History and Culture

Introduction

The interaction between people and their watersheds and the change in this interaction over time are important parts of the puzzle of watershed condition. Over centuries, people and cultures come and go and with them their practices and perceptions of the physical and biological place around them. Cultures and societies evolve over time, sometimes responding to natural events and constraints, sometimes causing them. Watershed assessments include descriptions of who lived in the watershed over time and how they related to the place. This description can be used to understand changes in the watershed over time and the emergent conditions that result from the relationship.

Little remains in the lower watershed that would be familiar to the inhabitants of 200, or even 75 years ago. Certain landmarks such as San Fernando Mission, Andres Pico and Lopez Adobes, and Bolton Hall still persist. The Great Wall of Los Angeles mural provides a visual timeline of the region's cultural evolution, and reminders of history are still apparent throughout daily life. For example, the names Tujunga and Pacoima originate from the Tataviam language and mean "old woman place" and "the entrance," respectively (King, 2004). The City of San Fernando takes its name from the mission established there in 1797, and Van Nuys is named for the powerful wheat merchant who once owned the land. Many of the street names, such as Chandler, Sherman Way and Lankershim Boulevards are named after people who played pivotal roles in shaping the watershed's future.

Historical events, environmental forces, cultural sensibilities and socioeconomic changes have all shaped the current state of the watershed today. In considering the cultural history of the watershed, we will focus on the area currently defined as the watershed. However, we will also discuss places and events that occurred within what was then the Tujunga Watershed, but are now outside of its official boundaries as determined by human intervention (see Figure C-1 in the Hydrology section of this report).

Findings

Early History and the Mission

Before the Europeans began their settlement of the Tujunga Watershed, the region was inhabited by the indigenous Tataviam. The Tataviam are part of the Shoshone Nation and anthropologists have placed them as having settled in the region as early as 450 A.D. (Ortega, 2005). Studying the history of the traditional life of the Tataviam is difficult because the past is preserved only through oral tradition that has been handed down throughout generations. Rita N. Rivera, an elder of the Tataviam tribe who died in 2001, recounted stories of her ancestors dating as far back as the 1850s (Stassel, 2001). Such oral histories are the primary source of information about indigenous peoples before the arrival of the Europeans. After the founding of the missions, the letters and diaries recorded by the Spanish monks also included observations of the Tataviam daily life.

Tataviam means "People facing the sun", as they built their homes on south-facing slopes. They later became known as the Fernandeño, because of their role in the construction of the San Fernando Mission (Ortega, 2005).

The Tataviam were strongly attached to the land. They lived without agriculture or domestic animals. Deer, rabbits, quail, squirrels, birds, lizards, snakes, grasshoppers and caterpillars were hunted and trapped; and

acorns, yucca, juniper berries, chia seeds and buckwheat were gathered for sustenance. Rivers and creeks were essential to the Tataviam not only for water, but for the willows and tule reeds that surrounded the riverbanks. These played a crucial role in the construction of shelter and the settlement of their villages. The typical Tataviam home, or Ki'j, was a dome-shaped framework of willow in a circle between 12 to 20 feet in diameter. The poles were bent in at the top to form a dome, then smaller saplings or branches were tied on cross-wise. To cover the outside, bulrush or cattails were woven into the frame. A hole in the top, which was covered with a hide when it rained, allowed for a fire pit in the center of the Ki'j. If it rained, the people could cook inside and remain warm and dry. The larger villages also contained gaming and dancing areas, cemeteries, granaries, work areas and sauna-like sweathouses called Sehé used for cleansing and relaxation (Tataviam Cybrary, 2005).

Figure H-1. Tataviam Village
(Fernandeno Tataviam Tribal Council, Inc. 2004)

The Tataviam paid meticulous attention to the drainage and flooding patterns of the watershed. They felt a connection to the water and natural resources that many Westerners now do not understand. A Tataviam tribe member stated, "The tribe sees water as their blood. Like veins carry the blood through the human bodies so do the rivers carry water through mother earth. If our blood would dry we would die, same as mother earth." They relied on the land for survival, yet still worked to conserve their natural resources. According to an elder from the Tataviam tribe, water boundaries and hunting boundaries between tribes were enforced in order to preserve resources and maintain the balance of nature and their blood (Ortega, 2006).

When Spanish conquistador, Hernando Cortez, invaded and conquered Mexico, all of the unknown land to the North was claimed for Spain. In 1769 Spain sent Gaspar de Portola and Jesuit priests to California to establish forts and missions. This expedition brought about a significant transformation in the culture and ecosystem of the region. Spanish influence and the Catholic Church altered the lives of the Tataviam forever (Pozzo, 2005). As K. Roderick (2001) states in his book, *The San Fernando Valley: America's Suburb*, "they (the indigenous people) could not have known that their world had in an instant drastically changed."

On September 8, 1797 Mission San Fernando Rey de España was established by father Lausen, successor to father Junipero Serra. The limestone mission, located in what is now the City of San Fernando, was established to close the gaps in El Camino Real and to "civilize the heathens, baptize them as Christians and put them to work producing goods." By 1804, nearly 1,000 Tataviam lived at San Fernando Mission and by 1806, they were planting crops, raising cattle and producing hides, leather goods, adobe bricks, tallow for candles, soap, and cloth (Nunis, 1997).

The mission system was designed to be a "temporary establishment" to teach the indigenous people how to manage a self sustaining pueblo and some contend, to Christianize native Californians. The natives were drawn to the missions. However, once they were baptized and converted to Christianity they became known as *neofitos* or neophytes and were not able to "leave without permission." Historians described the lifestyle of the neophytes as being harsh. They spent their days attending mass, working in the fields, and tending the animals. According to historical records, *neofitos* were whipped by Spanish soldiers for desertion. A large number of the native people were baptized and integrated into the mission lifestyle. In the first year, 92 indigenous people were baptized. In total 1,586 indigenous neophytes were converted to Catholicism at the San Fernando Rey (Roderick, 2001).

Over the next 50 years, the number of indigenous people dwindled significantly due to "disease, changes in their diets and the obliteration of their culture and language" (Pozzo, 2005). The indigenous ecosystem was transformed as well. The Spanish expeditions and settlers literally brought the seeds of change with them. Yellow mustard and invasive grasses quickly out-competed the valley's native grasslands.

