

# WHY SAN JOSE?

In 1927, the city of San Jose had a population of approximately 57,000 people, and it served as the center for a vast and abundant agricultural area consisting of farms, orchards, and row-crop fields that produced fruits and vegetables for a nationwide market. In late summer, fields at the edge of town would seem, at first glance, to be planted in masses of marigolds, but a closer look would reveal masses of apricots spread on racks to dry in the late summer sun.

Nearly everyone who grew up in Santa Clara Valley “cut ‘cots” (cut apricots for canning) at one time or another to earn extra money for high school or college, or to support families. And the wonderful aroma of the drying fruit wafted across the sun-drenched valley just as the remarkable fragrance of thousands of blossoming fruit trees filled the valley in springtime.

In the late 1920s, San Jose was the largest fruit canning and packing center in the country. Santa Clara Valley had 130,000 acres in orchards – including 70,000 acres of prunes. Approximately 16,000 acres were planted in vegetables, and over 1,000 acres in berries.

In and around San Jose, approximately forty canneries were in operation much of the year, and the canneries employed large numbers of people in season. The canning season started with asparagus early in spring, but when the orchard fruit ripened in mid-summer, the work really began in earnest. During the height of the canning season, canneries operated day and night, seven days a week. The wonderful aroma of steamed vegetables and fruit, along

with the spicy fragrance of garlic, wafted through the summertime air, creating a bouquet of interesting flavors.

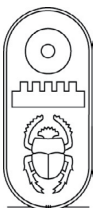
Surrounding the town were plum orchards and strawberry “ranches,” as the locals called them. Prunes, made from Italian plums, were the main export from the valley, and H. Spencer Lewis sang their praises in some of his friendly chats in the *Rosicrucian Forum* magazine.

The history and fortunes of this valley are a record of the fascinating changes that have marked the state of California in the last three centuries. Long ago, the wickiups (shelters) of the Ohlone Indians dotted the

verdant valley floor, clustering near San Francisco Bay and nearby rivers. Today, Santa Clara Valley is better known as “Silicon Valley,” and orchards and farms

have given way to computer companies clustered near crowded freeways.

Traditionally, long before the emergence of Silicon Valley, Santa Clara Valley was an agricultural gold mine. Agriculturally, it was one of the richest valleys in the world. Two and a half centuries ago, California was as it had been for thousands of years, unaltered except by nature. In 1769, Father Junipero Serra and his missionaries came to this unspoiled land, and the agricultural history of California began. The missionaries brought livestock, seeds, and cuttings from trees and plants that had thrived in Spain, parts of which have a Mediterranean climate similar to Santa Clara Valley. The livestock, seeds, and plant cuttings became the nucleus of the agricultural economy which was to become the greatest in the world.



By 1869, the Transcontinental Railroad was completed, connecting California with the East, and great demands were placed on California's farm products in the eastern markets.

Short of workers to help on California farms to tend and harvest the crops, farmers welcomed every labor-saving machine that was available. For example, the first tractor in America was bought by a California farmer in Red Bluff in 1874 for \$36,000!

When the Depression hit the country and the droughts hit the Midwest, farmers and farm workers poured into California looking for land and work. There was none to be had, and the migrating farmers were put to work building dams and canals in the most massive water projects to ever be completed in the country. Their contribution to the control and distribution of water in California put the final block in place that has made California the most productive agricultural region in the world.

Today, California's great valleys provide nearly half the fruit and vegetables consumed in America, and feed millions more in other parts of the world. In a few decades, a combination of human resourcefulness and applied technology made California the agricultural capital of the world.

But to truly understand this special place and why H. Spencer Lewis chose to establish Rosicrucian Park here, let us step back in time – back to an era long before H. Spencer Lewis had conceived of Rosicrucian Park, long before the first California State Legislature had convened in San Jose in 1849, and long before the Pueblo de San Jose de Guadalupe had been established as the first Spanish pueblo in California in 1777.

