



During the Depression, apricot orchards like this one drew thousands of hopeful migrant families to low-paid seasonal work in the Santa Clara and San Joaquin valleys. CHS Library, San Francisco.

while protesting U.S. policies in Central America. The prisoners were temporarily detained in the same wooden trailers that the Navy had used to transport the black ammunition loaders to the docks during World War II. On the day of his arrest, Allen wore a T-shirt decorated with the slogan "Remember Port Chicago." In his book, Allen has succeeded admirably in preserving the memory of the place, and in defending the reputations of 50 sailors who had the courage to stand up for their rights 45 years ago. CHS

*The Harvest Gypsies:
On the Road to
The Grapes of Wrath.*

By John Steinbeck. Introduction by Charles Wollenberg. (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1988, 80 pp., photos, \$7.95 paper.)

Reviewed by James N. Gregory, Associate Professor of History, University of California, Berkeley.

Two and one-half years before the publication of *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck wrote a series of articles for the *San Francisco News* that signaled his mounting concern for the plight of the Dust Bowl migrants. California was just beginning to learn about the families arriving in large numbers from

Oklahoma and the surrounding southern plains states, and Steinbeck's report helped bring to public attention the serious challenges that greeted these newcomers in the state's Central Valley. Photographer Dorothea Lange was also busy during 1936 and 1937. Her empathetic shots of migrant families suffering the indignities of farm labor and the wretched conditions of squatter camp life brought more attention and concern. Now, fifty years later, Charles Wollenberg has brought author and photographer together in a new edition of Steinbeck's 1936 articles illustrated with Lange's remarkable photographs. The seven articles in this slim volume tell a story that is instantly recognizable to anyone familiar with the novel that followed. In terms every bit as stark as *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck builds a portrait of misfortune, suffering, and oppression. In place of the fictitious Joads, nameless real families face brutal conditions in agricultural California, living in miserable squatter camps, where children died of malnutrition and families fell into helpless despair.

Steinbeck was very sure about the source of this tragedy. Blame went to the system of large-scale agriculture and the corporate growers who controlled it. Carefully exempting small farmers, he indicted agribusiness for luring the migrants to California, keeping them in conditions of near starvation, and ruthlessly repressing all attempts at labor organization. The good guys in this scenario are equally apparent. As in the novel, Steinbeck found hope for the migrants first in the migrant labor camps established by the Farm Security Administration, and second in the promise of unionization.

As a guide to the actual experience of the Dust Bowl migrants, *The Harvest Gypsies*, like *The Grapes of Wrath*, leaves much to be desired. It overlooks the majority of newcomers who suffered nothing like the destitution of the squatter encampments. It also oversimplifies the social and economic context. The travail of farm workers was not simply the result of the scale of farm ownership; small family farms could also exploit. Nor were Steinbeck's solutions very useful. Like most liberals in the late 1930s, Steinbeck put his faith in unions, in the federal government, and in an ethos of cooperation. The Okies had little use for any of these. Their progress out of poverty and out of agriculture would depend primarily on the tremendous expansion of economic opportunity afforded by World War II and subsequent decades.

But *The Harvest Gypsies* is a marvelous document of its time, important both to those interested in Steinbeck's personal

development and the background to his classic novel, and for anyone interested in the political passions surrounding the Dust Bowl migration. Steinbeck was a reformer, not a social historian. His articles reveal much about the sympathies that radicals and New Dealers registered for the disadvantaged, and especially for the rural poor. They suggest as well the angry contest between liberals and agricultural interests that became one of the cornerstones of California politics in the 1930s.

Charles Wollenberg's otherwise excellent introduction might have done more to establish this context. Wollenberg provides a careful overview of the migrants' experience in Depression-era California and much interesting detail about Steinbeck's research and writing. He corrects some of the novelist's assertions by showing, for example, the error and ethnocentrism in Steinbeck's assumption that the influx of "white labor" would make unionization possible, since whites would "insist on a standard of living much higher than that which was accorded the foreign 'cheap labor.'" More of this would have been useful. One other small concern: these articles were reprinted once before, in a 1938 pamphlet entitled *Their Blood is Strong*, and Steinbeck then wrote a concluding essay that for some reason was not included in the present volume. Still, we are lucky to have the original series back in print. By resurrecting these fascinating essays, Wollenberg has given new life to an important artifact of California history. CHS

*Neighborhoods in Transition:
The Making of San Francisco's Ethnic and
Nonconformist Communities.*

By Brian I. Godfrey. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, xvii, 233 pp.)

Reviewed by Fred W. Viehe, Assistant Professor of History at Youngstown State University and author of articles on Los Angeles and its environs.

Neighborhoods in Transition: The Making of San Francisco's Ethnic and Nonconformist Communities is a major contribution to our understanding of community history in a major city. In this work, Brian I. Godfrey presents a new model of neighbor-

hood development, illustrating that ethnic and nonconformist communities change in similar, but also different, ways.

Godfrey focuses on two San Francisco communities, the Mission district and the Haight-Ashbury district. The former is an Hispanic neighborhood, while the latter is well-known as a counter-cultural center. Since both ethnic and nonconformist subcultures have a cultural detachment from mainstream American society, they cluster in the city rather than assimilate into it. At the same time, there are distinct differences between these two communities, perhaps best summarized by the comment, "Hispanics are not a counter-culture; we are trying to preserve our culture, not change it." (p. 216) In the Mission district, the 1930s and 1940s represented the period of Hispanic penetration; the 1950s, the period of ethnic invasion; and the 1960s, the era of consolidation. In contrast, Haight-Ashbury experienced a bohemian influx during the 1960s, a middle-class transition during the following decade, and gentrification most recently. As can be readily seen, the Hispanic community in the Mission district remains, while Haight-Ashbury has been transformed.

While *Neighborhoods in Transition* is a geographical work, it contains a significant message for students of urban and community history. Godfrey reinforces the view that the strength of ethnic communities lies in the refusal of their residents to adopt American values. In contrast, Haight-Ashbury failed to survive as a counter-cultural mecca because in reality it represented values more aligned with American culture than antithetical to it. That explains why the Mission district continues as an Hispanic community, while the Haight-Ashbury undergoes gentrification.

Besides his focus on the Mission and Haight-Ashbury districts, Godfrey also presents a brief history of greater San Francisco. The section that is particularly enlightening deals with the period since World War II. In this section, there is an excellent overview of the San Francisco experience from the viewpoint of Japanese Americans, blacks, Chinese Americans, Filipino Americans, Hispanics, and smaller Asian and Pacific groups, as well as Beats, hippies, and gays. From this overview, the reader receives an excellent impression of San Francisco's diversity.

Neighborhoods in Transition is required reading for all those interested in urban, community, and California history. It also will be enjoyed by San Franciscans who seek a deeper understanding of their city. CHS