

## PRELIMINARY REPORT ON RECENT MISSION-ERA FINDINGS AT SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY

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*Excavations occurred in the fall of 2004 at the location of the new Leavey School of Business on the Santa Clara University campus. Archaeologists encountered a Native American housepit that dates to the Mission era. Paintings and descriptions from the Mission period had always suggested that neophytes lived in their native house forms surrounding the mission, as well as in new adobe residential buildings, but this is the first native house form documented archaeologically. Archaeologists also discovered deep pits that were likely for food caching or storage. More pits and remnants of an adobe neophyte residential structure were documented during spring, 2005 excavations at the new Jesuit Center Residence, one block away.*

### INTRODUCTION

Many documentary lines of evidence exist that provide details of the history of Mission Santa Clara. Annual reports and priests' letters found in the Santa Clara University (SCU) campus archives, many of which were recently published (Skowronek and Thompson 2006), give insight into historical events and the experience of the Franciscan fathers. Santa Clara, like many missions, went through trial-and-error phases of construction (see introductory essay by Allen, Hylkema, and Blount). Several historic-era maps, although created well after the Mission period, are particularly important for understanding the Mission complexes. In 1854, a surveyor produced a map of buildings that depicted the third and fifth iterations of the Mission Santa Clara complex. Father Spearman (1958) used this map and other information to plot the Mission-era features found within the boundaries of the university. Figure 1 in the introductory essay (Allen, Hylkema, and Blount, this volume) shows historically mapped mission features superimposed on a current SCU campus map. Drawings also provide evidence for structures and a general sense of the landscape. An 1842 sketch by G. M. Waseurtz af Sandels (Figure 1) illustrates the fifth mission church, as well as the ruins of the third church in the lower right, and rows of adobe residences for the Indian neophytes along the right edge.

Under the supervision of the Franciscan fathers, Indian neophytes constructed all of the buildings within a mission complex. Building programs at all mission sites began with the church, and then expanded to the structures surrounding the church, known as the mission quadrangle. Eventually some adobe structures for neophyte families were built at all missions. At Mission Santa Clara, the first neophyte adobe houses were constructed in 1792, during the construction phase of the third mission church and quadrangle complex. Eight houses were built in 1792, and 14 the following year.

The Mission's annual report does not specify how many rooms were built within each house, but evidence from other missions suggests anywhere from three to seven rooms. The Indian population numbered 1,001 individuals in 1792, and 1,062 in 1793 (Skowronek and Thompson 2006:369), likely too many to house in the new adobe structures, even considering that young girls of marriageable age were housed separately in the quadrangle, in the dormitory known as the *monjerio*.

Contemporary drawings and travel accounts describe native-style houses within the missions. Certainly neophytes lived in native houses prior to the construction of the adobe residences, and it seems very probable that some families continued to live in native houses, as there were never enough adobe residences to house the entire native population. It is most likely that neophytes who had lived longest at the mission would be housed in the adobe structures; newer arrivals constructed native houses in which to live (Allen 1998:51; Farris 1991:40). Duhaut-Cilly, a nineteenth century explorer who visited California in 1827 to 1828, near the end of the Mission period, depicted native houses alongside temporary Spanish-Mexican style palisade (*palisada*) buildings (Figure 2). In the drawing, the native houses are located in an open area in front of the adobe church and quadrangle of Mission San Luis Rey (Egenhoff 1952:43). Alfred Robinson, traveling in 1829, produced a drawing of San Luis Rey with much the same perspective, although he did not depict either the temporary *palisada* or the native structures, perhaps in an effort to "clean up" the perspective. Interestingly, Robinson did depict native structures at Missions San Gabriel and San Buenaventura (Egenhoff 1952:48-50). He also described the native residences: "In many of the villages the residences consist of straw huts of an oval form, which, when decayed, the Indians set on fire and erect new ones..." (Robinson, quoted in Egenhoff 1952:48).

