

## SETTLEMENT OF FRESNO COUNTY: MIGRATION & IMMIGRATION

There was massive migration and immigration into California between the end of the Civil War and the first decades of the twentieth century. The photographs and documents in this section highlight American westward migration from three separate groups looking for a fresh start, as well as photographs of Fresno County's most significant immigrant communities from 1880 to 1920.

### **George Washington Mordecai Collection, 1868-1920**

Born in Henrico County, Virginia, George Washington Mordecai fought in the Civil War with Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson. Mordecai came to California in July 1868 and settled in northern Fresno County with several southern families who sought a safe haven during Reconstruction. Approximately seventy colonists formed the Alabama Colony, yet most of the settlers left after a few years. However, Mordecai married into the locally-prominent Dixon family and farmed a 2,200 acre ranch called Refuge. By the 1890s, Mordecai's agricultural success and civic engagement made him a natural Democratic candidate for the California State Assembly. He was elected twice and, in January 1893, successfully introduced the bill to separate Madera County from Fresno County. Mordecai is representative of the extremely conservative Democratic trends in early Fresno County politics. *The materials in this collection were gathered for a Teaching American History project, and the originals can be found at the Madera County Historical Society and/or the California History Room of the Madera County Library.*

### **Charles H. Robinson Family Collection, 1828-1900**

Charles H. Robinson served with the Union Army in the 47<sup>th</sup> Illinois Volunteers as a First Lieutenant before being honorably discharged on October 11, 1864. Left a widower after the war with his small daughter Carrie to care for, Robinson married Mary Lenora Ormsby in 1867. The couple relocated to Sonoma County, California around 1874, and by 1879, the family was living in Fresno County. In addition to images of the Robinson family, this collection includes the diary of Robinson's daughter Caroline (Carrie) Robinson Sage. It documents the Robinson family trip from Fresno County to Los Angeles and back up the coast and home via San Luis Obispo. The reason for the trip in the spring of 1882 was to celebrate Carrie's marriage to John Epler Sage who became a sawmill owner and mountain poet. John and Carrie Sage became known as one of the pioneering families of Selma.

### **Hutchinson Collection, circa 1914**

This collection of images offers a unique glimpse of the rural Fresno County community of Fowler circa 1914. The photographs document the people, businesses, homes and street scenes of this farming community. Of particular note are the images showing the African American and Japanese

communities. The African American residents of Fowler migrated into the San Joaquin Valley following the Civil War and Reconstruction to escape the oppressive Jim Crow laws in the South. The demand was high for agricultural laborers, and unlike many other regions, rural Central California offered the opportunity to own land.

### **Immigration Photograph Collection**

These images were gathered to represent the major immigrant groups that settled in Fresno County in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Armenian, Chinese, Danish, Japanese, Mexican, Southern European, and Volga German communities formed the foundation of Fresno's ethnic heritage. These photographs and supplementary materials outline this rich cultural legacy.

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These materials are provided for educational purposes and are not intended for personal use.

## George Washington Mordecai Document Citation List

1. GW Mordecai Diary, 1868. George Washington Mordecai Research Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
2. G.W. Mordecai Letter, August 20, 1868. George Washington Mordecai Research Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
3. G.W. Mordecai Letter, September 30, 1868. George Washington Mordecai Research Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
4. Bill of Sale for “Refuge” Ranch to G.W. Mordecai, 1880. George Washington Mordecai Research Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
5. Fresno County Atlas Map, 1891 - Township 12S, Range 17E. George Washington Mordecai Research Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
6. Newspaper article – G.W. Mordecai for California State Assembly, 1888. George Washington Mordecai Research Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
7. Will of G.W. Mordecai, February 12, 1890. George Washington Mordecai Research Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
8. California State Assembly Bill No. 154, January 10, 1893. [The bill called for the separation of Madera County from Fresno County.] George Washington Mordecai Research Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
9. G.W. Mordecai Death Certificate, June 14, 1920. George Washington Mordecai Research Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
10. G.W. Mordecai Obituary. June 15, 1920. George Washington Mordecai Research Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
11. G.W. Mordecai - Fresno County Census Record, 1870. George Washington Mordecai Research Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
12. G.W. Mordecai - Fresno County Census Record, 1880. George Washington Mordecai Research Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
13. G.W. Mordecai - Madera County Census Record, 1900. George Washington Mordecai Research Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
14. G.W. Mordecai - Madera County Census Record, 1910. George Washington Mordecai Research Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
15. G.W. Mordecai - Madera County Census Record, 1920. George Washington Mordecai Research Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.