The Ohlone Indians were the original inhabitants of Santa Clara Valley. Their home was located along the southern edge of San Francisco Bay – a marshy

area abundant with fish and waterfowl. The valley extends south from the bay, and rising on the east and west sides of the valley are foothills – Mt. Hamilton and the semi-arid Diablo Range rose to the east, and to the west, the redwood-forested Santa Cruz Mountains separated Santa Clara Valley from the chilly Pacific Ocean. Between these two mountain ranges stretched the dimpled landscape of the valley floor. Oak trees in clusters and in solitary dignity were dark and green among the tall grasses. The valley extends some fifty miles south from the bay, narrowing to about five miles in width until the foothills of the two opposing ranges shoulder together to close off the valley south of the present town of Hollister.

From the very first, the native Ohlone Indians preferred this lush valley south of San Francisco Bay to the fog-shrouded, sand-strewn tip of the San Francisco Peninsula, or, in other words, the site of present-day San Francisco. “Llano de los Robles” – Plain of the Oaks – was what Portola's scout Jose Francisco Ortega called the valley in 1769 as he viewed the golden, oak-dotted expanse from what is known today as Skyline Ridge. Eighteenth century English explorer George Vancouver likened the valley to an English parkland, because the oak forest were so dense then.

It was Father Junipero Serra who was to give the valley its present and permanent name when he consecrated the Mission Santa Clara de Asis in 1777. The surrounding pasture lands claimed by the mission from San Francisquito Creek (at Palo Alto) to Llagas Creek (at Gilroy) took on the name, and it stuck and was confirmed by the new state legislature in 1859 as Santa Clara County.<sup>1</sup>

Nowhere could a hunter-gatherer culture flourish better than in this favored valley. The year-round mild climate, the gentle terrain, and the availability of fish,

fowl, acorns, berries, and roots combined to make this a generous and easy place to live.

But all this was eventually to change. The Spanish, Portuguese, Russians, and English began their explorations of the California coast in the mid-sixteenth century. Spain's Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo and Sebastian Vizcaino, and England's Sir Francis Drake were notable among the many explorers, pirates, and adventurers who explored the California coast in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, the European settlement of California did not begin until 1769, when the Spanish founded San Diego. To convert the Indians, the Spanish and Franciscan fathers founded a series of twenty-one missions stretching north from San Diego. In 1777, the Santa Clara Mission was founded, and settlers from northern Mexico made an extremely difficult, 900-plus-mile trek to the Santa Clara Valley to establish El Pueblo de San Jose de Guadalupe – the first civil settlement in Alta California. Neither a mission nor a presidio (fort), the San Jose pueblo was an agricultural settlement – its purpose was to grow crops and supply food for the surrounding area so that California would not be so dependent on provisions from faraway Mexico.

The valley became the domain of the pleasure-seeking, hard-riding Dons who ruled over vast ranchos that had been snatched from the native Indians and were granted to them for the most part in the dissonant days after the Mission lands were secularized in the 1830s. The land area where Rosicrucian Park is located today was once part of a Spanish land grant that was quite a sizeable tract, incorporating much of what today is San Jose's exclusive Rose Garden neighborhood.<sup>2</sup>

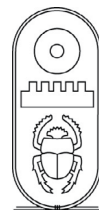
The immigration of settlers to the Valley of Heart's Delight eventually brought people to San Jose from all parts of the world. The flags of Spain

and Mexico flew in turn over the San Jose pueblo, to be followed later by the distinctive Bear Flag of the brief-lived California Republic, and eventually the Stars and Stripes of the United States, which acquired California from Mexico in the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

The Gold Rush of 1849 brought thousands of newcomers to California and transformed San Francisco into a great city overnight. Many of those who came for gold stayed on to establish farms and to build cities, and California became a state in 1850. The original large Spanish land-grant ranchos were eventually subdivided into smaller ranches and farms. The completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869, with its 1,775 miles of new track across mountains, prairies, and deserts, brought tens of thousands more people to this new and prosperous state on the edge of the Pacific. From the United States' Eastern Seaboard, from Europe, and from Asia, new residents arrived to establish homes, farms, and businesses in this melting pot of peoples.

