Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 374.

contempt. That generosity resulted from his own self-image as an historian, capable of making sense out of whatever material they held independent of their ability to recognize or to organize what they had.

Having completed work in the Surveyor General's Office in San Francisco, Savage turned his attention to smaller archives around California. He did so, at least in part, as a matter of pragmatism. He wanted to keep in his employ the best of his assistants from the labors in San Francisco in order to avoid training others in the future.⁴¹ So they set out for the local repositories in Monterey, Santa Cruz, and Santa Clara counties in order to secure not only "abstracts from government and church records, but also dictations on California events from old natives and others willing or able to contribute the same, and such old documents as he might find in private hands."⁴² As he left San Francisco, he interpreted his additional task of taking dictations as an expansion of his potential sources rather than a significant shift in his project.

That initial trip lasted only from March 20 to May 17, 1877, but by May 21 Savage had started a second trip. Though Savage completed his final journey in July 1879 and his manuscript detailing his travels in September of that year, the last dictation that he reported taking was with Justo Larios on June 1, 1878.⁴³ Over the course of two years, Savage and his assistants conducted more than sixty interviews in six counties, in both northern and southern California. Throughout that time, their activity recording dictations constantly intersected with their activities procuring historical documents. He

⁴¹ Savage, "Report of Labors in Archives and Procuring Material for History of California;" Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 345.

⁴² Savage, "Report of Labors in Archives and Procuring Material for History of California;" Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 345–346.

⁴³ Savage, "Report of Labors in Archives and Procuring Material for History of California;" Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 381.

often approached a person in hopes of recording a dictation or collecting documents only to do both. Thus, the two activities remained fully intertwined both in practice and in Savage's imagination.

At least two additional oral history projects occurred contemporaneously to that conducted by Savage, and the resulting dictations of all three now reside at the Bancroft Library. In the Spring of 1874, Bancroft dispatched Henry Cerruti to Sonoma in order for him to establish a relationship with Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, a prominent military leader in Alta California who had already started his own history of California.⁴⁴ Cerruti identified his assignment as "either by purchase or in any other manner, [obtaining] as many original documents referring to California's early days as I could lay my hands upon. I likewise stated that it was part of my duty to interview every old settler living in the country," which included "every white man who had settled in California prior to 1850, and every native Californian upwards of sixty years of age."⁴⁵ Between 1874 and his death by suicide in 1876, Cerruti conducted sixteen interviews around California.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, xix–xxi; Beebe and Senkewicz have included excerpts from Cerruti's "Ramblings in California" as an appendix. The manuscript version can be found at the Bancroft Library: Henry Cerruti, "Ramblings in California: Sonoma, Calif", 1874, MSS C-E 115, Bancroft Library; Additionally, Margaret Mollins and Virginia E. Thickens published "Ramblings in California" in 1954. Henry Cerruti, *Ramblings in California: The Adventures of Henry Cerruti*, ed. Margaret Mollins and Virginia Emily Thickens (Berkeley, California: Friends of the Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley, 1954).

⁴⁵ Cerruti, *Ramblings in California*, 19.

⁴⁶ Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, xxiv; The following dictations taken by Cerruti are housed in the Bancroft Library: Felix Buelna, "Felix Buelna Narracion: San Francisco", 1876, BANC MSS C-E 76, Bancroft Library; Nicholas Carriger, "Nicholas Carriger Autobiography: Sonoma, Calif", 1874, BANC MSS C-E 65, Bancroft Library; Edward R Chapin, "Edward R. Chapin Reminiscences: Sonoma, Calif", 1874, BANC MSS C-E 65, Bancroft Library; Josefa Carrillo Fitch, "Dictation of Mrs. Captain Henry D. Fitch: Healdsburg, Calif", 1875, BANC MSS C-E 67, Bancroft Library; William Fitch, "Narrative of William Fitch Taken on Board of Steamer M.S. Latham on Her Voyage from San Francisco to Donahue", 1874, BANC MSS C-E 67, Bancroft Library; María Teresa de la Guerra Hartnell, "Narrativa De La Distinguida Matrona Californiana Doña Teresa De La Guerra De Hartnell: Rancho Del Alizal", 1875, BANC MSS C-E 67, Bancroft Library; Cayetano Juárez, "Narrative of Cayetano Juárez", 1875, BANC MSS C-E 67, Bancroft Library; Jacinto Rodríguez, "Año 1840: Relation of the Arrest of Isaac Graham, Et

Like Savage, Cerruti made little distinction between his role as a procurer of documents and as an interviewer. He differed significantly, however, in the ways that he chose to record his interviews. While Savage's general disregard for the narratives of his interviewees led him to leave them unadulterated, Cerruti disregarded them altogether. Instead, he took notes during his interviews, from which he "wrote in intelligible shape" his own version of their story.⁴⁷ Spanish literary critic Rose Marie Beebe and historian Robert M. Senkewicz, editors of *Testimonios: Early California Through the Eyes of Women* (2006), assert that the "quest for an 'intelligible shape' no doubt affected not only how he phrased his narrative, but what he decided was significant enough to be included."⁴⁸ Therefore, while Cerruti and Savage shared a certain disregard for the actual memories of their interviewees, Savage's method preserved imperfectly the narrative flow of the memories dictated to him.⁴⁹

In the late 1870s another set of Californians dictated autobiographies that now reside in the Bancroft Library alongside those produced by Savage and Cerruti. At least thirty professional, Anglo American men in San Francisco, all but four of whom had

Als.: Also of the Crime and Execution of Diego Feliz. Both Events Occurring 5th April, 1840", 1874, BANC MSS C-E 65, Bancroft Library; Jacinto Rodríguez, "Jacinto Rodríguez Narración ...: Monterey, Calif", 1874, BANC MSS C-E 65, Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley; José Ramón Sánchez, "Notas Dictadas Por José Ramon Sanchez: Healdsburg, Calif", 1875, BANC MSS C-E 67, Bancroft Library; Isidora Filomena Solano, "Isidora Filomena Solano Narración: Sonoma, Calif", 1874, BANC MSS C-E 65, Bancroft Library; "Statement of Patrick McChristian: Santa Rosa, Calif", 1875, BANC MSS C-E 67, Bancroft Library; Dorotea Valdez, "Dorotea Valdez Reminiscences: Monterey, Calif", 1874, BANC MSS C-E 65, Bancroft Library; José Manuel Salvador Vallejo, "Lo Que Piensa ... Sobre Orígen De Los Indios De California", 1875, BANC MSS C-D 157, BANC MSS C-D 166 (Transl.), Bancroft Library; Frank Watson, "Narrative of Frank Watson: Monterey, Calif", 1875, BANC MSS C-E 67, Bancroft Library.

⁴⁷ Cerruti, *Ramblings in California*, 22.

⁴⁸ Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, xxviii.

⁴⁹ Beebe and Senkewicz question whether Savage ever succeeded in writing down every word dictated to him as he tended to claim he did. Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, xxviii.

arrived after 1846, dictated their stories to a shorthand recorder.⁵⁰ Along with the demographic difference between these dictations and those performed by Cerruti and Savage—the exclusive focus on Anglo Americans, the geographical limitation to the San Francisco Bay Area, and the prevalence of Gold Rush emigrants—these sources also differ in the role played by the recorder. Unlike Savage and Cerruti, the shorthand editor who recorded these documents never identified himself or herself. Rather than an active participant in the process, or even the initiator of the process like Savage and Cerruti, this person seems only to have taken the dictations passively.

The anonymity of the recorder makes these dictations particularly difficult to

⁵⁰ Josiah Belden, “Statement of Historical Facts on California: Of Santa Clara Co. for Bancroft Library”, 1878, MSS C-D 42, Bancroft Library; S. H Brodie, “Statement from S.H. Brodie”, n.d., MSS C-D 52, Bancroft Library; Harvey S Brown, “Early Days of California”, 1878, MSS C-D 54, Bancroft Library; Francis Cassin, “Statement of a Few Facts on California”, 1878, MSS C-D 55, Bancroft Library; Chas. H Chamberlain, “Statement of Charles H. Chamberlain ... a Pioneer of 1849”, 1877, MSS C-D 56, Bancroft Library; Elisha Oscar Crosby, “Statement of Events in California as Related By”, 1878, MSS C-D 62, Bancroft Library; John Currey, “Incidents in California: Statement by Judge John Currey for Bancroft Library”, 1878, MSS C-D 63, Bancroft Library; William Heath Davis, “Glimpses of the Past: Statement of William Heath Davis”, n.d., MSS C-D 65, Bancroft Library; Peter Dean, “Statement of Occurrences in California”, 1878, MSS C-D 66, Bancroft Library; William G Doolittle, “Statement of a Journey from New York to San Francisco, Cal. Via Nicaragua, in 1849”, 1878, MSS C-D 68, Bancroft Library; James Findla, “Statement of a Few Events in Early Days of Cal. as Given by James Findla ... for Bancroft Library”, 1878, MSS C-D 79, Bancroft Library; Caleb T Fay, “Statement of Historical Facts on California”, 1878, MSS C-D 78, Bancroft Library; Alfred A Green, “Life and Adventures of a 47-er of California”, 1878, MSS C-D 94, Bancroft Library; William McKendree Gwin, “Memoirs on History of the United States, Mexico and California ... Dictated ... for Bancroft Library”, 1878, MSS C-D 96, Bancroft Library; David N Hawley, “Hawley’s Observations”, n.d., MSS C-D 98, Bancroft Library; Joshua S Henshaw, “Statement of Historical Events in California in Early Times After Am. Occupn”, 1878, MSS C-D 100, Bancroft Library; William Francis Herrick, “Statement from William Francis Herrick”, n.d., MSS C-D 101, Bancroft Library; George B Hitchcock, “Statement from George B. Hitchcock”, n.d., MSS C-D 103, Bancroft Library; William W Hollister, “Statement of a Few Facts on California from 1852-1860 ... Bancroft Library”, 1878, MSS C-D 104, Bancroft Library; George Hyde, “Statement of Historical Facts on California”, 1878, MSS C-D 107, Bancroft Library; Frederick Ferdinand Low, “Statement from Frederick Ferdinand Low”, n.d., MSS C-D 117, Bancroft Library; T. D Matthewson, “Statement on California Affairs”, 1878, MSS C-D 124, Bancroft Library; Annis Merrill, “Statement of Recollections on Early Days of San Francisco, after the American Occupation”, 1878, MSS C-D 126, Bancroft Library; W. C Randolph, “Statement from W.C. Randolph: A Pioneer of 1849”, 1877, MSS C-D 143, Bancroft Library; Philip Augustine Roach, “Statement of Historical Facts on California”, 1878, MSS C-D 146, Bancroft Library; Alfred Robinson, “Statement of Recollections on Early Years of California”, 1878, MSS C-D 147, Bancroft Library; Henry Schmiedell, “Statement of Recollections of Cala. Matters”, 1878, MSS C-D 155, Bancroft Library; O. P Sutton, “Statement of Early Experiences in California”, 1878, MSS C-D 160, Bancroft Library; William R Wheaton, “Statement of Facts on Early California History”, 1878, MSS C-D 171, Bancroft Library.

identify. All of the documents share a distinct handwriting and form, which point toward a single, unnamed scribe. George Hyde's dictation reveals the most, including on the opening page, noting that it was "taken down from his own lips by a short hand writer."⁵¹ Hyde's dictation contains two drafts, the earlier of which begins with a note from the recorder scrawled along the edge of the first page. It reads: "this statement was taken down and written out just as dictated by Mr. Hyde, who then desired to see it, and going over it, altered and revised it extensively, in pencil, as it now appears, and also saw fit to rewrite it with further alterations, and have it copied—both copies are here given. Reporter."⁵² While this note does nothing to identify the recorder, its description of Hyde's role in editing his own dictation provides valuable insight into the role played by the recorder. Savage always had the final word in the creation of the dictations that he recorded. By contrast, the recorder of these memoirs held a great deal less power than the testator himself.⁵³

The documents produced by Cerruti and the anonymous "Reporter" of San Francisco help to contextualize those produced by Savage. Together they demonstrate the degree to which Californians engaged in concerted efforts to inscribe their memories

⁵¹ Hyde, "Statement of Historical Facts on California."

⁵² Hyde, "Statement of Historical Facts on California," 27.

⁵³ Further evidence that these dictations resulted from private efforts among individuals to record their own memories rather than from institutional efforts by Bancroft to record them appears in the bibliographical note placed at the front of the Huntington Library's publication of Elisha Oscar Crosby's memoir. The Huntington asserted its right to publish Crosby's memoir in spite of the existence of an alternate manuscript in the Bancroft collection, arguing that "comparison with other Crosby manuscripts in and out of the Library suggests to the point of certainty that this is a parent document, a source or literary depository, in which Crosby first put down the reminiscences of forty-five years, and from which he and others have since drawn and redone fragments of California history." The evidence provided by Charles Albro Barker, the editor of the volume, in order to prove literary dependency of all other versions of Crosby's memoir demonstrates that, over time, Crosby edited and published alternate versions, at least one of which he provided to the Bancroft Library while another found its way to the Huntington Library, by way of Mr. Boutwell Dunlap of San Francisco, in 1922. Elisha Crosby, *Memoirs of Elisha Oscar Crosby Reminiscences of California and Guatemala from 1849 to 1864*, (San Marino, CA: Huntington library, 1945), ix, xxiv–xxv.

upon the narrative of California history throughout the 1870s. Whether in Bancroft sending first Cerruti and, eventually, Savage out to collect oral histories, or in lawyers, judges, and businessmen in San Francisco recording their own, the desire in the late 1870s to record living memories of the past four decades reveals that Californians understood those years to be important to understanding California history.⁵⁴

Though a common cultural desire to record the recent past and its significant social transformation spawned all three historiographical projects, they differed significantly according to the relationship between the testator and the recorder. Cerruti assumed absolute editorial power over his documents while the recorder in San Francisco exercised almost none. By contrast, Savage and his team did their best to record the dictations as their testators offered them. Only after the fact did Savage add to the beginning of each dictation a paragraph offering his assessment of the reliability of the testator and his notions of what “important” facts they contained. Because the following chapters will analyze the ways in which individual testators constructed their narratives intentionally, I have necessarily excluded Cerruti’s dictations. In order to analyze memories of those Californians who had lived in California before the Gold Rush, I have excluded the San Francisco reporter’s dictations, most of which were dictated by Anglo Americans who had arrived after 1846.

Savage tended to come by dictations in three primary ways. First, he sometimes set out for a particular area with the intention of interviewing a particular man, usually a

⁵⁴ These represent a portion of the pioneer memories, emphasizing the Gold Rush and centered in Northern California, that proliferated in the late nineteenth century and that groups like the Society of California Pioneers would emphasize throughout the early twentieth century. Kropp, *California Vieja*, 2; Gendzel, “Pioneers and Padres,” 58.

prominent figure, of whom he already knew. Second, in his attempts to meet with those prominent men, he often received recommendations of other, less prominent Californians he might interview as well, typically on a specific issue of interest to him. Finally, in the course of his journeys he occasionally filled time by taking dictations from whoever was nearby. As he met additional interviewees either by personal recommendation or by happenstance, Savage expanded his subject pool beyond the former elites of Alta California.

Those patterns held for women, almost none of whom Savage originally intended to interview.⁵⁵ He came to interview María Inocenta Pico at the recommendation of her brother, José de Jesús Pico, because she possessed records relating to her late husband, Miguel Avila. In the course of procuring what records she had, he took down a short dictation from her.⁵⁶ A priest in San Diego recommended that he interview Juana Machado de Alipás de Writhington and Felipa Osuna de Marrón in order to pass the time while waiting for permission from Father Antonio Ubach, the priest in charge, who was away.⁵⁷ Through a combination of personal introductions and excess time, Savage finally interviewed nine women.⁵⁸

The dictations taken by Savage and his team reflect his initial goal: to procure any useful information about the history of Alta California available through documents or oral histories, but they also demonstrate the degree to which he expanded that project over time. He certainly set out with the intention of speaking primarily to those powerful

⁵⁵ Beebe and Senkewicz assert that Savage included three women for interviews, Eulalia Pérez, Angustias de la Guerra, and María Inocenta Pico. Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, xxi.

⁵⁶ María Inocenta Pico, "Cosas De California", 1878, MSS C-D 74 Transl., Bancroft Library; Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 301.

⁵⁷ Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, xxi.

⁵⁸ Additionally, Gómez interviewed Catalina Avila de Rios. Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, xxi–xxii.

men from the old days of California who remained alive, but through local referrals and happenstance, he increasingly solicited information from a much wider variety of Californians. He expanded his subject pool in this way because he sought trustworthy facts rather than narratives. As long as the potential testator seemed of sound mind, of good character, and in a position to know about the event in question, he made no distinctions between people. Though he did not intentionally seek perspectives that cut across class, gender, and ethnic divisions in Californian society, those are exactly what he recorded in his pursuit of useful facts.⁵⁹

In the course of the project, Savage and his assistants interviewed testators in a variety of settings, all of which necessarily influenced the encounter. For his first dictations in Salinas, Savage rented a room adjacent to the Recorder's Office. Gómez traveled the countryside, visiting Californians in their homes in order to convince them to narrate their dictations. Savage then took their dictations in his rented room, from which he could also monitor the labors of Piña and Corona in the Recorder's Office.⁶⁰ Though he often had testators meet him in a rented room, he occasionally made trips to their homes in order to secure interviews, as he did when he interviewed Eulalia Pérez at the

⁵⁹ Among these categories, class had the most complex history. Though the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 had promised the continuance of existing land titles, the years after U.S. annexation saw the systematic stripping of the Californios' land. Pitt identifies Senator William Gwin, who produced his own dictation, "Memoirs on History of United States, Mexico, and California of Ex-Senator Gwin," and his application of the Land Law of 1851 as a primary culprit. Gwin, according to Pitt, "proposed a fine-toothed combing of all the titles without exception, for he believed them to be largely inchoate and fraudulent--or so he said." By the time they recorded their memories in the 1870s, the Californios "charged the Mexican government with having sold them in 1848 as a 'shepherd turns over his flock to a purchaser,' and the gringo buyer with having led them to slaughter." Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios*; Pitt quotes José Manuel Salvador Vallejo's 1874 dictation: José Manuel Salvador Vallejo, "Notas Históricas Sobre California: Sonoma, Calif", 1874, MSS C-D 22, Bancroft Library; Gwin dictated his memoir to the same short hand editor his the other wealthy men of San Francisco in 1877 and 1878. Gwin, "Memoirs on History of the United States, Mexico and California ... Dictated ... for Bancroft Library."

⁶⁰ Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 346–347.

San Isidro Ranch owned by Michael C. White, her son-in-law.⁶¹ Interviewing Pérez in her own home afforded Savage the opportunity to include anecdotes that provided insight into her personality, particularly in relation to her extraordinary age. He described her preference for sitting on the floor, her tendency to kill mosquitoes and flies with her slipper, and the self-sufficiency she maintained, living some five hundred yards from her granddaughter.⁶² Thus, the physical site in which the interviews took place influenced the ways in which Savage constructed images of his subjects.

Savage's own participation in the creation of these dictations played perhaps the most important, if the least obvious, role in constructing their narratives. Unlike Cerruti's self-aware tendency to rewrite the narratives in his own words, Savage rendered his interviewees' words in the first person, claiming to have recorded them verbatim. Since he often had with him an assistant whose sole job was to record their words, that assertion may hold at least *some* merit.⁶³ However, in his introductions to the dictations he recorded, Savage typically revealed a particular agenda with which he entered the interview.

What Savage revealed about his and his assistants' agenda in the introductions provides one half of the equation necessary in order to interpret these dictations as truly the narratives of their authors. Certainly, Savage controlled many things in the interview, most of which he failed to mention. Most importantly, Savage tended only to be interested in a small number of "important" facts about which he believed a particular

⁶¹ Curiously, he interviewed White himself in Pomona, where White was briefly staying with his own son-in-law. Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 99, 361.

⁶² Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 99.

⁶³ Carlos N Híjar, "Recuerdos Sobre California ... En 1834: San Jose", 1877, 1, MSS C-D 102; José Antonio Alviso, "Recuerdos Sobre La Campaña De Natividad, 1846 ...: Con Unos Apuntes De José Eusebio Boronda", 1877, 2, MSS C-D 29 Transl.

testator could speak reliably. When they agreed to let Savage dictate the topics on which they would speak in order to tell their stories, his subjects intentionally negotiated the power dynamics created by the interviewer/interviewee relationship in order to tell their stories. That they did so does not discount their agency in constructing their own narratives, and only by understanding what that subjectivity within Savage's project implied can we understand how they exercised agency and succeeded in telling their own stories, if not in the way that they might have wanted.⁶⁴

Savage introduced almost every dictation taken by him or members of his team with a preliminary paragraph or two, which provide the clearest insight into the role he played in the creation of these dictations. Regardless of the particulars of any interview, Savage's formulaic introductions accomplished similar things. Analyzing the ways in which he fit each interview, with its unique set of circumstances, into his pattern of description in its introduction illuminates his role in shaping the topics his testators covered.

