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CALIFORNIA-KO OSTATUAK: A HISTORY OF
CALIFORNIA'S BASQUE HOTELS

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
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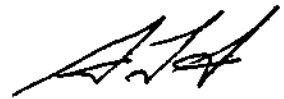
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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The history of California's Basque boardinghouses, or *ostatuak*, is the subject of this dissertation. To date, scholarly literature on ethnic boardinghouses is minimal and even less has been written on the Basque "hotels" of the American West. As a result, conclusions in this study rely upon interviews, census records, local directories, early maps, and newspapers.

The first Basque boardinghouses in the United States appeared in California in the decade following the gold rush and tended to be outposts along travel routes used by Basque miners and sheepmen. As more Basques migrated to the United States, clusters of *ostatuak* sprang up in communities where Basque colonies had formed, particularly in Los Angeles and San Francisco during the late nineteenth century. In the years between 1890 and 1940, the *ostatuak* reached their zenith as Basques spread throughout the state and took their boardinghouses with them. This study outlines the earliest appearances of the Basque *ostatuak*, charts their expansion, and describes their present state of demise.

The role of the *ostatuak* within Basque-American culture and a description of how they operated is another important aspect of this dissertation. Information from interviews supports the claim that the *ostatua* was the most important social institution among *Americanuak*

during peak years of Basque immigration. Since a majority of the Basque sojourners who arrived before 1930 were unmarried, unable to speak English, and intended to return to the Old World within a decade of their arrival, the Basque-American often substituted his "hotel" contacts for his Old World family. At the *ostatuak*, he found a familiar language and cuisine, as well as an employment agency, a place to vacation, translating services, an occasional loan, explanations of his host culture, and new friends from old villages. This history of California's *ostatuak* is the first of its kind and encourages future research on Basque boardinghouses throughout the American West.

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FOREWORD

Although Basques were among the earliest Europeans to migrate to the New World, surprisingly few historical studies deal with their impact on United States history. To date, even fewer studies have appeared on one of their major social institutions--the Basque hotel. The focus of this study is a history of Basque *ostatuak* in the state of California.¹ Such an undertaking requires consideration of historical factors that brought Basques to California and influenced them after their arrival, a discussion of *ostatuak* in the American West, and some comparisons with other ethnic boardinghouses.

Unfortunately, some of the data and materials necessary for a complete study of these hotels are lost to history. In the case of San Francisco, for example, most of the civic records were destroyed in the earthquake and fire of 1906. In addition, many of the earliest hotels began as informal boardinghouses without licensure and cannot be found in the historical record. The county of Merced, for example, did not begin filing deeds of record until 1922 by which time at least two of its earliest Basque hotels had closed.

This study relies upon interviews with former hotelkeepers, employees, and hotel customers, as well as city directories, local newspapers, fire insurance maps, early state and county histories,

¹See appendix A for a glossary of Basque, Spanish, and French terms used throughout this work. Lengthy phrases and those that appear only once are translated within the text.

deeds of record, census information, and other primary material. The verbal record speaks most directly to the social function of the Basque hotel and supports my thesis that the *ostatuak*, more than the family or church, functioned as the major social institution of Basques in the New World for a specific period of time. Because they were dependent upon surging Old World immigration, the peak years for Basque hotelkeeping seem to fall between 1890 and 1940. Since the 1940s, the role and function of the hotels within the Basque-American community have transformed. Interviewing provided critical information on the daily functions of the *ostatuak* but, unfortunately, the history of the earliest hotels has lapsed beyond human memory.

Important reasons exist for focusing upon the history of California's Basque hotels. California became the major port of entry for Basques as a result of the Gold Rush and the state is believed to be the site of the first Basque hotels in North America. In addition, the golden state continues to host the largest Basque population and the greatest number of currently functioning hotels. These factors make California a primary target for an initial study of Basque *ostatuak*.

At the same time, one should realize that to some extent the use of California is at best a heuristic device. Delineating the history and nature of California's Basque hotels is useful as a method of discovery but can neither be automatically accepted as a model for all Basque hotels nor can it be taken as identical in nature to hotels in other areas of the United States. A general knowledge of Basque behavior in the American West and of Basque migration patterns within the

United States indicates that Basques themselves have been relatively unaware of state borderlines. That is, a Basque from Bakersfield who visited a Reno hotel in 1932 is not likely to have noticed substantial differences in that hotel merely because he had crossed a state line.

Another point critical to any discussion of *Euskaldunak* is the boundary line that divides them in Spain and France. A student of the Basques must decide whether he or she will follow the lead of the Basques and ignore Spanish and French viewpoints and distinctions. Except in the cases where it is impossible or where provincial sentiments affect the hotels in the New World, I will attempt to do as other Basques do and use a Basque perspective in both Old and New World settings.

To speak of Basque hotels in the present tense is a bit of an anachronism. In the past four decades, the Basque *ostatuak* of the American West have evolved into scaled-down versions of their former selves. The few that remain as ethnic boardinghouses no longer function in the full capacities of an earlier era. In addition, the observer should note that when a Basque uses the word "hotel" for one of these boardinghouses, he is applying the term to a complex set of social functions familiar to members of his community. If and when a non-Basque uses "hotel," he usually has something quite different in mind.

As suggested earlier, the *ostatuak* reached their zenith in influence and breadth in the half-century between 1890 and 1940. Then and to the present, the hotels have been closely linked to the expansions and

contractions of the sheep industry in the American West and to the Old World Basque herder. For the unmarried *Euskalduna* who came to earn his fortune and then return to the Basque homeland, the hotel became a "home away from home." In the absence of a New World family setting, it also became the major social institution of this immigrant group.

At first, the assertion that the *ostatua* was the Basque-American's major social institution seems bold. Given that few Basques directly mention the hotels in their personal histories, the claim seems even bolder. But, like so many social institutions, the *ostatuak* may be best considered an "invisible institution," for they were so thoroughly integrated into Basque-American culture that even the *Amerikanuak* were unlikely to distinguish them in their everyday life.

For example, my childhood memories include regular Sunday visits to the Chino Centro Vasco hotel with my family. I vividly remember my father and his compatriots playing handball at the *cancha* while my mother sat in the bleachers and discussed the week's events with her friends. In the afternoon, we gathered for supper at long picnic tables placed under dense grape arbors. After supper, the men sang folk songs in Basque, smoked thick cigars, and drank cognac while the rest of us visited or played in the area. I cannot remember anyone ever pointing out that we went to the hotels to see our Basque friends, to experience our heritage, or to strengthen our ties to one another. Despite the fact that the Chino hotel provided the setting for activities vital to my family, we never discussed its importance to us.

A history of a major social institution, such as California's Basque hotels, must include a number of historical and sociological factors. The first chapter of this work describes the Old World Basque setting and presents cultural characteristics which played a part in the development of *ostatuak* in California and throughout the American West. This chapter also contains an outline of the Basque migratory tradition and offers a brief history of Basques in North America. The second chapter discusses the general pattern of Basque settlement within the United States so that the parallel development of *ostatuak* can be appreciated and also presents legislation that led to the reduction of Basque immigration in the twentieth century.

Having established the historical presence of Basques throughout the United States, the study turns to the development, expansion, and contraction of California's Basque hotels in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Chapter three discusses early outposts and inns operated by Basques between 1850 and 1880 and begins to define *ostatua*. California's first two "Basque towns," found in nineteenth century San Francisco and Los Angeles, were crucial to the development of other *ostatuak* and are the subject of chapter four. The fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters describe the fanning out of *ostatuak* from those two original centers and the eventual expansion into the San Joaquin Valley.

Chapters three through seven include all the *ostatuak* and *hoteleros* that I have been able to locate throughout the state and also present the largest collection of *ostatuak* in scholarly literature to

date. Community directories written by non-Basques have often provided data for this project and have also played havoc with Basque surnames. In cases where numerous renditions of a surname were presented, I selected the most probable version despite the knowledge that it may have been spelled differently when the subject left *Euskal herria*.

The seventh chapter concludes the historical aspects of California's Basque hotels and gives rise to a discussion of the critical role of the *ostatuak* in the Basque-American community. How the hotels functioned as homes away from home, the significance of the hotelkeeper couple, the types of cooperation and competition found among the hotels, and the interactions between *hoteleros* and their customers are topics included in the eighth chapter. This chapter focuses on *ostatuak* in their peak years as well as addressing the demise of Basque hotels in the American West.

The ninth chapter relates the California *ostatuak* to the greater network of Basque hotels and presents a typology of *ostatuak* found in the United States. Chapter nine also includes a brief review of literature on *ostatuak* and on other ethnic boardinghouses, underscoring the need for further research and publication. The tenth and concluding chapter of this study reviews the emergence and eventual decline of California's *ostatuak*, assesses the validity of the claim that the Basque hotel was the major social institution of New World Basques, and bids farewell to the California *ostatuak*.

CHAPTER 1

FROM *EUSKAL HERRIA* TO THE NEW WORLD

The Basque region occupies portions of northcentral Spain and southwestern France along the coastal waters of the Bay of Biscay and in the western Pyrenees Mountains. Despite the frustration of not having their own statehood, Basques have tenaciously given their homeland the political identification of *Euzkadi* (Basque nation) or *Euskal herria* (land of Basques). Measuring scarcely one hundred miles in any direction, the Basque homeland is geographically compact. The four Spanish provinces of Navarra, Alava, Guipuzcoa, and Viscaya comprise six-sevenths of the total land mass, while the French *departements* of Labourd, Basse Navarre, and Soule represent the remainder. Current population estimates for the region are about two and a half million and approximately 27 percent or 70,000 people speak Basque today.¹ Those living within one of the seven provinces, however, are not all culturally Basque and other *Euskalduna* are scattered throughout the world.

In addition to the distinction of being Europe's oldest surviving ethnic group, the Basque population claims biological evidence that distinguishes it from other European groups. Studies of blood types indicate that among European Basques have the highest incidence of O

¹William A. Douglass, "The Basques," Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups, ed. Stephen Thernstrom (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 173.

positive blood and the lowest of type B. In addition, the occurrence of the Rhesus negative blood factor is more frequent among Basques than of any of the world's populations. Conclusions from recent serological and dermatological research suggest that Old World Basques maintain a marked preference for endogamy.²

Unfortunately, thorough studies of endogamous and exogamous behavior in Basque-American communities do not exist. Those that do exist offer of a sense, intuition, or verbal testimony that "the young ones just aren't marrying our own kind anymore."³ Few doubt the accuracy of this sentiment but, without statistical verification, it is difficult to assess the degree to which second and third generation Basques have assimilated in the United States.

Discussion of European Basques is incomplete without noting that *Euskera* is the only remaining pre-Indo-European language. Beyond factors such as the Basques' longstanding history in the Pyrenees and biological evidence supporting ethnocentrism, *Euskera* is the most convincing evidence of Basque uniqueness. Basques refer to themselves as *Euskaldunak*, which means literally "holders of the language" or "speakers of *Euskera*." In the 1960s, Morton Levine

²For more information on physical and serological evidence related to Basques, see the articles section of the Bibliography.

³Lynne Fereday, "Descriptive Study of the Integration and Assimilation of Basques in Boise, Idaho," *The Basques - A Preservation of a Culture* (Boise: Fereday Memorial, 1971); Carol Pagliarulo, "Basques in Stockton: A Study of Assimilation," (Master's thesis, College of the Pacific, Stockton, 1948); and Joseph Gaiser, "The Basques of Jordan Valley" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1944) are three examples.

wrote a series of articles on the relationship between the Basque language and cultural isolationism. His study of French Basque villages demonstrated that internal decision rather than compelling external factors guided villagers in resisting the outside world. Rejecting the notion of the Pyrenees as a geographical barrier, Levine asserted that Basques displayed "an unquenchable desire to remain Basque."⁴ Calling Basques a "true biological population," Levine suggested that *Euskera* was both a major vehicle for self-identification and the exclusion of non-Basques. In fact, Basques enjoy discussing the difficulty of learning Basque and have numerous folk stories to support the claim. This tendency underscores an important feature of Basque ethnicity found among Basques in Europe and the New World: they believe themselves to be a unique people and use their language and folklore to defend this point of view.

Scholars of Basques, on the other hand, find their migratory tradition especially noteworthy. That migratory tradition, for example, is the theme for William Douglass and Jon Bilbao's history of Basques in the New World.⁵ Another scholar, Davydd Greenwood, has stated that the concept of collective nobility is essential to an understanding of Basque history and migration.⁶ Beginning in the eleventh century

⁴Morton E. Levine, "The Basques," Natural History 76 (April 1967): 50.

⁵William A. Douglass and Jon Bilbao, Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1975).

⁶Davydd Greenwood, "Continuity and Change: Spanish Basque Ethnicity as a Historical Process," Ethnic Conflict in the Western World, ed. Milton J. Esman (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 81-102.

and throughout the following four centuries, the Crown granted collective nobility status to villagers in Navarra, Guipuzcoa, Viscaya, and Alava.⁷ During this period, if a person were able to prove Basque parentage, he would automatically be recognized as noble by virtue of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood). While Spain also bestowed similar privileges upon non-Basques for a variety of motives, the most probable reason for granting blanket nobility to Basques was the Crown's desire to fortify her northern defenses.⁸

Despite the intentions of the Spanish Crown, collective nobility did more to strengthen the Basques' sense of ethnic identity than it did to strengthen Spain's border.⁹ By the fifteenth century, Spanish and French Basques also enjoyed a degree of autonomy under the ancient *fuego* and *fors* systems. According to these medieval legal systems, Basques acknowledged that--while they were not citizens of Spain or France--they were people of a land that had accepted the Spanish and French monarchs. This subtlety was an important one because it meant that Basque loyalty to the respective Crowns was dependent

⁷Ibid., 87-92, and Rachel Bard, Navarra: The Durable Kingdom (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1982), 85-91.

⁸Greenwood, "Continuity and Change," 91. Also John A. Crow, The Root and the Flower (New York: Harper and Row, 1963); and Townshend Miller, The Castle and the Crown (New York: Coward-McCann, 1963).

⁹Gregorio Monreal, "Annotations Regarding Basque Traditional Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century," Basque Politics: A Case Study in Ethnic Nationalism, ed. William A. Douglass (Reno: University of Nevada Press and Basque Studies Program, 1985), 21-22.

upon the monarch's allegiance to Basque legal codes.¹⁰ The local autonomy and the collective nobility which Basques enjoyed in the fifteenth century are important factors leading them to the migratory tradition which they developed in the next two centuries.

As Douglass and Bilbao point out in Amerikanuak, assessing the numbers of Basque *emigrés* to the New World during the fifteenth through nineteenth centuries is nearly impossible.¹¹ Many ships' records are lost to history, many Basques are likely to have returned to *Euskal herria* years after they arrived in America, and a number probably arrived illegally. Despite the lack of documentation, the Basque exodus to the New World seems to have been sizeable. One scholar, for example, has estimated that 80 percent of the vessels on the American run were staffed and/or owned by Basques in the years between 1520 and 1580.¹²

There are a number of factors that account for the high concentration of Basques sailing for the Crown in the sixteenth century. To begin with, whaling and codfishing had become important economic activities along the Cantabrian coast in the Middle Ages and, for a time, Basques dominated the industry.¹³ As the fishermen's

¹⁰Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, 62-64.

¹¹Ibid., 70.

¹²John Lynch, Spain Under the Hapsburgs, vol. 1: Empire and Absolutism, 1516-1598 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 165.

¹³James Tuck and Robert Grenier, "A 16th-Century Basque Whaling Station in Labrador," Scientific American 245 (November 1981): 180-88; Selma Barkham, "The

demands for heavier seafaring vessels increased, shipbuilding began to develop as an industry in the Spanish Basque provinces.¹⁴ And while the famed expedition of Columbus in 1492 was not an immediate economic stimulant to the Trastámara empire, it was for the Basque region.¹⁵ In 1498 and again in 1502, for example, Queen Isabella offered generous subsidies to Basque shipbuilders encouraging the rapid construction of seafaring vessels weighing in excess of 600 and 1500 tons.¹⁶ Thus, on the eve of Spain's imperial dominance in Europe and the New World, Basques were in an ideal position to work with the Crown. They enjoyed the benefits of collective nobility that allowed them to enter civil, ecclesiastical, and military orders at home and abroad, and thus were able to offer their proven skills in service to the Crown.

Geographical factors have also proven to be critical to an understanding of Basque history and culture. In his famous ethnography, Julio Caro Baroja characterized the Basque community as an intricate network of functions whose origins are closely linked to

Basques: Filling a Gap in Our History between Jacques Cartier and Champlain," Canadian Geographical Journal (February-March 1978): 8-19; Carl O. Sauer, Northern Mists (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 62-76; Rodney Gallop, Book of the Basques (1930; reprint, Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1975), 268-81; and M. Ciriquian-Gaizlarro, Los Vascos en la pesca de la ballina (San Sebastián: Biblioteca Vascongadas de los Amigos del País, 1961).

¹⁴ Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, 49-53.

¹⁵ J. H. Elliott, "Economic and Social Foundations of the New Spain," Imperial Spain, 1469-1716 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1963), 108-123, and Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, 67.

¹⁶ Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, 67-69.

geographical contours and Basque adaptations to them. Caro Baroja describes the prototype Basque farmstead as a self-sufficient unit designed to accommodate a number of needs. In most farmsteads or *baserriak*, the two- or three-floor dwellings contain a barn area for livestock, a tool shed, and an area to store grains and dry goods.¹⁷ These homes often accommodate up to three generations under one roof. The mixed farming systems often include twenty to thirty acres which yield vegetables, cereal grains, fruit, timberland for construction, pasture for livestock, and kindling for its inhabitants. Because of the emphasis on the self-sufficient *baserria* system, local transactions as recently as the early decades of this century were on a barter rather than cash basis.¹⁸

With good reason, the *baserria* system is commonly portrayed as central to Old World Basque culture. Ethnographers, social historians, and cultural anthropologists tend to describe Basque family dynamics, work distinctions, and social functions as dependent upon the maintenance and survival of the *baserriak*. It should also be remembered, however, that many European Basques have made the village center their home. In her article on one Basque village,

¹⁷Julio Caro Baroja, *Los Vascos: una etnología* (San Sebastián: Biblioteca Vascongada de los Amigos del País, 1949). For a colorful supplement to Caro Baroja, see Gallop, "The Basque House," *Book of the Basques*, 203-214.