Through the years arrived a procession of merchants, mariners, and farmers – in their turn snatching the land from the Dons. There were also the railroad kings, like Stanford and Hopkins, quicksilver kings, including Barron and Bell, President Herbert Hoover, banking potentate A. P. Giannini, astronomer James Lick, and eventually the electronic geniuses Lee de Forest and the Varian brothers, along with writers like Jack London, the Norrises, and Fanny Stevenson, Robert Louis Stevenson's widow. Into this fertile brew of people and ideas eventually stepped visionary H. Spencer Lewis in 1927.<sup>3</sup>

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, *Harper's Magazine* described the local viticulture of Santa Clara Valley at the time: "The mature vintage around San José boasts of a number of acres of grape-vines under cultivation (something





over eleven thousand), larger than any but one other in the State, that of Sonoma.”<sup>24</sup>

Some of the new immigrants to Santa Clara Valley brought with them fine grape cuttings and the small, young trees to begin the vineyards and orchards that would eventually cover Santa Clara Valley. Fields formerly devoted to raising grains and hay were newly planted in orchards and vineyards as farmers realized the climate was perfectly suited for this type of agriculture.

Among the French immigrants, Louis Pellier brought a trunk full of cuttings from the old country, their ends thrust into potatoes to keep them alive. Of paramount importance among these cuttings was the French or Italian plum, known locally as simply the “prune.” And as the acres of orchards, vineyards, and row crops spread across the valley floor, and the fruit and packing industry grew, so did San Jose grow and prosper as it entered the twentieth century.

Shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, a noted author and traveler summed up Santa Clara Valley as “a fifty-mile-long garden of fruit and flowers, where in Spring miles of vineyards and trees in snow-white profusion of blossoms burgeoned forth . . . A sight not to be seen elsewhere in the world.”<sup>25</sup>

Since the founding of the Rosicrucian Order’s present cycle of activity by H. Spencer Lewis in 1915, the organization’s

headquarters had been consecutively located in several cities in different regions of the country. From its original home in New York City, the Order’s headquarters had moved out west to San Francisco in 1918, and then to the South – to Tampa, Florida – in 1925. There the Order established a new headquarters and launched one of Florida’s earliest radio broadcast stations which reached listeners throughout the South. These moves helped to stimulate membership growth in the various sections of the United States.

In 1927, when Rosicrucians in the San Jose area urged H. Spencer Lewis to move the Order’s headquarters from Tampa and take up permanent quarters in California, Emperor Lewis felt it was again time to return to the West and to establish a permanent administrative and spiritual center in this fast-growing part of the nation. San Jose had much to offer as the new center for the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC.

In an article explaining the move to California in the November, 1927, issue of *The Mystic Triangle*, H. Spencer Lewis described San Jose and its advantages:

In selecting San Jose as our next center of national activities, we were guided by the following important points: First, it is not one of the biggest cities of the West and it is therefore possible to have headquarters in a park

section away from all the hustle and bustle, noise, and distraction of a large city. San Jose is but forty-three miles from both San Francisco and Oakland – two very large centers of national supplies – and connected with them by excellent auto highways, bus lines, trolley lines, and main line railways from San Francisco to all points of the Pacific Coast.

Second, the Order owns a fine piece of land there known as Rosicrucian Park, and on this property the national executive offices will be located, with radio towers, power plant, and studio. The Park is located so that it is easily accessible to all who travel anywhere in California . . . in the heart of Santa Clara Valley, known all through the West as the Paradise of America. From this point, very long distance radio transmission is possible, as has been proved by the many radio stations in the West.

We shall be happily located in San Jose for one other reason. It is today one of the big educational centers of the West, with many colleges and universities within its limits or adjoining it. It is fitting that AMORC should be located in such a place, which thousands visit annually to see the newest and best systems of progressive education.