Savage nearly always did three things in his introductions. First, he introduced his subject and recounted the manner in which he came to interview her or him. That information usually detailed at least some personal information about the interviewee, such as the year in which she or he came to Alta California, a physical description, or a familial relationship that made her dictation desirable to Savage. Second, Savage

⁶⁴ Similarities exist between this reading and Rosaura Sánchez's reading of the dictations as collaborative or dependent productions. Sánchez focuses exclusively on the Californio dictations as a part of the genre of testimonios. As a result, she emphasizes the ways in which the testators assumed "agency collectively in the act of narrating." With the inclusion of Anglo American dictations within this historiographical project, the assumed communal identification becomes problematic. So, while my reading follows hers insofar as it emphasizes the collaborative nature of these dictations, the two diverge as I have chosen to examine the relationship of the individuals to the process of the interview rather than of an oppressed minority community to the dominant culture. Sánchez, *Telling Identities*, 9.

described his objectives in seeking the present dictation. Whether based upon the referral of a friend or relative or by the notoriety of the individual, Savage tended to seek dictations from those who he believed held specific pieces of historical knowledge, especially if they also possessed supporting documents. Thus, Savage always began by explaining why he had sought out an interview with the testator in question based on the assumption that most people did not possess information worth recording.

Finally, Savage closed each of his introductions with an assessment of his subject's reliability, intertwining judgments concerning his or her honesty as well as soundness of mind, as he did in his reflection on Michael Claringbud White. Savage claimed that White laid the blame for all of his misfortune "at the door of Americans, their authorities, and laws," which Savage believed prejudiced him unfairly against the United States and its citizens. Aside from that prejudicial attitude, Savage estimated him to be quite trustworthy. He closed his introduction with a broad estimation of White's physical, mental, and moral condition: "Mr. White is in very feeble health; his hand is extremely shaky, his memory seems to be quite fresh and I am led to believe from the little I have seen of him, but much more from what others have said of his character, that he is a truthful man, a man who means always to speak the truth."⁶⁵ Savage effectively prefaced each dictation as though it were a source in an annotated bibliography, summarizing its contents, evaluating its usefulness, and assessing its reliability.

The primary factors that prompted Savage to assess the reliability of a dictation negatively were perceived age-related memory loss, ignorance of important events, or

⁶⁵ Michael Claringbud White, "California All the Way Back to 1828: Pomona, Calif", 1877, MSS C-D 173; Michael Claringbud White, *California All the Way Back to 1828* (Los Angeles: G. Dawson, 1956), xv-xvi.

willful deception. In each case, Savage treated his subjects much like imperfect archival documents, attempting to cull from them what he could while forgiving their inability to tell a complete story. Again, he grappled with the imperfection of his sources by relying upon his self-image as the critical historian, capable of discerning between good and bad information.

When Savage interviewed Don Francisco Arce, one of Bancroft's original assignments to him and his primary purpose in traveling to Salinas, the condition of Arce's memory disappointed him. Arce, a Lieutenant in Amador and Castro's revolt against Micheltorena (1844-1845) and an important associate of Amador's, promised to possess a great deal of information on military and political matters.⁶⁶ Savage noted that his memory was "very much clouded, a fact of which he had himself a conviction, attributing it to a severe kick he had received some years before from a mule."⁶⁷ In spite of that condition, Savage recorded seventy handwritten pages of testimony from Arce, though he likely desired a dictation closer to the two hundred and twenty pages he took from Florencio Serrano. That he included this unflattering detail about a man he regarded as quite important indicates the degree to which Savage was willing to go in order to assess the quality of the facts contained within his dictation. However, Savage attempted to portray the old man in the best light, following Arce's lead in attributing his condition to a past injury rather than to his advanced age.

Savage did not always present his subjects so kindly, as when he interviewed Job Francis Dye. Savage described Dye as old, with an unreliable memory of events in

⁶⁶ Angustias Ord, "Ocurrencias En California: Relatadas a Thomas Savage En Santa Barbara", 1878, MSS C-D 134, Bancroft Library; Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 257, 261.

⁶⁷ Francisco Casimiro Arce, "Memorias Historicas De Don Francisco Arce: Salinas, Calif", 1877, 2, MSS C-D 30, Bancroft Library.

California before 1850. Most damningly, Dye appeared to Savage not to “have paid much attention to the political events transpiring in the country during the Mexican domination.”⁶⁸ The old man had lived on a farm outside Corralitos for most of his life, which resulted in a woefully insufficient knowledge of the important events of California history, by Savage’s estimation. Even so, Savage recorded twenty-one pages from his interview, though he complained that two evenings in the old man’s home had yielded so little useful material.

In addition to evaluating the condition of his subjects’ memories, Savage also attempted to evaluate their characters, both by his own judgment and by the judgment of other parties. Whenever possible he relied upon assessments provided by others, but when he could find no one to speak to a particular testator’s character, he tacitly provided his own impressions. He noted in regard to José Francisco Palomares that he did not know “how much faith to put on his sentiments” as he “could learn nothing for or against his character, although from his own accounts he must have been a cruel-hearted man, at least in his treatment of Indian hostiles.”⁶⁹ Savage always represented himself as simply recording the information and leaving up to his readers to discern the reliability of his subjects.

Sometimes Savage received conflicting evaluations of a person’s character, as he did concerning Juan Bojorges. Savage noted that he had received “some hints . . . against some male members of his family, at the same time that one of his sons was praised for his good conduct. Those hints were made by respectable persons with the view that I

⁶⁸ Job Francis Dye, “Recollections of California Since 1832: Corralitos, Calif”, 1877, 2, MSS C-D 69.

⁶⁹ José Francisco Palomares, “Memorias De José Francisco Palomares: San Jose, Calif”, 1877, MSS C-D 135; José Francisco Palomares, *Memoirs of José Francisco Palomares* (Los Angeles: G. Dawson, 1955), 68.

should not give much credence to Bojorges' statements."⁷⁰ While on historical matters Savage considered himself an expert capable of serving as the arbiter between fact and fiction, he elected not to take a side in his present-day question concerning the Bojorges family's character. Instead, he recorded the information provided to him from both sides "for what it may be worth."⁷¹ While Savage presented himself as eminently capable of discerning between accurate and inaccurate memories of the past among those who could not or did not remember the events in question, he made no such claim regarding intentionally falsified narratives.

The closest Savage came to rejecting any narrative as intentionally inaccurate came in his introduction to his interview with Pablo Vejar. Savage determined that the old soldier consistently inserted himself into his narration of military and political events as the hero. While Savage characterized his memory as "fresh," he lamented that Vejar had "a disposition to take to himself the credit that perhaps belonged to others."⁷² As a result, Savage turned his attention away from such events, instead asking Vejar to relate some adventures he had had with a band of famous Native Californians around Los Angeles. Seemingly, the fame of his Indian partners made the events historically interesting to Savage, if not as important as the political matters. After all, that he turned Vejar to relating those adventures because he distrusted him not to exaggerate his own importance suggests that Savage cared little whether he stretched the truth, so long as he did not do so on matters of real political and military significance. Vejar provides a telling example not only of Savage's convictions about important and unimportant facts,

⁷⁰ Juan Bojorges, "Recuerdos Sobre La Historia De California: Santa Clara, Calif", 1877, 2, MSS C-D 46, Bancroft Library.

⁷¹ Bojorges, "Recuerdos Sobre La Historia De California: Santa Clara, Calif," 2.

⁷² Pablo Vejar, "Recuerdos De Un Viejo", 1877, 2, MSS C-D 169.

but also of the active role he played in directing the stories his subjects told.

Savage always presented his dictations as first-person narratives that obscured his own role in their creation. He included no questions in the narratives, but presented his interviewees' words as if they had complete freedom. In his introductions, the only part of these documents devoid of collaboration, Savage constructed his own imagined position in relationship to his subjects, portraying himself as a neutral and informed observer without any bias. Throughout, Savage represented his and Bancroft's goal as the writing of "a complete, as well as impartial history of" California.⁷³ Because he took his impartiality as axiomatic, Savage saw no need to inform his readers of his influence upon the dictations.

The case of Apolinaria Lorenzana provides an instructive example of Savage's objectives. Savage noted in his introductory material, "she appears to be a good old soul—cheerful and resigned to her sad fate, for in her old age, and stone blind, she is a charge on the county and on her friends, having by some means or other lost all her property. She was loath to speak on this subject, assuring me that she didn't want even to think of it."⁷⁴ Savage abandoned his interest in Lorenzana's loss of wealth at her insistence, but the situation as he recorded it illustrates the ways in which Savage and the testators collaboratively constructed narratives in which neither had total control.⁷⁵

⁷³ Victoriano Vega, "Vida Californiana 1834-47", n.d., 1-2.

⁷⁴ Apolinaria Lorenzana, "Apolinaria Lorenzana Memorias: Sta. Barbara, Calif", 1878, MSS C-D 116; Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 169. Beebe and Senkewicz demonstrate how, through a series of malevolently misrepresented contracts, Lorenzana lost possession of her land between 1852 and 1877, 167-168. Pitt offers an extended analysis of the ways in which the Californios lost their land. Even if her situation did result from poor decisions, the vast number of people who encountered similar misfortune suggests that a larger pattern was at work. Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios*, 83-103.

⁷⁵ Beebe and Senkewicz make a similar argument, taking as their example Eulalia Pérez. They note that Savage's introduction plainly lists a series of questions with which he directed the interview. Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, xxix.

Savage engaged his Anglo Californian testators similarly, as in the case of William T. Wheeler. Savage took Wheeler's dictation in June 1877 in San José with the specific goal of learning about the 1846 loss of the *U.S.S. Warren* in the harbor of San Francisco. Savage noted that Wheeler "had his own idea abt. that affair, and was desirous to have it recorded, and used by Mr. Bancroft in his hist. of Cal., what-ever opinion he (Mr. B) might express on it."⁷⁶ The implied exchange between Wheeler and Savage suggests that Savage approached the issue with existing assumptions about what Wheeler would tell him. That Wheeler succeeded in providing his own story while recognizing that Bancroft might eventually disregard it illustrates the degree to which Savage let his subjects construct their own narrative on his chosen issues.⁷⁷

As the Lorenzana and Wheeler cases demonstrate, Savage tended to enter each interview with questions, or at least a topic, in mind that fundamentally shaped the interview. In other words, Savage approached each interview with a certain set of information that he hoped to gain from it, which reflected his tendency to view his subjects as potential repositories for certain, desirable facts. The interviewees exercised their own power within the process, though, as Wheeler did when he insisted on presenting his speculation on the fate of the *Warren* in addition to his memories of what transpired that day in 1846. Savage approached Wheeler in search of certain facts, but the man he encountered forced himself into the situation as an interpreter of that event and its

⁷⁶ William T Wheeler, "Loss of Men and Launch of the U.S. Ship 'Warren' in 1846: San Jose, Calif", 1877, 1, MSS C-D 172.

⁷⁷ Wheeler argued that the ship did not sink, but rather that members of the crew killed the officers and stole off with the ship, carrying a sum of money bound for Sacramento. Wheeler offered a barrage of anecdotal evidence in support of his fanciful narrative. Bancroft included Wheeler's testimony in his coverage of the event in 1902, citing it among a series of other legends that developed around the possibility that the ship was commandeered rather than taken by a storm. Wheeler, "Loss of Men and Launch of the U.S. Ship 'Warren' in 1846," 384; Hubert Howe Bancroft, *West American History* (San Francisco: The Bancroft Co., 1902), 384.

legacy across time.

In this way, the testators in Savage's historiographical project both did and did not tell their own stories. They did not insofar as they necessarily told the stories that Savage wanted them to tell; they related the events about which he asked, regardless of whether those were the stories they believed to be the most telling regarding their own personal histories. Given his entire life, one doubts that Wheeler would have focused exclusively on an event he witnessed as a boy, and in which he played no real part. The testators told their own stories, however, in that when they answered Savage's questions in narrative form, they did not necessarily offer him the story he had expected.

That Wheeler believed Bancroft and Savage might disregard his interpretation of the *Warren* incident and that he fervently desired to give that account anyway illustrate how and why the testators negotiated space in which to tell their own stories within Savage's historiographical campaign. Whatever limitations they incurred by accepting his terms, their role as testators allowed them their only possible way to tell California history as they remembered it to Savage, Bancroft, and to future generations.

Among the telling inclusions of his introductions, Savage often stated how he came to interview the present person. In the course of giving due credit, Savage often unintentionally provided insight into his present agenda. For example Don Esteban de la Torre recommended that Savage interview Austin Escobar in order to "get from him what he knew of the Californians campaign against Capt. Fremont," a campaign in which both de la Torre and Escobar had taken part under the command of Juan Bautista Alvarado.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Agustín Escobar, "La Campaña De '46 Contra Los Americanos En California: Monterey, Calif", 1877, MSS C-D 72; Carlos N. Híjar, Eulalia Pérez, and Agustín Escobar, *Three Memoirs of Mexican California*,

Indeed, Escobar's entire dictation concerned his participation in that event.

Savage's pursuit of specific information crossed ethnic lines, as he approached John Chamberlain, the Anglo Californian blacksmith of Monterey, because he "had heard that he was the blacksmith employed by the Authorities of Cal. in 1840 to put irons on the foreign [Anglo American] prisoners that were sent to Mexico."⁷⁹ Like Escobar, Chamberlain capitulated to Savage's request and built his narrative around his participation in that rather minuscule event. In both cases, the men used the topics given to them by Savage in order to offer their impressions of the overarching social relations in Alta California. In the end both men told the stories that they wanted to tell, and Savage did not stop them, but they did so using his selected anecdote as their starting point rather than choosing one of their own.

Savage did not always allow his subjects this sort of leeway to stray from his chosen subject, though. Often his introductory material expressed frustration at their unwillingness to tell the story that he sought. Savage interviewed Mauricio González in order to record his account of fighting on behalf of the Mexican Governor of California, Manuel Micheltorena, against Juan Bautista Alvarado and General José Castro's Californio troops in 1845.⁸⁰ González had worked closely with Micheltorena, and Savage believed his perspective on that military campaign most desirable. Savage lamented that

trans. Vivian C. Fisher (Berkeley: Friends of the Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley, 1988), 108.

⁷⁹ John Chamberlain, "Memoirs of California Since 1840", 1877, 1, BANC MSS C-D 57 transc., Bancroft Library.

⁸⁰ Micheltorena, a native of Oaxaca, New Spain, became governor of Alta California in 1842. He brought with him three hundred poorly trained soldiers, many of whom were convicts. Alvarado, who Micheltorena had replaced as Governor, and Castro led an uprising against Micheltorena and his unruly soldiers, deposing him from office in 1845. Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 411; Iris Wilson Engstrand and Kenneth N. Owens, *John Sutter: Sutter's Fort and the California Gold Rush*, Library of American Lives and Times (New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, 2004), 57–59.

González had a “rambling way of narrating, and [was] much given to deviate from his subject, mixing up matters generally.” However, “by dint of patience” he obtained “the desired information . . . in intelligible form.”⁸¹ Similarly, Don Juan Bernal’s “giddy and rambling way” threatened to obscure his knowledge of the past. Savage claimed that by “perseverance and persuasion, I managed to obtain from him what appears in this volume.”⁸² Neither González’s nor Bernal’s dictations even hint that the testator received any direction or prodding. Savage omitted his role in the construction of their stories, but his celebratory references to his own perseverance indicates that he played an active role in directing their narratives back toward what interested him.

Sometimes patience and perseverance could not save an interview in Savage’s estimation. He visited José María Romero at the recommendation of former Governor Downey, who implied that the man had much useful information. Savage soon became frustrated, claiming in his introduction that whatever information the man might possess, it could only be gleaned “if one stayed by him and noted down in the course of days & months whatever he might say.”⁸³ Aside from Romero’s inability to relate events in accordance with Savage’s expectations for linearity and pacing, others managed to run afoul for more basic reasons. Marcelino García, for instance, supplied to one of Savage’s assistants “all he knew, which was not much—he being old and ignorant.”⁸⁴ Savage found Don Eusebio Galindo’s knowledge “confused or incomplete, with a marked

⁸¹ Mauricio González, “Memorias ... De La Historia [de] California: Monterey, Calif”, 1877, 2, MSS C-D 91 Trans.

⁸² Juan Bernal, “Juan Bernal Memoria: San Jose, Calif”, 1877, 2, MSS C-D 43 Trans., Bancroft Library.

⁸³ José María Romero, “José María Romero Memorias: San Juan Capistrano, Calif”, 1877, 2, MSS C-D 150 Transl., Bancroft Library.

⁸⁴ Marcelino García, “Apunte Sobre El General Micheltoarena: Salinas, Calif”, 1877, 2, MSS C-D 86, Bancroft Library.

absence of dates.”⁸⁵ Whether an interviewee refused to be directed by Savage or lacked the sort of knowledge that he wanted, he often recorded his frustration over wasting his time in his introductory material.

In at least some of his introductions, Savage gives no indication that he approached the interview with a particular agenda or that he coerced the testator into staying on a particular topic. In the case of a relatively powerful man like Don Florencio Serrano, whom Savage judged to be among the “most intelligent and well informed of the old Mexican Californians,” Savage provided less direction. He requested Serrano “to furnish his recollections on events, manners and customs, anecdotes, etc.,” quite different from the strict direction he tended to enforce upon others.⁸⁶ Over the course of three weeks, Savage secured two hundred and twenty handwritten pages from Serrano. Most of the longest dictations, almost all of which were taken from relatively powerful figures in Alta California, have a similar lack of direction.

However, power and wealth did not always serve as useful predictors of Savage’s direction or the length of the interview. Savage met Victoriano Vega, whom he described as living “in the greatest poverty,” without introduction, but decided through the course of conversation that Vega held sufficient information about California history from his own experiences to warrant the recording of a dictation. Savage offered Vega no direction probably, at least in part, because his directions usually resulted from a referral on a specific matter. Without any particular agenda, Savage let Vega tell his story.

Though Vega's sixty-two pages hardly compare to Serrano's two hundred and twenty, his

⁸⁵ José Eusebio Galindo, “Apuntes Para La Historia De California: Santa Clara”, 1877, 2, MSS C-D 87, Bancroft Library.

⁸⁶ Florencio Serrano, “Apuntes Para La Historia De Alta California”, 1877, 2, MSS C-D 146.

dictation runs longer than those of several more prominent individuals whom Savage interviewed.⁸⁷

While Savage's method of recording his interviews obscured that they were, in fact, interviews, his introductions at least highlight his diverse roles in their creation. Most importantly, Savage revealed the topics on which he expected the interviewer to speak, thereby providing insight into which topics and themes the interviewers chose, which they received from Savage, and how they negotiated space for their own story within the one he expected them to tell. Savage's expressions of frustration indicate that he continued to take down his subjects' words, even when the process displeased him. He did not give up on the interview, nor did he edit it down to what he found to be its essential facts. He attempted to control the interviews, but he did not always succeed.

Savage's and his assistants' influence permeated every aspect of this historiographical project in ways that the uninterrupted flow of the dictations obscures. Throughout, Savage viewed his role in the process as collecting as many facts as possible, whether in the form of dictations or documents. That preference for facts over narrative certainly prevented the inclusion of many average people from participation in the project. Further, Savage's desire for specific facts shaped the dictations he recorded, though not absolutely. Some testators refused to let Savage direct their stories while others capitulated, but they often narrated his desired event while inserting it into a story that explained their life trajectory.

For all of his editorial influence, Savage's desire for facts over narrative helped to preserve his subjects' voices. He cared little what narrative surrounded the facts that he

⁸⁷ Vega, "Vida Californiana 1834-47," 2-3.

sought, and so he left those stories untouched. Even when he distrusted a narrator, or when he could not find a good reason to trust her or him, he only noted his reservations in his introduction. Savage could have altered the narratives he received without including his changes in his introduction, and thus without preserving the record of his changes. However, the fact that Savage tended to question or to complain about elements within the dictations he left intact suggests his lack of interest in changing them, which likely resulted from his general disregard for the dictations as narratives. Thus, for all of the editorial influence exerted by Savage and his assistants during the creation of these dictations, they successfully preserved the voices of their testators, if only on matters that Savage deemed historically important.

CHAPTER TWO

Recounting Revolution

California experienced a series of violent contestations of power throughout the 1830s as the new nation of Mexico attempted to assert its control over the region, which had experienced little outside control over the previous fifty years.⁸⁸ Californian attempts to preserve its autonomy manifested in the form of a series of localized political upheavals throughout the early part of the decade, culminating in the successful revolution of 1836 in which Juan Bautista Alvarado wrested the governorship of Alta California from his rivals.⁸⁹ When the testators recalled those scattered and disconnected political upheavals, they necessarily took a great deal of license in order to construct a narrative that made sense of an otherwise tumultuous decade.