The San Fernando Mission helped California and this region become an important participant in trade between other countries and paved the path for the large ranchos and the subsequent real estate boom (Falzarano, 2003).

Figure H-2. San Fernando Mission.
(Oviatt Library, CSUN)

The period of Spanish rule was described as "simple and feudal" (Pozzo, 2005). Large pieces of land throughout the region, or ranchos, were deeded to Spaniards. The introduction of the ranchos and brought about a great shift in land use, altering the landscape further. Livestock became an important resource, and by 1826 there were 56,000 longhorn cattle and 1500 horses and ponies in the San Fernando Valley (Roderick, 2001).

When Mexico succeeded in gaining independence from Spain in 1822, the Mexican government began to secularize the missions, and the management and use of the missions changed. The secularization of the missions led to controversy between the northern and southern regions of California and ended in an armed revolt. The Southern Californians wished for private control of the land without the influence of the priests. Their victory led to changes in land ownership. In the 1830's California officials began to confiscate mission lands, but usually left the buildings under the control of the church.

Statehood and Boom Towns

The discovery of gold in the San Gabriel mountains in 1842 brought European, Latin American and Chinese immigrants to area, increasing the valley's diversity.

In 1845 Pio Pico, whose ancestry was a mixture of African, native American, and European Spanish, became the last Mexican Governor of Alta California - and the first subdivider of the San Fernando Valley. Anticipating a war between Mexico and the United States, he dispersed his large land holdings. Seven ranchos were established in the valley: Rancho El Escorpion, Rancho Encino, Rancho Cahuenga, Rancho Providencia, Rancho San Rafael, Rancho Tujunga and Rancho Ex-Mission San Rafael. Within the Ex-Mission Rancho San Rafael, Geronimo and Catalina Lopez operated the Lopez Station. The station, now in the city of San Fernando, served as a resting place for travelers and was the first public school in the valley. In later years it also served as a post office. When war was declared in May of 1846, Governor Pico sold a large portion of the valley to Eulogio de Celis for $14,000. De Celis was a Spaniard who now became the owner of the largest parcel of land in Alta-California, 116,858 acres (Roderick, 2001).

On January 11, 1847, the United States Bear Flag Batallion, led by Col. John C. Fremont, clambered down what is know known as Newhall Pass to claim victory over Mexico. They occupied the mission and sent emissaries for peace. Two days later, at Rancho Cahuenga, Alta California capitulated and became the American territory of California. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848, under the terms of which Mexico sold much of what is now the Southwest United States to the U.S. government for $15 million, finalized the transition.

Life during the rancho era was more relaxed and less pious than during the time of the Spanish missions. The Californios lived life without "thought to the future, and life was lived for the moment." They participated in a number of large celebrations throughout the year, such as Saint's Days, dances, and weddings. Rodeos, bullfights, horse races and gambling were also common and provided entertainment for the families living on the ranchos. The rancho lifestyle was centered on a large and strong family structure. "The rancho provided a home for a host of poor relations, entertained strangers as well as friends…" (Pozzo, 2005).

The rancho owners had financial difficulties during the first half of the nineteenth century. They often did not have much cash, because while the region was "rich in land and cattle", the ranchos did not produce many goods. The Californios had to depend on foreigners for consumer goods, and many elites found themselves in serious debt (Pozzo, 2005). By tradition, travelers could expect gracious accommodation at ranchos, so one rancher was compelled to post a notice in the newspaper delicately asking those who wished to call "…not forget to bring with them what is necessary to defray their expense" (Roderick, 2001).

Figure H-3. Cattle Ranching on the Valley Plain
The San Fernando Valley: America's Suburb 2001

Cattle ranching as a major activity was brought to a sudden end by the disastrous drought of 1863-1864, which resulted in the loss of practically all the cattle and sheep in California (USBR, 2006). One resident was prompted to observe: "I could have walked across the valley on the bones of sheep and cattle." Pio Pico sold the rest of his share of the land to Isaac Lankershim in July of 1869. The Rancho Ex-Mission San Fernando was split in half between Lankershim and the heirs of Eulogio de Celis (Roderick, 2001).

U.S. businessmen had begun investing in California when it belonged to Mexico. These entrepreneurs recognized the value of the natural resources in the San Fernando Valley and saw an opportunity to profit from the land. At this point, the watershed was sparsely populated and largely undeveloped beyond the San Fernando Mission.

The completion of the transcontinental railway on May 10, 1869 caused great changes in the Tujunga Watershed. When former California Governor Leland Stanford, owner of Southern Pacific Railroad Lines, promised that he would extend the railroad lines from San Francisco to the valley, Charles Maclay, a California Senator from San Francisco, purchased over 56,000 acres of land (essentially the northern half the valley) for about $2.00 an acre from the de Celis family.

Chinese laborers built the rail line extension, but by 1882 the Chinese-exclusion act would halt laborers' entry and bar them from citizenship. The town of San Fernando was developed as a station stop for the railway, giving birth to the booming towns of the San Fernando Valley. Maclay's agents would greet potential buyers with a free barbeque and a sales pitch. Town lots sold for an average of $75 each and farmland anywhere from $5 to $40 an acre. Maclay formed an equal partnership with brothers Benjammin and George Porter. During the 1880's Maclay and his business partners busily created a number of small towns and subdivisions, attracting people with cheap land, even though the area was still very rural and offered few amenities (Roderick, 2001).

By 1880, English speakers outnumbered Spanish speakers for the first time, and land use in the valley had shifted once again. Numerous types of agriculture were attempted, each culture bringing with it a different crop, with various results. In the southeast watershed where the water table is most shallow, vineyards and fruit orchards flourished. Olives did well in the north valley. Small-scale irrigation was tried with citrus in the mostly frost-free alluvial fans. Similarly, a single farm a few miles from San Fernando produced vegetables with irrigation (Rodrigue and Rovai, 1996).