¹⁸William A. Douglass, "Serving Girls and Shepherders: Emigration and Continuity in a Spanish Basque Village," *The Changing Faces of Rural Spain*, eds. Joseph B. Aceves and William A. Douglass (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1976), 45-46.

Marianne Heiberg divided the town of Elgeta into *kaleterrak* (people of the *kalea* or street) and *baserritarak* (people of the farmstead).¹⁹

The distinction between *kaleterrak* and *baserritarak* becomes more significant when considering which Basques left their homeland for the New World. Rural farmsteads have become symbolic of Basque family lineage, property, and success. Since the sixteenth century and perhaps earlier, Basques have taken as surnames the name of their *baserriak*; having to sell the family home has been interpreted as a failure, the end of a family's lineage in that village.²⁰ Moreover, rules regarding inheritance of the farmstead vary slightly from village to village: the first-born child might inherit in one village, while the first-born son might inherit in the next. Occasionally, the child deemed most able to operate the *baserria* will be selected upon early maturity. As William Douglass has demonstrated, decisions regarding primogeniture have often influenced young, non-inheriting Basques to travel to the New World.²¹ In many villages, a youth's non-inheriting status became the factor that forced him from his (or her) natal village.

¹⁹Marianne Heiberg, "Inside the Moral Community: Politics of a Basque Village," *Basque Politics: A Case Study in Ethnic Nationalism*, ed. William A. Douglass (Reno: University of Nevada Press and Basque Studies Program, 1985): 285-308.

²⁰Surnames are highly recognizable among Basques. Names such as *extea berria* (new house) appear frequently and *Iturriberrigorrigoikoerrotakoextea* (new red house near the upper mill spring) is said to be the longest. The definitive listing of Basque surnames is Luis Michelena, *Apellidos Vascos* (San Sebastián: Editorial Txertoa, 1973).

²¹William A. Douglass, "Rural Exodus in Two Spanish Basque Villages: A Cultural Explanation," *American Anthropologist* 73 (October 1971): 1100-1114 and Douglass, *Echalar and Murélagu: Opportunity and Rural Depopulation in Two Spanish Basque Villages* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975).

This was especially true in cases where children knew from an early age that they were not to inherit.²²

While Old World inheritance customs were the major impetus behind the steady flow of young single Basques arriving in the United States between 1890 and 1940, additional factors encouraged migration. Demographic studies indicate that late nineteenth century Europe underwent a population explosion which nearly doubled the continent's numbers in the last fifty years of the century.²³ Dramatic population increases and the Basques' adherence to primogeniture encouraged emigration from the villages. As Douglass and Bilbao have suggested, however, disinheritance did not necessarily mean a voyage to the Americas.

Moving to urban and village centers, marrying into other *baserriak*, or taking religious vows were some of the available options. Despite such options, leaving *Euskal herria* seems to have been greatly preferred in the nineteenth century. For example, emigration from *Pays Basque* between 1832 and 1907 has been placed at over one hundred thousand, an enormous number from an area whose total population for that period fluctuated around one hundred and twenty thousand.²⁴

²²Of thirty-five European born Basques interviewed in this project, thirty-two stated that the "nothing to inherit" factor was the major push for their migration.

²³Alfred W. Crosby, Jr., The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press), 165-205, and Michael W. Flinn, The European Demographic System, 1500-1820 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 65-101.

²⁴Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, 124.

Nineteenth century events also provided ample reason for Basque political alienation, an alienation which eventually led to draft evasion. Several engagements of the Napoleonic wars were fought in the Pyrenees region and Basques were drawn into the conflict via recruitment and requisitioning on both sides. The French Revolution, which abolished the *fors*, also introduced the Napoleonic Code of inheritance in the *Pays Basque*. In 1839, the defeat of the Carlists forces in the First Carlist War brought heavy taxation and the relaxation of the *fueros* under the Treaty of Vergara.²⁵ As a result of their defeat in the Second Carlist War in 1876, Spanish Basques surrendered the remainder of the privileges guaranteed by the *fueros* and were subjected to military conscription for the first time.

Evasion of military service was widespread among both Spanish and French Basques in the nineteenth century and became acute during World War I. For example, official passenger lists from the *Consejo de Emigración* (Emigration Council) indicate that 18,547 young Spanish Basque men left their homeland between 1911 and 1915.²⁶ This number does not include those who left illegally or via French ports. Two factors contributing to the rural exodus of Basques to the United States besides primogeniture, then, were the pressures experienced as a result of Europe's burgeoning population and the intensified Basque political isolation and resultant draft evasion.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 130.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 129.

One important characteristic found in the Old World *baserriak* which Basques brought to the New World was the *lenbizikoatia* or first neighbor tradition. On the Basque farmsteads, a family relies upon the nearest neighbor for support in family emergencies and for extra hands when they are needed. Sandra Ott's study of the French Basque mountain community of Sainte Engrâce, for example, describes the careful rotation of shepherds sharing the responsibility of the village herd.²⁷ Mutual assistance and cooperation are critical among first neighbors. Functions that are often shared are the annual harvests, the slaughter of livestock, the celebration of family holidays, the mourning for a deceased family member, and the larger maintenance work around the *baserriak*.

As Ott notes in Circle of Mountains, no two households have the same first neighbors. This asymmetric ordering of first neighbor relationships tends to reduce competition and encourage mutual assistance. She suggests that the first neighbor system among *baserriak* are distinct from the more generalized neighborhood frameworks found outside the Basque region.²⁸ While the tradition differs from its Old World form, this study of Basque hotels in California suggests that Old World Basques carried the *lenbizikoatia* concept with them to the New World.

²⁷Sandra Ott, The Circle of Mountains: A Basque Sheepherding Community (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

²⁸*Ibid.*, 213.

One should also note that the role of the community shepherd in the Old World Basque community was and is quite distinct from that found in the American West. At first glance, students of Basque history assume that sheepherding is a traditional Basque occupation in Europe, but actually, many Old World communities hire herders from the villages to summer the town's collected herd in the mountains. During other seasons, small bands are left to roam the village commons.²⁹ In many portions of the Basque country, sheep are altogether absent. Generally speaking, then, sheepherding as a major occupation of Basques is a New World phenomenon.³⁰

Another point critical to a discussion of Old World Basques is the role of the village church. Since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Basques have almost universally adopted Catholicism. Even in the most remote village, a small church and *pelote* or *jai alai* court is likely to dominate the town square.³¹ Quite frequently, the town cemetery, church, and *pelote* court are all part of the same complex. As Rodney Gallop suggested several decades ago, "these three form a

²⁹Fermin Leizaola, "Aspects of Pastoral and Nomadic Life in the Basque Country," Primera semana internacional de antropología Vasca, ed. José Luis Goti Iturriaga (Bilbao: La Gran Enciclopedia Vasca, 1971): 533-50, and Sandra Ott, Circle of Mountains.

³⁰Richard Lane, "The Cultural Ecology of Sheep Nomadism: Northeastern Nevada, 1870-1972" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1974); William A. Douglass and Richard Lane, Basque Sheepherders of the American West (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1985); and Robert Laxalt and William Belknap, "Basque Sheepherders, Lonely Sentinels of the American West," National Geographic 129 (June 1966): 870-88.

³¹The introductory chapters of Caro Baroja's Los Vascos includes detailed layouts of Basque towns and villages.

triple symbol of the Basque race. The church stands for faith, the cemetery for tradition and the *pelote* court for a hard and vigorous outdoor life."³² One study maintains that the close affiliation between the village clergy and the playing of *pelote* is a tradition existing since the Middle Ages.³³ In *Euskal herria*, the handball and *jai alai* courts frequently share a common wall with the village church whereas, in the American West, these courts are found adjacent to Basque hotels.

As discussed earlier, Greenwood suggested that collective nobility status allowed Basques to develop a strong sense of ethnicity, independence, and self-sufficiency. Others have asserted that serological and linguistic evidence sets Basques apart from other ethnic groups. Yet another group of scholars might argue that the Basques' longstanding migratory tradition makes them unique. Whatever the proper conclusion in this matter, few will argue with a Basque about the uniqueness of his or her culture. Perhaps the most persuasive argument is the fact that Basques for centuries have spoken of themselves as a unique people.

³²Gallop, Book of Basques, 230; Teresa B. Urquidí, "An Historical Relationship between *Pelote* and the Church in Old World Basque Society," Proceedings of the First International Basque Conference in North America (Bilbao: Gran Enciclopedia Vasca, 1985): 106-18; and Fernando Maria Mugica, "The Basques in Sport," Primera semana internacional de antropología Vasca, ed. José Luis Goti Iturriaga (Bilbao: Gran Enciclopedia Vasca, 1971): 515-26.

³³In Bat, Ball and Bishop (New York: Rockport Press, 1947), Robert Henderson presented the idea that the cloistered courtyards of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries--where the clergy played handball while it was publicly outlawed--were the forerunners of the modern indoor *jai alai* and *pelote* courts.

Many scholars have likewise written about Basques as the "mystery people" of Europe, an emphasis that tends to inflate their role as a unique ethnic group. In a study of Basques in the New World, especially of those who made their way to the *ostatuak*, very little of the "mystery" discussion is relevant. One factor that cannot be ignored, however, is that the majority of Basques who came to America during peak years of immigration were from the rural *baserriak*. They were, in a sense, the disinherited rural villagers. They did not arrive representing a broad cross-section of Old World Basque society but rather a very specific group that tended to be less educated and less wealthy than those villagers who stayed behind. They brought with them a high regard for the self-sufficiency they had developed on their farmsteads and a good deal of ethnic pride. Many, if not most, arrived with the intention of working to save enough money so that they could return to *Euskal herria*, marry, and retire.

Not surprisingly, Basques carried important aspects of their culture with them to the Americas. Ironically, Basques in South America and North America created a new social institution to preserve Old World values and traditions. In the United States, first evidence of these *ostatuak* can be found in California, where the lure of gold accelerated Basque migration to that state.

CHAPTER 2

FROM THE MOTHER LODE TO THE GREAT BASIN

On the morning of 24 January 1848, John Marshall walked out of his cabin toward the tailrace of his sluice and beheld a few glittering particles at the bottom of the box. Neither Marshall, nor anyone else, could foretell the impact of his discovery upon the future of California. One result would be an increase in the numbers of immigrants entering the United States in the following decades. Through 1847, annual immigration statistics had never exceeded 200,000, but in 1851 the number swelled to 408,000 and peaked in 1854 with 460,000.¹ Not all new arrivals raced directly to the mines of California, however. Many of them replaced factory workers who had gone west, others worked in industries that the discovery of gold had expanded, and still others tried their luck with the sluice box or gold pan.

The California gold rush years were a watershed in Basque immigration to the United States. While mild disagreements occur over when the first Basques arrived in the United States, who they were, and where they went after initial settlement, little dispute arises over the magnetic effect of the gold rush on Basques.² Soundest

¹Ralph J. Roske, Everyman's Eden: A History of California (New York: MacMillan Company, 1968), 250.

²Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, 203-04.

estimates place the number of Basque immigrants to California at several hundred between 1849 and 1852.³ While these numbers are small when compared with those of larger immigrant groups, they represent a drastic increase in California's Basque population in a three-year period.

A majority of Basques striking out for the gold fields migrated north from Latin America and Mexico. For example, in 1845, Pedro Altube left Oñate, Guipuzcoa, to join his two brothers in Buenos Aires. Four years later, Pedro responded to the news of California gold by travelling on horseback west to Valparaíso where he joined thirty-five other Basques and set sail for San Francisco.⁴ Still another young Basque, Jose M. Andonaegui, arrived in Buenos Aires in 1842, and after seven years of working there as a tailor, decided to try his luck in California.⁵

Altube and Andonaegui are two examples of the Latin American contingent that came to be known as the "Argentine Basques." By the 1840s, large colonies of Basques had been established in Buenos Aires and Montevideo. With the news of Marshall's discovery spreading rapidly, South American Basques with "gold fever" headed for the most direct route to California via Valparaíso, Chile. Passenger lists of those

³Ibid., 209.

⁴Carol Hovey, "The Spanish Ranch," Journal of Basque Studies 5 (1984): 87.

⁵Walker A. Tompkins, ed., Tompson and West's History of Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties (Berkeley: Howell-North, 1961), 241-42.

embarking in Valparaíso for San Francisco between January of 1849 and February of 1852 included approximately 170 Basques.⁶

In examining the biographies of fourteen Basques arriving in California between 1845 and 1860, Douglass and Bilbao noted that eight were from the Río de la Plata area, one was from Mexico, and five directly from Europe. Nine of the fourteen entered the mines immediately after arriving, yet none remained in this occupation. Twelve of the fourteen men eventually became involved in livestock ranching.⁷

Direct participation in gold mining among Basques was relatively short-lived. While some may have returned to *Euskal herria* in the 1850s, others changed to occupations which served the growing numbers of northern California miners. In fact, gold mining in the Sierra Nevadas caused a boom in the state's cattle industry. California cattlemen scrambled to keep up with the demand while eyeing the competitive prices offered by Missouri, Texas, and New Mexico's cattlemen.⁸ By 1856, however, the boom in the cattle industry was over as a result of droughts, floods, and livestock epidemics. Still,

⁶Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 418-20. This listing based upon Santiago de Zarautz's "Pasajeros salidos de Valparaíso para California, años 1849-1852." Manuscript, Basque Studies Collection, University of Reno, Nevada.

⁷Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 210-12. Information on these fourteen Basques was obtained from biographical sketches in county and local histories and therefore represents a limited portion of the Basque-American population.

⁸Roske, *Everyman's Eden*, 258.

while the cattle industry declined, its fall directly urged the rise of sheep raising.

Since food for hungry miners was often scarce and prices high, sheep could be sold for as much as fifteen to twenty dollars per head in the mining camps. During the 1850s and 1860s, sheep ranching and trailing expanded into cattle lands, gradually surpassing beef production. Other factors contributing to the growth of the sheep industry were the accessibility of inexpensive land in California, the ability of sheep to survive semi-arid pasture better than cattle, open grazing on the public domain, the improved quality of merino wool, and a ready market for wool products as a consequence of reduced cotton production after the Civil War.⁹

Altogether, the new opportunities for the California sheep industry could scarcely have been better choreographed for "Argentine Basques" disappointed with their luck in the gold fields. From their experience in the Pampas, they brought with them a knowledge of open-range herding practices not unlike those then being employed in southern California. Clearly, the large-scale herding techniques that Basques are credited with in the American West were a carryover from Argentina rather than from the Old World. Popular depictions

⁹E. N. Wentworth and C. W. Towne, Shepherd's Empire (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1945), 166. Robert Glass Cleland credited the growth of the California sheep industry to droughts, increased property taxes for ranchers, and cattle epidemics. He also emphasized the disruption of cotton trade during the Civil War as the primary cause for the California sheepmen's prosperity in the 1860s. Robert Glass Cleland, Cattle on a Thousand Hills, 1850-1880 (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1964), 140-42.

notwithstanding, open-range herding is not found in the Old World, nor is it "instinctively" Basque.

By the mid-1850s, a number of Basque sheepmen were operating in southern California and trailing their sheep north to San Francisco and the mines. Among these *Euskaldunak* were Domingo Amestoy, Jean Baptiste-Batz, Jean Etchemendy, and Pierre Larronde.¹⁰ In a review of 110 published biographies of Basque men arriving in California between 1845 and 1920, Douglass and Bilbao found that ninety-three were involved in the sheep business.¹¹ Seventy-four began as herders, and fifty-two eventually owned sheep outfits. Another nineteen once owned sheep but evidently were not previously herders.

From the gold rush years through the close of the century, Basques became increasingly influential in the state's sheep industry. The two decades from between 1860 and 1880 reflect an increased number of Basque immigrants to southern California.¹² Permits to run sheep in Santa Ana Canyon and Inyo County, for example, demonstrate that Basques dominated herding in those areas by 1870 and 1897.¹³ By 1890, southern California's dominance within the industry ebbed and

¹⁰Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 225-30.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 230, 421-24.

¹²Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 218-33.

¹³*Cajon de Santa Ana* Sheep Licenses, 1868-1870. Orange County Registrar, Santa Ana, California, and Inyo County *Sheep License Book*, 1896-1897. Inyo County Registrar, Independence, California. *Amerikanuak* Papers, Basque Studies Collection, University of Nevada Reno Library.

sheep tending developed in northern counties such as Kern, Fresno, San Joaquin and Mendocino.¹⁴

As 1900 drew near, a new trend in sheep trailing was established. Bands were trailed east and north from California to the Great Basin area of northern Nevada, southern Idaho, and southeastern Oregon. In addition to summer pasturing in the mountains, crossing the Sierra Nevadas became more desirable due to the completion of the transcontinental railway in 1869. The rail system made possible the shipment of wool to eastern markets. With the growth and geographical expansion of the sheep industry, Basque herders were able to send for their countrymen to join them in the West. Now that the railway had been completed, European Basques no longer had to sail the treacherous Tierra del Fuego route; they could book passage to New York City, take a passenger train to Ogden, Utah, and then switch trains for their ultimate destination.

Completion of the transcontinental railroad and Basque dominance of the expanding sheep industry were two major factors that led to the marked increase of Basque immigration around the turn of the century. In a recent article, Craig Campbell has demonstrated a close association between the development of the western rail system and the migration of Basques.¹⁵ In addition, the years between 1890 and

¹⁴James J. Ayers, Transactions of the California State Agricultural Society, 1883 (Sacramento: State of California Printing, 1884), 204.