In spite of the challenges, each testator constructed an internally consistent narrative out of the events he or she remembered in order to tell a story that explained how the people of California had risen in defense of their country and, in the process, had become Californians. The testators did not agree with one another on what it meant to be Californian, and in some cases they had fought on opposing sides during that period. Sex, nationality, and geographic location all influenced which movement they identified with the popular will of “the people” of California during that period. For all their disagreements, these dictations posited an emerging Californian identity within California

⁸⁸ Steven W. Hackel, ed., *Alta California: Peoples in Motion, Identities in Formation*, 1st ed. (Berkeley, California and San Marino, California: University of California Press and the Huntington Library, 2010), 132; Historian Leonard Pitt expounded upon California’s isolation, describing it as “a sort of Siberian work camp” acquiring from Mexico “hosts of petty thieves and political prisoners--18 in 1825, 200 in 1829, 130 in 1830, and so on.” Pitt argues that the policy of banishing such undesirables to California created “an ambivalence toward Mexico and things Mexican.” Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios*, 6–7.

⁸⁹ According to Pitt, many of the factions within California resulted from the organizational efforts of the political prisoners who had been sent to the region. Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios*, 6.

in the 1830s. Even when two testators identified the popular will of the people with opposing sides of the same conflict, both narratives shared the assumption that during that period Californios gained a political consciousness with which they transformed California. Taken together, they constitute a cultural memory that emphasized the people of California in the 1830s as responsible for initiating a movement against tyranny.

The testators all recalled how an emerging notion of what it meant to be Californian in the 1830s had fueled the various movements. The dictations provide no consensus on what constituted that identity; the testators agreed only that Californians came to think of themselves as Californians during that period. The individual testators explored that identity only negatively, disputing what they perceived to be wrongful appropriations of that identity for particular political purposes. They agreed only that understanding oneself as a Californian had not *necessarily* precluded ongoing loyalty to Mexico. Instead, they recounted the conflicting ways in which they believed that Californians had come to understand the need for rule by one of their own. They all constructed narratives in which their “real” Californians were victorious. Thus, the testators uniformly remembered the 1830s as a decade that, through all of its discord, made the Californians as a people united.⁹⁰

Though the events that the testators recalled from the 1830s spanned California, they had two epicenters: Monterey and Santa Barbara. Those cities assumed prominent

⁹⁰ In her essay “Becoming Californio: Jokes, Broadsides, and a Slap in the Face,” Louise Pubols explores the Californio identity formation that occurred during this period. However, I will examine only how the testators remembered those identities in the 1870s and, thus, on how they contributed to a cultural memory of that period of identity formation in ways that inform our knowledge of their present rather than their past. Louise Pubols, “Becoming Californio: Jokes, Broadsides, and a Slap in the Face,” in *Alta California: Peoples in Motion, Identities in Formation, 1769-1850*, ed. Steven W. Hackel (Berkeley, California and San Marino, California: University of California Press and the Huntington Library, 2010), 131–155.

roles in the dictations not because important things happened only in those places, but because Savage took so many of his dictations from Californians who still lived there. The testators tended to draw upon the events that they remembered personally, which they then *made* important through their narratives. Those two cities also reflect the important division between northern and southern California that played an integral role in the political strife of that decade. While Monterey, the capital of Alta California, existed unquestionably within northern California, Santa Barbara existed in the contested space between the two sections.⁹¹

California's first general election took place in Monterey in 1822, the same year that news arrived there that Mexico had won independence from Spain during the previous year.⁹² Over the next fourteen years, Californians continued to contest the governance of California through "a series of bloodless revolts and uprisings."⁹³ Those revolts included an 1827 uprising by the ex-Governor Joaquín Solís and another in 1830 led by Pio Pico, Juan Bandini, and José Castro in an attempt to oust the new governor Manuel Victoria. During the 1820s and into the 1830s, Californians became increasingly dedicated to the proposition that California ought to be governed by one of its own, and yet the continual disagreement over *which* one helped to maintain a cycle of violence that culminated in 1836.

The complicated, ever-shifting web of alliances that contributed to that pattern of

⁹¹ Leonard Pitt argues, "The province was, however, vast, and the Californios felt the strongest ties to an immediate locale. This led to another innovation in the Mexican period, a north-south regional consciousness; it, too, proved divisive. Regionalism polarized around Monterey, Los Angeles, and Santa Barbara, although the latter town, often caught in the cross fire remained indifferent and confused." Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios*, 7.

⁹² J. D. Conway, *Monterey: Presidio, Pueblo, and Port* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 49, 53.

⁹³ Conway, *Monterey*, 53.

political and social upheaval made it possible for a testator to begin her or his story with almost any event, or with almost any governor or revolutionary, in order to construct a narrative leading to Juan Bautista Alvarado's 1836 installation as governor, a position he held until 1842.⁹⁴ Their choices tended to revolve around those groups they identified as having acted out the will of the people in opposition to those who acted on behalf of the powerful few. Thus, the dictations analyzed hereafter all explored a single event: the creation of place, distinct from the Mexican metropole and requiring self-government.

Just as the events varied based on what a particular testator hoped to convey regarding California's past, so also did the main characters. Several began with the widely respected⁹⁵ General José Figueroa, governor of California from 1833 to 1835, whose death created the succession crisis that led to the revolts of 1836.⁹⁶ Upon Figueroa's death, José Castro served briefly as governor before he relinquished control to Nicolas Gutiérrez, the military commander. Gutiérrez held the office from January 2 to May 3, 1836, after which he transferred control to Mariano Chico.⁹⁷ Under political

⁹⁴ Of course, such freedom existed only at the theoretical level. In practice, Savage always played some role in directing the testators to particular events of interest to him. However, Beebe and Senkewicz have noted that the testators also held the power to redirect their narrative, as they argue that Angustias de la Guerra did when "she broke the flow of Savage's questioning to insert an event in which she had been a significant agent." Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 199.

⁹⁵ In his 1851 history of Alta California, Antonio María Osio described Figueroa as one who desired "to be respected rather than feared." He asserted, the people of California "found in him the fine qualities they had hoped for and a good friend who was always ready to help in any manner which did not conflict with his decorum and duty." Based upon those characteristics, Osio claimed that Figueroa "obtained everything simply by stating that those were his desires and that everyone should work together for the good of the country." Osio could find only one fault with Figueroa, a defect "which he could not remove, even by the power of his good intentions." Figueroa was an Indian, which Osio argued made Figueroa sympathetic to their plight and gave the Native Americans a sense of empowerment that made them, in Osio's eyes, more unruly. Antonio Maria Osio, *History of Alta California: A Memoir of Mexican California* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 125, 133–134.

⁹⁶ Among the other valuable appendices included within their volume, Beebe and Senkewicz put together a chronological list of the "Governors of Alta California and Important Events during Their Governorships." Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 427–428.

⁹⁷ Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 427.

pressure, Chico fled the state on July 31, 1836, leaving Gutiérrez in charge again.⁹⁸ In November 1836, José Castro, Ángel Ramírez, and Juan Bautista Alvarado began an open rebellion against Gutiérrez in Monterey. Castro and Alvarado succeeded in wresting control of Alta California from Gutiérrez in Monterey as well as Don Carlos Carrillo in southern California. The Mexican central government had appointed Carrillo to the office of governor, based upon the recommendation of his brother José Antonio Carrillo, the representative of Alta California to the Mexican congress in order to appease the Californios' desire for a Californian to govern California.⁹⁹

The complex political situation around California throughout the 1830s, marked by shifting alliances and regional fragmentation, provided nearly limitless material for the narrative construction of the dictations in the 1870s. At the individual level, the dictations presented contradictory memories of California as each attempted to identify the will of the people with a particular local circumstance. Indeed, no single cause had ever motivated the people of California in any unified way.¹⁰⁰ In spite of the contradictory memories presented in the dictations, which represented the contradictions inherent in the political movements of the 1830s themselves, the dictations do offer a unified memory of California in the 1830s: a place where the people actively pursued their desire to have California governed by a native son.

⁹⁸ George Tays, "The Surrender of Monterey by Governor Nicolas Gutierrez November 5, 1836: An Account from Unpublished Correspondence," *California Historical Society Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (December 1936): 338.

⁹⁹ Osio, *History of Alta California*, 304n16.

¹⁰⁰ Historian George Tays elaborated on a few of the myriad of injustices, real or perceived, that the Californios identified as the reasons for their revolution against Gutiérrez. Tays, "The Surrender of Monterey by Governor Nicolas Gutierrez November 5, 1836," 339–340.

Testators Florencio Serrano and Antonio Franco Coronel both explored the relationship between the emerging popular Californian identity and the leadership of two opposing movements that attempted to harvest that popular energy. Neither testator understood that Californian identity to preclude loyalty to any other nation. Rather, both recalled that Californians had demanded home rule. Serrano and Coronel recalled how different movements of Californians attempted to achieve that goal in conflicting ways.

Serrano was born in Mexico in 1810 to *criollo* parents.¹⁰¹ He came to California in 1834 as a part of the Híjar-Padrés colony, an attempt by the Mexican government to reassert political control in California after having largely abandoned the region during the war for Mexican independence.¹⁰² Serrano recalled that while Híjar had been sick, others in the party had detained a courier from Mexico in San Diego because he carried orders from the Mexican government that would not benefit the colony.¹⁰³ Serrano explained that he met with General Figueroa the general to release him from his obligation to the colony based in part upon his indignation over the unlawful arrest of that courier. Thus, in the earliest events of his narrative Serrano established his character as one loyal to Mexico and to Mexico's lawfully appointed officers in California.

¹⁰¹ Florencio Serrano, *Testimonios De Florencio Serrano: Alta California Remembered, 1834-1850* (Petaluma, CA: William Wilkinson, 2009), 1.

¹⁰² The Híjar-Padrés party formed when its two leaders decided to capitalize on the decision by the Mexican government to secularize the missions of California. They convinced the government to give some of the land to colonies promising to settle California with industrious citizens of Mexico. Kevin Starr, *California: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2005), 47–48; For a more extensive account, see: Cecil Hutchinson, *Frontier Settlement in Mexican California: the Híjar-Padrés Colony and Its Origins, 1769-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).

¹⁰³ Serrano, “Apuntes Para La Historia De Alta California;” Serrano came to believe over time the rumors that acting President Valenín Gómez Farías had colluded with the organizers of the colony with the intention of settling it with loyal colonies, and then declaring independence from Mexico. He believed that when Santa Ana gained power and recognized Farías' plot, he dispatched the courier to General Figueroa in California with orders revoking the colony's claim on the secularized mission lands. Serrano, *Testimonios De Florencio Serrano*, 53–55.

Serrano recounted the 1836 revolt as the joint effort of Anglo Americans, “Californios and some Mexicans” in which common people attempted to secure Californian independence under the leadership of Ángel Ramírez, Juan Bautista Alvarado, and José Castro.¹⁰⁴ He argued that almost immediately after their first victory, the Californians “publically proclaimed the ‘free, independent, and sovereign state of California.’”¹⁰⁵ He interpreted the rhetorical shift toward nationalism at the popular level as an indication that the common people had moved beyond “that which was believed at the beginning” of the revolution.¹⁰⁶ He never explained to whose beliefs he referred, but his assertion clearly indicated that whatever role its leaders had played in the outbreak of revolt, the will of the people had become a self-sustaining nationalist cause at the popular level. In fact, Serrano argued that the “advanced views of the Californios caused Licenciado Peña, the principal promoter of the revolution, Don Ángel Ramírez,” and others “to separate themselves from the ranks of Castro” in order to form a counter-revolution.¹⁰⁷

Serrano credited an emerging Californian identity as the motivation for the revolt against Gutierrez. He argued that the revolutionaries illustrated the “vehement desire among the native Californians that the country should be governed by its sons.”¹⁰⁸ As Serrano told it, the majority of Californians identified themselves as a people distinct

¹⁰⁴ Serrano, “Apuntes Para La Historia De Alta California;” Serrano, *Testimonios De Florencio Serrano*, 65.

¹⁰⁵ Serrano, “Apuntes Para La Historia De Alta California;” Serrano, *Testimonios De Florencio Serrano*, 67.

¹⁰⁶ Serrano, “Apuntes Para La Historia De Alta California;” Serrano, *Testimonios De Florencio Serrano*, 67.

¹⁰⁷ Serrano, “Apuntes Para La Historia De Alta California;” Serrano, *Testimonios De Florencio Serrano*, 67.

¹⁰⁸ Serrano, “Apuntes Para La Historia De Alta California;” Serrano, *Testimonios De Florencio Serrano*, 65.

from Mexicans and, therefore, requiring self-rule. For some Californians, like Peña and Ramírez, identifying as a Californian did not necessarily conflict with loyalty to Mexico.

Serrano claimed that the counter-revolution had begun with a few elite leaders before he explained the rapid popularization of that movement. He identified its principal actors as young people acting without any centralized authority. Without any authorization, two young Californians and five of their friends, whom Serrano identified as Mexicans, took a Californian-held *castillo* at gunpoint. Serrano, twenty-seven years old at the time, had joined their numbers and helped to defend the *castillo* that first night along with fifty other armed young people. Serrano claimed that he and the others had done all of this without any authorization from the leaders of their counter-revolution. They had done so because, as Mexicans (or at least those at risk of being identified as Mexicans), they “concluded that if we stayed in our houses we were exposed to suffering injustices” at the hands of the Californians.¹⁰⁹

Serrano argued that on all sides, common Californians and their leaders attempted to appropriate the emerging Californian identity for their cause. Naturally, conflicts arose over those competing claims to Californian identity. Twice he recounted the “despicable act against the national colors” perpetrated by Castro in 1836. In the process of replacing the Mexican flag with the first of two newly made Californian flags, Castro had placed the Mexican flag on the ground and “stamped on it with scorn.”¹¹⁰ Serrano identified the outrage over Castro’s desecration of the Mexican flag as the genesis of the growing counter-revolution. While Serrano vehemently disapproved of Castro’s desecration of the

¹⁰⁹ Serrano, “Apuntes Para La Historia De Alta California;” Serrano, *Testimonios De Florencio Serrano*, 71.

¹¹⁰ Serrano, “Apuntes Para La Historia De Alta California;” Serrano, *Testimonios De Florencio Serrano*, 57.

Mexican flag, he never questioned the creation or the flying of a Californian flag.¹¹¹

Throughout, he presented the movement as a struggle between two groups of Californians who disagreed about whether loyalty to California demanded the rejection of all loyalties to Mexico.

While Serrano presented the turmoil in Monterey as the manifestation of the Californians' struggle to define their own identity, Antonio Franco Coronel represented it as an attempt by its leaders to commandeer that identity for their own purposes. Rather than a revolution of the people, Coronel remembered an orchestrated manipulation of the populace by a few elites who sought additional power in the region. Coronel came to California from Mexico in 1834 with his family at the age of sixteen. He eventually joined the fight against Castro and Alvarado.¹¹² In his dictation, he told how he and others fought because they rejected the Monterey revolutionaries' binary opposition between being Californian and remaining loyal to Mexico.¹¹³

In his dictation, Coronel argued that most Californians, particularly those in

¹¹¹ Teodoro González, who had come to California from Mexico as a prisoner, offered a brief statement of his memory of the revolution and counter-revolution in which he corroborated much of what Serrano recalled. González identified the counter-revolutionaries as Mexicans and recalled how he had demanded their release from military custody after they had been captured by revolutionary forces. He emphasized that the revolutionaries "turned them over without any opposition, thus respecting civil authority. I proceeded in this way in the discharge of my duty, and most especially with a view to preventing the mishaps which might have befallen the prisoners because of the ill-feeling of the Californians against them, but fortunately this was soon appeased." González, like Serrano, recognized the vehemence of Californian nationalists in Monterey even as he represented himself as a sort of intermediary whose loyalty remained with the maintenance of law and order. Teodoro González, "Las Revoluciones En California, 1829-40", 1877, 8-9, MSS C-D 93 Transl.

¹¹² Doyce B. Nunis and Antonio Franco Coronel, *Tales of Mexican California: Cosas De California* (Santa Barbara, CA: Bellerophon Books, 1994), 3.

¹¹³ Coronel and the others in his family lost their property in a title dispute with the U.S. Land Commission, but he amassed a fair amount of wealth mining to purchase and maintain a successful orchard and vineyard in Los Angeles. Doyce B. Nunis and Coronel, *Tales of Mexican California*, 3.

southern California, did not support breaking ties with Mexico.¹¹⁴ He explained that a few self-serving individuals, namely Ángel Ramírez, had attempted to redirect the Californian sense of identity toward independence in hopes of securing more power for themselves. Where Serrano had seen conflicting popular movements, Coronel recalled a popular movement of southern Californians who opposed the narrow definition of “Californian” posited by a few northern opportunists. According to Coronel, Ramírez persuaded Castro and Alvarado, who were “were young men then, and would not have aimed so high if it hadn't been for Ramirez's advice and maneuvers,” to join his cause by promising them more power.¹¹⁵

Coronel recounted his participation in a military campaign against Castro and Alvarado on behalf of Carlos Antonio Carrillo, a Californio whom he understood to be the legitimately appointed Governor of California. In spite of the willingness of Coronel and his fellow soldiers to fight on behalf of Carrillo, Coronel lamented in his old age that Carrillo and Captain Tovar, the commander of the unit and a “pusillanimous coward” according to Coronel, surrendered to Alvarado. Coronel recalled that the majority of his unit shared his sense that Carrillo had betrayed them by surrendering to Alvarado and, as a result, the majority of them deserted. As Coronel told it, many young Californians took up arms to defend their political ties with Mexico while the revolutionaries of the north

¹¹⁴ Louise Pubols provided narrower boundaries, arguing that “if Monterey was the most nativist town in California, then Santa Barbara, under the influence of Captain de la Guerra, was the most Spanish.” However, Coronel interpreted his experiences in those two cities as representative of the two regions. Hackel, *Alta California*, 147.

¹¹⁵ Antonio Franco Coronel, “Cosas De California: Vecino De La Ciudad De Los Angeles...Dictadas Á D. Tomas Savage Para La Bancroft Library Año De”, 1877, MSS C-D 61; Doyce B. Nunis and Coronel, *Tales of Mexican California*, 17.

had no such popular support.¹¹⁶

While he always represented that revolution as an illegitimate power play by a small number of people, Coronel argued that it had capitalized on an emerging popular Californian identity and the accompanying conviction that California ought to be ruled by its own people. He celebrated that, in spite of Carrillo's betrayal, Alvarado and his supporters eventually "bowed to the legitimate central government of Mexico . . . and abandoned their idea of California as an independent sovereign state."¹¹⁷ Coronel agreed with the assessment of José Antonio Carrillo, Carrillo's brother and the Californian representative to the Mexican Congress, in 1838 that "the Californians were loyal" to the central government of Mexico "only if they had a native son as governor" and that "the Mexican government [would be] well-served" if they remembered that fact.¹¹⁸ Though he had lamented Carrillo's surrender, he found no fault in the eventual rule of Alvarado after the latter renounced his intentions of breaking with Mexico. In that act, Coronel represented Alvarado as finally capitulating to the popular will of the people, which opposed casting off Mexican authority. Thus, even after its surrender, he recalled the popular movement in which he had participated to have been successful in its primary goal: the continuance of a relationship with Mexico.

Coronel did not portray himself or his movement as more Mexican than Californian. Rather, he explained that he and his companions had defended Carrillo because they had accepted the legitimacy of the governor's rule. They accepted him as legitimately appointed by the central government and as a "native son" of California.

¹¹⁶ Coronel, "Cosas De California;" Doyce B. Nunis and Coronel, *Tales of Mexican California*, 19.

¹¹⁷ Coronel, "Cosas De California;" Doyce B. Nunis and Coronel, *Tales of Mexican California*, 20–21.

¹¹⁸ Coronel, "Cosas De California;" Doyce B. Nunis and Coronel, *Tales of Mexican California*, 19.

According to Coronel, Carrillo had been “immediately recognized by the town council of Los Angeles and all of California south of Santa Barbara,” all of whom identified themselves as Californians as fervently as their northern counterparts.¹¹⁹ Coronel represented his and other southern Californians’ willingness to fight against the northern revolution as a natural part of their identity as Californians rather than at odds with it.¹²⁰

María Inocenta Pico and María de las Angustias de la Guerra, both women of prominent families in California, focused their narratives on specific, local events that caused popular sentiment to turn against Chico and Gutiérrez in defense of a local, prominent Californian man who had been wronged by Chico. Like Serrano and Coronel, Pico and de la Guerra did not understand the Californian identity as antithetical to a Mexican identity. Rather, they argued that Chico’s arbitrary actions against local Californians dramatized for the common people the need for home rule.

Thomas Savage interviewed Pico in hopes that she would relate the dictation from the perspective of her late husband, the military man Miguel Avila.¹²¹ Instead, she offered

¹¹⁹ Coronel, “Cosas De California;” Doyce B. Nunis and Coronel, *Tales of Mexican California*, 18. Though he lamented Carrillo’s surrender, Coronel remembered giving the same unquestioning allegiance to Alvarado after the Mexican government officially appointed him Governor of California, after which “there was no longer any excuse for this or any other part of the territory to deny Alvarado’s authority,” 21.