The next dominant landscape was determined by Issac Lankershim and his son-in-law. Isaac Newton Van Nuys, who together owned 47,500 acres of the valley. Lankershim, who noted how naturalized oats flourished without irrigation, began dry-land wheat farming, establishing the dominant land cover between 1877-1910 (Rodrigue and Rovai, 1996). Lankershim and Van Nuys built the largest wheat-growing empire in the world, the Los Angeles Farm and Milling Company. Van Nuys can be credited for mapping the valley when he instructed one of his ranchers to plow a 20-mile line though the dirt, dividing the Porter-Maclay and Lankershim lands. This line later became Roscoe Boulevard.

Figure H-4. Lankershim-Van Nuys Wheat Harvest 1900
(Canoga-Owensmouth Historical Society)

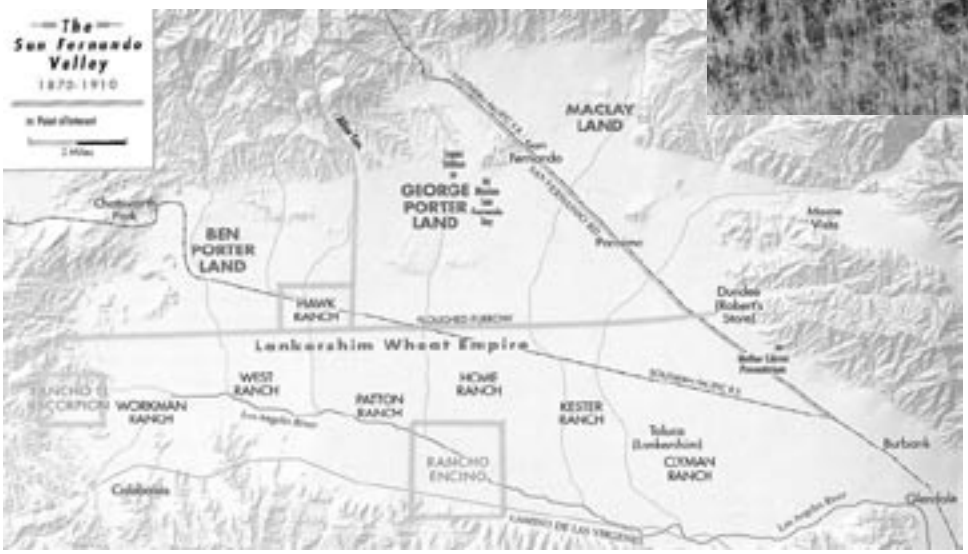

Figure H-5. San Fernando Valley, 1870-1910.
(The San Fernando Valley: America's Suburb, 2001)

Water…

Lankershim and Van Nuys, as well as orchard owners in North Hollywood, who found that they could double their yield using gas well-pumps to irrigate with groundwater, were among numerous landowners who attempted to legally assert the doctrine of riparian rights to both the surface waters of the river and the groundwater basin. These lawsuits would ultimately culminate in the City of Los Angeles vs. A.E. Pomeroy, wherein the Supreme Court ruled that Los Angeles had succeeded, by virtue of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, to all the rights which it had enjoyed as a Spanish pueblo; therefore, its claim to the waters within the watershed was prior to that of all appropriators subsequent to 1781 (McWilliams, 1946).

With their pueblo rights established, Los Angeles had sufficient water to meet its needs. However, given the expanse of the landscape, empire builders of the period saw the growth potential of the region as limited only by its water supply. A syndicate financed by Harry Chandler and Harrison Gray Otis, president and vice president of the Los Angeles Times, respectively, suburban railway builder (and member of the city's water board) M.H. Sherman, E.H. Harriman, E.T. Earl, and banker Joseph F. Satori, worked quietly to acquire 108,000 acres of land in the valley, including Lankershim's large holdings.

Sherman was close to former Los Angeles mayor Fred Eaton who, along with J. B. Lippincott had begun to orchestrate a series of complex and disingenuous arrangements to secure the land and water rights to all the Owens Valley, 238 miles away. They stealthily bought every other property along the Owens River and all the irrigation canals, ultimately forcing the remaining property owners to sell (Falzarano, 2003).

With San Fernando Valley land and Owens Valley water rights in hand, the syndicate proposed to the Water Board that the City of Los Angeles should build – and finance – a massive aqueduct. The city agreed to float a $25 million bond, but the voters still had to approve it. A drought in 1904 helped the syndicate utilize their power of the press to stimulate widespread fear of a water shortage, and project sponsors clandestinely dumped water from reservoirs into the sewage system, prompting a water shortage so severe that on the eve of the election, an ordinance was passed forbidding people to water their lawns. On September 7, 1905, citizens approved the bond issue (McWilliams, 1946).

With the promise of so much water in the valley, land values soared. Land that the syndicate had paid between $35 and $50 an acre for a few years previous was sold for between $500 and $1,000 an acre, yielding them an estimated $100 million dollar profit, at the expense of the residents of the Owens Valley and the city of Los Angeles (McWilliams, 1946).

The engineer in charge of the aqueduct project for the city's Department of Water and Power was one-time zanjero and protégé of Eaton, William Mulholland. He designed it to terminate thirty miles outside the City of Los Angeles in the San Fernando Valley. It was capable of delivering a quarter billion gallons a day - ten times more water than the city could use in 1913 when the project was completed (Falzarano, 2003). At this point in history, it could be argued that the city didn't need more water, the water needed more city.

Figure H-6. Opening of the Los Angeles Aqueduct, 1913.
(San Fernando Valley Historical Society)

While the aqueduct did not actually reach the City of Los Angeles, a third of the water used for

irrigation in the valley would still accrue to the city by transfer to groundwater through the natural connection of the Glendale Narrows. However, since revenues from demand within the City of Los Angeles would not be sufficient to repay the bond interest on the aqueduct construction, the final pieces of the complex scheme had to be implemented. A landowner in the valley paying to irrigate a one-acre orchard could transform his acre into several residential units requiring the same amount of water. If all these new homeowners could become tax-paying citizens of the City of Los Angeles, the bond would be more quickly satisfied. Annexing the valley would ensure the City's rights to all Owens River water and enough citizens to pay the bills (Falzarano, 2003).