## Robinson Family Collection Document Citation List

1. Diary of Caroline Knowles Robinson Sage, April 11 – May 19, 1882. Charles H. Robinson Family Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
2. Fresno County certificate to teach second grade for Carrie K. Robinson, November 29, 1879. Charles H. Robinson Family Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
3. Selections from *Along the Trails: A Collection of Poems by John Epler Sage*. Selma, CA: 1940. Charles H. Robinson Family Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.

## Robinson Family Collection Photograph Citation List

1. Charles and Mary Jane Robinson, circa 1858. Charles H. Robinson Family Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
2. Caroline Knowles Robinson, circa 1860. Charles H. Robinson Family Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
3. Charles H Robinson in Civil War uniform of the 47th Illinois Volunteers, circa 1862. Charles H. Robinson Family Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
4. Caroline Knowles Robinson, circa 1864. Charles H. Robinson Family Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
5. Charles H Robinson home in Parlier, circa 1890. Charles H. Robinson Family Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
6. Schoolhouse where Carrie Robinson taught now used as a church, 1969. Charles H. Robinson Family Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
7. Charles H Robinson in Grand Army of the Republic uniform, circa 1890. Charles H. Robinson Family Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
8. Charles H Robinson, circa 1890. Charles H. Robinson Family Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
9. Loggers from the Sage Saw Mill, circa 1895. Charles H. Robinson Family Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
10. Loggers and their wives from the Sage Saw Mill, circa 1895. Charles H. Robinson Family Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.

## Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection Photograph Citation List

1. Street scene, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #318. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
2. Fowler Transfer Company wagon, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #336. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
3. B. W. Ford Billiard Parlor, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #308. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
4. Fowler Independent newspaper office, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #328. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
5. Fowler Restaurant and Fashion Shoeing Shop, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #309. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
6. Fowler Cyclery, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #159. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
7. Valley Lumber Company, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #162. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
8. Japanese ABC Company General Store, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #337. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
9. Japanese Hom Cyclery Company, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #307. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
10. K. Yamagata Boarding House and Tiida Pool Hall, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #320. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
11. K. Sakamoto Pool Hall, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #2. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
12. Japanese father and daughter in front of home, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #45. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
13. African American church with congregation, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #319. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
14. African American family in front of their home, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #85. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
15. African American family on their porch, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #171. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.

16. African American family with two daughters in front of their home, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #211. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
17. African American young man, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #296. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
18. David Jennings on his porch, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #265. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
19. African American woman, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #94. [Possibly Julia Bell, daughter of David Jennings.] Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
20. Smiling African American girl, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #80. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
21. Woman at gate, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #203. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
22. Man on motorcycle, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #6. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
23. Woman in yard, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #75. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
24. Men with bicycles, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #260. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
25. Family in front of tree, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #141. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
26. Family in automobile, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #333. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
27. Extended family in front yard, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #4. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
28. Mother with five daughters, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #294. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
29. Children at play under the eucalyptus, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #288. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
30. Three generations of women, Fowler, California, 1914, Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative #187. Hutchinson Glass Plate Negative Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.

## Immigration Photograph Citation List

### Armenian

1. George Seropian, 1938. [First Armenian in Fresno County in the late nineteenth century.] Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
2. Seropian Brothers Packing House interior, 1897. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
3. Azhderian family portrait, circa 1880. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
4. Armenians picking grapes, circa 1895. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
5. Unidentified Armenian girl, circa 1890. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.

### Chinese

1. Fresno's Chinatown, circa 1885. [Photograph taken by Fresno photographer, E. R. Higgins.] Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
2. Chinese Dragon Parade in Fresno's Chinatown, circa 1900. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
3. Quong-Shun Wo general store decorated for the Lunar New Year, circa 1900. [The store was located on Tulare Street near Fagan Alley in Fresno's Chinatown.] Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
4. Chinese girls and old man in Fresno's Chinatown, circa 1907. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
5. Chinese man with buckets on Mariposa Street, circa 1907. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
6. Haw Children, left to right, Lily, Eva & Ben, circa 1890. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
7. Eva Haw and Husband, circa 1910. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
8. Sally Stein, on left, with Chinese children at the Chinese Baptist Mission in Fresno's Chinatown, circa 1895. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.

### Danish

1. Danish Creamery Co. wagon, circa 1900. [Likely decorated for Fourth of July parade]. Danish Creamery Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.