¹²⁰ José del Carmen Lugo, who Savage believed to be ignorant of all of California’s history because of his reclusive life on his ranch in San Bernadino, briefly recounted the events of the 1830s as a struggle between regional loyalties. According to Lugo, “Alvarado and Castro (Jose) came South with a considerable force expecting to bring pressure to bear on the people of the South. In time an arrangement was reached, and the force from Monterey retired to Santa Barbara, while those of the South, who had been concentrated at San Fernando came back to Los Angeles. These arrangements did not satisfy the people in the North, but the people in Los Angeles demanded that they be carried out. Things continued in this unsatisfactory state and from time to time reports were heard that the Government in Mexico was proposing to send troops in numbers sufficient to subdue the rebel Californians.” José del Carmen Lugo, “Vida De Un Ranchero: Los Angeles”, 1877, MSS C-D 118; José del Carmen Lugo, *Vida De Un Ranchero, a History of San Bernardino Valley*, ed. Helen Pruitt Beattie, vol. 8, Quarterly (San Bernardino County Museum Association) 2 (Bloomington, Calif., 1961), 5.

¹²¹ Born in Santa Barbara in 1810, she married the soldier Miguel Avila in Monterey in 1826. When Savage interviewed her in 1878 her husband had been dead for four years. Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 297–300.

a narrative driven by average women and men who rose up to defend her husband from an unjust arrest. Pico portrayed Alvarado and Castro as champions of the local community, which had responded violently to a series of highly personal affronts by Governor Gutiérrez against the people of the pueblo. Like her male counterparts, Pico drew from her actual experiences in order to explain the outbreak of revolution. In her case, those experiences blended her roles as wife, mother, and leader within the pueblo. Savage approached Pico with the assumption that he could only gain second-hand information from her concerning the outbreak of revolution in which her husband had played an important and active role; she dictated to him a narrative in which her late husband played a primarily passive role while she and other members of the pueblo had transformed California through their attempts to deliver him from his imprisonment.

For Pico, the events leading to the November 1836 revolution had begun earlier that year when her husband happened upon three women bathing in a well. She recalled that Avila had chastised the women, the wives of prominent men, for filling the well with soap. Their husbands took offense and began legal proceedings against Avila, who was quickly arrested by Gutiérrez. Pico recalled how she went before Gutiérrez in order to secure her husband's release, using her femininity and motherhood quite strategically in her appeal. She appeared before Gutiérrez accompanied by her four-year-old son, presenting herself as a wife and mother appealing for her husband's release. She recalled that Gutiérrez had responded heartlessly, asking if she "preferred to have them shoot my husband five times or have him exiled to Guadalajara for many years."¹²² She responded coolly that "if he thought it was fair, then he should shoot my husband five times,"

¹²² Pico, "Cosas De California," Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 305.

adding that “there would be justice on earth as surely as there was justice in Heaven” for she was “determined that he would not see one bit of cowardice” in her.¹²³ Far from a weak woman who placed her faith in divine justice in the next life, Pico had emphasized earthly justice in a not-so-veiled threat.¹²⁴

As Pico told it, the revolt against Gutiérrez in Monterey began when the pueblo, outraged by the mistreatment of her husband, rose up against him under Castro’s leadership. The instruments of earthly justice had already begun to move against the Governor for his abuse of her husband. The leaders of Monterey had met immediately after her husband’s arrest in order to secure his release, “by force if necessary. The revolt against Gutiérrez was triggered a few days after the arrest, which was one of the main reasons for the revolt.”¹²⁵ She explained that her appeal to Gutiérrez and her refusal to show any fear before him had dramatized his injustices against the people, spurring them to action.

Pico did not relegate herself to a passive role in the revolt after helping to ignite it. Rather, she placed herself in a central role in her narrative. According to Pico, Gutiérrez recognized that the “pueblo stood armed and ready to defend itself” and that he “did not have the military might to ride out the threatening storm.”¹²⁶ Even after he released Avila, Pico explained, Castro and Alvarado had decided to lead troops against Gutiérrez anyway, and she had supplied them with all of the provisions she had: food, drink, gunpowder, and tack. Pico celebrated the victory as her own: “I had contributed greatly

¹²³ Pico, “Cosas De California;” Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 305.

¹²⁴ For an extended study of women’s experiences in California, see: Bouvier, *Women and the Conquest of California, 1542-1840*.

¹²⁵ Pico, “Cosas De California;” Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 305.

¹²⁶ Pico, “Cosas De California;” Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 306.

with my resources, my influence, and even with my own hard work. Many times my hands were the ones that put the bridles on the horses, And many of those bridles were made with pieces of my clothesline.”¹²⁷ Pico represented the 1836 revolt against Gutiérrez not as a movement forced upon the people by elite, power-hungry politicians, but as an organic movement that arose from the people and in which she and other women played active and decisive roles. As she recalled it, California had made its first steps toward independence inspired by the undaunted resolve of a wronged mother wielding her gunpowder and clothesline.

Even as Pico directly opposed Serrano’s and Coronel’s interpretations of that period, arguing that Castro responded to rather than manipulated the will of the people, she also explained that the emerging Californian identity had been central to the movement. She concluded her narrative of that period by arguing, “the revolt did free us from people who wanted to treat us more despotically than what we had ever experienced during the absolute rule of the Spanish governors.”¹²⁸ Pico used Gutiérrez, the Mexican appointed governor, but “a Spaniard by birth,” to demonstrate how little Mexican independence had done for the people of Monterey.¹²⁹ Their only salvation had come through the forceful deposing of Gutiérrez when “he became totally insufferable.”¹³⁰ In her recollection, Pico tied the Mexican government of 1836 to Spanish absolutism in order to distinguish Californians as a people unto themselves who required independence in the same way that Mexico had once required it from Spain.

¹²⁷ Pico, “Cosas De California,” Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 307.

¹²⁸ Pico, “Cosas De California,” Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 308.

¹²⁹ Pico, “Cosas De California,” Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 308.

¹³⁰ Pico, “Cosas De California,” Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 308.

Savage interviewed Angustias de la Guerra¹³¹ because of her reputation “as a lady of intelligence who, from her connections and position, was enabled to inform herself upon governmental affairs.”¹³² She began her narrative of the political upheaval of the 1830s in the years leading up to the 1836 revolt in order to portray Castro as the legitimate ruler of California and Chico and Gutiérrez as the insurgents whose coup forced Castro to violence.¹³³ In her narrative, de la Guerra claimed Figueroa had selected Castro as his legitimate successor. When Chico and Gutiérrez temporarily usurped his authority, the community rejected their leadership and worked to reinstall Castro as their legitimate leader. Like Pico, de la Guerra focused on the common people and their interactions with the leaders of the revolution, particularly as she inserted women as political actors.¹³⁴ Her narrative emphasized the right of the people to re-install Castro as the rightful leader of California by emphasizing prophetic events that confirmed him as the rightful heir to Figueroa and by demonstrating the abuses the people suffered at the hands of Chico and Gutiérrez.

¹³¹ Savage referred to de la Guerra as Mrs. Ord, using her ex-husband James Ord’s last name, and so her dictation appears at the Bancroft under the name Angustias Ord. She, however, began her dictation “I, María de las Angustias de la Guerra” and so I have elected to use the name by which she self-identified at the time of her interview. Angustias Ord, “Ocurrencias En California;” Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 201.

¹³² Beebe and Senkewicz highlight de la Guerra’s diverse personal history. The daughter of José de la Guerra, a prominent Spaniard in California, and María Antonia Carrillo, a Californiana, she was first married to a Mexican and second to an American. Thus, “Angustias de la Guerra encountered many worlds. Her testimonio revealed that she saw the light and darkness in all of them.” Angustias Ord, “Ocurrencias En California;” Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 200–201.

¹³³ De la Guerra was born in 1815 to a prominent Californian family in Santa Diego. She to Monterey in 1829. So while she did not live there in Monterey when revolution broke out in 1836, she had significant connections in both northern and southern California. Angustias Ord, “Ocurrencias En California;” Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 193, 196, 245.

¹³⁴ Beebe and Senkewicz argue that throughout her long narrative she “seems to have bristled when Savage focused his questions on the deeds of various men. She insisted that she and other women had been active participants in the history of their land. At various points in her narrative, she broke the flow of Savage’s questioning to insert an event in which she had been a significant agent.” Thus, her tendencies to emphasize her and other women’s roles in the events leading up to the revolt in 1836 kept with her tendency throughout the dictation. Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 199.

Angustias de la Guerra argued that General Figueroa had named Castro as his legitimate successor in order to show how Castro had attempted to reclaim the authority given him from the illegitimate usurper Gutiérrez. She began with the old general, who “had earned wide respect” and had governed the “country with great skill,” sensing death was near.¹³⁵ De la Guerra recalled how Figueroa had “summoned Don José Castro . . . and authorized him to take charge of the political command when he died,” placing Gutiérrez in charge of the military command.¹³⁶ Everything she described about the events that led to the revolt of 1836 built upon her recollection that Castro had always been the legitimate ruler of California.

De la Guerra offered scant commentary on the events that destroyed Figueroa’s established political order, noting only that “Gutiérrez demanded that Castro turn over the political command to him. Castro complied.”¹³⁷ With that abrupt transition, de la Guerra began a series of anecdotes that served to demonstrate Chico’s and Gutiérrez’s poor character and alienation from the people of California. At the same time, she elaborated on her participation in a popular movement around California aimed at undercutting

¹³⁵ Angustias Ord, “Ocurrencias En California;” Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 232.

¹³⁶ Angustias Ord, “Ocurrencias En California;” Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 240.

¹³⁷ Her lack of details likely resulted from her absence from Monterey at the time. However, in other matters she did not hesitate to present details that she knew only second-hand, and so her omission at least hints that she cared little on what grounds Gutiérrez had made his demand. Angustias Ord, “Ocurrencias En California;” Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 240; José María Amador offered a similar, though far less passionate, account of the transitional period between Figueroa and Chico. He asserted, “before dying Figueroa separated the political and military command. he left the first [office] in the hands of José Castro . . . and the military [command] to his comrade in arms, Lieutenant Colonel Nicolás Gutiérrez.” According to Amador, “Gutiérrez argued that California, as a territory bordering a foreign neighbor, had to be under the command of only one person” and, eventually, “Castro gave in and relinquished his position.” Amador did not explain how Chico replaced Gutiérrez. José María Amador, “Memorias Sobre La Historia De California: Natural Del País Que Nació El Año De 1781 Y vive Hoy Cerca Del Pueblito De Whiskey Hill. Lo Escribió, Dictado Por El Autor, Thomas Savage Para La Bancroft Library”, 1877, MSS C-D 28, Bancroft Library; Gregorio Mora-Torres, *California Voices: The Oral Memoirs of Jose Maria Amador and Lorenzo Asisara* (Denton, Texas: University of North Texas Press, 2005), 167.

Chico's and Gutiérrez's authority by protecting the citizens of California from their mercurial tendencies and arbitrary abuses.

A prophetic Indian named Cristóbal Manojó at Mission Santa Barbara provided the anecdote with which de la Guerra began her lengthy explanation of how the will of the people had turned against Chico. She began by stating cryptically how "this issue gave rise to serious incidents which I will relate at the right moment."¹³⁸ With that statement, one of the clearest acknowledgments by any of the testators that they intentionally crafted their narratives in order to make a particular point, de la Guerra set about demonstrating how the people's anger had slowly and steadily built against Chico. Beginning with Manojó gave de la Guerra the opportunity to show how Chico's despotism had always been present, but how the Californians had chosen to deny it for as long as possible.¹³⁹

Manojó's prophecy made a fitting departure point for her story because it presented Chico's demise as inevitable, albeit slowed by the foolish optimism of all but the prophet himself. Though she did not witness the event personally, she claimed to have heard it from a number of people, an indication that the event had come to hold mythic significance for Californians very quickly. As de la Guerra told the story, the sixty-year-

¹³⁸ Angustias Ord, "Ocurrencias En California;" Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 243.

¹³⁹ Angustias Ord, "Ocurrencias En California;" Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 243; The old man Rafael González, who was born in Santa Barbara in 1797, offered only sparse accounts of this period, relying consistently upon what he recalled having heard at that time rather than his personal experiences. As such, he did not attempt to interpret how those events shaped California. His recollections, though, did coincide with de la Guerra. He recounted how, "the Political Chief, Mariano Chico, had tried to make Father Narciso Duran take ship for Monterey, but the people of Santa Barbara opposed it, and for that reason it was not carried out. The men and women went right down to the beach and showed such a decided determination that those who were escorting the father had to return him to the mission. Father Duran was dearly loved by the people of Santa Barbara because he was very good, virtuous, and noble." Rafael González, "Experiencias De Un Soldado De California: Santa Barbara, Calif", 1878, 28, MSS C-D 92 Transl.

old neophyte had avoided Chico during his dinner at the mission. When Father Jimeno asked why he had avoided Chico, Manojó had replied “Oh, Father, it doesn’t sit well with me to be around a bad man. This fellow is crafty. Don’t you see it, boy? He wears glasses. I saw him when he arrived and I looked at his eyes. They were peering out from under the glasses. I’m afraid of him.”¹⁴⁰ De la Guerra recalled that Jimeno had rebuked Manojó for his disrespect, insisting that Chico was a good man with an honorable position who deserved respect. In spite of his rebuke, de la Guerra claimed that Manojó refused to concede, telling Jimeno to wait to see.¹⁴¹

De la Guerra used Manojó to portray a sort of simple wisdom from a bygone era that foreshadowed the coming abuses of the Californians at the hands of Chico.¹⁴² She represented Manojó as simultaneously bold and meek, assertive on the matter of his revelation concerning Chico and yet “afraid” of the man such that he hid from him.¹⁴³ So constructed, Manojó provided de la Guerra the opportunity to demonstrate that even a fool could have seen the signs of Chico’s poor character. Yet the Californians, like the priest who brushed off his warnings, remained temporarily blinded by their hope that he would be a “good man,” deserving of the respect they had held for Figueroa.

¹⁴⁰ Angustias Ord, “Ocurrencias En California,” Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 241.

¹⁴¹ Angustias Ord, “Ocurrencias En California,” Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 241.

¹⁴² De la Guerra represented Manojó’s insistance as foolish persistence. From an insider’s perspective, Manojó’s actions align with Lisbeth Haas’ description of the ways in which Native Americans negotiated their identities, refusing to abandon their indigenous cultures, through “behaviors of acceptance and accomodation [that] easily intertwined with overt and subtle forms of resistance.” Haas, *Conquests and Historical Identities in California, 1769-1936*, 29.

¹⁴³ Haas’ gloss of the violence suffered by indigenous peoples in California from the conquest forward suggests that Manojó had good reason to fear not only Chico, but also Jimeno, when he spoke against the general. The missionaries engaged in a “systematic effort . . . to disrupt the passage of indigenous forms of knowledge, authority, and power from elders to their children, and to more easily inculcate Christian norms,” and Manojó’s insistance on his ability to see in Chico something beyond what Jimeno could see could certainly have conflicted with those efforts. Haas, *Conquests and Historical Identities in California, 1769-1936*, 26–29.

Having prophesied the horrors of Chico's rule, de la Guerra immediately explained how Californians came to learn the truth of Manajo's warning, recalling how they came to see "who won," Manajo or Jimeno.¹⁴⁴ She explained that she had come to understand Chico's reprehensible character in June 1836 when Chico arrived unannounced to a dinner at the mission. He demanded to see the twenty-one-year old de la Guerra. He claimed that he had seen her once before as a small child when she was sick and that he desired to see her again. The fathers did what they could to accommodate him, but she claimed that he took her absence and their lack of preparedness for his arrival as a slight against his authority.

Such pettiness directed against her and the fathers of the mission might have convinced de la Guerra of Chico's despotism, but she recalled that the will of the people only turned fully against him after he escalated his abuse by attacking their superior, Father Prefect Dúran. Chico complained to Dúran that the missionaries had welcomed him "as if he were an Indian and [accused them] of sticking him in the scullery."¹⁴⁵ She elaborated in the pages that followed that Chico had insisted that the Fathers be punished and, eventually, that Durán be punished for taking their side in the matter. She meticulously built her narrative to "the right moment," recalling in detail how the frustration of the people had mounted steadily until it eventually broke into open rebellion.

De la Guerra explained that the rebellion against Chico began when the women of Santa Barbara forcibly prevented the wrongful deportation of Father Durán. The

¹⁴⁴ Angustias Ord, "Ocurrencias En California," Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 241.

¹⁴⁵ Angustias Ord, "Ocurrencias En California," Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 242–243.

disputación, an elected assembly that met at Monterey and that advised the governor,¹⁴⁶ decided to use Chico's abuse of the Father in order to "goad" the people of Santa Barbara, "who had never rebelled against the government before . . . into rebelling against Chico."¹⁴⁷ The whole pueblo quickly became involved in preventing Durán's deportation. While the "fathers, husbands, and brothers" of the women hid nearby, de la Guerra recounted how the women forcibly prevented Durán's deportation when he arrived at the beach, with some even resorting to the threat of violence. This event in her narrative marked the "right moment" to which she had earlier referred, and so de la Guerra noted that in their outrage over Chico's mistreatment of Durán, "we finally see the pueblo of Santa Bárbara openly rebelling against Chico's authority."¹⁴⁸ Rebellion, prefigured in de la Guerra's dictation by the prophecy of an Indian neophyte and spurred on by the *disputación*, ultimately burst forth when the women of Santa Barbara defended their beloved Father Dúran against deporation.¹⁴⁹

In her narrative, de la Guerra portrayed the rebellion against Chico, and therefore against Gutiérrez afterward, as having arisen from the people of California.¹⁵⁰ She took as her principal actors an Indian neophyte, a few priests, and an angry mob of women. She recalled the revolution beginning with those women on the beach as their men hid "in a

¹⁴⁶ Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 446.

¹⁴⁷ Angustias Ord, "Ocurrencias En California;" Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 243.

¹⁴⁸ Angustias Ord, "Ocurrencias En California;" Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 245.

¹⁴⁹ Again, Amador provided approximately the same explanation for the outbreak of the revolt against Chico in Santa Barbara, but he did so with only scant details. He claimed "he had misunderstandings with the Monterey town council, with the Deputation, and also with private individuals . . . it is said that Chico was as quixotic as a Spaniard and was almost as crazy." Amador, "Memorias Sobre La Historia De California;" Mora-Torres, *California Voices*, 167.

¹⁵⁰ Angustias Ord, "Ocurrencias En California;" Having established her memory of the impetus for rebellion, she felt little need to explain why it continued against Gutiérrez after Chico abandoned the country to him and fled to Mexico. She simply stated, "Señor Gutiérrez did not have any friends either." Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 245.

nearby willow grove.”¹⁵¹ If the people fought on behalf of Castro, de la Guerra recalled that they did so because of his legitimate claim to power as General Figueroa’s chosen heir. The revolution began, according to de la Guerra, when the people refused to tolerate Chico’s abuses. According to de la Guerra, the people fought of their own volition and for themselves, not because Castro or Alvarado tricked them.

Like de la Guerra, Michael Claringbud White and Agustín Janssens also possessed complicated ethnic heritages. Both of these men came to California from Europe (Janssens from Belgium and White from England), adopted Spanish names, and married Californianas.¹⁵² White and Janssens provided Savage with the only narratives of this period by testators who were neither Mexican nor Spanish.¹⁵³ Janssens and White provided two of the most ambivalent accounts of the period of any of the testators. However, their ambivalence resulted from their entrenchment within Californio society rather than from being outsiders. Each man opposed violence between factions of Californios specifically because he had strong connections to people on all sides of the conflict even as each recognized the need for Californian home rule.

Throughout the brief portion of his dictation devoted to the 1836 revolt, White

¹⁵¹ Angustias Ord, “Ocurrencias En California;” Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 245.

¹⁵² Angustias Ord, “Ocurrencias En California;” Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 241–242.

¹⁵³ George Nidever made sporadic mention of Castro, Alvarado, and their political dealings, but insofar as his brief interactions with them informed his hunting stories. George Nidever, “Life and Adventures of George Nidever, a Pioneer of Cal. Since 1834: Santa Barbara, Calif”, 1878, MSS C-D 133, Bancroft Library; George Nidever and William Henry Ellison, *The Life and Adventures of George Nidever, 1802-1883* (Santa Barbara: McNally & Loftin, 1984), 45–49; The Anglo American Job Francis Dye briefly recounted the events of the 1830s, noting that he “kept myself, as ever, aloof from the political disturbances of the country. I know that several foreigners, Americans, English, Irish & other nationalities, aided Alvarado to secure him in his position as Gov., and that he & others attempted as at first the foolish prospect of making Cal. a free & independent State, had meeting with strong opposition in the South, where people were nearer to Mex. & likely to be the first victims if the Mex. Govt. decided to send a strong force and punish their audacity in ignoring its supremacy & authority.” Thus, even as one who intentionally remained “aloof” from Californian politics, Dye recognized that southern Californians did not oppose independence because they were more loyal to Mexico, but because they were more vulnerable to Mexican attacks. Dye, “Recollections of California Since 1832,” 10–11.

rejected the revolutionaries' attempts to conflate being Californian with joining their cause. In the course of telling his story, White posited a much more diverse definition of the Californian that prevented him from joining the revolution, which he saw being fought against other Californians. White's first experiences with Castro and Alvarado's revolt came in 1836 in Los Angeles, when Judge José Sepúlveda called upon him to bring "every man capable of bearing arms residing in my jurisdiction" to meet him in Los Angeles.¹⁵⁴ Accompanied by four men, White met Sepúlveda, Castro, Alvarado, and White's brother-in-law Alférez Isidoro Guillen met in February 1837. Sepúlveda had asked him to meet with them in order to convince White to take troops to San Diego on behalf of the revolt. White rejected the request, which his friends accepted amiably, and the parties went their ways in peace.