In 1915, nearly all of the subdivisions in the Tujunga Watershed became incorporated into the City of Los Angeles, excluding the Cities of San Fernando, Burbank and Glendale. The water from Owens River transformed the San Fernando Valley into a rich agricultural region and contributed to a rapid increase in the number of new homes built between 1916 and 1923 (Falzarano, 2003). Ironically, many of these homes were built directly in the floodplains of Tujunga and Pacoima Wash.

. . . Water Everywhere

After the influx of settlers, native vegetation had been all but obliterated in the lower watershed and "floods, and forest fire problems multiplied" (Pozzo, 2005).

The arrival of the railroad brought more than just transportation and people to the region, the hurried development of the rail infrastructure precipitated a domino effect on the watershed's hydrologic cycle that would lead, in short order, to the complete channelization of the system. Confinement of the waterways, in turn, facilitated increased development.

After the storms of 1914, the County sent James P. Reagan, the Los Angeles County Flood Control Engineer all over the region to interview landowners of long standing about their experiences with flooding in the region, and to solicit their opinions about what should be done. Of those interviewed about the Tujunga Watershed, a majority remarked upon the construction of the Southern Pacific Railroad as the most singular intervention of consequence.

J.T. Wilson and J.H. Barclay were among those interviewed. Both had first come to the San Fernando Valley from Los Angeles in 1871 and had paid close attention to the hydrology in the region. According to their accounts, when they first came to the valley, the country was covered in "juniper, elders and some oak trees." The Tujunga Wash was running into the Los Angeles River with fewer branches that were narrow and deep, and with no great wide stretches as had developed by 1914. Pacoima creek was "only about one-third as wide as it is now." Mr. Barclay noted that the Southern Pacific Railroad had only left one 22 ft.-wide opening for the Tujunga, causing the channel to erode to a depth of about 40 or 50 feet. Mr. Wilson noted a change in 1875, when the "Tujunga broke out at the SPRR [Southern Pacific Railroad] and followed the railroad and the

Figure H-7. Railroad Bridge Washout, 1914
(Los Angeles Public Library)

washout left the ground in about the same shape as it is at the present time." He said the railroad built a dike to force the water to go under the bridges, but in every large rain since, the wash continued to obliterate the dike (Reagan, 1915).

Wilson did not approve of the efforts to cement the channels and recommended willow and other grasses could provide "bank protection," and recommended specifics for developing spreading grounds at the mouth of the canyon to help mitigate storm flows and encourage water absorption into the ground (Reagan, 1915).

The subsequent report to the Board of Supervisors made five primary recommendations for the watershed: construction of a masonry dam with a large impounding reservoir in Tujunga canyon, construction of a rock fill dam at Pacoima canyon, spreading of stream flows on 3,135 acres of land set aside for infiltration at the canyon mouths, check dams in the upper watershed, and reforestation of mountain slopes (Olmsted, 1915). The state legislature created the Los Angeles County Flood Control and Water Conservation District in June of 1915.

In 1931, the County constructed Big Tujunga Dam about 14 miles upstream of the valley floor to impound storm flows and conserve water. In March of 1938, after several days of rain had filled the dam to capacity, the region was hit by another storm front, and a decision was made to open the dam gates. A torrent of water poured through the canyon and across the valley floor, killing ninety-six people (Roderick, 2001). The flood ultimately led to the channelizing of the Los Angeles River and its tributaries.

The Hansen Dam, the largest earth-filled dam in the world, was built in 1940 to retain drainage from the Big and Little Tujunga canyons. It was named for Dr. Homer Hansen, who owned the property and 14 miles of the riverbanks in Big Tujunga Canyon. The construction displaced streets and ranches, but a 1,500-acre facility with picnic areas and a recreational lake was built for the community in return (Pozzo, 2005). With storm flows contained, development of the valley could continue unabated.

Figure H-8. Construction of Hansen Dam, 1939.
(San Fernando Valley Historical Society)

Figure H-9. Olive grove in Sylmar.
(West Valley Museum, CSUN Library)

The Valley Identity Evolves

With the seemingly unlimited availability of water for irrigation, agriculture was the culture of the valley during the 1920s (Roderick, 2001). There were a number of large ranches. Various crops flourished during this time period including olives, sugar beets, grapes, walnuts, oranges, tomatoes and lima beans (Roderick, 2001).

During the 1920s and 1930s Tujunga became famous after “Singing Jimmie Smith” wrote and recorded an homage: “The Best Little Town in the U.S.A.” Bolton Hall, built from boulders and rocks that washed down the canyon, served as an important location for community building and cultural events and was used as the venue for a number of civic organizations, concerts, meetings, and dances, as well as all church services (Pozzo, 2005).

Agriculture was not the only industry that boomed during this time period. Shortly after the beginning of the twentieth century, movie directors began to flock to the valley for filming because of its versatile terrain and authentic looking western locations. In comparison to New York or even Hollywood the valley was predictably sunnier, this was an advantage to film makers since every frame of film had to be exposed in natural light. Thousands of films, including *Birth of a Nation*, *Casablanca* and *It’s a Wonderful Life* were filmed in the area. With a little movie magic, the areas varied terrains stood-in for just about anywhere on earth.

In 1928 Mack Sennett, also known as “The King of Comedy”, built Sennett Studios on a former lettuce ranch along Ventura Blvd. near the confluence of Tujunga Wash and the LA River. His movies featured famous comedian Charlie Chaplin. However, the Great Depression hit and the studio was forced to close due to bankruptcy. In 1935 the studio became known as Republic Studios, home of movie cowboys Gene Autry, Roy Rogers and John Wayne, and grew to making fifty movies a year. In 1963 CBS Television Network leased the studios and through various business deals with production companies, has been home to a number of television series and movies (Roderick, 2001).

Figure H-9. Republic Studio, 1930.
(San Fernando Valley Historical Society)

A number of movie studios, including Universal, Warner Brothers and Disney, were established along the banks of the Los Angeles River. The motion picture business became the valley's third largest industry, behind ranching and real estate development. Studio City was developed adjacent to Sennett Studios, covering almost 500 acres with residential subdivisions and businesses. Maxwell Terrace, at Ventura and Laurel Canyon Boulevards, became the first housing development in the southern watershed (Roderick 2001).