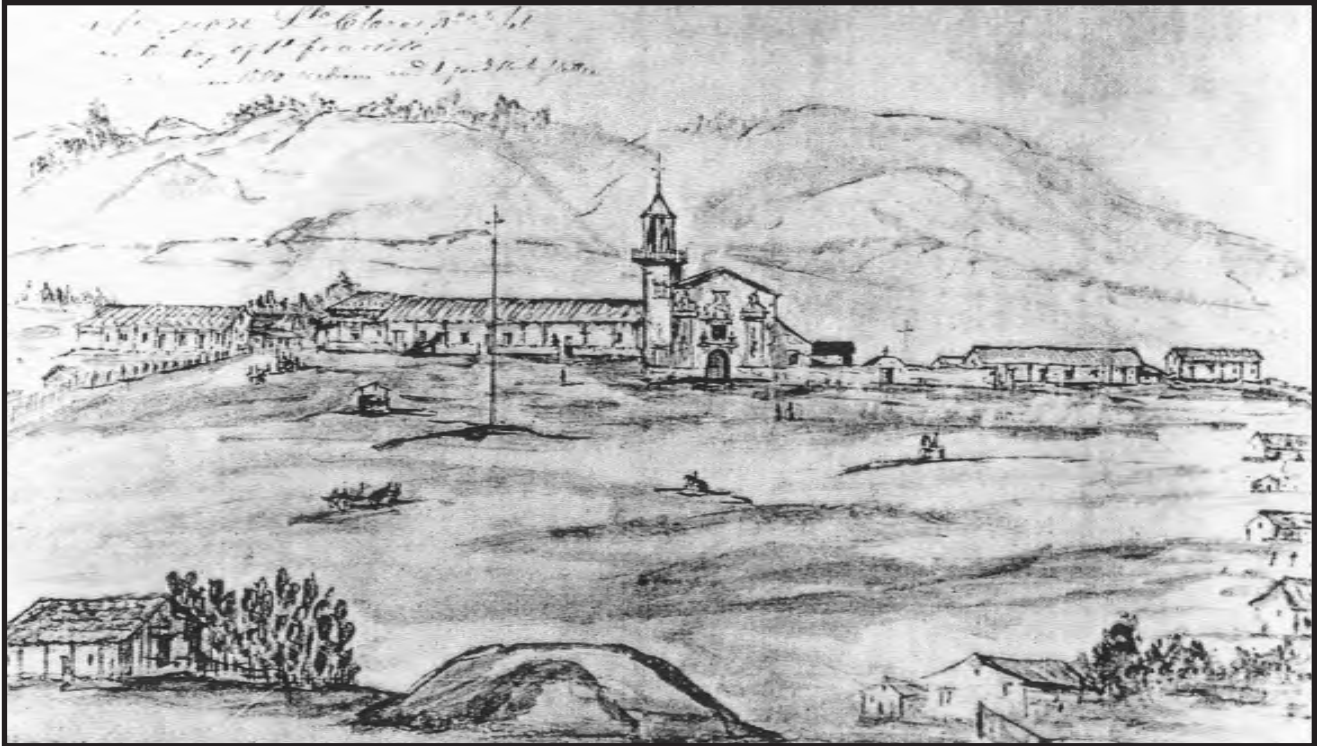


Figure 1. The G. M. Waseurtz at Sandels sketch of Mission Santa Clara, 1842, view to the west. Courtesy of the Santa Clara University Archives.