Despite the relative simplicity of the encounter, White took the opportunity to present a complex narrative of competing identities and loyalties. As he told it, Sepúlveda did not begin by asking if he would take troops to San Diego. Rather, White recalled that Sepúlveda asked "if I was ready to go and die with him in San Diego," to which White replied, "I had no idea of dying."¹⁵⁵ As White represented the conversation, Sepúlveda had assumed that White would share a willingness to die on behalf of California. White's answer led Sepúlveda to question his identity as a citizen. As White told it, Sepúlveda felt no need to identify what sort of "citizen" he meant, and so White replied, "Yes, I am a citizen of Mexico, but not a citizen of revolutions."¹⁵⁶ While, according to White,

¹⁵⁴ White, "California All the Way Back to 1828;" White, *California All the Way Back to 1828*, 34.

¹⁵⁵ White, "California All the Way Back to 1828;" White, *California All the Way Back to 1828*, 35.

¹⁵⁶ White, "California All the Way Back to 1828;" White, *California All the Way Back to 1828*, 35 White had come to Mexico in 1817 at sixteen years old but had only moved to San Francisco in 1828. So by 1837, he had lived as a Mexican for twenty years, but in California for only nine of those, 17-18.

Sepúlveda never considered a distinction between being Californian and supporting the revolution, White intentionally reframed the question of citizenship in order to reject that revolt, but not necessarily his identification as a Californian. In telling this story, White recalled how certain factions had attempted to appropriate the Californian identity to their particular cause, but also how he had successfully challenged that appropriation by rejecting their proposition that to be Californian prevented one from also identifying as a citizen of Mexico.

According to White, Sepúlveda continued trying to recruit him until White finally explained why he could never join the revolt: he had too many ties to people on the other side to support even the possibility of violence. Notwithstanding Sepúlveda's assurance that he hoped to avoid violence, White told him that he could not go because his wife's cousin Macedonio Gonzalez, who had named White his son's godfather, lived among those in the south against whom Sepúlveda intended to march.¹⁵⁷ Throughout his narrative, White challenged the simplicity of Sepúlveda's conflation of his movement with being Californian. He identified his friend Gonzalez not as a Mexican, but as one of the *abajaños*, "those from down below."¹⁵⁸ As he did on the matter of citizenship, White again recalled how the revolutionaries' conflation of their revolt with being Californian had excluded many others who had equal claim to the title "Californian."

Like White, Augustín Janssens presented the 1836 revolt in his dictation as a movement that created false distinctions between Californians, threatening not only the unity of the region but also the lives of its people. Janssens focused his narrative to an

¹⁵⁷ White, "California All the Way Back to 1828;" White, *California All the Way Back to 1828*, 36.

¹⁵⁸ Translation by the editor Glen Dawson. White, "California All the Way Back to 1828;" White, *California All the Way Back to 1828*, 36.

even greater degree than White on his close ties to Californians on both sides of the conflict. Janssens immediately problematized any characterization of him as an outsider in Alta California: he began his narration of the 1836 events by noting that at the outbreak of the revolt he lived in Monterey and shared a house with Ángel Ramírez and Juan Bautista Alvarado.¹⁵⁹

Janssens framed his entire narrative with the assertion that whatever average people, like María Inocenta Pico, might have claimed about the impetus for revolt, the whole event had been orchestrated by a few ambitious men who had taken the first opportunity that presented itself. Janssens argued that Alvarado, Castro, and Ramírez orchestrated the revolt based upon existing plans rather than as the result of perceived injustices. He believed that “all the charges they presented against [Gutiérrez] did not amount to more than pretexts to bring about the plan of independence for California which had been conceived for a long time.”¹⁶⁰ Beyond that, he seemed neither to know nor to care what role people like her thought they played in its beginning.¹⁶¹

Janssens presented the whole affair as an empty string of mob violence, void of any idealistic underpinnings, a situation he blamed on its leaders. He recalled how he had struggled to get those who found themselves on the wrong side of the revolutionary mob to safety in southern California. He constructed the average Californian revolutionaries as drunk, prone to violence, and largely directionless, because their leaders based the

¹⁵⁹ Agustín Janssens, “Documentos Para La Historia De California”, 1878, MSS C-B 83, Bancroft Library; Agustín Janssens, *The Life and Adventures in California of Don Agustín Janssens, 1834-1856* (San Marino, Calif: Huntington Library, 1953), 49–50.

¹⁶⁰ Janssens, “Documentos Para La Historia De California;” Janssens, *The Life and Adventures in California of Don Agustín Janssens, 1834-1856*, 50–51.

¹⁶¹ As a preface to his assertion that Castro, Alvarado, and Ramírez had no legitimate charges, Janssens plainly stated, “I don’t remember, or perhaps did not know, the motives that they could have had.” Janssens, “Documentos Para La Historia De California;” Janssens, *The Life and Adventures in California of Don Agustín Janssens, 1834-1856*, 50.

impetus for the revolt on such shaky grounds. As Janssens told it, while the “cause of independence was growing noisier,” it also grew less articulate.¹⁶² In opposition to that violence, however, he and other Californians risked their lives by dissenting from the revolution because it appealed only to the sort of shallow patriotism and easy binaries that motivate drunken mobs, but not proper citizens.

Janssens criticized the revolutionaries less for their abuses than for their inability to distinguish between rabble rousers and peaceable citizens, a condition that resulted primarily from what he perceived as a perpetual state of drunkenness. After he had decided to accompany his friend Señor Negrete to Mexico, he encountered Castro and six others, who took him under arrest. He blamed his senseless detention on the possibility that Castro “had taken too much to drink.”¹⁶³ Janssens continued on the same line of criticism, asserting, “I was badly scared, for the officers and soldiers who had taken the presidio were crazy from the liquor they had imbibed, and I feared some sort of violence.”¹⁶⁴ He demonstrated the frivolousness of his arrest by describing his liberation, which came about simply by waving down a man he recognized as one of Alvarado’s officers and explaining his arrest. He claimed the man had him immediately released from custody.

By portraying the revolutionaries as drunken mobs lacking even the political consciousness to know why they were supposed to hate Mexicans or how to identify one, Janssens criticized Alvarado and Castro for beginning an empty revolution built only on

¹⁶² Janssens, “Documentos Para La Historia De California;” Janssens, *The Life and Adventures in California of Don Agustín Janssens, 1834-1856*, 53.

¹⁶³ Janssens, “Documentos Para La Historia De California;” Janssens, *The Life and Adventures in California of Don Agustín Janssens, 1834-1856*, 54.

¹⁶⁴ Janssens, “Documentos Para La Historia De California;” Janssens, *The Life and Adventures in California of Don Agustín Janssens, 1834-1856*, 54.

ignorant, nativist fervor. Janssens claimed that the abuse quickly transformed from the random abuse he had suffered at the hands of Castro and his men, taking on a decidedly nativist character. While previously the revolutionaries had identified those not directly participating in the revolution as suspect and targets for mistreatment, they began to identify them as guilty of the capital crime of being Mexican. By the time Janssens helped the Coronel family flee to Santa Barbara in November 1836, the same month the revolt had started, he noted that Señora Coronel had claimed, “the rebels had changed face, and the cry was now ‘Kill the Mexicans.’”¹⁶⁵ Soon after, he and his companions encountered yet another drunken mob, this time in Los Angeles, proclaiming “Death to Mexico! Kill the Mexicans!” One of them approached Janssens and asked where he was from, but “seeing his evil intention, I answered that I was French.”¹⁶⁶ Janssens consistently portrayed himself and those in his party as political refugees threatened with incessant violence by a revolution that lacked the principles necessary to define an actual enemy.

Like White, Janssens rejected the revolutionaries’ appropriation of Californian identity for their own purposes. His brushes with violence ultimately compelled Janssens to fight against the northern revolutionaries on at least two occasions, an action that White never took. However, both of their narratives shared a concern for those close to them whose Californian identity had been usurped by the revolutionaries. Far from rejecting the Californian identity in favor of a Mexican identity, both men rejected the assertion of the northern revolutionaries that the two were inherently incompatible, and

¹⁶⁵ Janssens, “Documentos Para La Historia De California;” Janssens, *The Life and Adventures in California of Don Agustín Janssens, 1834-1856*, 55.

¹⁶⁶ Janssens, “Documentos Para La Historia De California;” Janssens, *The Life and Adventures in California of Don Agustín Janssens, 1834-1856*, 57.

that to be Californian meant to join their cause.

The testators in the 1870s contributed to a shared cultural memory of 1830s California as a region in transition from colonial rule by outsiders to home rule by one of its own. Though few agreed on how to define identities like Mexican, Californian, or foreigner, they all invoked such categories with the shared assumption that all Californians began to understand themselves during the 1830s as a unique people who deserved to be ruled by a native son of California. In the course of their individual interviews, the Californians presented to Savage a unified cultural memory of California during the 1830s, in which its people had a political awakening that demanded the right to be ruled by a native Californian. For all of their disagreement concerning who had qualified as a Californian in those days or which movement most closely aligned with the people of California, all of the testators constructed narratives in which they assumed that the turmoil of that period had been about a single thing: establishing self-determination for Californians.

CHAPTER THREE

Preserving California

As they had made order from the chaos of the 1830s, so the testators also crafted narratives of the tumultuous 1840s that posited continuity across the decade. Though their stories conflicted concerning the details of that transition, they uniformly recounted an historical progression that resulted from intentional actions by Californians who recognized the need to preserve the people and place they had created in the previous decade. Similar to the conviction that California required home rule in the 1830s but not necessarily independence, the testators recalled of the 1840s how many Californians had worked to preserve its culture and society under any flag, regardless of the outcome of the Mexican-American War.

Their narratives focused on three primary events: General Manuel Micheltorena's 1845 departure from California, the brief period of home rule under Governor Pio Pico and Commandant José Castro that followed in 1845 and 1846, and the Bear Party's victorious campaign to claim California for the United States in 1846. In their recollections of those events, they overwhelmingly represented old California as having been transformed into the new state rather than positing an historical break between the two.¹⁶⁷ In many ways, their memories of that continuity ran contrary to the material

¹⁶⁷ I have limited my analysis to these three events, excluding many other events that did not differ significantly from the role played by these in the narratives of the dictations. For instance, several testators recounted the arrest of Isaac Graham, along with several other Anglo Americans, under the suspicion that he had been instigating a revolt. The testators used their recollections of the details of Graham's arrest, his deportation to Mexico, and his eventual return to California, having been compensated by the Mexican government for his false arrest, as a prelude to the events that followed, but the Graham affair did not occupy a central point of any dictation. Thus, I have chosen to focus on the three events that occupy central roles in the most dictations. I believe that this sample faithfully reflects each testator's recollection of California's transformation in the 1840s and provides the most consistently useful points of comparison between the dictations. For an account of the events of this period, see: Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios*.

conditions in which many of the testators found themselves by the time they dictated their stories to Savage. While they recounted the preservation of Alta California, they did so in opposition to their own alienation from the California that had been theirs, whether measured by land, livestock, or money.¹⁶⁸

The testators' memories of the 1840s differed most significantly from their recollections of the 1830s in number. Twenty-one of the testators examined in this study included some reference to the political upheavals of the 1840s in their narratives, including all six of the testators who recounted those of the previous decade.¹⁶⁹ Many who had not been old enough in the 1830s to remember those events reliably included their recollections of the 1840s. Additionally, several of the Anglo American testators who recalled the 1840s began with that decade because they had arrived in California late in the 1830s. By 1877 and 1878, far more Californians could recall the 1840s than could recall the 1830s.

In spite of the objective historical break between Alta California and the state in which they lived in the late 1870s, the testators' narrated memories of California

¹⁶⁸ Pitt argues that by 1875, the ranchos of southern California had begun to suffer similarly to how those in north had in the previous decade. Thus, in a land where "the well-being of this [second] generation greatly depended on the amount of land it might inherit," the preservation of California for the California became was even more dubious. Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios*, 250.

¹⁶⁹ José García, José Francisco Palomares, and William L. Wiggins each included some mention of the events covered herein in their dictations. I have chosen to exclude them because each did so only briefly and with little concern for the impact of the events on California. García, for instance, who had been twenty years old when he fought against Frémont in 1846, told the story as a series of episodes in which he and his fellow young soldiers intentionally taunted the Americans while lacking any definite stake in the outcome of their campaign. José E García, "Episodios Históricos De California: Santa Barbara, Calif", 1878, MSS C-D 85 Transl.; Palomares, whose narrative often reflects a particularly sadistic man, only lamented the poor leadership and untrained soldiers on the Californio side, as he did when he complained that Flores had not seized the opportunity to "exterminate" the Americans when the latter had turned their backs on the Californios in order to care for the wounded and carry out the dead. Palomares, *Memoirs of José Francisco Palomares*, 48; Palomares, "Memorias De José Francisco Palomares;" Wiggins offered little that others did not, but when his recollections coincide with those who have received fuller treatment, I have noted the connections. William L. Wiggins, "William L. Wiggins Reminiscences", 1877, MSS C-D 175.

emphasized their belief that the essence of California had been preserved during the 1840s. Though they all emphasized how the revolts against Micheltorena and the Bear Flag revolution transformed California in 1846, the testators asserted continuity between the old society and the new. The continuities they posited often contradicted the claims of their fellow testators. In spite of that dissonance, the dictations collected by Thomas Savage presented a cultural memory of California that insisted on at least one point: the state of California in 1850 was not new. Instead, the testators recalled the annexation of California by the United States as the result, or perhaps even the continuation, of political developments that dated back to at least the 1830s.

As in the previous chapter, I have arranged the dictations primarily based upon their narrative connections to one another, beginning with the most institutionally focused recollections before moving to those that challenged those narratives by asserting the importance of relative political outsiders. The first group of testimonies includes those dictations that emphasized the actions of elite Californians and Mexicans, particularly General Micheltorena, as central to the transformation of California during the 1840s. Second, some testators celebrated the self-sacrificial actions of average Californians in defense of their homes and families in direct opposition to the greed and excess of its leaders, portraying the martyrs as the real heroes of California. A third set of testators, all of whom occupied positions outside the Californio power structure, described how they had acted as intermediaries in order to transition California through the 1840s as peacefully as possible, regardless of which national power came to possess it. Finally, a fourth category of dictations posited specific villains whose actions had threatened the future of California, in order to recount how the people of California had preserved the

country.

Several testators focused their narratives on the ways in which the political leaders of California worked together, occasionally in secret, in order to safeguard the future of California. Their narratives share an emphasis on the selflessness of those leaders, recalling how many of them chose to preserve the social fabric of California rather than attempt to maintain their power once the will of the people had moved against them. Highlighting that altruism allowed these narrators to portray Alta California's political leaders not as those who had lost control of the country, but rather as those who understood that the only way to save California and its people would be to resign their respective positions. Certainly the testators disagreed on which leader to credit with saving California as well as on how to interpret the annexation of California by the United States. However, they all agreed that the California in which they had lived since 1846 had been shaped by the selfless wisdom of at least one of Alta California's leaders, who had recognized the need to remove himself from power in order to preserve the country.

Florencio Serrano remembered the rebellion against Micheltorena, led by José Castro and Juan Bautista Alvarado, as an orchestrated drama in which Micheltorena and Castro colluded in order to allow the former to transfer the country peacefully into the hands of the latter.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, he asserted that this followed the pattern of political succession in Mexico, and so he framed those events as another in a series of "revolutions

¹⁷⁰ Serrano told how he had chastised Castro after the general had bragged about expelling Micheltorena. Serrano argued, "The Californios haven't expelled Micheltorena like you say. What, according to my understanding, has happened is that if the General didn't promote the revolution, at least he knew how to take advantage of it as it was convenient for him to leave California very quickly." Serrano, "Apuntes Para La Historia De Alta California;" Serrano, *Testimonios De Florencio Serrano*, 119.

in which the heads of both sides have been in agreement.”¹⁷¹ By constructing his narrative around the efforts of the leaders on both sides to control the revolution, Serrano portrayed those events as simultaneously the will of the people and the plans of the elites.

Serrano argued that the hearts of the people of California turned against Micheltorena when the Mexican-appointed governor sent troops wrongfully to arrest Juan Bautista Alvarado, who had been living out his days peacefully at Rancho Alisal. Governor Pico based the arrest upon the rumor that Alvarado had been orchestrating a revolution.¹⁷² Though Micheltorena’s slight against Alvarado reignited the revolutionary spirit of the 1830s among the Californians, Serrano noted that it did not provide them with the leadership of that previous era. Serrano came to believe that Micheltorena and Castro together recognized the dangerous potential for California if the people rose up against the former in revolt without proper leadership. Serrano claimed that, years later, Castro had shown him a note from Micheltorena, which read, “a revolution has begun. More disgracefully, at the head of it are found young hotheads. I don’t want there to be

¹⁷¹ Serrano explained his expertise in interpreting revolutions, noting “I was born in the country of revolutions; I have grown up with them, since I was born in 1810 when the first campaign for independence began and later, in the year 1821, when it was finished by General Iturbide when I was only 11 years old, I had received enough of an education. Nature gifted me with some intelligence and all that has made me fasten my attention on all the public happenings that I have witnessed.” Though he claimed to have witnessed many other revolutions in which the leadership on both sides essentially agreed with one another, he promised to limit himself only to the discussion of “the movement by Santa Anna against General Bustamente when the latter was President.” Serrano, “Apuntes Para La Historia De Alta California;” Serrano, *Testimonios De Florencio Serrano*, 119.

¹⁷² Serrano recalled how Micheltorena had sent troops to arrest Alvarado because a rumor had circulated that Alvarado was planning a revolt. Serrano explained how the old Colonel came out of retirement that night, donning his uniform once again in order to dramatize his superiority over those officers who had attempted to arrest him. He stated plainly to the arresting officer, “You are subordinate to me and, consequently, not capable of arresting me. Leave and tell the General that I will present myself freely to find out the motive that has caused that order.” Serrano recalled how the decision to arrest Alvarado wrongfully “influenced the general discontent” of the Californians, “not only of the Californios, but all of the people.” According to Serrano, the attempted wrongful arrest of Alvarado, an old hero of the California people, stirred a complacent people into action again, imbuing them anew with the spirit of revolution that had dominated the 1830s. Serrano, “Apuntes Para La Historia De Alta California;” Serrano, *Testimonios De Florencio Serrano*, 109.

persecutions and personal vengeance. Put yourself at the head of it to regulate it and we will understand one another. Manuel Micheltorena.”¹⁷³ In this way, Serrano portrayed the revolution against Micheltorena as a movement of the people of California even as he believed that Micheltorena and Castro had manipulated and controlled it to their own ends.

While Serrano portrayed Castro and Micheltorena’s collusion as the peaceful solution to the uprising of the Californians, he also recalled how the political situation born of that compromise directly contributed to the United States annexation of California. In the absence of Micheltorena, Pío Pico took the office of Governor while Castro remained in his position at the head of the military. However, Serrano argued that Pico’s tendency to favor southern California over the northern half produced discord between Castro, Pico, and their respective sections. He described the political air around California in 1846 as “just short of seeing a destructive war breaking out between the two sections of the country since the animosity between the inhabitants of each of them was great.”¹⁷⁴ While Micheltorena and Castro had worked together, though publicly against one another, Serrano faulted Castro and Pico for not having arrived at such an arrangement.

Serrano blamed the discord between north and south, between Pico and Castro, for having nearly destroyed California. He argued that “thoughtful persons” in California had began to realize that annexation by the United States offered the only possible future for Californians, “otherwise, the Californios and Mexicans would destroy one another or

¹⁷³ Serrano, “Apuntes Para La Historia De Alta California;” Serrano, *Testimonios De Florencio Serrano*, 123.

¹⁷⁴ Serrano, “Apuntes Para La Historia De Alta California;” Serrano, *Testimonios De Florencio Serrano*, 125–127.

the Indians would finish them off. At this distance of time, I have become convinced that if the United States had not occupied the country in such an opportune time this place would have ceased to exist as a civilized society.”¹⁷⁵ As he acknowledged the fluidity of his memory over time, Serrano identified the revolution against Micheltorena as the final event through which the Californio leaders in California succeeded in preserving a Mexican California against the revolutionary spirit of its people. He did not, however, mark that as the end of California. Rather, he constructed a memory in the intervening decades in which the United States functioned in California to protect the people from their intense desire for home rule. Serrano focused his story on the leaders of the revolution as well, exploring the close relationship Castro had to Micheltorena in order to present Castro as a loyal Californian who had navigated between his political duties and his personal attachments.