As the movie industry moved to the San Fernando Valley, movie stars came to the valley to live and relax. Actors and actresses enjoyed a lifestyle that catered to their more pampered sides. Country clubs, golf courses, airfields, polo and cricket fields, equestrian centers, and swimming pools appeared in the valley to serve the wants and needs of the rich. One remaining example of this is the Lakeside Country Club, which attracted a large number of celebrities (Roderick, 2001).

While the seemingly perpetual sunshine was one of the things that made the valley attractive to the movie industry, the literary community often illuminated the dark side of valley life. Raymond Chandler's short story *Red Wind* focused on the effects that the valley's Santa Ana winds often had: "[T]hose hot dry [winds] that come down through the mountain passes and curl your hair and make your nerves jump and your skin itch. On nights like that every booze party ends in a fight. Meek little wives feel the edge of the carving knife and study their husbands' necks. Anything can happen." James M. Cain's *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and *Double Indemnity* were also set here.

Transportation and Parks?

In 1911, The Pacific Electric Trolley system, which had been established by M.H. Sherman was taken over by a group of investors, many of them the same men who engineered the great land and water scheme. By 1913, they had extended the trolley system to the far reaches of the valley. The red car system stretched from the valley to as far east as Azusa and Covina, and as far south as San Pedro, Santa Ana and Newport Beach (EHRA, 2006). The valley's roads were still largely dirt; new automobiles and horse-drawn carriages shared a single road through the Cahuenga pass to the city. The trolley gave residents, especially young people, freedom to travel the region. The trolley took valley residents to the beach, the mountains, Hollywood and a numerous attractions that drew newcomers to the region including "freak exhibits" and other "must sees" (Pozzo, 2005).

Figure H-10. The "Red Car" comes to Van Nuys, 1911.
(Los Angeles Valley College)

In 1907, the Reverend Dana Bartlett published *The Better City*, wherein he promoted the notion that nature offered the regenerative powers to help battle temptations and vices. Citing growth projections, he advocated for the creation of parks, especially ones that presented "the natural condition which the city dweller longs for; parks so large that there is room for the planting of all kinds of trees in their native soils and altitudes." He called for the city to engage a planner to realize this grand vision.

Twenty years later, the prestigious Olmsted Brothers and Harland Bartholomew and Associates Firms were hired by a "citizens committee," comprised largely of Chamber of Commerce members, to develop a comprehensive plan to address the need to dedicate park space in the rapidly expanding Los Angeles region. In their report, *Parks, Playgrounds, and Beaches for the Los Angeles Region*, they found that the region spent more than other comparable American cities to "advertise its assets, but also spent the least to maintain and enhance them," that Los Angeles did not meet the minimum recreation facility number, that the Los Angeles River was serving as a sewer for industries rather than as a clean water source, and that dozens of the City's parks should be condemned due to their filthy and unsanitary condition. The plan was submitted to the committee in 1930, but was quietly shelved (Hise and Deverell, 2000).

Three factors have been variously attributed to the plan's deliberate demise. First, given the wide geographic scope of the plan, the City's existing Parks Department and Playground Recreation Department faced elimination in lieu of a new countywide parks commission. Second, the cost was high, and the City was still using revenue form taxes to pay for the construction of the Los Angeles Aqueduct. In addition, faced with the reality of the choice, the major developer/landowners in the valley preferred to maximize their potential profit rather than set aside land for a shared park system. (Hise and Deverell, 2000; Falzarano, 2003).

By the 1920s, as the popularity of automobiles increased, trolley service to some communities was discontinued as tracks were paved over, and the trains had to yield their high speed right of ways to traffic crossings. Lack of public support defeated plans for a subway or elevated rail system, and bus lines began to replace the red cars in many areas (USC, 2002).

World War II brought a brief resurgence in popularity to rail travel, and the refurbishing of some lines. At its peak, the Pacific Electric Railway was huge: 1,150 miles of track covering four counties and 900 cars. 1944 marked the highest ridership: over 109 million passengers. But by the 1950s it was clear that the automobile had become the premier means of travel in L.A. The explosive growth and sprawl of L.A. in the postwar years, lack of public money to keep up the existing lines, and the huge increase in automobiles all conspired to kill the red cars. The last regular trolley car left the valley at the end of 1952. All trackage was pulled up except for the SP trackage in the vicinity of North Hollywood. The right-of-way through Cahuenga Pass was paved over in 1957 to add two additional lanes to the Hollywood Freeway (EHRA, 2006).

World War II Industry and the Post-War Boom

By 1936, the City of Los Angeles controlled the electric power business within city limits. The combination of water and power supplies made the region an ideal location for some of the nations largest industries, including chemicals, electronics, and of course, aircraft design and manufacturing for World War II. In 1940, as the country was entering into World War II, aircraft factories had begun to emerge near the valley's airfields. Residents became welders, assemblers and designers for warplanes and machinery. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Lockheed Corporation employed 90,000 people (Falzarano, 2003). By the end of the decade, nine of the ten largest manufacturers in the valley were in the service of the Defense Department (Roderick, 2001).

The 3,177 people of Japanese descent that lived in the San Fernando Valley were important contributors

to the agricultural economy in the region. When President Roosevelt signed the order that forced them into internment camps in 1942, the farms that much of the valley's economy relied upon were left to fallow until women and teenage boys (who comprised much of the remaining work force not drafted for the war effort) took over the farming (Falzarano, 2003). After the war ended and the Japanese Americans were released, they returned to their former homes and farms to find out that they had lost everything. Their land had been turned into subdivisions or was owned by other people, and they were not able to participate in the "valley dream" that benefited war veterans and families looking for a fresh start (Roderick, 2001). The San Fernando Valley Japanese American Center opened in 1951 to preserve the culture and language of the Japanese American community in the valley. It continues to this day to serve as a vibrant community center (SFVJACC, 2006).

Figure H-11. Panorama Ranch 1946, with Tujunga Wash on right, Pacoima Wash on left.
(Los Angeles Public Library)

Before the war, much of the region was relatively rural and lacked running water, sewers, paved roads, and streetlights. Post war development in the San Fernando Valley witnessed the introduction and rapid proliferation of the suburb to the Tujunga Watershed. Developer Fritz R. Burns, and industrialist Henry J. Kaiser, had introduced standardized tract housing in North Hollywood just prior to the war. On May 9, 1945, the day after World War II ended, they announced their plan to develop Panorama City. Burns and Kaiser constructed their idea of the perfect town and provided the modern infrastructure to support it. Schools, churches, hospitals, and commercial centers needed to serve the population soon followed (Roderick, 2001).