¹⁵Craig Campbell, "The Basque-American Ethnic Area: Geographical Perspectives on Migration, Population, and Settlement," Journal of Basque Studies 6 (1985): 83-89. See Figure 1 for a reproduction of Campbell's map of immigration flow patterns from 1850 through 1930.

1930 reveal a change in the basic migratory pattern of Basques within the United States. Whereas the tide had originated in San Francisco and moved eastward in the gold rush years, in the 1890s it became a powerful east-to-west flow. The years of peak Basque immigration probably lasted until the 1930s and marked the beginning of a Basque exodus from California to the Great Basin states.¹⁶

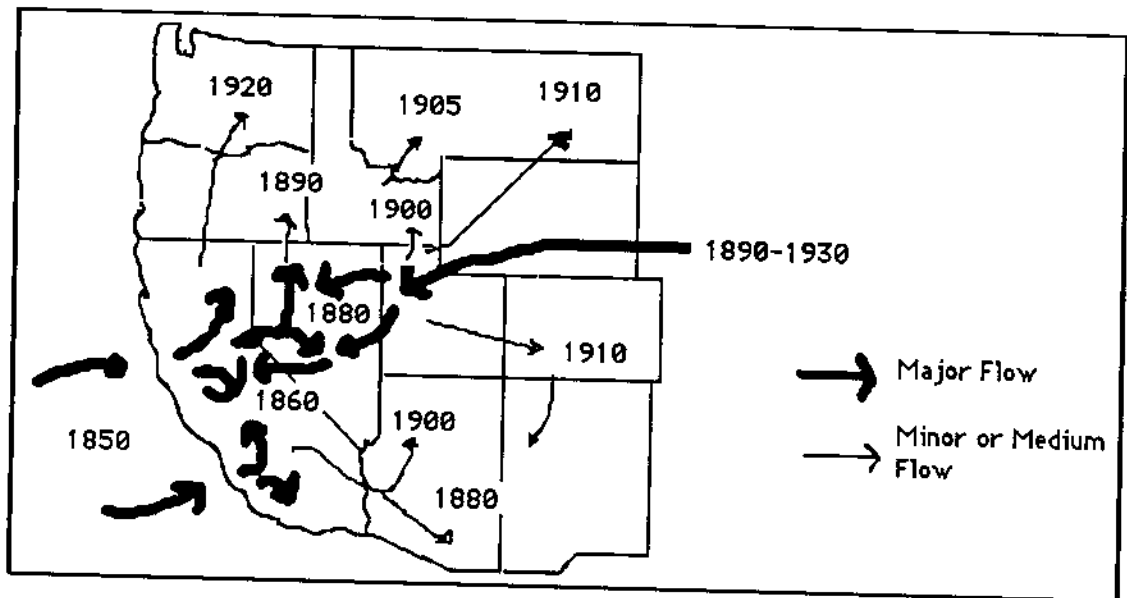


Fig. 1. Basque Immigration Flow, 1850 to 1930

Recent immigration statistics indicate interesting trends among Basques who arrived in New York in the five-year period from 1897 to 1902.¹⁷ Of the 636 names in the population studied, 86 percent were

¹⁶Lane, "Cultural Ecology of Sheep Nomadism," 44.

¹⁷Iban Bilbao and Chantal de Equilaz, *Diáspora Vasca*, Vol 1.: *Vascos llegados al puerto de Nueva York, 1897-1902* (Vitoria: Gasteiz, 1981).

male and 77 percent single. Although of varied ages, 65 percent of the men ranged between sixteen and thirty. And 464 of the 636 were Spanish Basques. A clear pattern emerges: most Basque immigrants during this period were young, unmarried males from Spain.

This pattern was also evident in Marie Pierre Arrizabalaga's comparative study of the Censuses of 1900 and 1910.¹⁸ From her data, one can also conclude that Basque-Americans have always been and continue to be a relatively small ethnic group. In 1900, when the number of Basques in *Euskal herria* was 1,084,616, only 986 were living in California, Nevada, Idaho, and Wyoming.¹⁹ Ten years later, the Old World Basque population was 1,160,023 while Basques living in the four western states numbered 8398. Basque-Americans in the West represented less than .01 percent of the total Basque population in 1900, increasing ten years later to .7 percent. Table 1 displays the Basque population in Arrizabalaga's sample and suggests a dramatic increase in Basque migration in the decade between 1900 and 1910.

Of the 8398 Basques living in the United States in 1910, Arrizabalaga found that only 1212 had immigrated to the United States before 1900.²⁰ Slightly over 14 percent of the group remained for a decade or longer. The relatively low percentage could possibly

¹⁸Marie Pierre Arrizabalaga, "A Statistical Study of Basque Immigration Into California, Nevada, Idaho and Wyoming" (Master's thesis, University of Nevada, Reno, 1986).

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 40.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 53.

Table 1
Basque Population, 1900 and 1910

STATE	1900	1910
California	745 (75.6%)	6267 (74.6%)
Nevada	180 (18.3%)	971 (11.6%)
Idaho	61 (6.2%)	999 (11.9%)
Wyoming		161 (1.9%)
TOTAL	986 (100%)	8398 (100%)

indicate a high mobility rate among newly arrived Basques. Some may have moved on to other states or returned to *Euskal herria* within a few years of arrival. The statistic also highlights the dramatic increase in Basque immigration within the first decade of the twentieth century. More Basques migrated into California in 1907 than in any other year between 1900 and 1910. One "push" factor partially explaining this exodus may have been the widespread crop failure in the Basque region between 1904 and 1906. The graph in Figure 2 demonstrates the increased number of Basques arriving in California during these years and the crest in 1907.²¹ Unfortunately, scholars interested in Basque immigration will have to wait patiently for more recent census materials to be released. Until such time, our information regarding larger immigration trends for Basques in the twentieth century remains incomplete and attempts to pinpoint peak years of immigration remain somewhat futile.

²¹Ibid., 54.

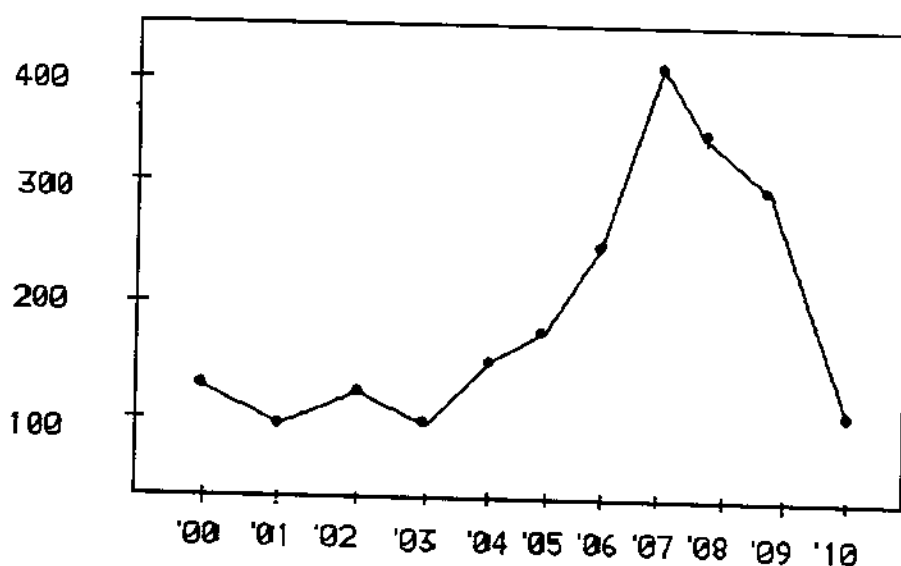


Fig. 2. Basque Immigration to California, 1900 to 1910

As stated earlier, Basque immigrants during this period were most often young, unmarried, and Spanish Basque males. They came to join their predecessors working in the sheep industry and usually entered one of two work situations: working for another Basque on an established sheep ranch or working for landless sheep owners who depended upon access to open grazing areas for feed. This latter group of "tramp sheepmen" have often been referred to as "ranchers without ranches."²² Such sheepmen sent for brothers, friends, and neighbors from their Old World villages to come over and help them with their herds. Once the newcomers arrived, they were sometimes

²²Frank Araujo, "Basque Cultural Ecology and Echinococosis in California" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Davis, 1974), 112.

paid wages in ewes. In this way, a new herder could begin building his own flock within the larger band and graze them together. Once his herd had grown large enough, he could set out on his own, a process now known as "hiving off."

Initially, kinship ties and contacts among Old World compatriots were the key factors in the recruitment of new herders. By the early 1900s, Basques were known in several areas of the West as dependable herders. In fact, from 1900 to 1915, almost every Viscayan immigrant took a herding job upon arrival in the Great Basin.²³ The Arrizabalaga study found that 87.3 percent of Basques involved in the sheep and cattle industry were new immigrants. That percentage declined slightly to 88.1 in 1910.²⁴ As a result, a surplus of Basque herders developed. By 1920, the large numbers of incoming herders caused the laws of supply and demand to become more influential than kinship. In addition, herders were more often recruited from labor pools found in local Basque hotels than from direct communications with Europe. On the other hand, some correlation between the settlement pattern in western states and regional Old World provinces continued. For example, French and Navarrese Basques continued to settle in California, western Nevada, and portions of Wyoming and Montana, while Viscayan Basques continued their concentrated exodus to the Great Basin.²⁵

²³Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 302.

²⁴Arrizabalaga, "Statistical Study," 58.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 129-32.

The National Origins Act of 26 May 1924 was a deterrent to the steady flow of Basque migration to the American West. The intention of the bill was the limitation of foreign persons entering the United States.²⁵ Also known as the Quota Act, the legislation established a policy of using national origin as a basis for the allocation of immigration quotas. Because of the high quota set for French immigration, French Basques were relatively undeterred by the bill. On the other hand, Spain's quota was small and Spanish Basque immigration suffered by comparison. Concerned with the reduction of incoming Basque herders, representatives from the Western Range Association and the Woolgrowers Association began pressuring their Congressmen to initiate legislative reforms.

About twenty-five years later, Senator Pat McCarren and Representative Walter Baring of Nevada introduced bills in the eighty-first Congress that would give skilled worker status to incoming herders.²⁶ In the second session, the McCarren bill was incorporated into another bill and passed. As of 30 June 1950, up to 250 sheepherders could be admitted annually.²⁷ Next, Wyoming's Senator Hunt also proposed Senate bill 1217 to provide additional immigrant

²⁵Edward P. Hutchinson, Legislative History of American Immigration Policy, 1798-1965 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 484.

²⁶For more on McCarren's biography and senatorial activities, see Jerome E. Edwards, Pat McCarren: Political Boss of Nevada (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1982).

²⁷S1 165-Public Law 587 granted special quota visas to a maximum of 250 alien shepherds per year. Congressional Quarterly Almanac, 81st Congress, 2nd Session (Washington D. C.: Congressional Quarterly News Features, 1950), 6:218-19.

visas for aliens willing to accept jobs as herders. This bill amended the Shepherders' Act of 30 June 1950 and increased the limitation from 250 to 550.²⁹ The passage of occupationally related legislation allowed Basques to continue migrating to the United States at restricted levels but failed to completely alleviate the initial concern found within Basque-American communities.

By the second session of the eighty-second Congress, pressure was building to revise and codify the maze of immigration and naturalization laws enacted after the National Origins Act. The McCarren-Walter Act, officially known as the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, revised the quota preference structure.³⁰ Among its many stipulations was one that allowed entrance of skilled agricultural workers. Notably, the McCarren-Walter Act did not specify Basques as the only nationality able to take advantage of this provision. Nevertheless, many in the sheep industry considered the legislation a "Basque immigration" law. Senator Lehman of New York, for example, objected that admitting more Basque herders was an unfair practice because immigration quotas had not changed for other ethnic groups.³¹

²⁹Hutchinson, Legislative History, 490.

³⁰HR 5678-Public Law 414, Congressional Quarterly Almanac, 82nd Congress, 2nd Session (Washington D. C.: Congressional Quarterly News Features, 1952), 8:154-60.

³¹Pierre Salinger, "Senator Lehman Protests Bills," The New York Times, 21 June 1956. Newspaper coverage of the "Shepherders' Laws" were generally sympathetic to the need for more herders. Christie Peters's article in The New York Times, 9 January 1955, Pierre Salinger's article in The Wall Street Journal, 29 November 1960, and C. M. Cianfarra's article in The New York Times, 21 August 1954, are examples of more favorable viewpoints.

Despite Lehman's objections, the "Sheepherders' Bills" remained part of the McCarren-Walter Act and encouraged a sheep industry in need of revitalization. As Nason Ruiz stated, "no other group in the United States has received so much specific attention and legislation on the basis of occupational specialization."³² Between 1942 and 1961, 383 Basque men received permanent United States residency due to these bills.³³ In 1965, the Western Range Association sponsored 1,283 work contracts for Basques that had been sanctioned by Senator Hunt's amendment.³⁴

The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 is another case of national legislation effecting Basque immigration. Intended as a revision of open-range grazing, the act also tried to conserve public domain and regulate the livestock industry.³⁵ As Senator Edward Taylor of Colorado commented, the bill was written in order to institute systematic control of government-owned lands, "in other words...to protect the little fellows " who had been raising livestock before the onslaught of itinerant herders. The Senator continued, "At the present time this army of nomadic herds of stock are robbing him [the

³²Allura Nason Ruiz, "The Basques--Sheepmen of the West" (Master's thesis, University of Nevada, Reno, 1964), 51.

³³Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, 306.

³⁴Grant McCall, "Basque Americans and a Sequential Theory of Migration and Adaptation" (Master's thesis, San Francisco State University, 1968), 46.

³⁵United States Department of the Interior, Taylor Grazing Act: Explanation of the Law and Text of the Act (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1934), 1-2.

little fellow] out of his house and home. They [Basques and other itinerants] pay very little taxes."³⁶ The Taylor Act effectively closed the door on open range herding--long a mainstay of the Basque itinerant sheepman. As a result of its passage, sheepherding declined as a major vehicle for Basque immigration and incoming herders were forced to buy or rent grazing land before they could "hive off" with a small band as their predecessors had before them.

The Senator's commentary also reveals the degree of nativism in the public disputes over the Taylor Act. Newspapers and literature in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries indicate that Basques too suffered from anti-foreign sentiment. One account of the gold rush, for example, claims that fierce prejudice against Latin American miners existed in California.³⁷ Perhaps the target of this nativism was the "Argentine Basques" mentioned earlier. Near the turn of the century, terms such as "Black Basques," "dirty Bascos," and "garlic snappers" were used to describe this growing ethnic group.³⁸ According to Richard Etulain, Basques were "thrice damned" in the Progressive period: they came to make their money and leave without

³⁶House of Representatives, Hearings Before the Committee on Public Lands, HR 2835 and HR 6462, June 7-9, 1933 (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1933), 14.

³⁷Roske, Everyman's Eden, 246.

³⁸"Nevada's Danger," Carson Morning Appeal (Carson City, Nevada), 4 May 1898, 3. Two additional studies of Basques in American literature are Wilbur Shepperson, Restless Strangers (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1970) and Richard W. Etulain, "The Basques in Western American Literature," Anglo-American Contributions to Basque Studies: Essays in Honor of Jon Bilbao, eds. William A. Douglass, Richard W. Etulain, and William H. Jacobsen, Jr. (Reno: Desert Research Institute, 1977):7-18.

becoming American citizens; they were clannish and did not speak English; and they took jobs that others did not want.³⁹ In part, the Taylor Act was passed because of these three irritations. After the act was passed, conflict between ranchers and sheepmen subsided and the image of the Basque herder improved dramatically with the appearance of newspaper articles and fiction extolling the virtues of Basque culture.⁴⁰

National legislation in the 1920s and 1930s brought about a marked decline in Basque immigration totals. The resultant expansions and contractions of the sheep industry in turn directly affected Basque hotels. The numbers of Basque hotels operating in Stockton, California, for example, during the past eighty years exemplify this influence. In the first decade of this century, Stockton had three hotels, but the number jumped to six between 1920 and 1939. In the 1940s, hotels peaked at eight and then began a steady decline until 1970, when the last Basque hotel in the community closed.⁴¹ The number of hotels within that community seems to reflect general trends in Basque herding and immigration.

³⁹Richard W. Etulain, "Basques in the American West: Some Problems for the Historian" (Paper presented at Idaho Historical Conference, Boise, March 1974), 3.

⁴⁰Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, 369, 394, and Wilbur S. Shepperson, Restless Strangers: Nevada's Immigrants and Their Interpreters (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1970), 187-189.

⁴¹Personal correspondence with Steve Ybarrola, 8 April 1987. Ybarrola Papers, Providence, Rhode Island.



KEY, in Vertically Descending Order: Core Ethnic Areas, Areas of Recognition, Sphere of Transhumance, and Independent Concentrations

Fig. 3. Basque-American Ethnic Areas, 1985

Recent research shows that twentieth-century settlements of Basques have broken from early patterns so closely associated with the sheep industry. The Census of 1980, for example, located at least a few Basques in each of the fifty states and counted 43,140 persons of Basque ancestry residing in the fifty United States.⁴² As can be seen in his map of Basque-American ethnic areas, Craig Campbell suggests

⁴²United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Ancestry of the Population by State: 1980 (Washington D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1983), 51-56; William A. Douglass, "Counting Basques: The U. S. Census," Basque Studies Program Newsletter 28 (November 1983): 3-7; and William A. Douglass, "Ethnic Categorization in the 1980 U. S. Census: The Basque Example," Government Publications Review 12 (1985): 289-296. See appendix B for a summary of 1980 census results.

that the greatest concentration of Basques can now be found in southern Idaho.⁴³ As we have seen, several important factors influenced Basques in the past century and a quarter. These forces carried them from the California mother lode to the southern and central valleys of California and then east over the Sierra Nevadas into the Great Basin region. Throughout this geographical and chronological progression, Basques established and supported their ethnic boardinghouses. To these California hotels and their hotelkeepers we now turn.