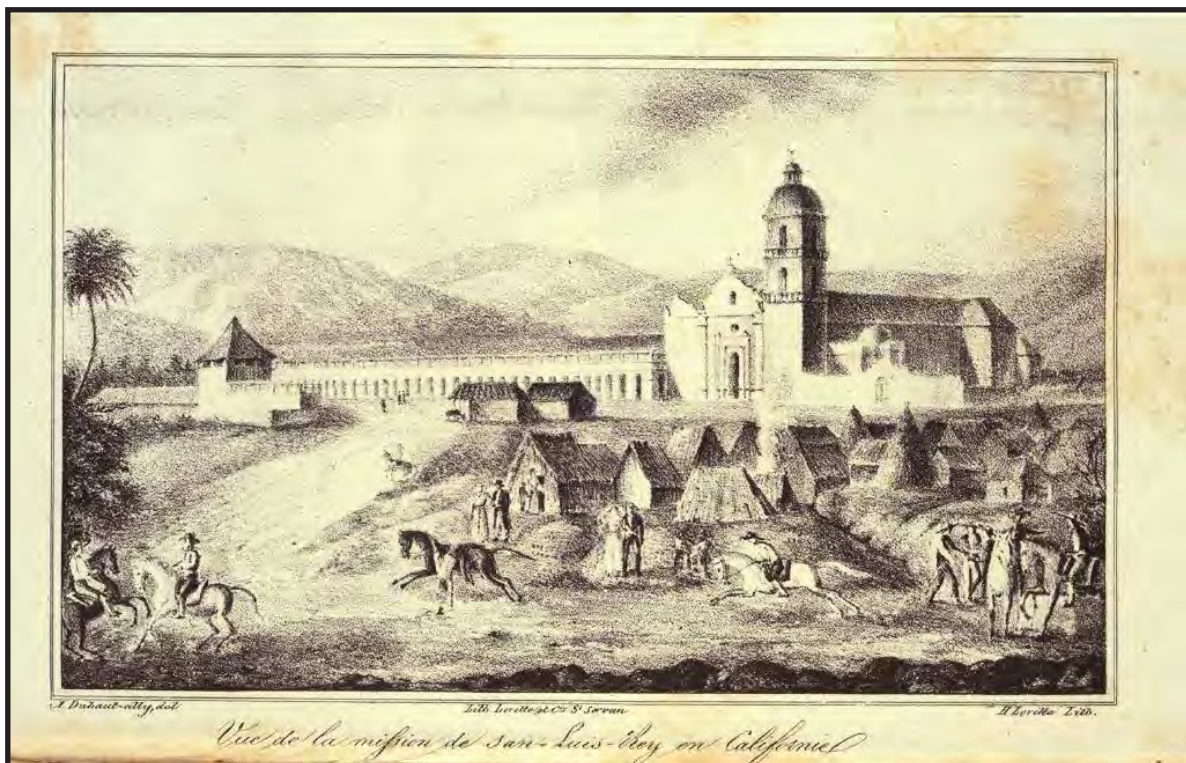


Figure 2. View of Mission San Luis Rey, showing adobe, palisade, and native structures. Drawn by Auguste Duhaute-Cilly, ca. 1827-1828. Courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

## HOUSEPIT AND OTHER MISSION FEATURES AT SANTA CLARA

At Mission Santa Clara, recent excavations encountered the first *archaeologically* documented native residence that dates to the Mission period. Designated Feature 57, the housepit was circular in plan view, and measured 9.8 ft. (3 m.) in diameter. First identified as an irregularly shaped stain in the bottom of a large area of excavation, a half-circle became apparent as more overburden soil was removed mechanically (Figure 3). Hand-excavation of the now-recognizable housepit revealed the details of this remarkable find (Figure 4).

The circular housepit was shaped like a shallow basin with sloping walls and a flat floor. A slightly raised berm extended around the eastern half of the housepit, and likely continued on the western edge. A hearth with intact ash fill was located in the center of the housepit. A posthole was situated just south of the hearth. A second posthole, on the opposite side of the hearth, was truncated and expanded by the excavation of a large pit (Feature 57B) that clearly had been dug into the abandoned and burned housepit at a later date. From the housepit, what was interpreted as an entryway extended westward. A small, shallow secondary hearth was found at the western extension of the entryway. This suggests that the entryway itself was not covered, but became hard-packed with use. Another post-abandonment pit feature, designated Feature 57C, truncated the hard-packed entryway at its westernmost extension.