Panorama City became an important hub for the rest of the valley because of its amenities and job-creating industries. The second largest General Motors plant in the country, the Schlitz Brewing Company, and the Carnation Research Laboratory all sprung up around it. The San Fernando Valley was quickly deemed "the best real estate market in the world." The region, with its suburban lifestyle, suddenly became very attractive to veterans on the GI Bill who with their families moved into the newly built, affordable tract homes. Radio stations promoted the valley lifestyle to their nationwide listeners, with one broadcaster saying GI's liked it because "it reminds them of their own hometown" (Roderick, 2001). After World War II, the area became almost completely white and middle class. This was a trend was the "epitome of everything that we associate with the great demographic dispersion of the post-war era" (Kotkin and Ozuna 2002).

Figure H-12.
Panorama City and shopping center, 1955.
(Los Angeles Public Library)

By 1950, the San Fernando Valley's population exploded to 402,538 residents, becoming the ninth-busiest urban area in the United States. In short order, the area had transformed from a sparsely populated region dominated by agriculture to a bona fide American suburb.

The development of the valley allowed for a lifestyle different from, but in proximity to, urban living. The valley lifestyle during the Post war era was characterized as "casual" and became what is now known as the "Southern California way of life." Tract homes allowed for families to have their own spacious yards and entertain guests with barbecues and backyard pools. There were parks to play baseball in, and "safe" streets to wander. When the Dodger's moved to Los Angeles in the 1950s, baseball became an important part of daily life and fans spent their summers listening to the World Series on their radios. Churches and synagogues were important institutions where valley residents interacted and built their strong community connections. (Roderick, 2001)

While many enjoyed "valley living," some realized the importance of the past and fought to keep the region's rural roots. 1940's city-planning director Charles B. Bennett predicted the harmful impacts of growing too fast. He proposed a new way of living that embraced the current changes and the old way of life. He believed that it was possible to preserve the rural past and maintain open space. He proposed mixed zoning to maintain small farms, and emphasized the natural beauty of the region by proposing the planting of native trees and the creation of bridle paths along the washes and tributary streams. However, growth was important to developers who believed that the region could grow to 2 million, and Bennett's ideas were dismissed (Roderick, 2001).

After the elimination of the trolley system, public transportation was virtually nonexistent and automobiles were necessary to navigate the region. As more people flocked to the valley, dependence on automobiles caused smog to become a serious health issue, especially for children. Congestion increased, and it wasn't

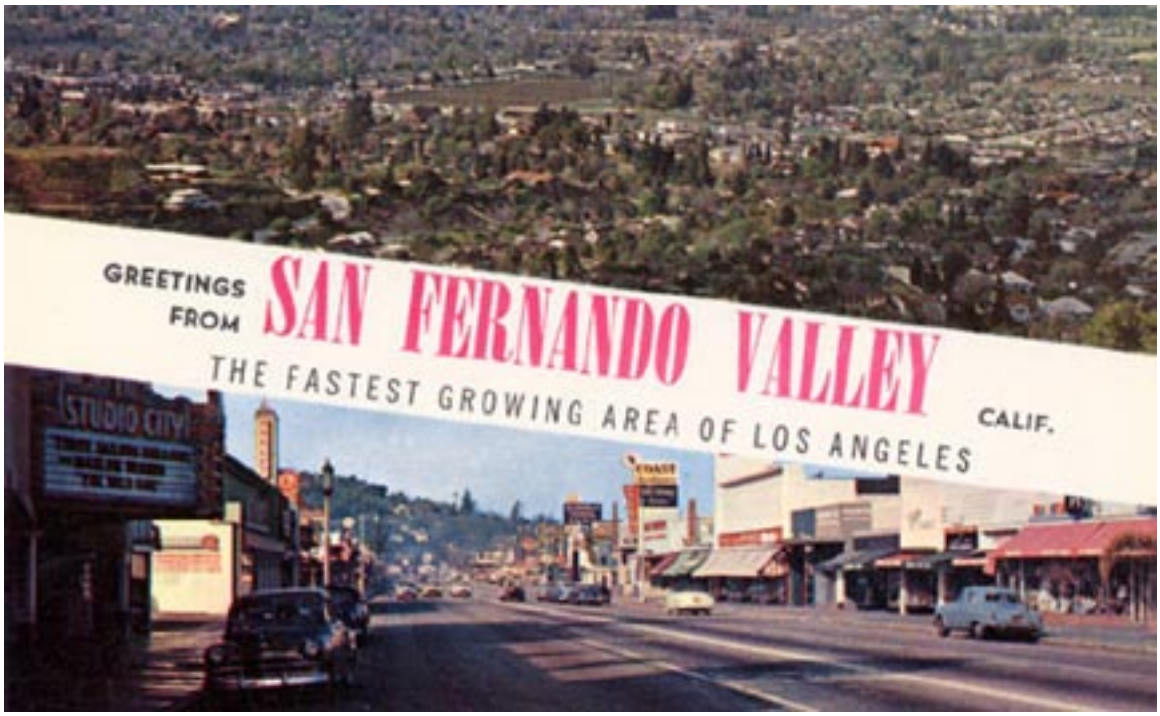

Figure H-13. '50's post card.
(Delmar T. Oviatt Library, Urban Archives Center)

until the 1960's that freeways would be constructed to ease the traffic on the small, country roads. Many of the reasons that people sought to live in the valley seemed to be drifting away, and these problems began to infringe on the "valley life" so many adored (Roderick, 2001).

Confirming the predictions of Bartlett, the Olmsteds, and Bennett before him, a city planning consultant in 1956 commented: "The valley is neither as livable or efficient as it might have been." He noted that not enough land had been set aside for parks and public spaces to support cohesive communities, and the proliferation of strip malls was "not only inefficient in that it strangles traffic movement, but it is violently ugly and blighting to the residential areas fringing it." He concluded that suburbia had been allowed to "sprawl uniformly mile after mile, with little variation in density or dwelling type, making for monotony not only of view but of inhabitants" (Roderick, 2001).