⁴³Campbell, "Basque-American Ethnic Area," 96-97. See Figure 3 for a reproduction of Basque geographical zones within the United States.

CHAPTER 3

EARLIEST HOTELS, 1850 to 1880

The earliest evidence of Basques in the hotel business in North America are found in the mission town of San Juan Bautista, California. There a Basque named Julian Ursua operated in the early 1850s a hotel that fronted on the old town plaza.¹ In 1844, Ursua was granted an enormous five square league tract of land known as the Rancho Panocha de San Juan y los Carrizalitos.² Unfortunately, relatively little is known about Ursua beyond that at one time he owned the "Rancho Panoche" and later a hotel in San Juan Bautista. Not far from Ursua's hotel, on the corner of Washington and Third streets, an Italian named Angelo Zanetta ran another hotel known as the Sebastopol.³ After a few years, Zanetta married Maria Laborda, a French Basque from Bayonne whom he had met in San Francisco. Together the Zanettas purchased the Plaza Hotel from Ursua and reopened it on 24 June 1856.⁴ According to one eye witness, the opening was a "gala affair" accompanied by a band playing on the second story veranda, the

¹"Basque Beginnings in California," Talbott Papers. Private Collection, Los Banos, California.

²Joseph Arburua, "Rancho Panocha de San Juan y los Carrizalitos" (Manuscript, University of Nevada, Reno, Basque Studies Collection, 1970), 10.

³Isaac L. Mylar, Early Days at the Mission San Juan Bautista (Watsonville, California: Valley Publishers and San Juan Historical Society, 1970), 52-55, 131-35.

⁴Tony Taix, interview with Ralph L. Milliken, San Juan Bautista, California, 5 March 1937. Ralph Milliken Papers, Milliken Museum, Los Banos, California.

sporadic firing of the town's old cannon, and horsemen racing through the plaza at full speed plucking chicken's heads from their half buried bodies.⁵

Under the Zanettas' ownership, the Plaza became a major center for travellers, local ranchers, and businessmen. Favorably situated at an intersection of roads leading north, south, east, and west, the town of San Juan Bautista was a transfer point for seven stage lines including the famed Wells Fargo coaches.⁶ As one early rancher stated, "San Juan was one of the best trading centers in the state. Cattlemen from as far away as Los Angeles and Santa Barbara used to bring their cattle here where the butchers from San Francisco would come buy them. There were no banks in those days and the Plaza Bar was their clearing house."⁷

Descriptions of San Juan from nineteenth-century visitors place the Plaza at the center of many town activities. According to one of Zanetta's sons, the Plaza bar was regularly packed with out-of-town gamblers. They often enjoyed Maria Zanetta's cooking that featured steaks covered with mushrooms, served punctually at 9:00 A.M. and 4:00 P.M. in the dining hall next to the bar. A few years after opening the Plaza, the Zanettas leased the popular bar to an Englishman named

⁵Mylar, Early Days, 131-32.

⁶Mrs. L. Castle, interview with Ralph Milliken, San Juan Bautista, California, 17 April 1938. Ralph Milliken Papers.

⁷"Basque Beginnings in California," Talbott Papers.

John Comfort for \$300 per month and continued to operate the hotel and kitchen.⁸

Not long after Comfort began tending bar at the Plaza, Angelo Zanetta decided that San Juan needed a livery barn and a city hall. He had the livery stable constructed near the town plaza and hired hands to oversee the stables. Then he bought an old adobe on the corner of the town plaza and hired men to construct a second story on the building. The upper level became San Juan's first city hall and the lower was used for serving large banquets.⁹ From descriptions of the Plaza and from Zanetta's construction program, the Hotel and Bar was evidently both a popular stop and a financially successful venture for the Zanettas.¹⁰

Possibly a number of the Basque ranchers living on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley visited the Plaza in the 1860s and 1870s. For example, the "three Johns" (Indart, Etcheverry, and Iribarri) operated the Sentinella Ranch on the San Luis Gonzaga Grant. One of the three partners regularly travelled by horseback over the Pacheco Pass, reaching San Juan by nightfall in order to buy, sell, and barter or

⁸C.C. Zanetta, interview with Ralph Milliken, San Juan Bautista, California, 5 January 1936. Ralph Milliken Papers.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰The Census of 1870 listed Zanetta's combined value at \$6000. This sum was considerably higher than other members of the community. U. S. Bureau of the Census. Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1870. National Archives Microfilm Publications, M593-74, 34-35.

stock up on needed provisions.¹¹ Other Basques, such as Juan Miguel Arburua, who owned the 22,000 acre Rancho Panocha de San Juan y los Carrizalitos, or Jean Baptiste Arambide of the Arambide Quicksilver Mines outside of Mendota probably frequented the Plaza.¹² In addition, a veritable Basque colony had formed in western Merced County by 1860. The Basque sheepmen Arrivallaga, Irigoyen, Anoitzbehere, Ayoigar, Gastimbide, Etcheaundi, and Oyarbide were all tending their flocks in the area.¹³

Not surprisingly, a few of these Basque surnames can be found in Angelo Zanetta's hotel registers. Though incomplete, a small portion of the Plaza's guest lists were retained by the California Parks system. Those available are dated 1863 through 1866 and include twenty-eight entries, with four of the registrants appearing more than once. Of the twenty-three individuals listed, eleven seem to be Basques. Table 2 includes the eleven Basques registered at the Plaza Hotel between 1863 and 1866, their home town or ranch name, and the date of their visit.¹⁴

Why Zanetta's records would contain only twenty-eight entries is cause for speculation. First of all, it would seem that the Plaza

¹¹"History of San Juan Bautista, Panoche, Los Banos," Talbott Papers. The partners were known locally as "Juan Primo" (Iribarri), "Juan Chico" (Indart), and "Juan Grande" (Etcheverry).

¹²Joseph Arburua, "Rancho Panocha," 10.

¹³Ibid., 19.

¹⁴"History of San Juan Bautista, Panoche, Los Banos," Talbott Papers. Entries are presented here exactly as Zanetta recorded them, despite a few misspelled surnames.

accommodated more than a few dozen guests between 1863 and 1866. Possibly the records for these three years as well as those before and after were lost, misplaced or accidentally destroyed. Since a partial record exists for this period, it is likely that Zanetta also recorded guests' names during the other years that he was in business. Given that very few twentieth-century *hoteleros* have kept written ledgers, Zanetta's incomplete accounting piques ones curiosity. Could he have

TABLE 2
Plaza Hotel Guests, 1863 to 1866

NAME	RANCH/TOWN	DATE
Julian Ursua	San Juan	5 October 1863
Juan Indart	San Luis Gonzaga	7 April 1864
Juan Echeverri	San Luis Gonzaga	13 September 1864
C. Echeveria	Los Baños	31 December 1864
Jose Aurrecochea	Burns Creek	6 January 1865
Claro Echeveria	San Juan	26 June 1865
Mendizabal	San Luis Gonzaga	18 & 20 September 1865
Esteben Luyua	Rancho Quien Sabe	3 December 1865
Ramon Chevarria	San Juan	22 June 1866
Franco Echeveria	Santa Ana	12 August 1866
Benito Echeveria	Santa Ana	12 August 1866
Julian Ursua	San Juan	6 November 1866

listed some guests and not others, for example? Could this listing have been a record of special or important customers? Unless more evidence is discovered, these questions are likely to remain unanswered. Whatever the case, the Plaza likely accommodated many more guests during, before, and after this three-year period.

Studying the available registers also raises some critical questions regarding the nature of Basque hotels and whether the Plaza ought to be considered the first Basque boardinghouse in the American West. For instance, the available guest lists indicate that the hotel was not exclusively Basque in its clientele. Twelve of the twenty-three were clearly non-Basque guests. As a general rule, more recent Basque hotels have catered exclusively to Basques. Even if the Zanettas could have afforded such exclusivity, they probably would not have been so selective. Since the three business partners were of Italian, Basque, and English heritage, this ethnic combination that Angelo, Maria, and Comfort provided probably appealed to a variety of local and visiting clientele.

Other information in the Census of 1870 leads one to question whether the Plaza should be considered a Basque hotel or ethnic boardinghouse.¹⁵ According to the censustaker, nine staff members lived at the Plaza but none seem to have been Basque. Table 3 lists the name, gender, age, occupation, and birthplace of each staff member working at the Plaza in the summer of 1870. As the census reveals, Maria Laborda and her six children were the only Basques living at the Plaza at this time.

¹⁵U. S. Bureau of the Census. Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1870. National Archives Microfilm Publications, M593-74, 34-35. Table 3 summarizes the 1870 census information for nine of the Plaza's employees.

TABLE 3
Plaza Hotel Staff, 1870

NAME	AGE/SEX	OCCUPATION	BIRTHPLACE
John Pompase	89 M	Hotelkeeper	England
John Karat	30 M	Waiter	Prussia
Pietro Pironi	27 M	Barkeeper	Italy
Mack Regan	28 M	Stablekeeper	New York
James Engbrot	30 M	Stablekeeper	England
John Oh	30 M	Cook	China
Sim Tim	45 M	Cook	China
Yuck Ah	30 M	Cook	China
Lu Oh	23 M	Washman	China

The likelihood that the Plaza appealed to a wide sector of the population suggests that the Plaza was not a Basque hotel in the truest sense. Instead, it was probably a hotel that some local Basques frequented. When they did, they must have enjoyed Maria's familiar cooking style and exchanged news with her in their native *Euskera*. Unfortunately, the Zanetta family and staff are not listed in 1860 Census for San Juan Bautista.¹⁶ Had they been included, it might have been of interest to discover whether earlier employees were of Basque descent and to analyze changes in the staff over the ten-year period.

Discussion of the Plaza Hotel and other early *ostatuak* raises questions as to the definition of a Basque hotel. Throughout the development of this text, specific characteristics of *ostatuak* will be presented and discussed. Unfortunately, depictions of early hotels are dependent upon twentieth-century models. Despite dangers of

¹⁶U.S. Bureau of the Census. Population Schedules of the Seventh Census of the United States, 1860. National Archives Microfilm Publications, M653-060, 62.

"presentism" in history, we are forced to some extent to distinguish between what was and was not a hotel by the use of such models. Unfortunately, no witnesses remain from the mid-nineteenth century to describe the operation of the earliest hotels. In the case of the Plaza Hotel, because it did not cater exclusively to Basques and was not operated by two Basque hotelkeepers, the Plaza should not be considered Basque hotel. Instead of thinking of the Plaza as the first *ostatua* in the American West, it is best considered their precursor or forerunner.

A second establishment that could be considered the first *ostatua* in the United States would be a store and boardinghouse that John and Mary Indart built on the Sentinella Ranch in the early 1860s. Indart of San Benito County had married Mary Erreca in Stockton, California, in July of 1863 and the newlyweds had moved to the Sentinella Ranch where they formed a three-way partnership with John Etcheverry and John Iribarri.¹⁷ (As mentioned earlier, this ranch was commonly known as the "Ranch of the Three Johns.") According to one of the Indarts' descendents, John and Mary owned a one-story adobe hotel on the ranch that they later leased to a Basque named Valdemoro Mendia in 1864. After the Indarts left Sentinella in 1865, the adobe was expanded into a two-story wooden building that stood until the 1930s.¹⁸

¹⁷San Joaquin County Marriage Records, 1850-1865. Stockton, California. Talbott Papers.

¹⁸Mrs. M. Indart, interview with Ralph Milliken, San Juan Bautista, California, 5 February 1933, Ralph Milliken Papers.

From 1863 to 1865, when the Indarts worked the Sentinella Ranch, they lived in a small adobe. One account described the "small adobe house about twelve feet square" as standing a few hundred feet from the old Salt Slough Warehouse. The earlier reference to the adobe as "a hotel" is of interest and suggests that the Indarts accommodated travellers in the region. Another pioneer claimed that "a sheepman and his wife [Indarts] lived there during the gold rush and made lots of money selling butter and supplies to the gold hunters travelling by on their road to and from the mountains."¹⁹ Possibly both of these accounts are speaking of the early Indart adobe that became a familiar but small stopping place; another account described the Indart place as one of the stops that early miners used while travelling west from San Juan Bautista toward the Sonora Pass in search of gold.²⁰ While no proof exists that the Indarts' house served as a Basque hotel or boardinghouse, it may have catered to local Basques. The numerous Basque-owned and operated quicksilver mines in the area indicates that a Basque clientele was present. The Richmond Gold, Quicksilver and Copper Mine in the Panoche, the Arambide Mines mentioned earlier, and the New Idria Mines northwest of Fresno all attracted Basque employees.²¹ Basque miners "passing through" were likely to visit the Indarts, purchase supplies, and stay

¹⁹"History of San Juan Bautista, Panoche, Los Banos," Talbott Papers.

²⁰Y. P. Villegas, "Gold Mountains," Hollister Free Lance, 7 May 1947.

²¹Arburua, "Rancho Panoche," 28-30.

the evening if convenient. By the time two years had passed and Mendia began operation of the adobe structure, the "hotel" may have become a known stop-over among local Basques.

In some ways, the Indart adobe might have been a more likely beginning for a Basque boardinghouse than the Plaza Hotel in San Juan Bautista. Since both Indarts were Basque, it seems plausible that other Basques would prefer re-stocking supplies and exchanging news at their adobe. The presence of local Basque miners and sheep ranchers provided clients for the Indart store and boardinghouse. In addition, the small size and comparatively remote location of the Indart operation seems a more likely gathering place for early Basques than the large-scale Zanetta endeavor.

In fact, identification of the first Basque hotel in the American West may be beyond our reach. Small boardinghouses and hotels may have existed throughout California and the West but remain unrecorded. For example, of the numerous hotels, butcher shops, and saloons in the Sonora area serving early forty-niners, some may have been Basque.²² The area contained a sufficiently large Basque argonaut population to support a boardinghouse or hotel in the early 1850s even though substantiating evidence is lacking.

Juan Miguel Aguirre's hotel in San Francisco, however, offers a great deal more certainty for the historian. After serving as a soldier on the losing side of the First Carlist War, Juan Miguel left Spain for

²²"Basque Beginnings," Talbott Papers.

Montevideo where he began a hide and tallow business. When he heard news of gold discoveries in California, he booked passage for himself and his wife, Maria Martina Lebayon Aguirre.²³ Their trip on the sailing vessel, *Le Bon Pere*, took six months and arrived in San Francisco on 15 May 1849. Unlike many other forty-niners, Aguirre remained in San Francisco. There he bought a donkey that he outfitted with two large wooden barrels strapped onto a harness for transporting water. With his donkey, Aguirre began carrying water from the Presidio to the old downtown area around Dupont, Kearny, and Clay Streets, where he sold the water for a dollar per bucket.²⁴ When his business grew, Aguirre employed other Basques to help him cart and sell water throughout the city. Another Basque who had also arrived via South America, José Aurrecoechea, worked with Aguirre at this time. Years later, in 1872, Aurrecoechea bought the Idiart Ranch in Merced County from Jean Echeto.²⁵ Because of José Miguel's successful water transportation business, he is occasionally credited with designing San Francisco's first water system.

Aguirre's expanding water service encouraged him to invest in real estate. Juan Miguel and Martina's first purchase was a lot at the intersection of what is now Grant Avenue and Ashburton Place.²⁶

²³Rockwell R. Hunt, California and Californians, Vol. 3 (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1932), 121.

²⁴Ibid., and Arburua, "Rancho Panoche," 16.

²⁵"History of San Juan Bautista, Panoche, Los Banos," Talbott Papers, 4. The same Aurrecoechea appeared in the Plaza Hotel registers.

²⁶Hunt, California and Californians, 122.

Here, at Number 2 Dupont Place, Juan Miguel built the first handball court in San Francisco. Some authorities claim he used lumber imported from his Spanish Basque homeland.²⁷ In 1866, Juan Miguel began construction of the city's first Basque hotel at 1312 Powell Street.²⁸ In spring of that year, Aguirre sent for his nephew, Juan Miguel Arburua, to join him in San Francisco and help him construct the hotel. The twenty-two year old Arburua left his natal village of Echalar, Navarra, arrived on 27 June 1866, and began working for his uncle at a wage of twenty dollars per month.²⁹ Within three months, Aguirre's hotel was completed and in operation. Interestingly, no source provides a name for Juan Miguel and Martina's new business, but this was the case for most other Basque hotels in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Even when they did name their establishments, local Basques preferred to use the owner or employee's first name or surname, such "Aguirre's" or "Recault's" or "Elizalde's".³⁰

Aguirre's establishment probably operated like today's Basque hotels. By 1870, for example, Aguirre's was known as an employment agency among newly arrived Basques. For example, consider the story

²⁷Ibid. and Arburua, "Rancho Panocha," 16-17.

²⁸Arburua, "Rancho Panocha," 16-17.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰These three examples refer to Aguirre's in San Francisco; to the Royal Hotel in Stockton; and the Noriega in Bakersfield. Many other examples exist.

of Italian rancher Alberto Trescony from the Salinas Valley.³¹ While out walking one day in the early 1860s, Alberto happened across a Basque shepherd named Echeverria. Discovering they both spoke a broken but intelligible Spanish, the two struck up a conversation. After talking briefly with Echeverria, Trescony decided to begin importing Basque herders to tend his flocks. Thus began a steady stream of Basques to New Orleans, to San Luis Obispo on the train, and finally by stage to the Salinas Valley. A few years later, when the transcontinental railway system was completed, Trescony began turning to the Aguirres of San Francisco to help him locate good herders. One author's description suggests that Aguirre's hotel was the perfect employment agency: "There was a Basque hotel in the center of town, where California rancheros in need of help were sure to find quiet gentle men from the Pyrenees."³²

In addition to being an employment center, Aguirre's was also a meeting place for Basques. In 1870, Martina (Labayon) Aguirre sent for her niece Josefa Labayon from Areso, Navarra, presumably to help her aunt with kitchen, serving, and cleaning chores around the hotel.³³ Ten years later, Juan Miguel Arburua--Aguirre's nephew--married Josefa at the "French Church" in San Francisco. The two had met at Aguirre's hotel. As in the case of the Arburuas, many young

³¹Anne B. Fisher, The Salinas: Upside-Down River (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1945), 208-33.