2. Poulsen family portrait, circa 1890. Poulsen Family Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
3. Jorgensen portrait taken in Denmark, circa 1880. Jorgensen Family Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
4. Jorgensen family portrait, circa 1885. Jorgensen Family Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
5. Jorgensen couple portrait, circa 1895. Jorgensen Family Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.

### **Japanese**

1. Portrait of fashionable Japanese couple, circa 1910. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
2. Kunishige family with automobile behind Kearney Mansion, circa 1915. [Mr. Kunishige was a cook at Kearney Vineyard until Japanese internment in WWII.] Kearney Vineyard Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
3. Mr. & Mrs. Kunishigue of Kearney Vineyard, circa 1910. [Mr. Kunishigue was a cook at Kearney Vineyard until Japanese internment in WWII.] Kearney Vineyard Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
4. Unidentified Japanese general store interior with staff in Fresno's Chinatown, circa 1900. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
5. Nakamura Cyclery in Fresno's Chinatown, circa 1910. Nakamura Cyclery Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
6. Nakamura Cyclery with staff in Fresno's Chinatown, circa 1910. Nakamura Cyclery Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
7. Japanese group at Annual Fresno City Community Picnic at Herndon on the San Joaquin River, circa 1910. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
8. Japanese workers packing fruit, September 1919. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.

### **Mexican**

1. Children of Emilano (Joe) and Patricia Perez - Manuela Emiliana, Rodolfo and Pedro, 1885. [Photograph taken by Fresno photographer, E. R. Higgins.] Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
2. Perez and Creason Blacksmith Shop, circa 1885. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.

3. Perez and White Blacksmith Shop on the northeast corner of Fresno and K Street (Van Ness), circa 1895. [E. J. Perez and Henry White were partners.] Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
4. Jose Gil Diaz y Socios parade float for Mexican Independence, September 1921. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
5. Mexican girl picking cotton, circa 1920. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
6. Sante Fe Railroad track layers, Calwa, 1937. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
7. Avila family, circa 1948. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.

#### **Southern European**

1. Forestiere Gardens created by Italian immigrant Baldessare Forestiere, n.d. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
2. Portuguese Romeiro family portrait, circa 1910. Romiero Family Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
3. Greek Float, Raisin Day Parade, 1919. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
4. Dante Club Drum Corps, circa 1935. [This Italian immigrant organization made its first public appearance on October 25, 1935 at Fresno's Golden Jubilee Parade.] Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.

#### **Volga German**

1. Unidentified Volga German family, circa 1880. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
2. Unidentified family from Saratov, Russia, circa 1890. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.
3. German family picking oranges, circa 1890. Photograph Collection, Fresno Historical Society Archives.

## Further Reading

### Migration:

- Bakken, Gordon Morris, and Alexandra Kindell. *Encyclopedia of Immigration and Migration in the American West*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing, 2006.
- Billington, Ray Allen., and Martin Ridge. *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009.
- Bingham, Emily. *Mordecai: An Early American Family*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2003
- Evans, Albert S. *A La California: Sketches of Life in the Golden State*. San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft & Company, 1873.
- Justice, William E. ed. *Essential Saroyan: A Selection of William Saroyan's Best Writings*. Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books. 2005.
- LaSalle, Michael E. *Emigrants on the Overland Trail: The Wagon Trains of 1848*. Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2011.
- McFarland, J. Randall. *Centennial Selma: Biography of a California Community's First 100 Years*. Selma, CA: McFarland with the Selma Enterprise, 1980.
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- Nordhoff, Charles. *California for Health, Pleasure, and Residence: A Book for Travelers and Settlers*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1873.
- Nugent, Walter T. K. *Into the West: The Story of Its People*. New York: Vintage Books, 2001.
- Starr, Kevin. *Americans and the California Dream 1850-1915*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

### Immigration:

- Bulbulian, Berge. *The Fresno Armenians: History of a Diaspora Community*. Sanger, CA: Word Dancer Press, 2001.
- Gonzales, Manuel G. *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States*. 2nd ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009.
- Lee, Erika. *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

- Minnick, Sylvia Sun. *Samfow: The San Joaquin Chinese Legacy*. Fresno, CA: Panorama West Publishing, 1988.
- Selland, Mabelle M. *From China to Fresno: A Love Story*. Fresno, CA: Heritage Fresno Press, 2007.
- Street, Richard Steven. *Beasts of the field: A Narrative History of California Farmworkers, 1769-1913*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004.