Changes in America's Suburb

In the late 1950's the community of Pacoima came to exemplify the valley's changing culture through a rock and roll idol and a Baptist minister.

Figure H-14.
Richie Valens signs autographs for fans, 1958.
(Del-Fi Records)

Richie Valenzuela was a guitar-playing Chicano kid whose heroes were Roy Rogers and Gene Autry. At 16, he joined the Silhouettes, a local garage band with an ethnic mix that reflected Pacoima: Black, Japanese and Chicano. They quickly became in demand at dances all over the valley. A local record company signed Richie – without the Silhouettes – to a contract and changed his name to Richie Valens. His first record hit the national pop charts within months. His second hit, Donna, was written for a white girl he met at a Panorama City party, whose parents did not approve of their dating. La Bamba was the flip side to that single. With these three hits, Richie became the first rock and roll star of Mexican ancestry and the valley's hometown hero. He was killed in a plane crash at 18. Today, a park bearing his name stands at Laurel Canyon and Paxton, and the US Postal service created a Richie Valens stamp in 2000 (Roderick, 2001).

Pacoima was the valley's defacto ghetto and a haven for the African American community. In 1960, 90% of the valley's African American population lived in Pacoima. It was the one valley community where deed restrictions, though ruled unconstitutional in 1948, were not practiced. Hillery T. Broadus, the pastor of the local Baptist Church, fought to change that. He helped found the Fair Housing Council of the valley in 1960, and through his efforts, the valley began to change. Rev Broadus helped quell tensions in Pacoima after the Watts riots of 1964 (Roderick, 2001).

Today there is an elementary school named after him on Filmore Street in Pacoima.

By 1960, population in the valley had doubled again over the course of a decade, and the arrival of the freeways opened the door for another development frenzy. Easy travel in and out of the area spelled the death knell for the last of the valleys citrus and walnut groves.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the emergent social and cultural revolution had a significant impact on the 100,000 teenagers coming of age. The children of those who sought the "American Dream" and "valley lifestyle" rebelled against their parents' patriotic, crew-cut ethic. The new counter-culture began to fight for the right to wear their skirts short and their hair long, and refused to participate in traditions of the towns such as parades and festivals. Weekend activities were no longer centered on barbecues in their parent's backyards. If you were a teenager in the valley, your objective was to get out (Roderick, 2001).

Teen alienation combined with car culture to create activities like car clubs, drag racing and cruising Van Nuys Boulevard on Wednesday night, or racing on the San Fernando Drag Strip, later celebrated in movies like *Rebel Without a Cause* and *American Graffiti*. Drive-in movie theaters like the Victory, the SanVal, the Laurel and the Van Nuys were date night magnets (Roderick, 2001).

By the mid-sixties, rock music festivals, war protests, and campus demonstrations for racial justice taking place in the valley were making national news headlines. In February 1966, Neal Cassady, Wavy Gravy and the Grateful Dead unleashed one of their "acid tests" at the Unitarian church on Haskell known as The Onion (Roderick, 2001).

Two months before Woodstock in June of 1969, the three-day *Newport '69* headlining Jimi Hendrix, Joe Cocker, The Byrds, Jethro Tull, Creedence Clearwater, Marvin Gaye, Ike and Tina Turner, and Miles Davis, among others, drew 200,000 fans to Devonshire Downs. The largest rock festival the country had ever seen was staged in the middle of suburbia (Roderick, 2001).

Figure H-15. Cruising Van Nuys Boulevard in the 60's.
(Los Angeles Times)

When two Manson Family members were arrested in San Fernando on August 8, 1969 for trying to use stolen credit cards, Manson ordered a revenge killing. The Tate-LaBianco murders brought the summer of love to a grisly end that caused valley residents to look more closely at their neighbors. The image of the valley as a safe haven had been irrevocably altered (Roderick, 2001).

In 1974, artist Judith Baca conceived The Great Wall of Los Angeles, a public art project painted on the concrete walls of the channelized Tujunga Wash, adjacent to Los Angeles Valley College. Through her leadership it was completed over five summers by urban youth. The Great Wall represents the "the history of ethnic peoples of California from prehistoric times to the 1950s" and is a "monument to inter-racial harmony". It displays significant periods in Los Angeles history such as the Japanese internment, the Zoot Suit Riots and the Civil Rights movement. The Great Wall includes a greenway and trails and is recognized as the largest mural in the world (SPARC, 2006).

The 1970s brought controversy over school bussing, with many valley residents fighting to maintain the status quo. Under pressure to de-segregate the school system, Los Angeles board of education planned to bus thousands of students all across Los Angeles. In fear, many families moved their children to private schools or left the valley for smaller municipalities outside the school district. White flight accelerated the changing face of the valley (Roderick, 2001).

Shopping malls like Valley Plaza and Sherman Oaks Fashion Square became social centers for those too young to drive themselves out of the valley, especially young girls. This new subculture would be widely satirized in later years in the hit song 'Valley Girls' (written by Moon Unit, daughter of local counterculture icon Frank Zappa).

Figure H-16. Great Wall of Los Angeles Mural (Detail). (SPARC)

In the 1980s, pornographic film production and distribution began to replace manufacturing as one of the valley's largest industries, as the General Motors and Lockheed plants closed their doors. Welfare caseloads in the watershed soared by 80,000 in the year and a half following Lockheed's closure. Formerly working class families were now living below the poverty line.

In the wake of widespread unemployment, another subculture took root in the valley. Several prominent gangs emerged and gang violence became an issue of concern. The most dangerous street in Los Angeles, according to the LAPD, was not in South Central or East L.A., but in the Tujunga Watershed on Blythe Street, a few blocks from the shuttered General Motors plant (Davis, 1997). The Los Angeles Police Department has three gang injunctions within the watershed: Blythe Street, Langdon Street and the Pacoima Project Boys (LAPD, 2006).

The New Century

In the Tujunga Watershed, minority populations now constitute the majority of the overall population (see appendix 4). This is clearly expressed by the record of commonly spoken languages in public schools. After English and Spanish, the most common languages in the valley are Armenian, Korean, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Farsi, Russian, Thai, Punjabi, Arabic and Khmer. The least diverse sections of the valley are now the traditional minority enclaves. Elementary schools in Pacoima feature just one non-English language: Spanish (Roderick, 2001).