Burned soil in the profile of the housepit clearly indicated that the house had been burned after abandonment, a typical pattern of native residence, and one indicated by Robinson in the above quotation. Burned vegetal material covered the floor of the housepit. This material is currently being identified, but it appears to be remnants of the structure itself. Fill from both the central hearth and the small exterior hearth were collected as soil samples, and the macrofloral and pollen analysis of the features will be reported on at a later date. Artifacts associated with the housepit are currently under study, but include Mexican lead-glaze, majolica, and locally made ceramics, a reworked Desert Side-notched projectile point, a Franciscan chert flake tool, glass and *Olivella* shell beads, animal bone, shell, fire-affected rock, and charcoal. Also found were fragments of *tejas*, Mission-period roof tiles that are ubiquitous in Mission-related archaeological features on the Santa Clara campus.

The intrusive pits (features 57B and 57C) excavated into the layers associated with the housepit were similar to seven other pit features found in the vicinity of the housepit. Another shallow Mission-era pit feature was later found in a different area within the excavation area proposed for the Leavey School of Business. Across Franklin Street, in the area designated for the new Jesuit Center Residence and a

parking lot, four other similar Mission-era pit features were found. Large amounts of roof tile and animal bone filled the pit features. The pits seemed to be of two varieties. The first, roughly conical in shape, were excavated to about 3-4 ft. in depth (Figure 5). The second type combined two associated pits, with larger, deeper pits (up to 5 ft. in depth) dug adjacent to shallower "platform" pits (2-3 ft. in depth). These "platforms" would have allowed easier access to the deeper pits. Figure 6 shows Feature 63, the latter kind of pit and platform; Feature 63 even had hand- and footholds visible in the sidewalls. In addition to the roof tile and animal bone, all pits had domestic materials found within the fill, including chipped stone; clamshell, *Olivella*, and glass beads; imported and local ceramics; charcoal; fire-affected rock; and other cultural debris.

Also in the Leavey School of Business project area, in the vicinity of the north sidewalk of the Franklin Center, archaeologists re-exposed a long, linear rock feature that appeared to be a cobble foundation of a very large structure. Other Mission-era features found in the Jesuit Center Residence area included a possible animal slaughtering area and the foundation of an adobe neophyte residence. As proposed construction would have minimal impact on the neophyte residence, this feature was identified and tested, but not fully excavated. It was covered with geocloth and left in place. All of these features and their artifact assemblages are still under study.

## ASSOCIATING FEATURES WITH NATIVE GROUPS

The Ohlone first came into contact with Europeans in 1602-03 during the voyage of Sebastian Vizcaino (quoted in Broadbent 1972:47), who briefly described the Ohlone inhabitants of Monterey, also known as the Rumsen:

The land [is] well populated with Indians without number[,] many of whom came on different occasions to our camp. They seem to be gentle and peaceful people; they say with signs that there are many villages inland. The sustenance which these Indians eat most of daily, besides fish and shellfish, is acorns and another fruit larger than a chestnut; this is what we could understand of them.

This contact was brief, and it was not until nearly 170 years later that the Ohlone again made contact with the Spanish. In 1769, Gaspar de Portolá, traveling north by land along the Pacific Ocean from San Diego in order to establish a settlement in Monterey, was the first European to sight San Francisco Bay. As he journeyed through Ohlone territory, Portolá gave brief descriptions of the Indians he encountered. The following year, Lieutenant Pedro Fages led a small expedition inland from Monterey. One of the expedition's chroniclers, Juan Crespi, made extensive notes



Figure 3. Excavation of Housepit Feature 57 and intrusive Pit Feature 57B in progress. Photograph by R. Scott Baxter, Past Forward, Inc., August 2004.