³²*Ibid.*, 211.

³³Arburua, "Rancho Panocha," 17.

Basques found their spouses at Basque hotels. Countless repetitions of this story led Douglass and Bilbao to suggest that one of the functions of the Basque hotel is that of a "marriage mill."³⁴ The union of Albert Trescony's son Julius with one of the Aguirres' daughters is another example of this matchmaking. The younger Trescony had been sent to Aguirre's hotel to procure a herder for his father but returned with dreams of marriage to young Kate Aguirre.³⁵

Roughly twenty years later, in 1898, young Francisca Arriola arrived in San Francisco with her mother and brother. The group stayed at the Aguirre hotel, then a two-story wooden building with a second story veranda facing Powell Street.³⁶ The year before their arrival, on 30 August 1897, Juan Miguel had died at the age of eighty-four, but his widow and their three sons and a daughter continued to oversee operations at the Aguirre until it was destroyed by the earthquake and fire of 1906.³⁷ And, just as in the case of earlier couples, Francisca met her husband-to-be, Saturnio Celayeta, at the Aguirre. Years later, they married at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Stockton, honeymooned at the Aguirre, and returned to Stockton to make the town their permanent home.

³⁴Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, 377.

³⁵Fisher, The Salinas, 212.

³⁶Elena Celayeta Talbott, interview with author, Los Banos, California, 8 May 1987.

³⁷Hunt, California and Californians, 122.

The Aguirre hotel greeted Basques for almost forty years before it was burned down in 1906. By the turn of the century, Juan Miguel and Martina's hotel had become a central meeting place for the growing number of Basques living in San Francisco, Alameda, Sonoma, and San Jose counties. Like the *ostatuak* of the twentieth century, the Aguirre serviced a steady flow of incoming and numerous local Basques, it served as employment agency and "marriage mill," and in later years it became a vacation spot for Basques visiting from other parts of California and the West. In many ways, then, Aguirre's hotel may be considered the first *ostatua* in the American West.

In addition to Aguirre's San Francisco hotel, other California Basque hotels and boardinghouses were opening their doors for business in the 1870s and 1880s. For example, in 1874, Juan Etcheverry built a small hotel with a large livery stable in Tres Pinos just across from the railroad depot.³⁸ Three decades later, Bernardo Yturriarte married Catalina Larrey and the newlyweds received their guests at the same hotel. By the time of the Yturriarte wedding in 1903, however, another Basque named Leon Yparraguirre was the owner and operator of the Tres Pinos hotel.³⁹ Seemingly, the *ostatua* Etcheverry built in 1874 continued as a Basque boardinghouse throughout the early twentieth century.

³⁸Mr. L. Larios, interview with Ralph Milliken, Hollister, California, not dated. Ralph Milliken Papers.

³⁹Fannie Yturriarte McCullough, interview with Elena Talbott, Hollister, California, 25 September 1972. Talbott Papers.

Moreover, the Chester hotel, which John Iribarne owned in 1884, could have been an early Basque hotel. In February of 1884, the Merced Express announced the opening of Iribarne's hotel: "John Iribarne took possession of the hotel at Chester yesterday and hereafter will be found ready to greet old friends and minister to their physical comfort at that place."⁴⁰ In addition to the hotel at Tres Pinos and possibly Chester, others may have existed. One source suggests that the communities of Lemoore, Whitesbridge, Mendota, Firebaugh, Coalinga, Volta, and Sonora hosted Basque boardinghouses that served "the sheep people" in California's central valleys.⁴¹

While Aguirre, Etcheverry, and Iribarne were operating their hotels in northern and central California, another Basque hotel was about to open in the sleepy southern California town of San Juan Capistrano. There, across the street from the old, fenced-in mission, Domingo Oyharzabal and his partner Juan Salaberri purchased two of the town's original adobe buildings from Mrs. Maria Rios, widow of Domingo Yorba.⁴² The deed of sale for the Yorba Adobe and Casa Mañuel Garcia purchase was finalized on 10 February 1880.⁴³ The partners

⁴⁰Merced Express, 2 February 1884, 3. Ralph Milliken Papers.

⁴¹"Basque Presence," Talbott Papers.

⁴²Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, San Juan Capistrano, June 1929, Map A. Map Collection, California State University, Northridge.

⁴³U. S. Department of the Interior, National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, 2. Oyharzabal French Hotel File. City Hall, San Juan Capistrano, California.

immediately converted the Casa Mañuel Garcia into a hotel, calling it the French Hotel, and made the Yorba Adobe their home.⁴⁴

In his well known history of Orange County, Samuel Armor inferred that the partners Oyharzabal and Salaberri opened the French Hotel in 1878 immediately after Oyharzabal's arrival in San Juan Capistrano.⁴⁵ While most accounts agree on 1903 as the closing date for the French Hotel, a slight discrepancy exists over its opening date. As mentioned earlier, the title deed of sale is dated February 1880. The partners may have leased the building for the two years prior to finalizing negotiations with the Yorba family descendants in 1880.

In that same year, Oyharzabal began reconstructing the second story of the French Hotel. The Casa Mañuel Garcia was the first and, for years, only two-story building in Capistrano. When the partners purchased it, the building had two large rooms on the ground level; one was approximately thirty-five by fifteen, the second was thirty-one by fifteen.⁴⁶ When the Casa was constructed in 1840, the second floor extended over half of the lower and measured only twenty-one by thirty-one. Prior to 1880, access to the second story is not clear, but in that year Oyharzabal and Salaberri added a balcony running the

⁴⁴Ibid., 3, and Pamela Hallan, Dos Cientos Años in San Juan Capistrano (San Juan Capistrano: Layman Publishing Company, 1975), 33.

⁴⁵Samuel Armor, History of Orange County, California (Los Angeles: Historic Record Company, 1921), 1644.

⁴⁶Exact measurements are 35'6" by 14'7" and 31' by 14'7". U. S. Department of the Interior, National Registry of Historic Places Nomination and Description Form, 1. Oyharzabal French Hotel File.

length of the building and a set of wooden stairs on the back of the building.⁴⁷

Having expanded the upper story to match the overall dimensions of the lower, Oyharzabal and Salaberri had also doubled their capacity to accommodate visitors to the French Hotel. What had previously been two upstairs dormitory style rooms with cots became four. Even though the records no longer exist, one transaction between Domingo Oyharzabal and the State of California that took place in 1891 suggests that Oyharzabal might have kept income and expense accounts.⁴⁸

Given that the French Hotel was San Juan Capistrano's first hostelry, it is unlikely that its clientele was exclusively Basque. In fact, a non-Basque guest named Clifton Johnson left our earliest eyewitness description of the hotel. According to Johnson, San Juan Capistrano's French Hotel was an old stage route tavern that he visited on more than one occasion.⁴⁹ Probably Johnson's visits occurred before 1887 since he made no mention of the new railway that was completed in that year and passed within a block of the hotel's back lot.⁵⁰ When Johnson arrived, he encountered two large downstairs rooms; one serving as a grocery and provisions store, the other as a tavern. When

⁴⁷Ibid., 1-2.

⁴⁸Orange County Deeds of Record, August 1891, Book 14:387. Santa Ana, California.

⁴⁹All citations from Clifton Johnson and his observations can be found in U. S. Department of the Interior, National Register of Historic Places, Inventory Nomination Form, 4-5. Oyharzabal French Hotel File.

⁵⁰Doris Drummond, "Learn Your History on Foot," San Clemente Sun Post, 2 August 1978, and Hallan, Dos Cientos Años, 33.

he walked in, he no doubt found Juan Salaberri in the store while Domingo Oyharzabal tended the bar next door.⁵¹ To get to his room, Johnson walked out the back door, climbed a set of wooden stairs, and passed along the outside balcony. He reported that his room was a "rather bare and shabby apartment, with a bed that had two boxes under it to prop up the slats." From the top of the stairs in back of the hotel, Johnson was able to see "all sorts of whitewashed barns and sheds and shacks, including a kitchen and dining room which were under a roof by themselves." Not far away, hanging from a pepper tree, was a framed wooden box covered by flynetting that served as the hotel's refrigerator.

The partnership between Oyharzabal and Salaberri seems to have lasted until 14 April 1901 when Domingo and his brother Etienne bought Salaberri's portion of the property.⁵² Oyharzabal and Salaberri first met on board ship sailing for California, and, according to one Oyharzabal descendant, the families remained lifelong friends and continued to share the upstairs apartments of the Garcia Adobe for many years after the sale in 1901.⁵³

⁵¹The Census of 1880 assigns the two men these occupations. By 1880, the 43-year-old Salaberri and his wife Catalina had one infant daughter, Juanita. Also living at the adobe was Domingo, 33; a cook named Teresa Yorba; and a carpenter/laborer, Juan Laralde. U. S. Bureau of the Census. Population Schedules of the Ninth Census of the United States, 1880. National Archives Microfilm Publications, T9-0066, 26.

⁵²Orange County Deeds of Records. Santa Ana, California.

⁵³Carmen Oyharzabal, interviewer unlisted, Oyharzabal French Hotel File.

By comparison, the life history of Domingo Oyharzabal is well documented. One of nine children born to Baptiste and Sabina Oyharzabal in the French Basque province of Basses-Pyrenees, Domingo left his natal village for South America in the early 1860s, spent a few years there, and set sail from Chile in 1868. On the boat from Chile the young Basque first met Juan Salaberri. The point of entry into the United States for the two lifelong friends was Alameda, California.⁵⁴ From 1868 to 1878, when the two appeared in San Juan Capistrano, their activities are a mystery. Given the experience of many other Basque immigrants, the two likely found work in the Bay area or San Joaquin Valley with other *Euskaldunak* and re-grouped once they had saved enough money to invest together.

About two years after settling in California, Domingo's was joined by two of his younger brothers, Etienne and William, who accompanied Domingo when he moved to San Juan Capistrano in 1878. Not long after their arrival, William died, but Etienne, a teenager at the time, worked with his older brother for the remainder of Domingo's life. A number of Basques were already making Capistrano their home when the three Oyharzabal brothers arrived. For example, Bernardo Erreca's sheep ranch employed his two younger brothers Juan and Miguel, and G. Etchevarran, D. Gastimbide, Juan Urulty, and Juan Mariliuss. All of Erreca's ranch hands were most likely Basque, having likely surnames

⁵⁴Armor, History of Orange County, 1644; and Maurice H. Newmark and Marco R. Newmark, eds., Sixty Years in Southern California, 1853-1913: Containing Reminiscences of Harris Newmark, 4th ed. (Los Angeles: Zeitlin and Ver Brugge, 1970), 549.

and French or Spanish birthplaces.⁵⁵ Other Basque residents of Capistrano at the time were Louis Dartiques; Juan, Maria, and Domingo Eramuspe; Bernard Ybarl; Juan and B. Arrambel; and Pedro, Juanita, and Maria Larra.⁵⁶

Similar to other early pioneers in Orange County, Domingo had an intense interest in real estate. From 1893, when the county began recording deeds of sale, the elder Oyharzabal's name occurs frequently. By 1910, Domingo had purchased more than 4000 acres of land, planted 150 acres in walnuts, and owned vast herds of livestock in Orange and Inyo Counties.⁵⁷ Between 1893 and 1899, Domingo made nineteen land and building purchases alone in the Orange County area. In the following decade, Oyharzabal's land investment program continued at a similar pace.⁵⁸ And, on 14 May 1895, Domingo made his partnership with his younger brother official. The two shared portions of town lots in San Juan Capistrano, the French Hotel, and livestock and ranching investments.⁵⁹

When they formed their partnership, both Oyharzabals were bachelors, but one year later, Etienne married Lucille Darius of

⁵⁵U. S. Bureau of the Census. Population Schedules of the Ninth Census of the United States, 1880. National Archives Microfilm Publications, T9-0067, 9-10.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 13-14. Surnames appear as recorded by the censustaker, but a few, such as Ybarl, may be misspelled.

⁵⁷Armor, History of Orange County, 1644.

⁵⁸Orange County Index, 1889-1908. Santa Ana, California.

⁵⁹Orange County Deeds of Record, Book 99:121. Santa Ana, California.

Bayonne. After their marriage, Lucy became the manager and overseer of the French Hotel until it closed in 1903.⁶⁰ The general store downstairs remained and is still open for business. On the other hand, Domingo remained a confirmed bachelor until his death at the age of fifty-nine. Etienne and Lucy continued to manage the Oyharzabal properties and were resided in the Yorba Adobe next door to the old Hotel until their deaths in 1934 and 1961.⁶¹ Since neither Etienne nor Domingo had children, their properties went to two of their nephews, Pedro and Esteban. Interestingly, the thick-walled adobes purchased by Salaberri and Oyharzabal in 1880 are still home to Domingo's heirs.

From the opening of the Plaza Hotel in 1856 to the years when Oyharzabal and Salaberri formed their partnership in Capistrano, a new social institution claimed its place in the American West. Not surprisingly, the California of "boom and bust" was its first home. This new social institution, the Basque *ostatua*, emerged as a result of increased immigration and was often directly linked to the sheep industry.⁶² *Ostatuak* in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries appeared soon after a critical number of Basques established their presence in any portion of the American West. In small town settings, Basques were often "sheep people" making their living on nearby

⁶⁰U. S. Department of the Interior, National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, 5.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 5-6.

⁶²Figure 4 locates all the *ostatuak* and possible hotels discussed in this chapter.

ranches. In other cases, such as in San Francisco and Los Angeles, the link between the hotel and the herder was less direct but still present.

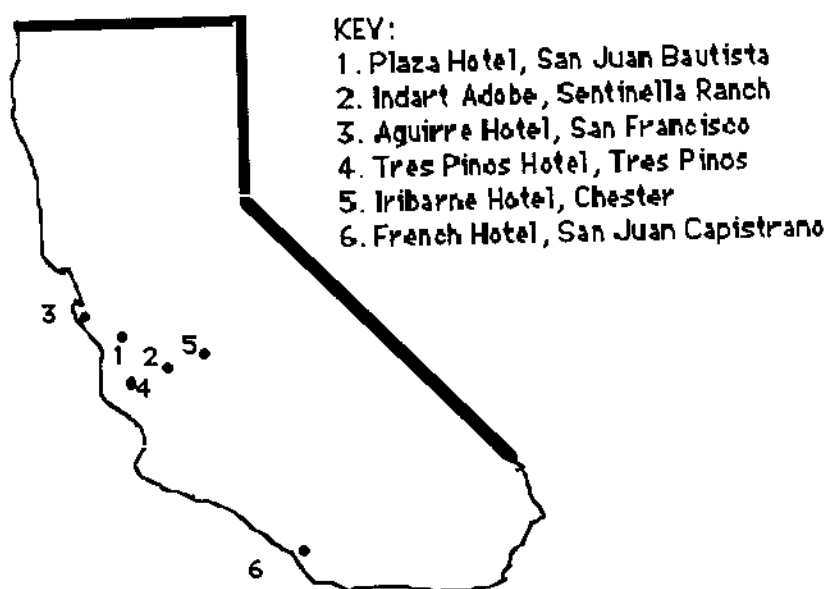


Fig. 4. Earliest Basque Outposts and *Ostatuak*, 1850 to 1880

The inner workings of the *ostatuak* operating between 1850 and 1880 remain unclear. For example, how their staffs worked together, who were their clients, and how they got along with non-Basques in their communities remains an enigma. Possibly the early hotels were quite similar to those of the twentieth century. Simple lodgings, family-style dining, and a shared language and culture are among the most basic characteristics common to all *ostatuak*. To assume further similarities, however, would be too great a leap.

A less troublesome problem is the effort to discover which of these *ostatua* was the first in the American West. The temptation to award

the role of "the first" to one of these early outposts actually obscures more important concerns, such as the evolution of a critical social institution within an immigrant group. More significant is that a number of hotels began to appear in the thirty year period ranging between 1850 and 1880.

Two important factors seem to distinguish the hotels of these three decades from those that followed. By the last two decades of the nineteenth century, a noticeable change was occurring. The *ostatuak* were becoming secure enough to cater exclusively to Basque boarders. Second, a few elderly Basques and their descendants who remember this period are still living. The final decade of the nineteenth century remains part of the memoirs of the oldest living generation. Their stories of hotel owners, customers, and employees bring the *ostatuak* to life again.

Generally, the 1890s seem to be a turning point in the history of California's Basque hotels. Surges in immigration near the turn of the century and the resultant growth in the sheep industry caused the expansion of Basque hotels within the decade. As will be seen, the sheer number of *ostatuak* increased appreciably in the 1890s.⁶³ But a word of caution is also warranted. How much of our depiction of 1890 as a turning point is based on its also the dawn of our current memory? With more information on hotels from earlier decades, we might be drawn to slightly different conclusions.

⁶³For chronological and geographical listings of all California Basque hotels included in this study, see appendices C and D.

In any case, the historical record indicates that two major cities on the West Coast hosted "Basque Towns" by 1890. In San Francisco, Juan Miguel Aguirre's hotel played an important role in the lives of Bay Area Basques from 1866 through 1906. To the south, the Pueblo de Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles also hosted a burgeoning Basque population and a small cluster of Basque hotels by 1880. The two centers were critical in the development of other Basque communities and hotels throughout the state. To these two important early "Basque Towns" we now turn.

CHAPTER 4

LOS ANGELES AND SAN FRANCISCO: TWO EARLY CALIFORNIA "BASQUE TOWNS"

By 1890, concentrations of Basque immigrants had appeared in small neighborhoods within San Francisco and Los Angeles. Each of the "Basque towns" featured clusters of *ostatuak* within compact geographical areas. At times, as many as five hotels were located within a two or three block neighborhood. Where California's *ostatuak* from 1850 through 1880 tended to be isolated resting spots frequented by travellers, the clusters of hotels in these two towns emerged as social centers for the greater American Basque community in the state and also led to the expansion of *ostatuak* in outlying areas.