The valley was once considered a suburban area, but that may no longer be the case. The valley is following a pattern that is occurring across the country, and is actually considered an "older suburb" or "midopolis". Residents have left and begun to move further out of the region into more remote suburbs, and change occurs in the racial and ethnic makeup of the area. Many have made the claim that the valley has evolved into "a city in its own right" (Kotkin, 2001).

The concept of the valley becoming a city in its own right is one that had emerged in 1941, in 1960 and in the

mid-1970's. As valley disaffection reached another peak in 1999, the issue of secession was put to the entire city of Los Angeles for a vote. Throughout the debates, the question of water rights was repeatedly raised. In the end, voter turnout was abysmal and the measure failed. But the valley, particularly its underserved communities, continued to express dissatisfaction (Roderick, 2001).

Secession proponents had sought an increased and more efficient level of services, and increased representation for local constituents in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. In an effort to address some of these concerns, Neighborhood Councils were established through an amendment to the Los Angeles City Charter in 2000. Eight of these councils are entirely or almost entirely within the boundaries of the Tujunga Watershed, and nine more have portions of their districts within the watershed (see appendix 4). These councils are recognized as entities of city government, and are involved in land use decisions, delivery of city services, and budgetary processes. In order to incorporate "a more holistic view of the definition of community" and legitimize themselves with those they serve and those they seek to influence, stakeholders with diverse interests are included in the determination of a council's activities. The degree to which they succeed "will affect whether Los Angeles retains its current identity and structure" (Parlow and Keane, 2002).


SUNDAY Daily News

SPECIAL REPORT

Does the Valley get its

FAIR SHARE?

The numbers tell the story

Figure H-17. Some residents feel than the San Fernando Valley should become its own city. (Los Angeles Daily News)

Although the Tujunga Watershed has changed since it was considered "America's suburb", it is still seen as a place where a hard-working family can live the American dream and climb the social ladder. However, the economically built tract homes and apartment buildings that represent relatively affordable housing opportunities for middle-class immigrants are rapidly aging. For developers, this represents a redevelopment opportunity.

Many neighborhoods in the watershed are facing challenges that impact the very things that define their identity. Communities with high percentages of middle class renters are seeing affordable apartments replaced by a proliferation of high-end owner-occupied developments that threaten to limit diversity. Equestrian areas with the last of the large tracts of open space are being replaced with condominiums that meet new density requirements. Density is encouraged along areas defined as transportation corridors, but with the exception of the new Orange express busway, the range of available transportation options in the watershed has not increased along with the population.

In a recent study eighteen percent of valley residents indicated that traffic was what they "liked least about the San Fernando Valley" and sixteen percent indicated, "population/ overcrowding." Twenty four percent indicated that they were "very concerned" and thirty eight percent responded that they were "concerned" about water pollution (EASFV 2000).

Figure H-18. The lower watershed today.
(The River Projects)

Conclusions

It might be argued that certain seminal events that would ultimately have a direct impact on much of the southwest's water took place within the Tujunga Watershed. The numerous lawsuits over riparian rights which ultimately led to the legal determination asserting the city's Pueblo Rights; the creation of the Owens Valley Aqueduct, which became the first of several massive man-made delivery systems to alter eco-systems far beyond local boundaries; the arrival of the railroad, which altered a critical point in the region's hydrology and spawned the genesis of modern flood control. These events together facilitated the rampant development and sprawl that continues to impede watershed function.

The indigenous groups that originally inhabited the region understood the natural cycles of the watershed and preserved the natural landscape to work with the natural hydrologic cycles rather than attempt to control nature. As settlers began to move to the region and introduce new types of land use practices, including livestock, farming and railroads, they ignored the natural conditions and suffered the consequences of flooding. In the 20th century, modern engineering made it possible to obviate human accommodation to nature, but also had the effect of limiting human awareness of natural conditions and access to precious natural resources. The unabated development that followed produced a lack of public open space, significant traffic, and air and water pollution.

Over the past 100 years, the Reverend Dana Bartlett, Olmsted Bros. and Bartholomew Assoc., and Charles Bennett all made recommendations for open space and land use from the perspective of how these approaches would benefit the psychological, social, and spiritual health of human communities. In each case, expediency or profit won out.

People are beginning to think critically again about their relationship to the land and how some of the negative impacts of sprawl and development can be reversed or at least ameliorated.

Recommendations

Improving the human relationship to the watershed is a fundamental requisite for meaningful change. Effort will need to be expended towards expanding awareness and appreciation of the natural character of the Tujunga/Pacoima Watershed, and fostering a human community that values the intrinsic ability of natural eco-systems to support and improve their quality of life. The Senegalese environmentalist Baba Dioum said it succinctly: "In the end we will protect only what we love. We will love only what we know, and we will know only what we are taught."

Establishing an identity for the watershed that links to its natural history can shape perceptions, and inform and justify sustainable practices. In order to assist communities in developing a stronger sense of place, we can begin with those who are actively engaged in learning.

Work with the state's new Education and Environment Initiative to develop and promote curricula in schools that focuses on the specifics of the local eco-system, highlighting habitat, water supply and water quality issues, flood safety, sustainable living, and environmental justice.

Partner with Los Angeles Valley College and Mission College to develop and implement local monitoring and stewardship programs. With the proper resources, students can gather and analyze data, and act as mentors to lower grades.

Provide the community with a means to learn from the indigenous people by developing an educational Tataviam Heritage Center. Include information about tribal history and practices in local educational curricula.

Work with and involve Neighborhood Councils. Neighborhood Councils can shape land use practices and community plans and can be powerful partners in education and outreach.

Support a watershed coordinator to assist in sharing of information, facilitate partnerships, and engage local communities in identifying, prioritizing, designing, implementing and maintaining watershed improvements.

Produce Watershed-U annually in order to foster an understanding of the natural cycles specific to the watershed, inspire a native landscape ethic, provide communities with direct access to resources, create a culture of stewardship, and instill a conservation ethic linked to sustainability.