Figure 4. Clinton Blount photographing the housepit, and Dave Makar excavating Pit Feature 57C. Photograph by Rebecca Allen, Past Forward, Inc., August 2004.



Figure 5. Hannah Hicok drawing profile of Pit Feature 23. Photograph by Rebecca Allen, Past Forward, Inc., May 2005.

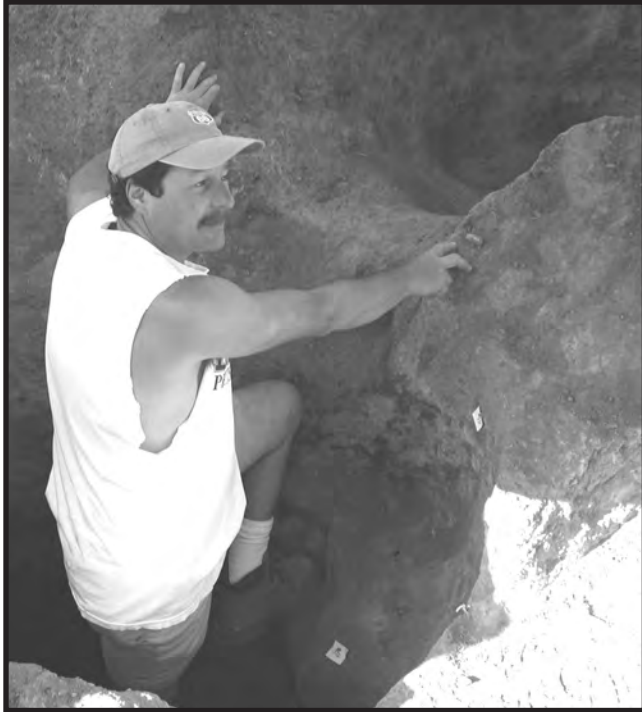


Figure 6. Tim Kennedy demonstrating the foot and hand holds in Pit Feature 63. Photograph by R. Scott Baxter, May 2005.

on the aboriginal inhabitants of the area. From that time on, the Spanish were a constant presence in the lives of the Ohlone. Between 1770 and 1797, seven missions were established within Ohlone territory (Levy 1978:486). In January 1777, Mission Santa Clara was founded on the west side of the Guadalupe River. This drastic influx of foreigners, combined with the pressures of forced missionization and disease, resulted in abrupt modifications of native traditional cultures.

In the late eighteenth century, the Ohlone occupied the San Francisco peninsula, the East Bay south to the Delta, and the Santa Clara Valley down to Monterey and inland to San Juan Bautista. This area encompassed a mosaic of different ecological communities, from grasslands, woodlands, and chaparral to redwood forests and seacoasts, as well as bay estuaries and tidal marshes. Estimates of total numbers of Ohlone, who traditionally lived in small villages or “tribelets” at the time of European contact, are varied. A. L. Kroeber (1925) suggested an estimate of 7,000 people, while Cook (1943) posited a total of about 11,000 at the beginning of the Mission period, and Heizer (1974) and Levy (1978) estimated about 10,000. Based on mission records, Milliken et al. (1993:25) estimated a population density of about 2.5 people per square mile. In the San Francisco peninsula area, Milliken (1995:19) noted that the earliest explorers usually encountered native villages every “three to five miles,” and that their descriptions suggested village populations numbering from 60 to 90 persons. Estimates of

village size elsewhere in Ohlone territory range from 200 to 400 people.

From its inception in 1777 until 1810, Mission Santa Clara recruited only Ohlone neophytes. Annual reports at the Mission state that there were 13 neophytes in 1777, 910 in 1790, 1,343 in 1800, and 1,332 in 1810 (also reported in Skowronek and Thompson 2006:369). Disease had always been a problem at the Mission, and numbers were kept up by new recruitment rather than by the births of large numbers of neophyte children. As the numbers of Ohlone both within and outside of the mission system declined, the Spanish fathers looked to neighboring native groups as a new source of neophyte population. Traditional Ohlone lands were bounded to the north and northeast by the Coast Miwok, and to the east by the San Joaquin Valley Yokuts. In 1811, the first of the Yokuts-speaking natives were brought into Mission Santa Clara. As Milliken (2002:58) notes, more than 1,800 San Joaquin Valley Yokuts arrived over the next 30 years. In 1834, at the end of the Mission period, 48 Miwok-speaking people were brought into Mission Santa Clara (Skowronek and Thompson 2006:287).