Despite numerous parallels, the patterns of growth and development in California's first two "Basque towns" differed slightly. San Francisco's first hotel, owned by Juan Miguel Aguirre, was critical to newly arrived Basques and to their northern California employers. For nearly three decades, Aguirre's served as the only San Francisco Basque hotel of record until the 1890s when other hotels appeared in the Powell Street neighborhood. In southern California, a cluster of hotels existed in Los Angeles's Alameda and Aliso Street neighborhood as early as 1880, and possibly earlier. By 1940, however, southern California Basques dispersed and the "Basque town" in Los Angeles was defunct. Today San Francisco hosts one boardinghouse and a few

Basque restaurants that still function. Therefore, while Los Angeles's "Basque town" was the more concentrated during its peak years of 1890 through 1910, its northern counterpart enjoyed a longevity and endurance that carried it to the present day.

As Arrizabalaga demonstrated in her statistical survey, southern California and Los Angeles County experienced large increases in the number of Basque residents from 1860 through 1880.¹ The city's first directory, dated 1872, includes nine Basque family names and merchants.² Six years later, the next directory available contains more Basques and lists one boardinghouse under the name of G. B. Levque.³ As the spelling of his name approximates a recognizable Basque surname, it is possible that Levque was French Basque. The address of the boardinghouse was 148-152 Alameda, in the heart of what became "Basque town" in the 1880s. Both the downtown Los Angeles location and surname suggest that Levque's 1878 boardinghouse was Los Angeles' first *ostatua* of record.

By 1881, the population of the city of Los Angeles was 11,200 and *Eskaldunak* in the county had become the largest and oldest Basque community in the American West.⁴ More first, second, and third

¹Arrizabalaga, "Statistical Study," 36-38.

²Ward, Ritchie and J. McQuinn, eds. The First Los Angeles City and County Directory, 1872 (Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie Press, 1963). This reproduction of the city's earliest directory contains a ten-page listing of residents, nine of whom are Basques.

³Aaron Smith, ed., Los Angeles City Directory, 1878 (Los Angeles: Mirror Printing, 1878), 69. This listing includes fifteen Basque names.

⁴Los Angeles City and County Directory, 1881-1882 (Los Angeles: Southern California, 1892), 22.

generation Basques lived in Los Angeles than in any other city or town the United States.⁵ In fact, by 1881 three downtown lodging houses were either owned and operated by persons with Basque surnames or were regularly serving Basque patrons. A few doors down from Levque's old establishment, Mrs. M. Ballade ran her first boardinghouse on the corner of Alameda and Aliso Streets with her husband Pascal who also worked at the grocery down the street at 35 Aliso.⁶ Ballade is a French surname, yet the Ballade family operated a series of boardinghouses in "Basque town" for over two decades with Basque boarders.⁷ In addition, Martín Hirigoyen opened his hotel a few blocks away from the Ballades on the corner of Labory and Alameda Streets.⁸ And, one street over, Pascal Harotcavena took in boarders at 46 Commercial Street.⁹ While little is known regarding the operation of these three early boardinghouses, evidence suggests that Los Angeles had an established "Basque town" before the 1880s.

The Hotel de France was another of the earliest hotels in Los Angeles's "Basque town" and was located directly across from the

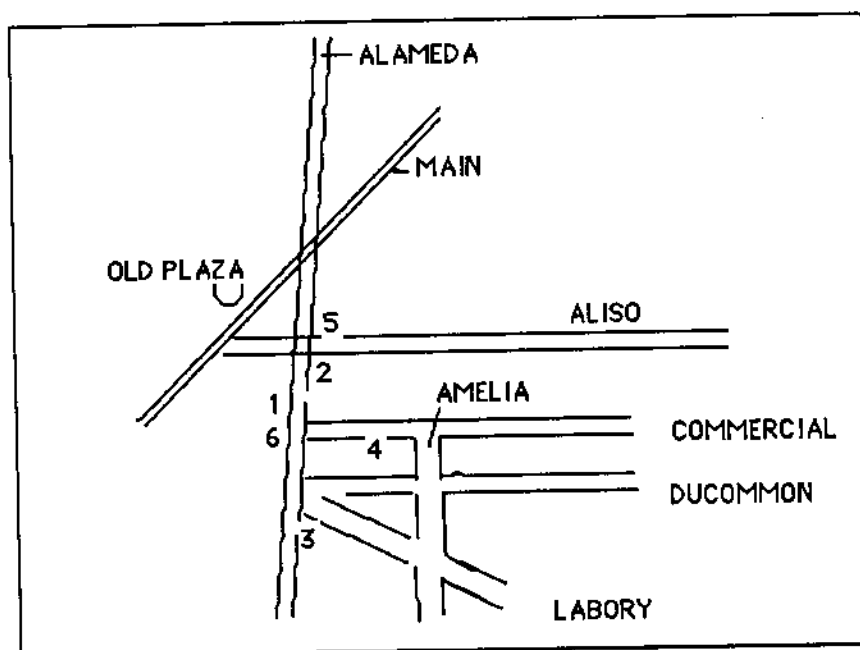
⁵Arrizabalga, "Statistical Study," 61.

⁶Los Angeles City and County Directory, 1881-1882, 27.

⁷Etcheverria Correspondence. Paquette Papers. Private Collection, Sonora, California.

⁸*Ibid.*, 79. See Figure 5 for a map of Los Angeles's early "Basque town" area based upon map in Los Angeles City Directory, 1891 (Los Angeles: W. H. L. Corran, 1891), fly leaf.

⁹*Ibid.*, 73. Spellings of Harotcavena's name vary widely in the directories. This one seems the most probable.



KEY: 1. G. B. Levque's, 1871
 3. Hirigoyen's, 1881
 5. Hotel de France, 1881

2. Ballade's Pyrenees, 1881
 4. Harotcavena's, 1881
 6. Ballade House, 1888

Fig. 5. Map of Los Angeles's "Basque Town"

Ballade House on the northeast corner of Aliso and Alameda.¹⁰ Its owners, Louis Etchepare and Domingo Apestegui, operated the hotel from 1881 until 1890 when J. B. Archimaut purchased the business.¹¹ In 1886, Marie and Pascal Ballade re-named their boardinghouse the

¹⁰For a listing of all Basque hotels and boardinghouses found in Los Angeles directories between 1872 and 1890, see Table 4. Hotels and boardinghouses listed in Table 4 also correspond to Figures 5 and 6.

¹¹Karen J. Weitz, "Aliso Street Historical Report for the City of Los Angeles," Office of Environmental Planning, Department of Transportation, Sacramento, California, January 1980, 12, and Los Angeles City Directory, 1890 (Los Angeles: W. H. L. Corran, 1890), 375.

Hotel des Pyrenees.¹² To the west of these two Basque establishments were the Hotel de Gap, Hotel d' Europe, and the Hotel de Grenobles that catered to Los Angeles's growing French population.¹³ A block and a half to the south, Martin Hirigoyen continued to operate his small boardinghouse and G. P. Sartiart opened another small *ostatua* at 26 Aliso Street.¹⁴

TABLE 4
Los Angeles's *Ostatuak*, 1872 to 1890¹⁵

DATE	OPERATOR	LOCATION	NAME
1878	G. B. Levque	148-152 Alameda	Boardinghouse
1881	Mrs. M. Ballade	141 Alameda	Lodging House
1881	M. Hirigoyen	Labory and Alameda	Boardinghouse
1881	L. Etchepare and D. Apestegui	Alameda and Aliso	Hotel de France
1881	Pascual Harotcavena	46 Commercial	Boardinghouse
1884	P. Ballade	Alameda and Aliso	Hotel and Grocery
1886	G. P. Sartiart	26 Aliso	Boardinghouse
1886	Martin Hirigoyen	Labory and Alameda	Boardinghouse
1886	Pascal Ballade	Alameda and Aliso	Hotel des Pyrenees
1888	Dominique Apesteguy	NE Corner Alameda and Aliso	Hotel de France
1888	Frank Esperance	144 Alameda	Hotel de Basse Pyrenees

¹²*Ibid.*, and Los Angeles City and County Directory, 1886-1887 (Los Angeles: A. A. Bynum and Company, 1886), 217.

¹³Los Angeles City and County Directory, 1886-1887 (Los Angeles: A. A. Bynum and Company, 1886), 12, and Ferdinand Loyer and Charles Beaudreau, Le Guide Francais de Los Angeles et du sud de la Californie (Los Angeles: Loyer and Beaudreau, 1932), 29-35.

¹⁴Los Angeles City and County Directory, 1886-1887, 220, 215.

¹⁵Table 4 is a compilation of information listed in city and county directories for this period and corresponds to the "Basque town" map in Figure 5. Spellings, addresses, and descriptions of the establishments are quoted precisely as found in directory sources.

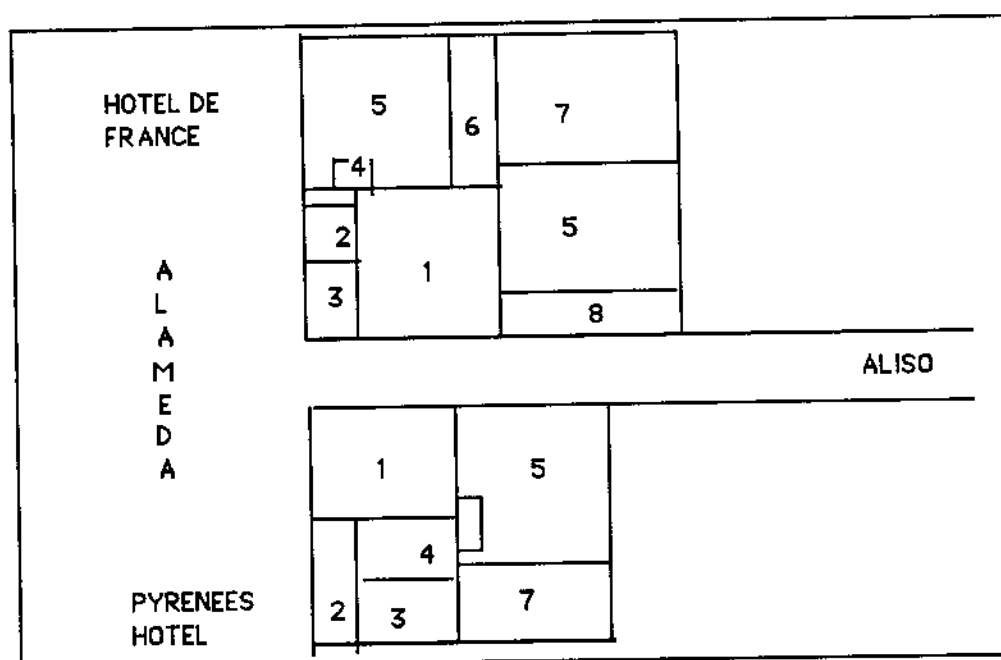
Directory advertising suggests that competition among the "Basque town" hotelkeepers was keen during the 1880s. In one city directory, each of the four existing establishments added descriptive phrases extolling their virtues. Interestingly, each promoted distinct attributes. The Hotel France, for example, claimed to be a "highly respectable house" where "strangers coming to the city will find good accommodations." In addition, good furniture, clean beds, and good meals at low rates were advertised.¹⁶ Pascal Ballade at the Pyrenees guaranteed "good board at the lowest rates," and G. P. Sartiart, the newest member of the foursome, promoted his "clean and wholesome lunch house" that featured coffee "Fit for a King."¹⁷ Meanwhile, Hirigoyen singled his dining room out for its "accommodating waiters" and convenient location.¹⁸ Not surprisingly, the owners of these establishments boldly promoted their businesses. Interestingly, each attempted to distinguish his enterprise from the others, which suggests that the proprietors were keenly aware of their competition.

These boardinghouses were likely to be of modest design, furnishings, and accommodations. In the late 1880s, the Sanborn and Dakin Map Companies published the floor plans of the Hotel de

¹⁶Los Angeles City and County Directory, 1889-1887, 55.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 217, 220.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 215.



KEY:

- 1. Boarders' Rooms
- 2. Saloon
- 3. Parlour

- 4. Kitchen
- 5. Open Yard

- 6. Handball Court
- 7. Livery Area
- 8. Wagon Shop

Fig. 6. Hotel France and Hotel Pyrenees, Los Angeles

France and des Pyrenees.¹⁹ These plans identify a dining room, saloon, sleeping rooms, a macaroni factory, and a bakery in the Hotel de France building. Alongside and behind both structures were a number of sheds for cooking and a livery. Photographs taken in 1918 reveal that the Hotel de France was a modest two-story brick structure of Greek revival style architecture.²⁰ Unfortunately, map work and

¹⁹Weitz, "Aliso Street Report," Maps 8 and 14, and Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Los Angeles, California, 1883-1887, California State University at Northridge Map Collection. See Figure 6 for a composite map of the Hotel de France and neighboring Pyrenees.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 20.

photographs for the other boardinghouses in the neighborhood are not available.

Details on these and later maps force one to re-think the labels "hotel" and "boardinghouse" more carefully. For example, one structure is labelled hotel on the maps while the other is labelled boardinghouse. Yet in terms of floor plan, size, and layout, the two were nearly identical. In local directories, the Ballades listed their business as a boardinghouse until the mid-1880s when they began advertising the same boardinghouse as Hotel Pyrenees, Hotel des Pyrenees, or Pyrenees Hotel. Why the change from "boardinghouse" to "hotel"? While the upstairs rooms and the physical layout of the buildings remained exactly the same, by 1890, a majority of the "Basque town" establishments were calling themselves hotels. Only the terminology had changed. Basques began referring to their *ostatuak* as hotels in this period and the use of the term among Basques still remains today.

Another notable point about the *ostatuak* is their name and ownership. Frequently, Basques refer to an *ostatua* by the operator's last name. For example, a few of Los Angeles' "Basque town" hotels were called Chotro's, Mayo's, Ballade's, or Hirigoyen's. Such labelling suggests that the building and business was the property of the operator, yet the operator was often a leasee rather than an owner. This situation becomes especially important when attempting to locate operators and their property in county records. In fact, very few appear in courthouse archives. That many of the *ostatuak* "owners"

were leasees may also partially explain their relatively short tenure. Indeed, these "owners" rarely operated a hotel beyond ten years. In the case of Los Angeles, leasing rather than owning may also explain why the relocation of *ostatuak* was not unusual. The Hotels de France and des Pyrenees, for example, both relocated three and four times during their thirty years of existence.²¹

The construction of the Hotel de France in the early 1880s coincided with the arrival of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Rail Lines and followed a decade that witnessed the establishment of the city's wool industry.²² The first woolen mill in Los Angeles, for example, was opened by the Barnard Brothers in 1873.²³ Together, these events stimulated Basque migration to the City of the Angels, and the gradual and steady increase must have been impressive to local Basques. This expansion led one resident, named Martín Biscailuz, the editor of the Basque-language newspaper Escualdun Gazeta, to estimate that 2,000 Basques were living in Los Angeles in 1886.²⁴ Given that the entire city's population numbered only 18,000 in 1884, Biscailuz's claim seems unlikely.²⁵ While subsequent census

²¹Study Tables 4, 5, and 9, and Figure 7 to note this phenomenon.

²²Weltz, "Aliso Street Report," 13.

²³Newmark, Sixty Years, 459 and 459.

²⁴Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, 336, and Weitze, "Aliso Street Report," 13.

²⁵Los Angeles City Directory, 1883-1884 (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Directory Company, 1883), 12.

records repudiate that one out of every nine Angelinos was Basque, the editor's claims are revealing. Perhaps for Biscailuz, Los Angeles may have seemed the mecca for American Basques. Also, since many southern California Basques frequented the Los Angeles hotels on Sundays, holidays, and vacations, Biscailuz's over-estimation is understandable. Travelling via horse and buggy to stock up on supplies in the city, many a Basque likely remained for an evening or two before beginning their return home, temporarily swelling Los Angeles's Basque population.²⁶

Los Angeles's Basque community also supported the only two Basque-language newspapers printed in the American West. The emerging Navarrese and French Basque colony in southern California in the 1880s was sufficient to encourage Martín Biscailuz, an American-born attorney in Los Angeles, to attempt the Escualdun Gazeta (Basque Gazette), the first Basque-language newspaper in the United States.²⁷ This three-month effort proved premature, however, and it was not until the California'ko Eskual Herria (California Basque Land) began publication that Basques in the United States had a successful newspaper. Founded by José Goytino in 1893, Eskual Herria flourished until 1898. A journalist by trade, Goytino established distributorships in San Francisco, San Diego, and Mexico City, thus maintaining ties between Basques in the American West and Latin

²⁶Sofia Landa, interview with author, Brea, California, 22 September 1975.

²⁷Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, 336-337.

America. In addition, each bi-monthly issue featured columns with local news and advertising from other Basque colonies such as Tehachapi, San Francisco, and Bishop Creek, California.²⁸

That Eskual Herria was published over a five-year duration in the mid-1890s suggests that the southern California Basque colony reached maturity during those years. In the 30 December 1893 issue of Eskual Herria, for example, five Basque hotels in Los Angeles sponsored advertisements. They were the Hotel des Pyrenees, the Hotel d' Europe, the Buena Vista House, the Eskualdun Ostaturia, and the Hotel de Bayonne.²⁹ One interviewee, in describing the Pyrenees's adjoining handball court, maintained that the Pyrenees Hotel was the largest of the "Basque town" hotels. He also stated that two private handball courts operated in the neighborhood.³⁰ Table 5 displays the *ostaturiak* found in Los Angeles's "Basque town" in the 1890s and notes with an asterisk those hotels advertising in Eskual Herria.