Augustín Janssens also highlighted the close relationship between Micheltorena and Castro, recalling how Micheltorena had defended Castro against Carrillo just a few years earlier and that “with his own hands [Castro] had pinned the insignias of rank on [Micheltorena].”¹⁷⁶ Janssens recalled that, at the same time, Castro had just as many ties to Alvarado, and he offered no further explanation of what he believed pushed Castro to fight against Micheltorena. Janssens constructed a narrative embedded in Castro’s and Micheltorena’s loyalty, to one another and to their respective duties to the people of California, that shaped the revolution of 1845 and 1846 into a search for as peaceful a transition as possible rather than a selfish attempt to seize or to maintain power.

¹⁷⁵ Serrano, “Apuntes Para La Historia De Alta California;” Serrano, *Testimonios De Florencio Serrano*, 127.

¹⁷⁶ Janssens, “Documentos Para La Historia De California;” Janssens, *The Life and Adventures in California of Don Agustín Janssens, 1834-1856*, 120.

Rather than explain why Castro fought against his *padrino*,¹⁷⁷ which Janssens claimed Castro called the general, Janssens claimed that Castro had hoped that his actions would not lead him into conflict with his old friend. According to Janssens, Castro had determined “that they, the Californians, were going forward, and if he and the general should meet, he would salute him.”¹⁷⁸ Thus, Janssens portrayed Castro as fully committed to exercising the will of the people of California for revolt even as he refused to disrespect Micheltorena’s authority. That respect, according to Janssens, went in both directions.

Janssens similarly portrayed Micheltorena as committed to his friendship with Castro, and to his role as the appointed ruler of California. He recalled that Micheltorena “had not expected Castro to take part against him, because of his services to him in Mexico and the consideration he had shown him there. Furthermore, he had thought that in case of his retiring from California, he would recommend that Castro be placed in his position.”¹⁷⁹ Having explained the unenviable situation in which both men had found themselves, both loyal to their own perceived duties and yet committed to their friendship, Janssens recalled that his parting words to Micheltorena had restated Castro’s stated desire: “I hope that the two sides will not exchange shots!”

Janssens’ recollection of the two friends’ relationship and mutual desire to avoid bloodshed occupied more space in his narrative than his actual recollection of the events that transpired when the two forces finally did meet. On that day, he recalled, “it came

¹⁷⁷ Beebe and Senkewicz define this term as: “Godfather, sponsor, or best man at a wedding.” Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 447.

¹⁷⁸ Janssens, “Documentos Para La Historia De California;” Janssens, *The Life and Adventures in California of Don Agustín Janssens, 1834-1856*, 121.

¹⁷⁹ Janssens, “Documentos Para La Historia De California;” Janssens, *The Life and Adventures in California of Don Agustín Janssens, 1834-1856*, 122.

out as [Micheltorena] wished; blood was not shed.”¹⁸⁰ Janssens argued cogently that Micheltorena had resigned from that battle *because* he knew that he could win it. He recalled how Micheltorena had expressed concern for the future of California, which he believed “needed population, civilization, and progress” and that for the few bachelor soldiers he might lose, those Californians who would be killed “would leave families, and he could never blot out this memory. He said that he would use every means and exhaust every resource to prevent the shedding of blood.”¹⁸¹ Faced with the unyielding determination of the Californians to rule themselves, Janssens recalled how Micheltorena had taken the only remaining resource available to him: surrender.

Janssens’ narrative emphasized Micheltorena’s interest not in the preservation of California as a possession of Mexico, but rather in the preservation of its people. He emphasized the same sort of continuity at the end of his brief recollection of Fremont’s taking of California. He recalled taking a walk with Fremont afterward, during which “he told me that he was a friend, that the war was over, and that he respected highly the Mexican citizens who had been true to their word.”¹⁸² The two men acknowledged that any excesses committed in the war had resulted from the actions of base people, and they agreed to cooperate in their mutual attempts to move California forward. Throughout his narrative, Janssens focused on the ways in which Californians, namely Castro, Micheltorena, and eventually himself, made peace in order to preserve California, under whatever national protection it had to exist in the future.

¹⁸⁰ Janssens, “Documentos Para La Historia De California;” Janssens, *The Life and Adventures in California of Don Agustín Janssens, 1834-1856*, 124.

¹⁸¹ Janssens, “Documentos Para La Historia De California;” Janssens, *The Life and Adventures in California of Don Agustín Janssens, 1834-1856*, 124.

¹⁸² Janssens, “Documentos Para La Historia De California;” Janssens, *The Life and Adventures in California of Don Agustín Janssens, 1834-1856*, 134–135.

Agustín Escobar recalled how Castro had similarly chosen surrender over the loss of Californian lives in his campaign against Fremont. Escobar claimed that Castro had refused to engage Fremont based on his assertion “that there was no necessity to spill blood. He did not want to be responsible for spilling California blood.”¹⁸³ Unlike Janssens, however, Escobar disapproved of Castro’s preference for preserving Californians rather than for preserving Mexican California. He recalled, “all were anxious to fight and became disgusted with Señor Castro for having stopped them. Among our men there was an excellent rifle company who would have won the combat.”¹⁸⁴ In spite of his disapproval of Castro’s inaction, Escobar’s recollection of Castro essentially matched Janssens’ portrayal of Micheltorena. In both cases, the testators remembered how military leaders chose not to fight a battle that each man would have won, preferring instead to save the lives of Californians for its future, even if that meant surrendering control of the country.

Almost all of the testators recalled the infamy of Micheltorena’s troops, universally called the *cholos*,¹⁸⁵ and identified their abuses as the primary impetus for the revolution against Micheltorena. Their inclusion necessarily imbued each of these dictations with a tragic tone insofar as the memory of the abuses perpetrated by those troops always vindicated the revolutionaries of the period and tainted the memory of

¹⁸³ Escobar, “La Campaña De ’46 Contra Los Americanos En California;” Híjar, Pérez, and Escobar, *Three Memoirs of Mexican California*, 110.

¹⁸⁴ Escobar, “La Campaña De ’46 Contra Los Americanos En California;” Híjar, Pérez, and Escobar, *Three Memoirs of Mexican California*, 110.

¹⁸⁵ Though her dictation said little about the revolution itself, Juana Machado offered perhaps the succinct recollection of Micheltorena’s troops. She stated, “Micheltorena brought with him a large retinue of officers and an infantry Battalion Permanente Fijo de Californias. It was made up of thieves and criminals taken from the prisons in Mexico as well as prisoners from Chapala.” Juana de Dios Machado Alipás Ridington, “Los Tiempos Passados De La Alta California: San Diego, Calif”, 1878, MSS C-D 119; Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 140; Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios*, 6.

Micheltorena. Though some attempted to redeem his memory by recalling how the General had always punished his troops for their infractions, all of the testators who included the *cholos* as an important element within their narrative acknowledged the horrors associated with Micheltorena and his troops.¹⁸⁶

Antonio Coronel portrayed Micheltorena as the tragic hero of California, abandoned by Mexico, unfairly mistreated by a few power-hungry Californios, and crippled by the reprehensible actions of his troops. Furthermore, Coronel argued that even Micheltorena had understood his position similarly at that time, recalling how the general had, “in private conversations with me, lamented his precarious situation abandoned by the central government, struggling with the depravity of the troops given him. He was aware that their conduct reflected unfavorably on himself in spite of his earnest desire to win the esteem of the Californians by good government.”¹⁸⁷ Coronel argued that the public outrage over the actions of Micheltorena’s troops, properly called the Permanent Battalion of California, became “a pretext for the rebellion in Monterey.”¹⁸⁸ Thus, while Coronel acknowledged the legitimate grievances against the permanent battalion, he absolved Micheltorena of responsibility for them in his memory, arguing instead that the usual suspects of Monterey, Alvarado and Castro, had only used that outrage in order to create a rebellion meant to benefit themselves.

In his narrative Coronel contrasted Micheltorena with Alvarado and Castro, whose ambitions Coronel identified as partly responsible for the eventual downfall of California. In

¹⁸⁶ Juana Machado, for instance, asserted, “General Micheltorena endeared himself very much to the people and we never complained about him. And if one of his soldiers committed some offense, he would have that soldier punished immediately.” Even in her attempt to defend Micheltorena’s memory, she recognized that it required defending because of the infamy of his troops. Ridington, “Los Tiempos Passados De La Alta California;” Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 139–140.

¹⁸⁷ Coronel, “Cosas De California;” Doyce B. Nunis and Coronel, *Tales of Mexican California*, 27.

¹⁸⁸ Coronel, “Cosas De California;” Doyce B. Nunis and Coronel, *Tales of Mexican California*, 27.

opposition to them, Coronel recalled that Micheltorena “had no personal ambitions as governor; he wanted only order and peace in his term, then honorable retirement in recognition of his duty done. He was always ready to compromise amicably and make any personal sacrifice in accordance with the law and justice.”¹⁸⁹ Like Janssens, Coronel remembered that Micheltorena had knowingly possessed “sufficient force to resist the rebellion and possibly crush it” and yet he had decided not to do so.¹⁹⁰ According to Coronel, Micheltorena made that decision based upon his recognition of the hopeless position in which he found himself: “the government failed to support him, he had no confidence in his troops, the Californians considered him their enemy, an American invasion was inevitable, and he didn't want it all to explode in his face. He considered the present crisis a way out—if not exactly honorable, at least acceptable to the government—and begged me not to worry any more about the negotiations because he knew how they would turn out.”¹⁹¹ Indeed, Coronel recalled how Castro and Alvarado had quickly come to terms concerning the general’s surrender and immediate removal from California of his forces.

Coronel used Micheltorena’s departure as an opportunity to imbue the general’s parting words to him with prophetic significance, remembering in them how Micheltorena had left California at the will of its people, tragically taking with him their last hopes of an independent California. According to Coronel, Micheltorena bid him farewell by saying, “the Californians I tremble for the future that awaits them,” claiming that, “without the shadow of a doubt, Mexico will lose California.”¹⁹² Coronel recalled the irony of Castro’s and Alvarado’s displacing of Micheltorena, after which “at last we see California again governed

¹⁸⁹ Coronel, “Cosas De California;” Doyce B. Nunis and Coronel, *Tales of Mexican California*, 28.

¹⁹⁰ Coronel, “Cosas De California;” Doyce B. Nunis and Coronel, *Tales of Mexican California*, 29–30.

¹⁹¹ Coronel, “Cosas De California;” Doyce B. Nunis and Coronel, *Tales of Mexican California*, 29–30.

¹⁹² Coronel, “Cosas De California;” Doyce B. Nunis and Coronel, *Tales of Mexican California*, 30–31.

by her native sons” though it would be for the last time.¹⁹³

Coronel’s narrative centered on how he, as well as other leading citizens, had recognized and responded to the precarious international position in which Micheltorena’s departure had left California. In spite of his efforts to persuade his fellow Californios that they “should declare ourselves independent under the aegis of Great Britain” he recalled how “the majority of the inhabitants of California decidedly opposed this, and the invasion was already upon us, so these projects were abandoned.”¹⁹⁴ Coronel recalled how the fervent and unyielding desire of the Californios to rule themselves had ultimately allowed the United States to take California for itself. He did not ultimately lament the annexation of California by the United States. Instead, he recalled how “Fremont deliberately set out to win over the Californians, and succeeded so well that many prominent men declared themselves in favor of the Americans.”¹⁹⁵ In hindsight, Coronel believed Fremont had brought political stability, which the testator valued over home rule by the Californios, as evidenced by his narrative treatment of Alvarado and Castro’s revolution.

José María Amador similarly remembered Micheltorena tragically, noting how he had attempted to save California from its own bickering citizens, only to find them finally unified against him on account of his troops. He recalled how the central government of Mexico, “tired of enmity between the military and political rulers of California and of the poor condition in which the country found itself, and desirous at the same time of enforcing its authority,” had decided to appoint Micheltorena governor of California in order to protect their interests in that region.¹⁹⁶ Having thus characterized Micheltorena’s project in

¹⁹³ Coronel, “Cosas De California;” Doyce B. Nunis and Coronel, *Tales of Mexican California*, 30–31.

¹⁹⁴ Coronel, “Cosas De California;” Doyce B. Nunis and Coronel, *Tales of Mexican California*, 31.

¹⁹⁵ Coronel, “Cosas De California;” Doyce B. Nunis and Coronel, *Tales of Mexican California*, 34.

¹⁹⁶ Amador, “Memorias Sobre La Historia De California;” Mora-Torres, *Californio Voices*, 171.

California as the saving of California and its people from themselves, Amador predictably proceeded to explain how the Californios foiled his efforts.

Like Coronel, Amador identified California's pathological desire for home rule as its ultimate undoing.¹⁹⁷ He recalled how, "although the Californios did not have a legitimate complaint against Micheltorena, there was a common desire among them to get rid of rulers that belonged to the opposing faction as well as the criminals of the Fixed Battalion."¹⁹⁸ No amount of compromise on Micheltorena's part could pacify the Californios, because the only conditions they would accept required his resignation from California, which Amador claimed the general quickly came to desire himself.¹⁹⁹ Amador recalled how, after a bloodless battle at Cahuenga, the General did leave, transferring political control to Pío Pico and military power to José Castro.²⁰⁰ Thus, Amador set the stage for his narrative of Fremont's seizing of California.

By dividing power between Pico and Castro, California found itself again in the same contentious situation from which Micheltorena had been sent from Mexico to rescue it.²⁰¹ However, the promising figure whose education, good birth, manners, and

¹⁹⁷ William Wiggins echoed this belief, arguing that "California whilst a part of Mexico, could scarcely be called a dependence of the Republic, for altho' the Supreme Govt. pretended to have control, and sent military officers to rule the country, the prominent men, and indeed the whole native population, would not endure their stay but a short time. A protest or some well founded grievance was soon made use of to break out in revolution, expel the Mexican authorities, appoint chiefs of their own, whom Mexico had to recognize as happened when Governor Chico & Guitierrez were driven away." Wiggins, "William L. Wiggins Reminiscences," 20–21.

¹⁹⁸ Amador, "Memorias Sobre La Historia De California;" Mora-Torres, *Californio Voices*, 175.

¹⁹⁹ Amador, "Memorias Sobre La Historia De California;" Mora-Torres, *Californio Voices*, 177.

²⁰⁰ Amador, "Memorias Sobre La Historia De California;" Mora-Torres, *Californio Voices*, 179, 181.

²⁰¹ Amador recalled, "Relations between Castro and Pico were not cordial at all. The first one largely refused to recognize the authority of the second one. Jealousy between the two and among their supporters was very great. Hatred between the inhabitants of the north and the south grew day by day and it threatened to create a split that would have brought ruin to the country. Hatred towards the Mexicans of the rest of the republic also became more and more intense. Hence, the Mexicans could barely feel that their lives and their properties were safe. They were mistreated and robbed with impunity. ¶ By that time there was a large immigration from the United States across the [Great] plains. This was a violation of Mexican laws that

reputation Amador had celebrated as evidence of his qualification to perform that salvation found himself sailing away from California rather than toward it, and so Amador's narrative came full circle.²⁰² Castro and Pico continued to move against each other, even as Fremont moved about the country with a military force.²⁰³ In fact, according to Amador, the only issue on which Pico and Castro ever agreed was surrender. He remembered, "as soon as it was found out that Frémont, with sizeable force, was coming, Castro gave orders to disband his troops. Pico did the same. Each one of them abandoned their duties under the ridiculous pretext that they were going to go get help when they knew very well that they were not going to get it."²⁰⁴ Amador's anticlimactic version of the end of California's independence assigned the blame entirely to Pico and Castro, citing their selfish infighting and cowardice as the primary reasons for Fremont's successful invasion.

Like Coronel, Amador expressed few regrets over the transition to U.S. control. Instead, he asserted that his only resentment from the whole period was that he had never received payment for the sixty horses taken from him by American troops. Amador recalled how he and a Frenchman named Sansevain had visited a drunken John Sutter for dinner one night and panned for gold the next day on the American River. He recalled how, "from every two shovelfuls, an ounce of gold was taken, that is, at least ten pesos

prohibited the entry of foreigners to the country without passports. In the region of Sacramento, near Fort Sutter, there was a large concentration of emigrants, and none had legal documents." Amador, "Memorias Sobre La Historia De California;" Mora-Torres, *California Voices*, 183.

²⁰² Amador, "Memorias Sobre La Historia De California;" Mora-Torres, *California Voices*, 171.

²⁰³ Amador, "Memorias Sobre La Historia De California;" Mora-Torres, *California Voices*, 187, 189.

²⁰⁴ Amador, "Memorias Sobre La Historia De California;" Mora-Torres, *California Voices*, 187, 189; Juana Machado offered an equally dispassionate recollection of Fremont's victory, not only that "On January 10 they entered Los Angeles without further resistance, and a few days later, Don Andrés Pico surrendered to Colonel Frémont at San Fernando. Since then, this country has been under the flag of the United States." Ridington, "Los Tiempos Passados De La Alta California;" Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 143.

[worth]. I then told Sansevain: ‘This is like coming to steal, let’s go [home] and we shall return.’”²⁰⁵ Thus, Amador wrote himself into the emerging American mythology of northern California, but he did so in ways that directly connected the possibility of the gold rush in that moment to the peace that had resulted from Castro’s and Pico’s final, mutual destruction.

While many of the testators identified Micheltorena as the hero of 1846, others assigned equally heroic roles to a variety of average Californians for their sacrifices in defense of family and home. In those cases, their heroism almost always highlighted the social survival of Californian communities in the face of political turmoil. In this way, a small number of Californians recalled how heroic efforts at the local level had preserved their world regardless of who assumed political power over California.

Inocente García, who had been born in Los Angeles in 1791 and who had served as the administrator of Mission San Miguel prior to giving his dictation to Thomas Savage in 1878, recalled how he had come to fight Micheltorena against his will. He recounted how he had done so in order to secure the release of his son-in-law, José Mariano Bonilla, who had been arrested by Castro’s forces.²⁰⁶ He presented a highly critical memory of the Californians’ revolution from an internal perspective. García recounted how his participation had resulted from his selfless devotion to family. Based on his close relationships to Castro and other leaders of the revolution, he focused on the high-ranking

²⁰⁵ Amador, “Memorias Sobre La Historia De California;” Mora-Torres, *Californio Voices*, 195.

²⁰⁶ Inocente Garcia, “Hechos Historicos De California : San Luis Obispo : Ms., 1878.”, 1878, MSS C-D 84, Bancroft Library; Inocente Garcia, *Hechos Historicos De California, as Told to Thomas Savage, 1878.*, ed. Antonio Isaac Bonilla, trans. Thomas Workman Temple (Santa Barbara, CA: Flair Studio Printing, 1974), 43.

officials even as he highlighted the true heroism of that day: those who, like him, had defended home and kin.

In his recollection, García juxtaposed his own sacrifice on behalf of his son-in-law against the abuses and excesses of the leadership of the Californians. He recalled with condemnation a man named Soto, whom he identified as being “in the good graces of Alvarado and Castro” and, “being a fearless man without scruples, he served as their tool for anything he was ordered to do, be it good or evil.”²⁰⁷ His association with the revolution began when Castro, Alvarado, and their associates took García’s son-in-law, Bonilla, prisoner while he was quietly at home with his family and doing no harm to anybody.²⁰⁸ In order to gain Bonilla’s freedom, García claimed that he presented himself to Castro and Alvarado’s service. Thus, he identified his relationship to the revolution in which he participated as antagonistic from the outset.

His disapproval of the revolution went beyond his own coercion, however, as he recalled in his dictation how he fundamentally disagreed with its premise. He recalled that he had had “great affection for the General [Micheltorena], knew him to be an honorable man, incapable of hurting anyone.”²⁰⁹ He identified Micheltorena’s predilection against the slaughter of Californians as the reason for his eventual surrender.²¹⁰ Since he had desired to abstain from the revolution from the start, he offered a not surprisingly short account of its victory at Cahuenga.

²⁰⁷ García, “Hechos Historicos De California;” García, *Hechos Historicos De California, as Told to Thomas Savage, 1878.*, 37.

²⁰⁸ García, “Hechos Historicos De California;” García, *Hechos Historicos De California, as Told to Thomas Savage, 1878.*, 43.

²⁰⁹ García, “Hechos Historicos De California;” García, *Hechos Historicos De California, as Told to Thomas Savage, 1878.*, 44.

²¹⁰ García, “Hechos Historicos De California;” García, *Hechos Historicos De California, as Told to Thomas Savage, 1878.*, 44–45.