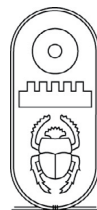
Centuries earlier, the English Rosicrucian philosopher and statesperson Francis Bacon foresaw that the Rosicrucian teachings would find a new home and new opportunities for growth in the recently-discovered lands of the Western Hemisphere, and with the founding of the American branch of the Order by H. Spencer Lewis in 1915, this prophecy came into full manifestation. The time was right. In the fertile American social landscape,

the Order's teachings grew strong and blossomed forth in a land free from the extremes of despotism, secrecy, class-consciousness, and religious intolerances of other lands. From its headquarters, the teachings spread out across the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean, with thousands of new students eagerly embracing the Rosicrucian system of study.

And what a unique system it proved to be! The innovative and visionary H. Spencer Lewis brought a new, distinctly American approach never before used to disseminate the Order's teachings – an approach especially suited to the openness of American society and the unfolding new twentieth century. The Order openly advertised for students – something unheard of in earlier times. Its teachings were disseminated in the form of printed monographs – mailed directly to the student's home – also a totally new approach. And the Order was very much in the public eye – perhaps most noticeably at Rosicrucian Park. There, the Order's landmarks and monuments – its Egyptian-style Temple and Rosicrucian Egyptian Museum – welcomed tens of thousands of guests annually.

In 1927, land in the vicinity of San Jose was still quite inexpensive and H. Spencer Lewis quickly found suitable property on the edge of a new residential section near the city limits. The first building erected at Rosicrucian Park faced a cherry orchard. Rail service from San Jose to all points was excellent, so that AMORC's mail could travel promptly to its members. In fact, so great was the added volume of mail caused by the establishment of AMORC's headquarters in this medium-sized city that San Jose's post office was changed from third-class to first-class almost immediately – the postmaster's salary increasing in proportion to his added responsibilities. Rosicrucian Park still has its own zip code.

As the administration offices of the



organization grew, new employees could hope to work here in permanent rather than seasonal positions (as in the predominant fruit-canning industry), and it was said around town that the best secretaries in San Jose had their training at “The Rosicrucians.”

H. Spencer Lewis and the Rosicrucian Order were happy with San Jose from the beginning. In a later article in *The Mystic Triangle*, H. Spencer Lewis reflected on the move to California and the establishment of Rosicrucian Park:

We are certainly delighted with the location of Rosicrucian Park here in this Garden City of the valley they call Paradise. The climate for the winter is wonderful and the spirit of California, so notable in the whole state, is distinctly manifest here. Rosicrucian Park is in the center of the newest residential section of San Jose, within two squares

of the main highway that leads from Los Angeles to San Francisco . . . The Administration Building is in Egyptian style of design and color and the grounds of the Park surrounding the building will be laid out with tropical shrubbery, broken by Italian cypress trees and occasional Egyptian ornaments.

And in remarking on Santa Clara Valley’s bountiful produce, H. Spencer Lewis commented:

Most of you throughout the country are eating every day some

of the products of the Paradise of America. In this Santa Clara Valley grows most of the fruit that finds its way into the high grade canning companies of California, and eventually into your homes.... Do you eat California prunes, raisins, and walnuts, plums, pears, peaches, olives, cherries, apricots, almonds? They come from this section of California....

With the highest average summer temperature set at 80 and the lowest winter temperature set at 30 – with warmth during the midday of winter – you can understand why this area is called the Paradise, with its rolling hills, green spotted with hundreds of natural wild flowers and its mountaintops tipped with snow like a contrasted decoration to beautify the continuous panorama of enchanting scenery. Certainly we are happy back in the West again.



And what did San Jose think of H. Spencer Lewis and the Rosicrucians? Any initial wariness was soon eased by H. Spencer Lewis’s ready friendliness, open mind, and careful business practices. H. Spencer Lewis could talk with anyone, and everyone from delivery persons to bank presidents soon became acquainted with this man who could easily discuss so many interesting subjects. San Jose found the Rosicrucians to be a knowledgeable group of people, and California’s open-mindedness and willingness to experience new ideas melded easily with the Rosicrucian outlook on life. As Rosicrucian

Park expanded and new buildings were added – one of the first planetariums in California, a science and university building, the Egyptian Museum, and an extensive research library – San Jose began to realize the unique cultural benefits provided to the city by the Rosicrucians. After all, how many other medium-sized cities, even in California, could boast a magnificent park with Egyptian-style buildings set amidst beautiful gardens, and the educational and cultural assets offered by Rosicrucian Park? In the words of a local newspaper reporter many years ago: “A little bit of Egypt fell out of the sky one day – on the block bounded by Park, Naglee, Chapman, and Randol Avenues.”