Milliken (2002:60-61) summarizes the mix of native groups at Mission Santa Clara in 1836, at the end of the Mission period:

At the beginning of that year there were 1,189 baptized Indians at the mission and its outlying ranches. About one-third of them, 367 people, were Ohlone-speakers from the original villages of the Santa Clara Valley environs or their descendants (31 percent of the total). The great majority, 622 people, were native Yokuts speakers from the San Joaquin Valley, and their children (52 percent of the total). In addition, 37 young people were descendants of Ohlone-Yokuts mission marriages (3 percent of the total). Sierra Miwok-speaking migrants from the Sierra Nevada foothills totaled 104 people (9 percent of the total). Another 50 people from the “*tulares*” were either Miwok or Yokuts speakers (5 percent of the total).

Based on the artifact assemblage and the shape of the housepit excavated at Mission Santa Clara, preliminary research suggests that Yokuts-speaking natives inhabited the residence. Housepits in the prehistoric archaeological record as rare as well, but comparison of the Santa Clara features with prehistoric housepits found in the San Joaquin Valley (Pritchard 1970:31-41) is promising. Additional research for other prehistoric examples is under way.

During the Mission period at Santa Clara, the third Mission church and quadrangle site was occupied from 1784 to 1818, the fourth from 1818 to 1825, and the fifth from 1825 to 1836 (use of the fifth church also extended

into later Mexican and American periods). The arrival of the Yokuts-speaking people into the Mission in 1811 suggests a possible beginning date of occupation of the housepit, and likely use of the adjacent probable storage pits. Comparison of the artifact assemblage with features associated with the occupation of the third Mission site (Hylkema 1995) suggests that the housepit and other features likely date to at least the occupation of the fourth Mission complex. Further analysis of the artifacts is necessary to refine this date, and *Olivella* shell beads in particular hold promise (Hylkema and Allen, this volume).

### CONCLUSIONS

Historical archaeology often has the potential to give voice to those who are underrepresented in the documentary record. In this case, it can help to fill in the gaps in that record with regard to the residential structures and daily life of the native populations that were brought into the Mission as neophytes. Archaeological discoveries also prompt new historical investigations, and prompt researchers to ask new questions of old documents, in this case the teasing-out of details concerning native-style residences and daily habits. Here history and archaeology intersect, and one field of study informs, challenges, and expands upon the other.

The most common views of the Mission period show the Mission church and quadrangle complex. Fewer show the outlying structures, including the neophyte residential area, and these generally depict tidy rows of adobe buildings. A notable exception is an artist's reconstruction commissioned for the Mission Vieja de la Purísima (see Costello 1994:76). In this drawing, the village of native-style huts extends out behind and to the side of the south wing of the Mission quadrangle. At Mission Santa Clara, the housepit and probable storage pits were within view of the Mission churches associated with the third, fourth, and fifth complexes. The neophyte adobe residences were located farther to the north, closest to the third church, but farther away from the later churches. The large plaza area in front of these complexes was empty and tidy, as is often depicted; these recent excavations indicate that the area actually was filled with native residences, likely those of new arrivals into the Mission system. The fact that one of the housepits survived in the archaeological record is remarkable – the remainder of the block all around this sole housepit had been almost completely disturbed by American-period occupation, which left its own traces in the archaeological record. The possible food cache or storage pits are intriguing – native houses were within site of the fathers, but the contents of the pits, perhaps, were not.

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