García recounted Fremont's victory over the Californios in a similar way, focusing primarily on his desire not to be involved in it and lamenting only those details that directly affected his estate. He recalled with little fanfare how the "Californios made a vain attempt to stop" the American advance, "and were soon convinced of the futility of their efforts, and they fell back."²¹¹ In the course of the transition, he recalled his only concern: "I went to see him [Fremont] and after greeting him, asked about my horses which his troops had taken. He authorized me to go to the horseherd and take all my horses that I could find. I found two and they were delivered to me."²¹² Thus, García constructed himself as a sort of hero of the day, not for his valiant participation on behalf of a nationalistic cause, but rather for his efforts to remain neutral except insofar as was necessary for the defense of his family and livelihood.

Juan Bernal, brother-in-law to José María Amador, recounted the political transformation of 1846 without acknowledging that it had made any real changes, focusing instead on the senseless murder of three heroic Californios at the hands of American troops. He recalled how a man named José de los Reyes Berryesa and his two nephews, surnamed Haro, encountered members of the Bear Party. He claimed that, after Berryesa had been killed, both of his nephews in succession demanded that the troops also kill them out of grief for their murdered relative. Bernal recalled that their pleas had roused anger rather than compassion in the soldiers, and so they "fired at the one who had uttered them, killing him also."²¹³ Bernal's narrative included no idealistic cause, nor did

²¹¹ García, "Hechos Historicos De California;" García, *Hechos Historicos De California, as Told to Thomas Savage, 1878.*, 49.

²¹² García, "Hechos Historicos De California;" García, *Hechos Historicos De California, as Told to Thomas Savage, 1878.*, 54.

²¹³ Bernal, "Juan Bernal Memoria," 2.

it include any actual fighting. Rather, he identified the Californios' commitment to their family members as the source of their heroism, as the cause for which they chose to die.

By contrast, Bernal's narrative of the actual battles included no heroic elements. Instead, he recounted how the Californio forces, "which was made up of citizens, was disbanded," upon their arrival in San José with Castro, surrendering to Fremont. After having been disbanded, each returned "to the exercise of his trade or profession. Capt. de la Torre left with his company for Monterey."²¹⁴ While Bernal explored the heroic details of the Berryesa and Haro murders, particularly focusing on their voluntary submission to death at the hands of their enemies, he represented the actual surrender of the Californio military forces represented the entire affair as rather insignificant. Throughout, he represented those troops as unprofessional, noting that many "stragglers joined our ranks and others dropped out on us, for subordination was not a quality of those composing the troop."²¹⁵ In this way, Bernal remembered the Californios who defended California against Fremont as citizen soldiers whose only real loyalty had rested with their families and communities, but never particularly with the leader of their force.

Three other testators, two Anglo American men and one Californiana, recalled how they had used their positions outside the more traditional political order and their relationships to the most powerful men in Alta California in order to smooth the transition between the changing regimes.²¹⁶ These testators used their own lives to

²¹⁴ Bernal, "Juan Bernal Memoria," 10.

²¹⁵ Bernal, "Juan Bernal Memoria," 4.

²¹⁶ Additionally, George Nidever presented himself as an intermediary figure. Characteristically, he emphasized only how he used his intermediary status for his own gain rather than to facilitate peace in California. He remembered California, before and after its annexation by the United States, as a land occupied by roving bands of international war parties. He recalled Frémont's party as one among the others, albeit the one to which he was loyal and that delivered him from what he recalled as perpetual

express in microcosm the cultural divide that they remembered between Alta California and California under the United States. Additionally, in recalling how they helped to bridge that divide, they also used their lives to illustrate the ways in which Californians intentionally preserved continuity between the old and the new. These four testators recalled how they had not fully belonged in Californio society, but also how they took advantage of their positions as relative outsiders to cultivate a California in which they did belong.

María Inocenta Pico acted as an intermediary on at least two levels in the telling of her story. Not only did her narrative recall the intermediary activities of that earlier era, but the actions taken in 1846 about which she spoke were not her own. Though her narrative concerning the 1830s focused extensively on her own efforts to have her husband released from prison, in her brief treatment of the 1840s she focused almost exclusively on how her late husband, the military leader Miguel Avila, had acted as an intermediary in the transformation of California. In her brief treatment of that period, Pico recalled how her husband had chosen not to fight against the Americans and had, afterward, “regarded himself as a citizen of that republic. He tried (as far as his influence could extend) to get his Californio countrymen to take advantage of the benefits the new regime offered for progress.”²¹⁷ Thus, Pico acted as an intermediary between the memory of her husband and her interviewer even as her story represented Avila as a cultural

harassment at the hands of the Californios for his associations with Frémont. He appreciated Frémont insofar as he benefitted from the actions of his party, though he equally appreciated the “three or four Californian women at my house besides my wife” who “at all times knew of my movements but . . . never offered to betray me, but on the contrary kept me informed of what was going on among their countrymen.” He remembered California in turmoil and elaborated on the ways in which he established and manipulated relationships with Anglo Americans like Frémont, Californios, and even Englishmen. Nidever, “Life and Adventures of George Nidever, a Pioneer of Cal. Since 1834;” Nidever and Ellison, *The Life and Adventures of George Nidever, 1802-1883*, 66.

²¹⁷ Pico, “Cosas De California;” Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 304.

intermediary who had labored to help his fellow Californios make the transition to American citizens.

Even as she spoke on behalf of her late husband, she represented herself as an important part of that intermediary work. She recounted fondly her memory of her husband's character, characterizing him as "a strong man with much character. At the same time, he also cherished freedom and public education (as do I) and he was a preserver of documents."²¹⁸ In that unassuming parenthetical inclusion, Pico reinserted herself into her own story, even if by aligning herself with the memory of her husband. Though she tended to focus exclusively on Avila's actions during the times when he had been capable of acting on his own behalf, Pico's reassertion of her own agency reflected called to mind her powerful participation in the political realm on his behalf when he had not been capable of acting, as during his imprisonment in the 1830s.²¹⁹

Benjamin Davis Wilson began his narrative by recounting how the Californios' hospitality had converted him into a permanent resident of California, contextualizing the remainder of his dictation in which he explained how he had helped his Californio counterparts make the similar transition to life under the United States. A native of Nashville, Tennessee, Wilson had come to California in 1841 after spending much of the previous decade in New Mexico. He claimed that he had not intended to stay in California, but rather had hoped to find a ship in San Francisco to take him to China

²¹⁸ Pico, "Cosas De California;" Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 304.

²¹⁹ Due to the achronological character of her narrative, her brief reference to her husband's actions in the 1840s actually came before her extended recollection of her efforts to have him freed from prison during the 1830s. Thus, this brief inclusion of herself marked her first departure in the narrative from the strict retelling of her husband's exploits. The extensive retelling of her own participation in the rebellion against Gutiérrez actually built upon this reference to her own agency in spite of those events having occurred earlier in her life. Pico, "Cosas De California;" Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 304–305.

before eventually returning to Tennessee. However, he had eventually given up finding such a ship and elected instead to make his home in what came to be known as Riverside, and thus he came to identify himself with the interests of California as a resident by 1843.²²⁰ He used his own change of mind in order to illustrate the hospitality of Californio culture, asserting “there was no place in the world where I could enjoy more true happiness and true friendship than among them.”²²¹ Wilson recalled a peaceful transition to U.S. control of California, highlighting his role in a series of good-will efforts between Californio and Anglo leaders in an effort to preserve the social fabric of the country, regardless of who governed California.

Wilson recalled how he had brought a recent group of arrivals from the eastern United States together with the Californians in the interest of expelling Micheltorena’s troops. He had addressed himself to them, believing that they had been convinced to fight for Micheltorena based upon the promise of land grants as well as the rumor that the Micheltorena, and not the Californians, promised the most friendly policies toward their immigration, both of which Wilson asserted were falsehoods. He had informed them that they found themselves “on the wrong side of this question,” asserting, “we in the Southern portion of California are settled, many of you are settled & others expect to settle. This rabble that you are with of Micheltorena's are unfriendly to respectable humanity and especially to Americans.”²²² By contrast, he claimed that he persuaded them that “the native Californians, whose side we have espoused, have ever treated us kindly” and that a victory for Micheltorena would have created “an element hostile to all

²²⁰ Benjamin Davis Wilson, “Observations on Early Days in California and New Mexico: Lake Vineyard”, 1877, 23, MSS C-D 177.

²²¹ Wilson, “Observations on Early Days in California and New Mexico,” 24.

²²² Wilson, “Observations on Early Days in California and New Mexico,” 51–52.

enterprise and most particularly, American enterprise.”²²³ According to Wilson, the Americans recognized that they had been misled and defected from Micheltorena’s side, directly contributing to his surrender the following morning.²²⁴ In Wilson’s telling, he and a number of other Anglo Californians had successfully convinced the newer arrivals from the eastern United States that their interests would be best served by allying themselves with the Californios.²²⁵

Consistent with his own representation of himself as the cultural and political mediator, Wilson claimed that he facilitated the peaceful surrender of the Californios to American forces. Governor Pico, he claimed, had enlisted him to carry to Commodore Stockton a message, telling “him of my [Pico’s] intention to abandon the country, and that I hope he will not ill treat my people.”²²⁶ Similar to the character of Micheltorena that so many other testators constructed, Wilson portrayed Pico as more interested in preserving the Californian people than he did in maintaining his power over them. He

²²³ Wilson, “Observations on Early Days in California and New Mexico,” 51–52.

²²⁴ Wilson, “Observations on Early Days in California and New Mexico,” 55; John Chamberlain, a blacksmith from Monterey whom Savage had interviewed because he had put the irons on the foreigners arrested with Isaac Graham in 1841 on the suspicion of plotting a revolt, recalled this exchange much more simply. From the perspective of a common soldier, Chamberlain recalled how the leaders of Americans on both sides had decided that the battle was “a quarrel betw. California Govr. & a Govr. sent from Mexico to govern California—it is a contest between governors. They don’t expect to hurt each other much, but have no objection to see two companies of Americans butcher each other” and so they agreed to remove themselves from service on both sides. Thus, Chamberlain’s recollection differed from Wilson’s insofar as he afforded Wilson much less persuasive power in the matter. Chamberlain, “Memoirs of California Since 1840,” 13.

²²⁵ Wilson appealed directly to their economic interests, citing the friendliness of the Californios to American enterprise, but also because Micheltorena had done the same. Wilson recalled that he brought Governor Pico to them in order to address their questions concerning Micheltorena’s promise of land grants to them in exchange for their military service. Wilson recounted Pico’s address in which he began by asking, “Gentlemen, are any of you citizens of Mexico?” They ansd. No. “Then your little deeds given you by Micheltorena are not worth the paper they are written on, and he knew it well when he gave them to you. But if you will abandon the Michelta. cause, I will give you my word as a gentlemen, and Don Benito Wilson & Don Julian Workman, . . . I will protect all and each one of you in the land that you hold now, in quiet and peaceful possession, and promise you further, that if you will take the necessary steps to become citizens of Mex., I, under my authority and the laws of Mexico, will issue to you proper titles.” Wilson, “Observations on Early Days in California and New Mexico,” 55.

²²⁶ Wilson, “Observations on Early Days in California and New Mexico,” 61.

also claimed that José Antonio Carrillo had enlisted Wilson to carry a similar message to Stockton, promising “no more blood will be shed on either side during the . . . the war in Mexico, where the fate of this country must be decided upon.”²²⁷ According to Wilson, Carrillo implored Stockton that, “in the name of humanity,” he should “not to march forces thro' the country, in this would cause the spilling of blood and engender bad feeling betw. two people who in all probability will have to live together.”²²⁸ In this recollection, Wilson used his dual cultural citizenship to negotiate a peaceful transition regardless of war’s end, and regardless of its outcome.

William A. Streeter’s recollection of how the Americans came to side with the Californios against Micheltorena essentially agreed with Wilson’s narrative, but Streeter attempted to reconcile his recollection of that cooperative effort to save California with the conflicting recognition that, by the 1870s, California had been largely lost for the Californios.²²⁹ Streeter placed significant blame upon the Californios’ refusal to acquiesce to American culture in the ways that the Anglo Californians had under Mexican rule, arguing that the average Californio of 1878 was an “American citizen in name only” who maintained “his characteristics and his language. His sympathies are as

²²⁷ Wilson, “Observations on Early Days in California and New Mexico,” 85–86.

²²⁸ Wilson, “Observations on Early Days in California and New Mexico,” 85–86.

²²⁹ Streeter asserted, “it was not his (Castro’s) intention to drive all the foreigners from the country as had been currently reported, but that the revolution was against Micheltorena because he refused to send his cholos, or hijos, as he called them, back to Mexico” and “that it was owing to this report that most all of the foreigners had joined Micheltorena, by advice of Sutter.” William A. Streeter, “Recollections of Historical Events in California, 1843-1878: Santa Barbara, Calif”, 1878, MSS C-D 159; William A. Streeter, “Recollections of Historical Events in California, 1843-1878 (Continued),” ed. William Henry Ellison, *California Historical Society Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (June 1939): 158; William Wiggins also essentially agreed with this narrative from his experiences on Micheltorena’s side. He recalled, “During the action the foreigners serving in both contending armies came to an understanding among ourselves to withdraw from the contest and let the Mexicans & Californians fight it out. The foreigners on our side withdrew and, without our knowledge, those on the other side stuck to Castro, and the result was that Gen. Micheltorena was taken prisoner and afterwards left the country with his troops & officers that he had brought from Mexico.” Wiggins, “William L. Wiggins Reminiscences,” 10.

entirely with the Mexicans as they were thirty years ago. He does not assimilate with the Americans.”²³⁰ Thus, Streeter recalled the decline of the Californios’ cultural and economic status in the American period as a failure on their part to assimilate rather than an Anglo American failure to honor that alliance.

Having focused his narrative on the division created between the Californios and the pre-Gold Rush Anglo Californians, Streeter labored to exonerate the latter, whom he recalled as the allies of the Californios, from any guilt in the economic downfall of the former. Streeter attributed the Californios’ significant loss of wealth and land to their lack of business savvy in the new economy of Gold Rush California.²³¹ However, in order to avoid blaming the Anglo Americans for the creation of that exploitative economy, Streeter blamed Jewish businessmen instead, drawing upon both their prominence in business around California by 1878 as well as the stereotypes of their business practices.²³² Thus, by constructing an other with questionable status as Americans,

²³⁰ Streeter, “Recollections of Historical Events in California, 1843-1878;” William A. Streeter, “Recollections of Historical Events in California, 1843-1878 (Concluded),” ed. William Henry Ellison, *California Historical Society Quarterly* 18, no. 3 (1939): 274.

²³¹ Streeter asserted, the “greater portion of the Californians were very ignorant of business, and perhaps this has been one of the greatest sources of their misfortunes. It has exposed them to the numberless traps that have been laid by the designing and unprincipled foreigners to cheat them out of their property. The Land Commission, full of defects as it was, also contributed to defraud them, when its object was to protect them in the possession of their lands. Between the poor, ignorant native and the lordly Commission, in too many cases the only medium of communication was the lawyer, often crafty and dishonest, who the approval of a title took half of the land as his fee, or even more when the pretext of appeal could be used to advantage.” Streeter, “Recollections of Historical Events in California, 1843-1878;” Streeter, “Recollections of Historical Events in California, 1843-1878 (Concluded),” 274; Streeter grappled with what the historian Leonard Pitt characterized as the decimation of the northern ranchos by the 1870s. Pitt notes that residents of California made up their own minds about who or what was to blame for the massive displacement of the Californios. Streeter’s dictation reveals at least one Anglo Californian’s attempts to make sense of that phenomenon. Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios*, 103.

²³² Fred Rosenbaum argues concerning San Francisco, “in the post-Civil War period Jews were increasingly woven into the fabric of San Francisco life even as anti-Semitism gained strength in other parts of America.” He notes that the economic success enjoyed by many prominent Jewish businessmen contributed to what he, quoting the historian Robert J. Chandler, calls “that lurking prejudice.” Rosenbaum demonstrates how that prejudice occurred at the intersection between religious intolerance, citing two 1875 sermons by John Hemphill of Calvary Presbyterian Church, and cultural stereotyping, referencing the 1869

Streeter reconciled his recollection of the Californios and the Anglo Americans as allies in the preservation of California with his recognition that the aftermath of U.S. statehood had done anything but save California for the Californios.

In contrast to those testators who emphasized the roles played by intermediary figures, a similar group of testators recalled specific villains in order to demonstrate how the majority of Californians had worked to preserve the country against that extreme minority that had threatened to destroy it. In this way, a Californiana, a Californio, an Englishman, and an Anglo American all recalled similarly how the democratic actions of the people of California had preserved it against the selfish and destructive actions of specific military leaders. As some of them had done in their recollections of the 1830s, they advanced narratives about how the people of California had made California during the 1840s in spite of their leaders.

Francis Pliny Fisk Temple and José del Carmen Lugo agreed in hindsight that California's democracy had saved it from the whims of its military ruler and his depraved troops. A native of Massachusetts, Temple came to Monterey in 1841 at the age of nineteen. He recalled that Micheltorena had broken faith with the people of California by ignoring the orders of the Assembly, to whom Temple believed he had been

testimony of a harbor supervisor named John McLean in which McLean argued that Jews were more prone to unscrupulous business practices than people of other faiths. Thus, Streeter's recollection that the Jewish Californians had been the culprits behind the impoverishment of the Californios reflected a vein of the religious and social discourse of his day. Fred Rosenbaum, *Cosmopolitans: a Social and Cultural History of the Jews of the San Francisco Bay Area* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 55–56.

subordinate.²³³ Micheltorena had “received the Asamblea's commissioners contemptuously” and “disregarded their pleas,” which he believed forced that body “to disown Micheltorena's authority” and to recognize Pico in his place.²³⁴ Temple narrated the deposing of the governor as a democratic action taken justly by an elected body against a man who had, “as the Californians say, . . . broke faith with them.”²³⁵ Similarly, José del Carmen Lugo claimed that the Assembly, recognizing that Micheltorena was determined “to punish those who had risen against him,” had identified him as “a person prejudicial to the country, ignoring his authority, and authorizing the older head, Pico, to take the reins of government into his hands.”²³⁶ Viewed from the 1870s, both testators claimed that it was the representative government of California that had saved its people.

The Englishman Michael C. White and the native born Californiana Angustias de la Guerra both blamed the American Captain Archibald Gillespie, in whose hands Fremont had left Los Angeles after capturing it in August of 1846, for having squandered what could have been a peaceful occupation of Los Angeles for the duration of the Mexican American War.²³⁷ For all of the demographic differences between them, both de

²³³ Beebe and Senkewicz define the diputación territorial as “the elected assembly, which usually met at Monterey during the Mexican period in California. A consultative body to the governor of the territory.” Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 446.

²³⁴ Francis Pliny F Temple, “Recollections of Francis Temple, a Resident of Los Angeles and a Pioneer of 1841: Events from 1841-1847”, 1877, 5, MSS C-D 162.

²³⁵ Temple, “Recollections of Francis Temple, a Resident of Los Angeles and a Pioneer of 1841,” 4.

²³⁶ Lugo, “Vida De Un Ranchero;” Lugo, *Vida De Un Ranchero, a History of San Bernardino Valley*, 8:8.

²³⁷ In his edited publication of White’s dictation, the southern California bookman Glen Dawson outlined the chronology of the Flores revolution as follows: “August 13, 1846, Fremont and Stockton took Los Angeles without opposition; early September, Captain Gillespie and some 50 men were left to hold Los Angeles; September 23 there was outbreak by the Californians in Los Angeles; September 26 was the Battle of Chino, described by White, with the American force surrendering to the Californians; September 30 was an exchange of prisoners and Gillespie forced to withdraw to San Pedro; October 9, the attempt to retake Los Angeles fails at the Battle of Domínguez; December 6 Kearny and his men fight the Californians at Battle of San Pasqual; January 8 and 9, Americans approaching from San Diego fight battles of San Gabriel and La Mesa, the last battles on California soil; January 13, 1847, Fremont and Andres Pico sign treaty of Cahuenga.” White, *California All the Way Back to 1828*, 52.

la Guerra and White recalled how southern Californians would have preferred peace under U.S. rule to open rebellion if not for Gillespie's abuses. Each argued that through popular revolt the southern Californians had achieved their desired end: peace for all Californians without concern for which flag flew.

White recalled Gillespie as intentionally antagonistic towards the Californios, arguing that his "despotic measures" resulted from his antipathy toward them. According to White, Gillespie's abuses of the Californios were inversely proportional to the respectability of those people, resulting from his taking "special pleasure in humiliating the most respectable among the Californians" in order to reduce them "to the condition of a conquered race."²³⁸ White argued that had a "sensible officer been left in command," one who had recognized the need to treat the Californios as integral parts of the existing California society rather than as a conquered people, then "the Californians would have continued to acquiesce to the occupation of their country by the Americans."²³⁹ Gillespie defined White's recollection of the worst sort of Americans during the transition to U.S. rule: he had no intention of integrating the best of Alta California into the American period. However, White used Gillespie's anti-Californio villainy as the exception that highlighted the popular efforts by most Californios and Anglo Americans to maintain continuity between Alta California and the emerging U.S. state.