Given the keen competition in "Basque town," it is noteworthy that the old Hotel de France chose not to advertise in the only Basque newspaper available in the West. In a report on the Aliso Street area,

²⁸Only a few copies of the two newspapers remain and can be found at the Los Angeles Public Library. Some editions include mention of even more remote Basque colonies, such as Van Horn, Texas, and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

²⁹California'ko Eskual Herria, 30 December (*Abendoaren*) 1893, Lib. 2, no. 9, 3-4, Los Angeles Public Library.

³⁰Sonia Eagle, "Work and Play among the Basques of Southern California" (Ph.D. diss., Purdue University, 1979), 75.

Karen Weitz suggested that the Hotel de France was considered to be one of the "lesser" Basque establishments in "Basque town" by 1895.³¹

Table 5
Los Angeles's *Ostatuak* in the 1890s³²

DATE	OPERATOR	LOCATION	NAME
1890	D. Hiriart	144 No. Alameda	Hotel des Basse Pyrenees
1891	J. Ordoqui and Son	300 and 302 Aliso	Hotel des Pyrenees*
1891	J. B. Archimaut	301 Aliso	Hotel de France
1891	Blavere and Gouillardow	Commercial and Los Angeles	Hotel de Europe*
1891	Burubeltz and	604 Alameda	Ballade House
1893	Clavere and Gouillardou	SE Corner of Los Angeles and Commercial	Hotel de Europe*
1893	Domingo and Mrs. J. Larronde	515 New High	Buena Vista House*
1895	Clavere and Gouillardou	226 Aliso	Hotel de Europe*
1895	Jean and Mrs. L. Chotro	302 Aliso	Hotel de France
1896	D. Hiriart	312 Aliso	Pension Francaise*
1896	Felix Clavere and Peter Gouaillardou	226 Aliso	European House*
1898	Mrs. J. Larronde	300 Aliso	Hotel des Pyrenees*
1898	M. Larinaneta	515 New High	Buena Vista House

³¹Weitz, "Aliso Street Report," 14.

³²Table 5 is based on Los Angeles directories covering the 1890s. Occasionally, advertising in California'ko Eskual Herria offered pieces of conflicting information. For example, Hiriart's *Eskualdun Ostatu** appeared in the newspaper on 31 December 1893 but was called the Pension Francaise in local directories. In addition, the Hotels Maritonia* and Bayonne* purchased advertising from December 1895 through 1897 but were not listed in directories in those years. Note that all asterisked hotels (*) advertised in Eskual Herria.

According to Weitz, the hotel's northeast Aliso and Alameda Street location may have determined its clientele. For a brief period, crude cribs were constructed alongside the hotel and housed Oriental, Black, and French prostitutes. In addition, the Chinatown section of Los Angeles was beginning to press into the neighborhood where the Hotel de France was located. Weitz insinuates that, because of the intrusion of "outsiders" and prostitutes, the local Basque community may have shunned the hotel. Perhaps, but the insinuation cannot be tested. In addition, other reasons such as Old World resistance to modern advertising or lack of resources may explain the choice not to advertise in Eskual Herria.

Peak years in the life of "Basque town" in Los Angeles began with the publication of Eskual Herria in 1893 and ran through 1910. This period was characterized by a steady increase in the Basque population in Los Angeles County and a well-established network of hotels within the city's Basque neighborhood. While some of the *ostatuak* remained in the Aliso-Alameda neighborhood through 1930, a slow exodus from the city to the outlying areas of Tehachapi, Bakersfield, Santa Barbara, and Orange County in the 1910s and 1920s eroded the community's Basque population. No doubt, the decline in the southern California woolen industry, droughts, and large-scale urbanization were major factors in the erosion.

Still, Los Angeles continued to be the oldest and largest of California's Basque communities until the Census of 1910, when San Francisco's Basque population surpassed that of Los Angeles,

nonetheless, census information demonstrates that the Los Angeles County Basque population quadrupled between 1900 and 1910. In 1900, there were 269 *Euskaldunak* in the county and ten years later the number had expanded to 1,036.³³

TABLE 6

Los Angeles's Basque Population, 1900 and 1910

SEX	1900 (%)	1910 (%)
Male	145 (53.9%)	564 (54.4%)
Female	124 (46.1%)	472 (45.6%)
Total	269 (100%)	1036 (100%)
Adult Male	81 (54.4%)	363 (56.5%)
Adult Female	68 (45.6%)	280 (43.5%)
Total	149 (100%)	643 (100%)

When compared with similar statistics from San Francisco, Alameda, Kern, and Fresno counties, data presented in Table 6 demonstrates the relative maturity of the Basque community in Los Angeles. In this case, the comparatively high male-female ratio in the population and number of adults aged eighteen or older are primary indicators for maturity. Half the Basques in this study were either second or third generation, which suggests that previous generations emigrated and established themselves in southern California decades earlier. In both 1900 and 1910, the number of American-born Basques in Los Angeles was greater than the number of recently

³³Arrizabalaga, "Statistical Survey," 61. Information for Table 6 is taken from the same source.

arrived Spanish and French Basque immigrants, with American Basques in the county constituting 54.7 percent of the study population in 1900 and 51.1 percent in 1910.³⁴

Occupations among Los Angeles county Basques in the national censuses are also interesting. While Basques in this area were not exclusively involved in sheep and cattle raising, agricultural occupations dominate the tally. Basques in other California counties, such as Kern and Fresno, reflect an even larger percentage of agriculturally-based occupations. By and large, the "newer" the

TABLE 7

Occupation of Adult Basques in Los Angeles County

BASQUES INVOLVED IN	1900 (%)	1910 (%)
Agriculture	41 (46.1%)	133 (34.4%)
Hotels	11 (12.3%)	21 (5.4%)
Mining	1 (1.1%)	5 (1.3%)
Laundry	3 (3.4%)	9 (2.3%)
Unskilled Work	17 (19.3%)	84 (21.7%)
Railroad	0	5 (1.3%)
Fishing	0	9 (2.3%)
Office Work	0	1 (.2%)
Sales	0	13 (3.4%)
Merchandise	3 (3.4%)	11 (2.8%)
Bakery	0	8 (2.1%)
Government Work	1 (1.1%)	5 (1.3%)
Skilled Work	1 (1.1%)	31 (8.0%)
Professions	3 (3.4%)	10 (2.6%)
Dress Manufactures	1 (1.1%)	8 (2.1%)
Services	7 (7.9%)	27 (7.0%)
TOTAL	89 (100%)	387 (100%)

³⁴Ibid., 62.

Basque community, the more likely it is to have a high percentage of agricultural occupations, a trend that reflects the Basque-American's dominance within the sheep industry. Included in Table 7 are the occupations listed for adult Basques in Los Angeles County for 1900 and 1935.³⁵ After agricultural work, hotels provided the second most frequently mentioned occupation. Unfortunately, census data does not offer distinctions regarding work within the hotels. Some of these numbers, therefore, might include hotelkeepers, clerks, maids, and a variety of other staff members.

Occupational statistics comparing the Basque population in Los Angeles County with the Basque population in four western states are also available. Table 8 lists occupational breakdowns for the Basque population in California, Nevada, Idaho, and Wyoming for 1900 and 1910. As this compilation shows, hotelkeeping among Basques in the West maintained an equilibrium or increased slightly from 6.6 to 6.9 percent, but the total number of hotel occupations increased tenfold from thirty-two in 1900 to 329 in 1910.³⁶ In Los Angeles, however, a change in the general pattern occurred. The number of hotel-related jobs decreased sharply from 12.3 to 5.4 percent within ten years, but only with a net change of ten persons. At first glance, the decline in hotel occupations seems to contradict the dramatic population increases for Basques in Los Angeles.³⁷ The drop from 12.3 to 5.4

³⁵Ibid., 66.

³⁶Ibid., 126.

³⁷To review these statistics, see Table 6.

percent in hotel occupations can be partially explained by the small size of the study. Another possible explanation is that, while "Basque town" hotels were declining in number and importance within

TABLE 8

Occupations of Basques in Four Western States, 1900 and 1910

BASQUES INVOLVED IN	1900 (%)	1910 (%)
Agriculture	320 (66.4 %)	2037 (42.9%)
Hotel	32 (6.6%)	329 (6.9%)
Mining	5 (1.0%)	380 (6.9%)
Laundry	16 (3.3%)	269 (5.7%)
Unskilled Worker	54 (11.2%)	971 (20.4%)
Railroad	0	66 (1.4%)
Factory Work	0	56 (1.2%)
Fishing	1 (2.5%)	8 (.2%)
Office Work	0	49 (1.0%)
Sales	0	56 (1.2%)
Merchandise	6 (1.2%)	55 (1.2%)
Bakery	2 (.4%)	55 (1.2%)
Government Work	1 (.2%)	16 (.3%)
Skilled Work	11 (2.3%)	194 (4.1%)
Professions	9 (1.9%)	66 (1.4%)
Cloth Manufacture	9 (1.9%)	28 (.6%)
Services	16 (3.3%)	114 (2.4%)
TOTAL	482 (100%)	4749 (100%)

the neighborhood, Los Angeles Basques began their mild exodus into the larger metropolitan area. In this fashion, they would still be tallied within the greater Los Angeles county area, but be less tied to the old "Basque town" hotels.

By 1905, "Basque town" was in a state of gradual decline. For the first time in two decades, Los Angeles Basque hotels were closing rather than moving across the street or selling to other Basques as they had in earlier years. Within the span of years covered in Table 9, for example, four of the earliest "Basque town" hotels closed. After a twenty-five-year history of operation by the Ballade and Ordoqui families, for example, the Hotel des Pyrenees closed. The Buena Vista, the Europa, and the Maritonia also closed their doors in the same decade.

Table 9
Los Angeles's *Ostatuak*, 1900 to 1910³⁸

DATE	OPERATOR	LOCATION	NAME
1900	Manual Ordoqui	620 No. Alameda	Pyrenees Hotel
1900	Domingo Hiriart	312 Aliso	Hiriart House
1904		503 Aliso	Hotel de France
1904		Aliso and Alameda	Hotel Español
1909	Ignacio Mayo	610 No. Alameda	

The two decades between 1920 and 1930 mark the final chapter for the "Basque town" neighborhood in Los Angeles. The construction of an electric train line on Aliso Street in 1912 heralded the change. The new Pacific Electric ran through the heart of Los Angeles' "Basque town" and introduced a new mixture of cultures to the old

³⁸Information in Table 9 is based on Los Angeles city directories, except in the case of the Hotel Español which was cited in the Etcheverria correspondence, Paquette Papers, Sonora, California, and mentioned by Frank Amestoy in an interview with the author on 2 April 1987, Bakersfield, California.

neighborhood. Intensifying transportation systems crisscrossed the area, older buildings were torn down for the widening of roads, and other ethnic groups, such as the Chinese and Japanese, began working and living in the old insular neighborhood. Eventually, when the construction of Union Rail station in 1930 caused the further demolition in the neighborhood, the death knell was sounded.

But, before it did, hundreds of Basques still called the Aliso and Alameda neighborhood home, and thousands of *Euskalduna* from other parts of the West visited the area. One of these residents was Pierre Sorcabal, who left his native village in Navarra, Spain, at the age of seventeen and headed for the United States.³⁹ Before arriving in Los Angeles, he worked for sheep outfits in Albuquerque, New Mexico, southern Utah, and Big Bear Valley, California. During a visit to "Basque town" in Los Angeles, Pierre met a young Basque woman from Xuberoa, France, named Marie Salthu. They met at a dance at the Hiriarts' Sempere Hotel on the corner of Turner and Alameda. In 1909, they married at the Old Plaza Catholic Church and, soon after, they opened their own hotel. With the financial aid loaned them from Casper Cohn, a Los Angeles financier who helped many Los Angeles Basques in these years, Pierre and Marie opened a hotel down the street from the Hiriarts on Turner and Amelia.⁴⁰ The Hiriarts and

³⁹Dominic Sorcabal, interview with author, Huntington Beach, California, 1 May 1987.

⁴⁰See Figure 7 for a reproduction of Sorcabal's hand-drawn map of all the hotels in Los Angeles' "Basque town" between 1900 and 1920.

Sorcabals became close family friends, and when the Sorcabals' first child was born in 1911, the Hiriarts became the child's godparents. Generally, despite keen competition for business, *hotelero* families maintained close family friendships.

Another of the popular hotels operating during these years was Ignacio Mayo's hotel at 610 Alameda.⁴¹ Mayo's, as it was known by its predominantly Navarran Basque clientele, was a second home to those newly arrived from the Spanish Basque provinces and a meeting place for those who resided in southern California. Here too, two Navarrans from villages no more than ten miles apart in the Old Country met for the first time. Not long after their first meeting, on 19 April 1913, Francisco Landa and Dominica Layana were married at the Plaza Church by the Basque priest Dominic Záldivar and moved to Orange County where they made their home on a small sheep ranch in Brea, California.⁴² Thereafter, when they visited Los Angeles, the Landas made Mayo's their first stop.

"Basque town" residents in Los Angeles considered the half dozen *ostatuak* their homes. As one early resident remembered, "We considered them home. . . .We butchered hogs right in the middle of what is now downtown Los Angeles."⁴³ Dominic Sorcabal also

⁴¹Los Angeles City Directory, 1912 (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Directory Company, 1912), 1050.

⁴²Sofia Landa, interview with author, Brea, California, 22 September 1975. The marriage license was discovered in Sofia Landa's personal papers.

⁴³Dominic Sorcabal, interview with author, Huntington Beach, California, 1 May 1987. Figure 7 is a depiction of the 1920 neighborhood as Sorcabal remembers it.

describes feeding the sheep dogs that accompanied their masters to his parents' hotel. The Oyamburu, as it was called, had a small pen behind the hotel so that herders travelling with their sheep dogs could be accommodated. One of Dominic's jobs was to tend to their feeding.

Another of Dominic's pastimes was a daily visit to the handball courts on Alameda Street. His favorite was the one adjacent to the Olasso hotel located around the block from his parents' hotel on Alameda and Aliso Streets. When Dominic was a boy, there were at least three courts available for use within a two-block area. Like other young boys, he loved to watch the *pelotarís* compete, and, when there was an opportunity, he played against his neighborhood friends.

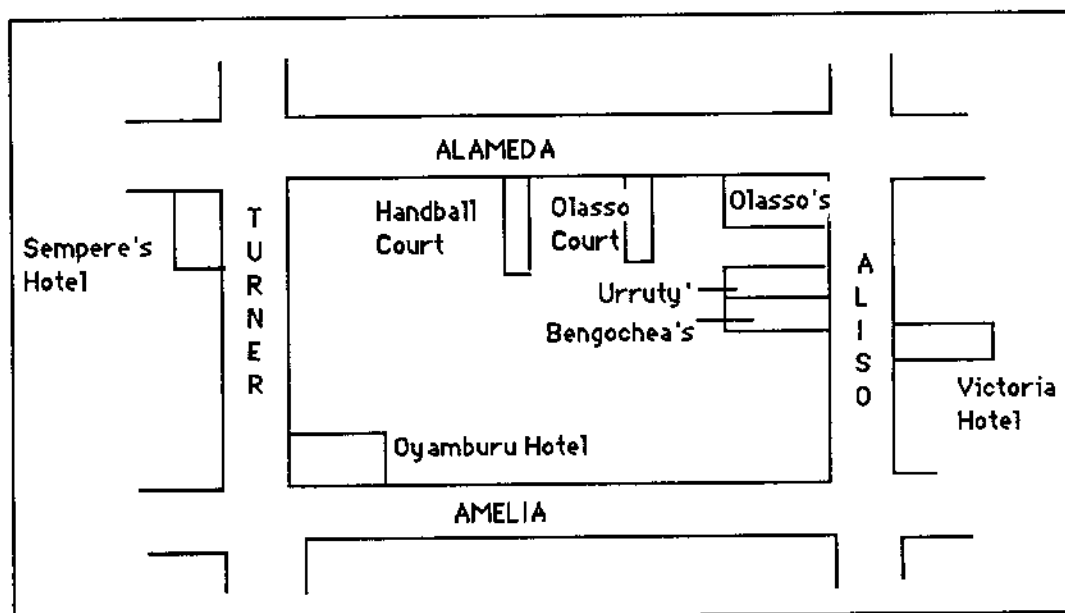


Fig. 7. Los Angeles's "Basque Town," 1920

This depiction is strikingly similar to descriptions of young Basques in *Euskalerrria* watching the *pelotaris* compete near the old plaza churches. Among the first and second generations of American Basques, the passion for sport--particularly handball--continued. Interestingly, the site of competition was transferred from the church walls in the Old Country to the *ostatuak* walls in the New World.

When national laws prohibiting the sale of alcohol were passed, it seemed to have little or no effect on Los Angeles's "Basque town." As they had for decades, *hoteleros* made their own wine and whiskey in their cellars. Those hotelkeepers who procured wine and liquor from other sources continued with those arrangements during the Prohibition period. As one participant observed, some might consider Basques to be "big bootleggers" because they continued their lifestyle during Prohibition much as before.⁴⁴ Of course, this was also true of other ethnic groups who consumed alcohol. Informants report being able to buy a shot of whisky at the Los Angeles Basque hotels for fifteen cents per shot, and that police raids of the "Basque town" *ostatuak* were quite rare. One person recalled that the police "had stopped by" the Oyamburu Hotel to ask the crowd to quiet down without checking for alcoholic beverages.⁴⁵ The good relationship existing between the Los Angeles police and "Basque town" during Prohibition was not

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

necessarily a common one, however; for in other Basque communities, such as Bakersfield, California, the relationship was strained. Perhaps "an arrangement" existed between "Basque town" hotelkeepers and the Los Angeles police.