To familiarize San Joseans with the Order and its purpose, H. Spencer Lewis (a former advertising executive) ran impressive full-page advertisements in San Jose newspapers. One ad opened with the inviting headline: “Let us get acquainted,” and then asked the reader, “We are your neighbors here in San Jose, we are known all over the world – but do you know the Rosicrucians?”

The ad explained that hundreds of Rosicrucians – many of them prominent men and women – from all parts of the world, visit San Jose each year, spending time at Rosicrucian Park and in the charming city itself. “Hundreds of local residents visit our Oriental Museum and Egyptian buildings monthly.... We have made San Jose known to millions throughout the world....” These ads also fully explained the Order’s purpose and invited local residents to join the Order and to “find out more about themselves, natural laws, and the universe.”

San Jose was impressed, and hundreds

flocked to the regularly scheduled concerts and lectures, free to the public, in the new Francis Bacon Auditorium (San Jose’s first large-size auditorium). Thus marked the beginning of a long-term cultural and community-involvement relationship between Rosicrucian Park and the city in the Valley of Heart’s Delight.

Today, San Jose is a great city, although it probably has never really thought of itself that way. The sleepy cannery town of the 1920s experienced a major population explosion in the decades following World War II, making San Jose one of the fastest growing cities in the United States. Orchards, vineyards, and fields were quickly replaced with miles of tract housing and industrial parks. Blossom festivals were no longer appropriate as the valley’s nickname was changed to “Silicon Valley” with the proliferation of the computer industry. San Jose and the surrounding communities

have run together and the metropolitan area now has 1.5 million people. In fact, San Jose is now the largest city in Northern California, eclipsing San Francisco in population, its more prominent neighbor to the north and is the tenth largest city in the United States.

But to those who walk the winding paths through green lawns and past beds of blossoming flowers amidst the colorful buildings of Rosicrucian Park, the surroundings make the valley’s older name come alive again, for here it is still the Valley of Heart’s Delight.

**Let us get acquainted**

We are your neighbors here in San Jose,  
We are known all over the World—but—  
**Do YOU know the Rosicrucians?**

Handfuls of prominent men and women visit us yearly from all parts of the World, and reside here in San Jose for days. Hundreds of local residents visit our Oriental Museum and Egyptian Buildings monthly. We have made San Jose known to millions throughout the World—but there may be a few in the district who do not know us. What would YOU do in a situation like that? How about you? Would you like to find out more about us? Then a man bring in Europe?

**Here are some very interesting facts YOU should know**

<b>What the Rosicrucians are—and are not</b>	<b>Famous in Early American History</b>	<b>What the Rosicrucians truly offer to others</b>	<b>Five Oriental Museums and Egyptian Temples</b>	<b>Our printing plant is largest in the Valley</b>
...	...	...	...	...

**We Can Help YOU**

**FREE SOLUTION BOOK**

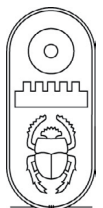
**Gift Book Coupon**

MAK THIS COUPON TODAY and receive a FREE SOLUTION BOOK by H. Spencer Lewis, R.E.C.

**A View of the Oriental Museum, Egyptian Temples and other Administration Buildings of the Rosicrucian Headquarters on Naglee Ave., near Park Ave.**

## Endnotes

1 - P.F. Butler, *Old Santa Clara Valley*, Wide World Publishers, San Carlos, CA 1991.



2 - Gilbert, Old Sta. Clara Valley.

3 - Adapted from Gilbert, Old Sta. Clara Valley.

4 - *The West: A Collection from Harper's Magazine*,  
New York: Gallery Books/W.H. Smith Publishers,  
1990, pp. 476, 485.

5 - Gilbert, Old Sta. Clara Valley.