In addition to her recollection of Gillespie's mistreatment of the Californios, Angustias de la Guerra criticized Castro for having ignored her concerns, which she

²³⁸ White, "California All the Way Back to 1828;" White, *California All the Way Back to 1828*, 56.

²³⁹ White recognized that the Californios would have preferred Mexican rule if they could have had it, and so he qualified his statement that the Californios would have continued to acquiesce to American occupation, adding: "at least until something favorable to Mexico had resulted from the campaign there." White, "California All the Way Back to 1828;" White, *California All the Way Back to 1828*, 56.

shared with other Californianas, over Gillespie's spying activities.²⁴⁰ Castro, de la Guerra asserted, had previously avoided attacking Fremont in spite of Alvarado and others urging him to do so because, she claimed, "Castro was not keen on placing his valuable self in the line of fire."²⁴¹ Instead, she recalled, he had preferred peaceful compromise, "either by scheming or some other means, as long as he protected his own hide."²⁴² Indeed, she cited those same characteristics when she explained how she and other women from Los Angeles had informed Castro that Gillespie was actually an American emissary with nefarious intentions. In reply, Castro "accused us, and all women in general, of thinking badly of others, which . . . women did much more than men. Our response to Castro was that women almost always hit the nail on the head—more often than men do."²⁴³ De la Guerra used Gillespie's infamy in order to demonstrate how the women of California had recognized the danger he presented and how Castro had ignored their reasoning in order to protect himself, even if it meant sacrificing so many others, thereby forcing the eventual people's revolt against Gillespie. She recalled how the people of California, many of them women, had done what Castro had refused to do in order to defend themselves against Gillespie's cruelty.

While many of the testators eschewed references to the changes in wealth they had endured between 1846 and the 1870s, Mauricio González's narrative provides an instructive example of how changing material conditions helped to construct memory.

²⁴⁰ De la Guerra recalled how Gillespie had come to California on an American warship posing as "an ill man who had come to travel through California to see if his health might improve," an introduction that "neither I nor Señora Spence was deceived by" finding it "difficult to understand why the U.S. government would send an entire warship just to bring an ill young man to California." Angustias Ord, "Ocurrencias En California;" Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 263.

²⁴¹ Angustias Ord, "Ocurrencias En California;" Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 263.

²⁴² Angustias Ord, "Ocurrencias En California;" Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 263.

²⁴³ Angustias Ord, "Ocurrencias En California;" Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 263.

Though Savage valued González's dictations particularly for his explanation of how the Californians came to be short of ammunition and forced to retreat at Natividad,²⁴⁴ the testator provided one of the narratives most critical of the financial ruin so many Californios had suffered in the wake of the Bear Flag Rebellion. González, according to Savage, owned and lived in Alvarado's own house in 1877, and yet Savage made note that he "has to work, earning a scanty support for himself and family with an express waggon, having lost all his other property. It is well known that one time of his life he was in much better circumstances."²⁴⁵ Within his "rambling way of narrating" and his "tendency to deviate from his subject, mixing up matters generally," which Savage described, González pointedly argued that the economic takeover of California, rather than the military campaigns, had transformed California into an American state and the Californios into a conquered and dispossessed people.

González began his narrative with a prophecy that foreshadowed his argument that the American occupation of California would signal the end of California for the Californios. He recalled how an eccentric old priest had, in 1840, corrected a visitor to the mission, saying "'Do not say 'Americans,'" exclaimed the padre; 'say 'my masters!' . . . Because they are going to possess the country, and you Californians will be fit only to clean their boots because you know no country but this.'"²⁴⁶ In his narratives of the military campaigns of the 1840s González emphasized the tendency on all sides,

²⁴⁴ Savage explained that he had desired González's dictation specifically for his account of Micheltorena's campaign against the revolting Californians in 1845, noting "One of those facts which I have not seen given by any one else, is the following: The Californian version of the action at La Natividad says the Californians retreated south because their ammunition was exhausted—he explains how they came to be short of ammunition." González, "Memorias ... De La Historia [de] California," 1.

²⁴⁵ González, "Memorias ... De La Historia [de] California," 1–2.

²⁴⁶ González, "Memorias ... De La Historia [de] California," 6.

Californian, Mexican, and American, to compromise, to surrender, or to restrain the violence of the troops in all battles.²⁴⁷

Having provided the military details that Savage desired, González proceeded to narrate his memory of the true nature of the war for California, focusing on the ways in which the military campaigns did more to rob the Californios of their livelihoods than of their lives. Like others, González spoke of the horses taken by Fremont's men that he had "never recovered" and for which he had never "received payment," asserting plainly, "the real war on both sides was against the horses and cattle."²⁴⁸ González blamed the same coincidence of careless actions by the rank and file and mismanagement by officials for the decimation of Mexican land grants. He recalled how, upon his return to Monterey in 1846, he took a walk by the pier and found "papers of the archives of the Juzgados thrown outside the Custom House," with American soldiers "using the white sides of official papers for targets."²⁴⁹ Those actions, he claimed, caused "the loss of many important public and private documents, which made possible the forgery of titles never

²⁴⁷ For examples of González's emphases, see his accounts of the resolutions of battles: González, "Memorias ... De La Historia [de] California," 8–9, 11, 13, 19, 21.

²⁴⁸ He never claimed that United States government had failed to compensate Californians for their lost property maliciously. Instead, he remembered how "the American government paid even for many that were not taken by the forces, but many that were taken remained unpaid for," thus identifying the source of the problem as bureaucratic clumsiness. González, "Memorias ... De La Historia [de] California," 32; José María Amador complained similarly that attempts by U.S. officials to reimburse those whose horses had been taken had no relationship to the actual value of the specific animals in question: "My only resentment is that I have never been paid for the first sixty animals that were taken from me. Captain Weber offered to pay for them at four or five pesos each, but I told him that I would rather lose the entire value rather than to accept it [this ridiculous amount] because these animals had cost me from fifty to 100 pesos each. It should be noted that for a long time I had had the habit that whenever someone passed by my house riding a horse that got my attention for its good qualities, I would offer to buy it from him if he was willing to sell it. (This was an area that I knew well since I have been riding horses from the time I started walking as a boy.) We would make the deal and I would pay the agreed upon price and, in addition, I would give him an ordinary horse so that he could continue his journey. The horse that caught my eyes did not leave anywhere but to my corral. This is how I managed to have such a carefully selected and valuable herd of horses, for which Weber offered four to five pesos, as was the custom to pay the borrachitos and the ladroncitos that sold stolen horses." Amador, "Memorias Sobre La Historia De California;" Mora-Torres, *California Voices*, 195.

²⁴⁹ González, "Memorias ... De La Historia [de] California," 33–34.

granted.”²⁵⁰ Just as the careless theft of horses by American soldiers had left the Californios missing property and without proof, González similarly recalled how the destruction of official documents exacerbated the later mismanagement of land title cases.

González remembered the true impact of the Bear Flag Revolt as the loss of California for the Californios materially rather than militarily. Because the Californios who had lost property—horses, cattle, and land—had little proof of what they had lost, any attempts to reimburse them bore no relationship to their actual lost property. Without such a relationship, González argued, there had existed no guarantee of continuity for the people of Alta California between their past and their present. Living in Alvarado’s historic house and yet deprived of his own wealth and the possessions that had belonged to him prior to 1846, González’s memory certainly reflected his own life’s trajectory over the intervening three decades.²⁵¹

Savage’s oral history project yielded an historical memory of Alta California that directly challenged any narrative that the state of California had been created *ex nihilo*. In this primary cultural memory, however contested its narrative arc, a direct causal link existed between the events of the 1840s and the development of California in its early statehood. That cultural memory asserted the enduring continuity between Alta California and the California of the 1870s as the result of strategic, and often selfless, actions taken by a wide variety of Californians during the 1840s. That the individual testators agreed so

²⁵⁰ González, “Memorias ... De La Historia [de] California,” 33–34.

²⁵¹ For information concerning the impact of the Land Law of 1851, which created the Board of Land Commissioners to investigate Mexican titles that had been guaranteed under the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, see: Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 79–87; Heidenreich, *This Land Was Mexican Once*, 89–91; Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios*, 83–103.

uniformly on that point, even as they distinctly disagreed about the details of the past, points toward the significance of that cultural memory in opposition to the developing secondary memories of California in the late nineteenth century. Had Savage and Bancroft been interested in their narratives, the cultural memory presented in these dictations would have posed a significant challenge to the secondary memory of California that they constructed in their histories of the state.

Conclusion

Hubert Howe Bancroft and Thomas Savage collaborated on *California Pastoral* (1888) in order to tell in a single volume how the American state of California had superseded its historical antecedent, transforming California from its “golden age” into the “age of gold.”²⁵² Bancroft closed the final chapter of the volume, an historiographic essay that detailed the historical sources upon which its narrative rested, with a final retrospective appraisal of the reliability of Savage’s dictations. Bancroft asserted that, while “in the aggregate of much value, I have found in many cases, as the result of defective memory, a strange and often inexplicable mixture of truth and fiction. Fortunately I have not been put to the necessity of basing the history of California wholly on this kind of evidence. Original documents have been at hand in abundance to guard, corroborate, and correct.”²⁵³ Like Savage had in his original project, Bancroft here paired dictations and original documents as the same type of historical sources. In both cases the historian had to extricate those facts that could be corroborated from their contexts in the respective documents, using only those “facts” to support the narrative into which Bancroft placed them.

Bancroft recognized that the dictations had narratives rather than just facts and he even distinguished between the relative value of the narratives from foreigners and from Californios. He asserted, “the testimony of foreigners, taken all in all, I regard as of less

²⁵² Historian Harry Clark credits Savage with having written several volumes of Bancroft’s series on Latin America and Mexico as well as “an undeterminable portion of *California Pastoral*.” Therefore, I treat this volume as the culmination of Savage’s research and writing on the history of California as well as of Bancroft’s larger historical understanding of California. Because Savage’s actual contributions to this volume remain a mystery, I will continue to attribute authorship to Bancroft. Clark, *A Venture in History*, 35.

²⁵³ Hubert Howe Bancroft, *California Pastoral. 1769-1848* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1888), 792.

value than that of the native Californians; for although the latter may be the superior of the former in native mendacity, foreigners have in many cases taken but little interest in the subject.”²⁵⁴ Had Bancroft valued the stories that the testators told, he likely would have preferred those he judged to be the least mendacious. Because he valued them only for the facts the testators had unwittingly provided in the course of telling their stories, the truthfulness of any particular story became less important than the number of facts it contained. That Bancroft identified a correlation between the trustworthiness of the testators’ stories and their ethnic identities but preferred the dictations that he judged to be the least accurate demonstrates Bancroft’s commitment to extricating discreet facts from the narrative contexts in which the testators had provided them.

While the primary cultural memory captured in these dictations insisted on continuity between California’s past and its present in the 1870s, Bancroft constructed a secondary memory that posited complete historical rupture. He imagined 1846 as a mirror reflecting opposites on each side: “First the Golden Age, and then the Age of Gold. How different! And yet between the end and beginning of a decade California gives us a specimen of each.”²⁵⁵ The historian Albert H. Hurtado sees in this imagined relationship both the origins and the solution of an historical dilemma: “how was [Bancroft] to explain the Anglo acquisition of this near Eden as anything more or less than a naked conquest?”²⁵⁶ Hurtado argues that Bancroft reconciled his simultaneous celebration of both eras of California’s history by constructing historical actors during the

²⁵⁴ Bancroft, *California Pastoral. 1769-1848*, 792.

²⁵⁵ Bancroft, *California Pastoral. 1769-1848*, 180.

²⁵⁶ Albert L. Hurtado, “Fantasy Heritage: California’s Historical Identities and the Professional Empire of Herbert E. Bolton,” in *Alta California: Peoples in Motion, Identities in Formation, 1769-1850*, ed. Steven W. Hackel (Berkeley, California and San Marino, California: University of California Press and the Huntington Library, 2010), 201.

golden age such that “the easy-going and virtuous golden age of California was doomed,” incapable of withstanding the Yankees and the inevitable progression to the “Age of Gold” that accompanied them to California in the late 1840s.²⁵⁷ As Hurtado argues, Bancroft’s imagining of a helpless race of native Californians tragically and inevitably overrun by progress allowed him to romanticize the Mexican past even as he celebrated the future of the thirty-first state.

Bancroft constructed his historical dilemma against the grain of his dictations, which together insisted on historical continuity rather than rupture. Significantly, Bancroft’s construction of an idyllic golden age that could not survive in the modern age of gold opposed the narratives not only of the Californio testators, but also those of Anglo American and European Californians. Though the narrative division between pre- and post-Gold Rush California that Bancroft made in *California Pastoral* would eventually become a significant element within the secondary, Anglo American cultural memory of California, the primary memory that Savage captured in the form of oral memoirs between 1877 and 1878 had no obviously ethnic division within it. While Bancroft contributed to the emerging Anglo American memory of the Gold Rush as the founding myth of California in which the Spanish past could play only a romanticized role, that narrative contribution was original to Bancroft and did not reflect a division between the testators upon whose dictations he based his histories of California.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ Hurtado, “Fantasy Heritage: California’s Historical Identities and the Professional Empire of Herbert E. Bolton,” 201–202.

²⁵⁸ This suggests an additional division within Glen Gendzel’s claim that a geographical division between northern and southern Californians proved as important to their developing cultural memories as divisions between race and ethnicity. Time, it seems, played perhaps a more important role than either of the aforementioned markers of identity: those who had lived in California prior to 1846, regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, or geographical location, contributed to a cultural memory of California that opposed

Though he tended to disregard the narrative arcs of the dictations, Bancroft did not ignore their constituent stories. Instead, he tended to retell narrative elements from his dictations as peculiarities that reinforced his division between the alien world of Alta California and the world inhabited by his readers. For instance, in his chapter “Golden Age of California,” Bancroft reproduced almost word for word Angustias de la Guerra’s account of the Indian Manojó’s prophecy against Governor Manuel Chico. He concluded the story by acknowledging and confirming its prophetic claims: “it is a matter of history,” Bancroft asserted, “that this jefe político was one of the most despotic rulers who ever came to the Californias.”²⁵⁹ Bancroft framed the anecdote within an extended catalog of the establishment of missions around California, their respective natural resources and their administration over time. So framed, Bancroft presented the story as a curious example of the social relationships within the missions in that foreign place. De la Guerra had used the story to dramatize Chico’s despotism and the resulting, if painfully slow, political awakening of the Californians in defense of their land. Bancroft used the story, with its prophetic element intact, only to further alienate the peculiarities of mission life in that exotic age from his modern, Anglo American readers.²⁶⁰

In other cases, Bancroft based his claims upon less significant stories while ignoring those dictations that dealt the most intentionally with his current subject matter. For instance, Bancroft began his chapter “Woman and Her Sphere” by asserting, “women were not treated with the greatest respect; in latin and in savage countries they seldom are; hence, as these were half Latin and half savage, we are not surprised to learn that the

both of the emerging Anglo American memories of California that he explores. Gendzel, “Pioneers and Padres,” 57.

²⁵⁹ Bancroft, *California Pastoral. 1769-1848*, 199.

²⁶⁰ Angustias Ord, “Ocurrencias En California;” Beebe and Senkewicz, *Testimonios*, 241.

men too often idled away their time, leaving the women to do all the work and rear the family.”²⁶¹ Bancroft claimed that Chico and Pico did the most to liberate women, “refusing them nothing,” and that by the time Pico took office “even the gentlest women seized their husbands by the beard” demanding better treatment.²⁶² Bancroft defended that claim through a series of short anecdotes, one of which detailed humorously how a woman had once “summoned her husband before an alcalde for having serenaded another woman.” The judge required him to repeat his rendition of the song, eventually fining him two dollars for disturbing the public peace.²⁶³ In spite of his examination of the ways in which women in Alta California had asserted their wills against their husbands, Bancroft entirely ignored their political agency. In fact, nowhere in his entire chapter on women and their experiences in California did Bancroft reference a single dictation by one of the women examined in this project.²⁶⁴ For all of the stories he used to illustrate his chapter detailing women’s experiences, Bancroft neglected to use those dictations in which female testators inserted themselves and other women directly into the political history of California, preferring instead to reproduce anecdotes that reinforced his representation of women as poorly treated in that alien society, half Latin and half Savage.

Bancroft treated dictations by men similarly, tending to use them only to provide details concerning the peculiarities and the customs of their time rather than for their

²⁶¹ Bancroft, *California Pastoral. 1769-1848*, 305.

²⁶² Bancroft, *California Pastoral. 1769-1848*, 305–306.

²⁶³ Bancroft, *California Pastoral. 1769-1848*, 321.

²⁶⁴ Bancroft mentioned de la Guerra on four occasions: three times he invoked her dictation to answer questions about the wealth of San Miguel Mission in 1833, the slaughter of cattle at the missions, and the quality of cotton clothes at San Luis Obispo, respectively. Finally, in his bibliographic essay Bancroft identified her dictation as “beyond a doubt one of the most reliable and fascinating narratives in my collection, treating as it does not only of political affairs, about which she was fully informed, but of social life and the missions.” Bancroft, *California Pastoral. 1769-1848*, 202, 230, 449, 781.

interpretations of the events that they witnessed. Bancroft assessed Florencio Serrano in his bibliographic essay as “somewhat superior to his associates” because of he “was a man of pure European blood, of fair education, and good repute.”²⁶⁵ In spite of those credentials, which led Bancroft to identify his “voluminous” dictation as “one of the most valuable in my collection,” Bancroft ignored its entire narrative.²⁶⁶ Bancroft only retold a single story from Serrano’s dictation. That story told how, in the course of his travels, an unfamiliar family had insisted that Serrano sleep in their only bed and how they had taken offense when he resisted the offer. Bancroft used the story to illustrate his interpretation of the character of the Californians who, though they had “received but little training, scarcely any education, yet they possessed virtues worthy of record.”²⁶⁷ Bancroft asserted, “if any one attempted to pay for services rendered, the poorest Californian would never accept any reward, but would say, ‘Señor, we are not in the habit of selling food.’”²⁶⁸ Bancroft used Serrano’s stories only to further his claims that Alta California had been a foreign place, populated by a generous people who could never survive in the age of gold.²⁶⁹

Because Bancroft posited the golden age and the age of gold as mirror images of one another, divided by an absolute historical rupture, he rendered any explanation of the historical processes by which Alta California became the thirty-first state not only superfluous, but nonsensical. That rupture negated the possibility of historical

²⁶⁵ Bancroft, *California Pastoral. 1769-1848*, 784.

²⁶⁶ Bancroft, *California Pastoral. 1769-1848*, 784.

²⁶⁷ Bancroft, *California Pastoral. 1769-1848*, 273.

²⁶⁸ Bancroft, *California Pastoral. 1769-1848*, 273.

²⁶⁹ Bancroft drew directly from Serrano’s dictation in three other instances, two of which explained details of womens’ fashion while the third explained how women in California had ridden horses with similar equipment and skill as their male counterparts. Bancroft, *California Pastoral. 1769-1848*, 381, 397, 447.

transformation. Had he wanted a narrative explanation that reinforced his claim, he need only have appealed to Streeter's explanation of why the simple and innocent Californios had failed to survive in the rough world of Gold Rush California. However, Bancroft made no such connection and cited Streeter's dictation nowhere in *California Pastoral*.²⁷⁰ Though Streeter's narrative might have reinforced Bancroft's division between the two eras, it also tied those eras together by positing an historical process through which the latter destroyed the former. Exploring the 1840s as an historical period rather than as an absolute rupture would have only broken down the sharp opposition between the golden age and the age of gold that Bancroft had labored to create.

California Pastoral provides a telling example of how Bancroft and Savage engaged the primary memory of the aging Alta Californians in order to write an early secondary memory of Alta California and its relationship to the new U.S. state. Bancroft's choice to ignore not only the Californios' memories of Alta California, but also the narrative of an Anglo Californian whose recollection might have reinforced his central claim, points toward his essential devaluing of the dictations as narratives. The significant ways in which Bancroft and Savage rewrote memory in California turned on their understanding of the value and potential usefulness of oral memoirs as historical sources. The emphasis on rupture throughout *California Pastoral* resulted from Bancroft's engagement in what Dominick LaCapra has called the "specific task of the historian," the critical engagement of a primary memory in order to write a secondary memory to present to the public, a process that "requires an interpretation and estimation

²⁷⁰ Bancroft at least does not explicitly cite Streeter's dictation. His name appears neither in the index nor anywhere in the text of the volume, based upon a search of the Google eBook. Bancroft, *California Pastoral. 1769-1848*. <http://books.google.com/books?ei=scGUTtvsEcPr0gH-hezmBw&ct=result&id=zu80AAAAIAAJ&q=streeter>.

of what in the memory is other than factual.”²⁷¹ Based upon his ethnocentric narrative of rupture and his assumption that narratives were not valid historical sources, Bancroft rejected all but the basic facts of the dictations as “other than factual,” though he did so uniformly, without discrimination based on the identity of the testator.

²⁷¹ LaCapra, *History and Memory After Auschwitz*, 21.

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