Only a handful of the Los Angeles *hoteleros* operated their *ostatuak* for over ten-year periods. The Ballade family, for example, managed the Pyrenees Hotel for three decades. A second example was the Eskualdun Ostaturia (Basque House or Hotel) opened by Domingo Hiriart in 1893. Domingo and Catherine Hiriart and their descendants operated the hotel until around 1938. Within that forty year timespan, the Eskualdun Ostaturia changed names a number of times: the Hiriart House, Pension Francaise, and Sempere's Hotel being three versions.⁴⁶ In Los Angeles, as well as in other locations throughout the state, operating a hotel for longer than a decade was unusual. Perhaps the Hiriarts and Ballades further demonstrate the relatively mature or stable nature of the Basque community in Los Angeles.

In several ways, the 1930s and beginning of World War II signalled the end of "Basque town" in Los Angeles. Not only was the new Union Rail station constructed on the old neighborhood and a large highway severed Alameda and First Streets which eventually became an Interstate, but "Japan Town" also pressed in from the south. By 1940, the downtown *ostatuak* disappeared and Basques moved to outlying

⁴⁶For a complete listing of California *ostatuak* by geographical location and chronological order, please see appendices C and D.

areas such as La Puente and Chino in significant enough numbers to support new *ostatuak* there.

The other early "Basque town" in San Francisco, however, continued to flourish through the war years. In fact, the lifespan of San Francisco's "Basque town" covered more years than that of Los Angeles. It commenced with the construction of Juan Miguel Aguirre's hotel on Powell Street in 1866, a hotel that could be called the first complete Basque hotel in the American West. Unfortunately, less is known about San Francisco's Basque neighborhood in the years between 1860 and 1900 than that of Los Angeles. The earthquake and subsequent fires of 1906 are largely responsible for the gap in the historical record. In addition to dispersing many of the city's early ethnic neighborhoods, the disaster of 1906 destroyed large collections of civic archives and county records.

Nonetheless, city and county directories provide information indicating that San Francisco had a well established "Basque town" by the 1890s. In 1890, for example, the Hotels de France, des Alpes, de Basse Pyrenees, and Europa comprised the "Basque town" neighborhood were located in the Broadway to Pacific Street area.⁴⁷ Just as in Los Angeles, hotels had Basque proprietors and were clustered within a few blocks of one another.

⁴⁷Langley's San Francisco Directory, 1890 (San Francisco: G. B. Wilbur, 1890), 661. See Table 10 for San Francisco's 1890-1906 hotels, and consult appendices C and D for other San Francisco Basque hotels from 1866 to the present.

Information available on San Francisco's Basque hotels prior to the earthquake and fire is inconclusive. None of the San Francisco *ostatuak* listed in Table 10 were included in Sanborn Company maps from the pre-quake period. The New Pyrenees and the Europa Hotels

TABLE 10

San Francisco's *Ostatuak*, 1890 to 1906⁴⁸

DATE	OPERATOR	LOCATION	NAME
1866	Juan Miguel Aguirre	1312 Powell	
1888	Yparraguirre and Matias Juaregui	1347 Powell	Basque Hotel
1890	Armand Dehay	618 California	Hotel de France
1890	Cuyala and Labarere	614 No. Broadway	Hotel de Basse Pyrenees
1893	Juan Francisco Yparraguirre	1347 Powell	Basque Hotel
1896	Louis Savart	616-18 California	
1904	J. E. Eustache	621 Pacific	Hotel des Alpes

were the only two Basque hotels found in the maps, yet neither appeared in San Francisco city directories. In fact, directories reveal four other Basque hotels existing in the area between 1888 and 1893.⁴⁹ Figure 8 is a compilation of information discovered in directories, literature, and mapwork and represents an approximation

⁴⁸As in the other tables throughout this work, the hotels are listed from the date they first appear in the city directories and changes from year to year are noted.

⁴⁹Since the New Pyrenees and Europa Hotels appeared on Sanborn Maps for 1899 but were not listed in city directories from 1895 through 1905, they are not included in Table 10.

of San Francisco's "Basque town" in the closing years of the nineteenth century.

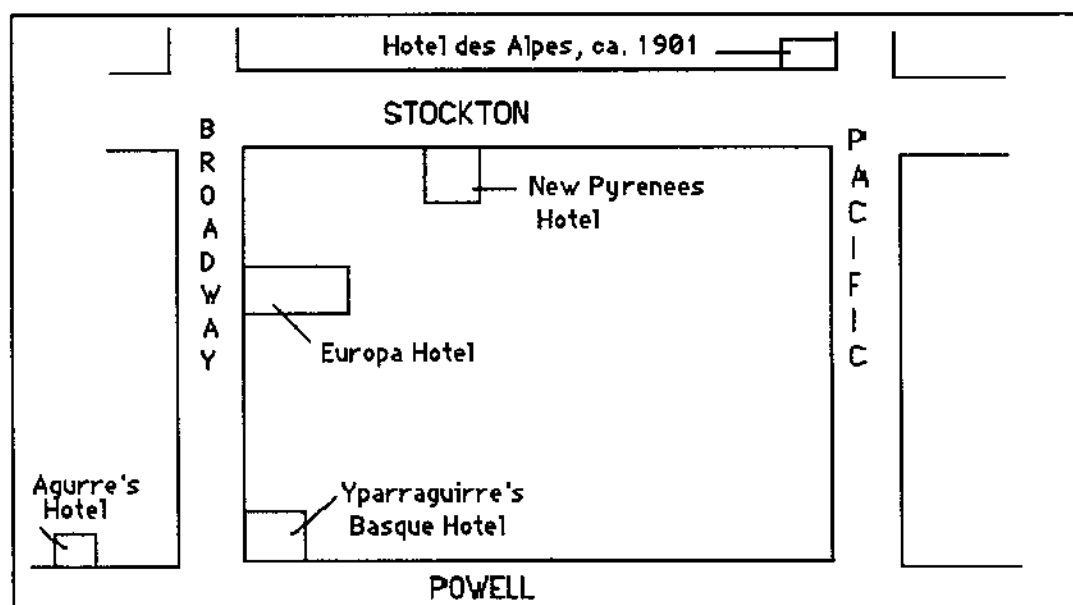


Fig. 8. San Francisco's "Basque Town," 1899

In the early 1880s, young Juan Francisco Yparraguirre of Echalar arrived in San Francisco. When visiting the San Joaquin Valley, Juan Francisco met Marie Etchebarren of Urepel, France, at her aunt's home in Tres Pinos, California. A short time later, the pair were married at the Our Lady of Notre Dame Catholic Church in San Francisco.⁵⁰ In 1893, the Yparraguirres leased a hotel building on the corner of Powell and Broadway Streets, which they named the Basque Hotel. When originally constructed, the two-story wooden frame building with a downstairs saloon stood between two private

⁵⁰Elvira Yparraguirre Root, interview with author, San Francisco, California, 14 and 15 May 1987.

residences.⁵¹ A year after opening, Juan Francisco sent for three of his brothers in Echalar to work for him at the hotel. Not long after, the four brothers built a handball court on 823 Broadway Street near the corner of Powell.⁵²

Yparraguirre's was a popular location among Bay Area Basques in the 1890s. Juan Francisco loved music and often invited musicians to play in the restaurant and barroom. For example, Juan Francisco's friend Vincent Arrillaga of the Arrillaga Musical College often frequented the Basque Hotel.⁵³ In addition, the patron was known for singing and encouraged his clients to join him in singing Basque folk songs. The atmosphere, conviviality, and Yparraguirre handball court enticed customers to the Basque Hotel. In addition, Juan Francisco regularly advertised in California'ko Eskual Herria, luring Basques to visit from other parts of the West.⁵⁴

When the fire of 1906 engulfed the peninsula from Van Ness Street to the Bay, Juan Francisco scurried his family down to the docks where they boarded a barge and crossed to the safety of Oakland's harbor. Yparraguirre remained and attempted to protect the hotel from destruction until ordered to evacuate. By that time, evacuees

⁵¹Photograph of Yparraguirre's Basque Hotel in Talbott Papers.

⁵²San Francisco Directory, 1905 (San Francisco: H. S. Crocker, 1905), 1981.

⁵³Elvira Yparraguirre Root, interview with the author, San Francisco, California, 14 and 15 May 1987, and Frank Bailey Millard, The History of the San Francisco Bay Region (San Francisco: American Historical Society, Inc., 1924), 280-81.

⁵⁴California'ko Eskual Herria, 30 December (*Abendoaren*) 1893, Lib. 2, no. 9, 3-4.

were being directed to Golden Gate Park to wait until the crisis subsided. While Juan Francisco waited and watched, his hotel and the old Aguirre were burned to the ground. Neither family attempted to re-build their former businesses. The destruction of these first two *ostatuak* and their neighbors marks the end of San Francisco's first "Basque town." While new Basque establishments emerged in the twentieth century, the two earliest hotels represented a particular period in Basque hotelkeeping, one reminiscent of gold and adventure seekers and of California's "boom and bust" period.

Comparisons between the censuses for 1900 and 1910 for San Francisco and Los Angeles Counties help us clarify the development of the two Basque centers. In 1900, San Francisco was the second most populated of California's Basque communities.⁵⁵ Ten years later, however, San Francisco had surpassed Los Angeles as the largest Basque community in the state. San Francisco expanded despite the disaster of 1906 and despite its being one of the Basque communities least involved in sheep and cattle raising.⁵⁶ For Basques in California and other parts of the West, San Francisco was becoming a major point of entry, a regional cultural center, and an ideal vacation spot for Basque families from the San Joaquin Valley and tired herders.

Another characteristic of San Francisco's Basques revealed in the 1900 and 1910 censuses was its comparatively young population.

⁵⁵Arrizabalaga, "Statistical Study," 66.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 68.

That San Francisco's Basques were three years younger than the state's average implies a dynamic dimension to the population and reflects the influx of newcomers to the community. Table 11 indicates that the percentage of foreign-born Basques in San Francisco was increasing between 1900 and 1910 which contributed to the city's youthful averages.⁵⁷

Table 11

Origins of San Francisco's Basque Population, 1900 and 1910

ORIGIN	1900 (%)	1910 (%)
France	47 (42%)	374 (28%)
Spain	15 (13%)	511 (38%)
United States	50 (45%)	456 (34%)
TOTAL	112 (100%)	1341 (100%)

While the disaster of 1906 had a profound effect on early "Basque town" and has probably prevented access to records of other early *ostatuak*, its significance should not be overemphasized. In this case, the event provides the historian with a convenient close to the nineteenth-century chapter of San Francisco's Basque neighborhood. Hotels that followed the quake will be discussed in a later chapter along with their twentieth-century counterparts.

San Francisco's early "Basque town" shared some characteristics with that of Los Angeles. In both cases, clusters of *ostatuak* sprang up in neighborhoods and formed a nucleus for surrounding communities.

⁵⁷Table 10 is based on Arrizabalaga, "Statistical Study," 67.

Both became regional centers for the wider Basque population, and both contributed to the development of newer communities on their periphery. While the Basque neighborhood in Los Angeles subsided and collapsed by the Second World War, San Francisco's "Basque town" has expanded into the present. Perhaps the nature of urban development in the Los Angeles metropolitan area was the most important "push" factor for southern California Basques to re-locate to surrounding areas, while Basques in San Francisco were able to accommodate themselves to urban growth by taking "town jobs" as gardeners, janitors, bakers, and laundry workers.⁵⁸ In Los Angeles, on the other hand, Basques were often directly tied to sheep raising and wool production or other agricultural endeavors.

Most important, the two early "Basque towns" share the status of "first." Before they emerged, the occurrence of Basque hotels and boardinghouses was scattered throughout the state's "sheep country." In addition, the hotels mentioned in the preceding chapter were so isolated that they developed as individual entities. In the "Basque towns," however, Basque neighborhoods developed into communities, and the *ostatuak* played an important part in that development.

In both San Francisco and Los Angeles, the Basque neighborhoods supported the establishment of new communities in outlying areas.⁵⁹

⁵⁸Jean Francis Decroos, The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance Among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region (Reno: Associated Faculty Press and Basque Studies Program, 1983), 42-43.

⁵⁹Another pre-quake *ostatua*, the New Lake House, operated in San Jose in the 1890s. and was advertised in California'ko Eskual Herria, 30 December (*Abendoaren*) 1893.

In the next chapter, we focus on what the "Basque town" in Los Angeles produced--a series of spin-off communities that moved Basques to points north, east, and south of the City of the Angels and gave them a permanent role in the development of key communities like Santa Barbara, Bakersfield, and Orange County. To their story we now turn.

CHAPTER 5

LOS ANGELES'S LEGACY AND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S BASQUE HOTELS

Although the Basque population in Los Angeles declined, colonies of *Euskaldunak* developed elsewhere in southern California. In fact, one author accurately referred to Los Angeles as the early training ground for those who became hotelkeepers in Bakersfield, as well as for *hoteleros* who made their way to Tehachapi, Santa Barbara, Chino, and Puente.¹

By 1890, Basques began to move into southern portions of the San Joaquin Valley of California, specifically to Bakersfield and the small neighboring town of Tehachapi. The Miller and Lux Ranch and Kern County Land Company, two of Kern County's largest ranches, were responsible for drawing a number of the earliest Basques to the county and employed many more Basque sheepherders between 1870 and 1900, thus establishing a "Basque pipeline" to the Bakersfield area. The first of Bakersfield's numerous Basque hotels was built in Kern City, later renamed East Bakersfield, and incorporated into the city of Bakersfield. Ironically, a non-Basque named Faustino Mier built Bakersfield's first Basque hotel. Mier was born in Santander, Spain, on

¹Mary Grace Paquette, Basques to Bakersfield (Bakersfield: Kern County Historical, 1982), 81.

15 February 1856.² At the age of fifteen, Faustino travelled to America to join his uncle Vincent Noriega in Tulare, California, and took his uncle's surname as his own. Faustino Mier Noreiga began working as a herder for the large Miller and Lux outfit in 1882 and became a foreman of one of their Kern County ranches a few years later. He worked there until February 1893 when he married a French Basque woman, Louise Inda.³

A few months before the Noriega-Inda wedding, Faustino formed a partnership with Fernando Etcheverry, a French Basque from Aldudes. After securing a loan of \$3,500 to finance the project the year before, Noriega and Etcheverry opened their Iberia Hotel in Kern City in 1893.⁴ The new hotel immediately became a center and meeting place for Basques from Bakersfield, Tehachapi, Wasco, Tulare, and other surrounding towns.⁵ Before the Iberia, several Dauphinois-owned hotels had served both the French and Basque communities in Bakersfield.⁶ Not accidentally, the Iberia was located directly across

²James M. Guinn, History of the State of California and Biographical Record of the San Joaquin Valley (Chicago: Chapman Publishing Company, 1905), 1571.

³Ibid.

⁴Guinn, History of the State, 1571; Paquette, Basques to Bakersfield, 15; and Deeds of Record Book, Kern County, 31 July 1893, Bakersfield, California.

⁵California'ko Eskual Herria contained an advertisement for an "*Ostatu Frantsesa*" in Bishop Creek, California, in 1895. The Hotel Fletcher, as it was called, was located directly east from Bakersfield, over the Sierra Nevadas, and would have been a likely stopover for Bakersfield and Tehachapi sheepmen summering their flocks. Whether it was a Basque hotel or a hotel that catered to Basques is unknown, but it seems appropriate to consider it part of Bakersfield's early period. California'ko Eskual Herria, 15 December (*Abendoaren*) 1895, Lib. 4, no. 16, 3.

⁶Paquette, Basques to Bakersfield, 87.

the street from Bakersfield's train station. So that, for decades after, Basques arriving in Bakersfield by rail have been able to spot the hotel upon stepping from the train. In fact, one 1899 advertisement ran, "Iberia Hotel, F. M. Noriega, proprietor, first class accommodations, everything neat and clean, for reliable information as to pasturage and fat stock of all kinds....opposite freight depot."⁷

After the turn of the century, Noriega and Etcheverry re-negotiated their partnership, divided profits from the hotel, and began investing elsewhere in Kern County. Not more than a block away, the two built a second Basque hotel which they named the Pyrenees. Construction costs for the new brick building were \$9000.⁸ To regain their initial investment, the two leased the Pyrenees to a series of other Basque hotelkeepers until it was sold years later. During their first eight years of managing the Iberia and Pyrenees, Faustino and Louise Inda Noriega, with their young children and Fernando and Mathilde Etcheverry, all lived at the Iberia. In 1901, the Noriegas left the Iberia and the partners began leasing it to other operators. Five years later, while still in partnership with Etcheverry, Faustino changed the name of the Iberia to Noriega's. Today, Noriega's is the oldest *ostatua* operating in the West; that is, it continues to take in Basque borders and serve single-seating family-style meals.

⁷Bakersfield and Kern City Directory, 1899 (Fresno: Marks, Weston, and Cooper, 1899), 45.

⁸Ibid.

For its first fifty years, Noriega's was a long two-story building. There was also an enclosed wooden handball court that leaned against the back wall of the hotel. In colorful stories, oldtimers remember the bats that lived in the rafters of the *cancha*. Chicken pens, a few livestock, a livery, and a vegetable garden could be found in the empty lots alongside and behind the hotel.⁹ In 1928, a fire damaged the livery area and ball court and a new *cancha* was constructed.¹⁰ The present bar, card room, and dining area were added in 1940, nearly doubling the area of the lower floor.¹¹ Today, Noriega's reminds one of the self-sufficient complex it once was, with vestiges of its former supply areas, courts, kitchens, parlours, and barrooms.¹²

A walking tour of the nearly century-old Noriega Hotel reveals the lifestyle and some of the demands of an earlier day. When facing the front facade of the building, one can barely distinguish the construction in 1893 on the left from the 1940 extension on the right. Once one enters the building, however, the distinction becomes more discernable. Today, the visitor entering the front door walks into a

⁹Frank Amestoy, interview with author, Bakersfield, California, 2 April 1987.

¹⁰Louise Amestoy Maitia, interview with author, Bakersfield, California, 2 April 1987.

¹¹Janice Elizalde, interview with author, Bakersfield, California, 1 April 1987.

¹²Figure 9 illustrates the physical layout of Noreiga's in 1987.

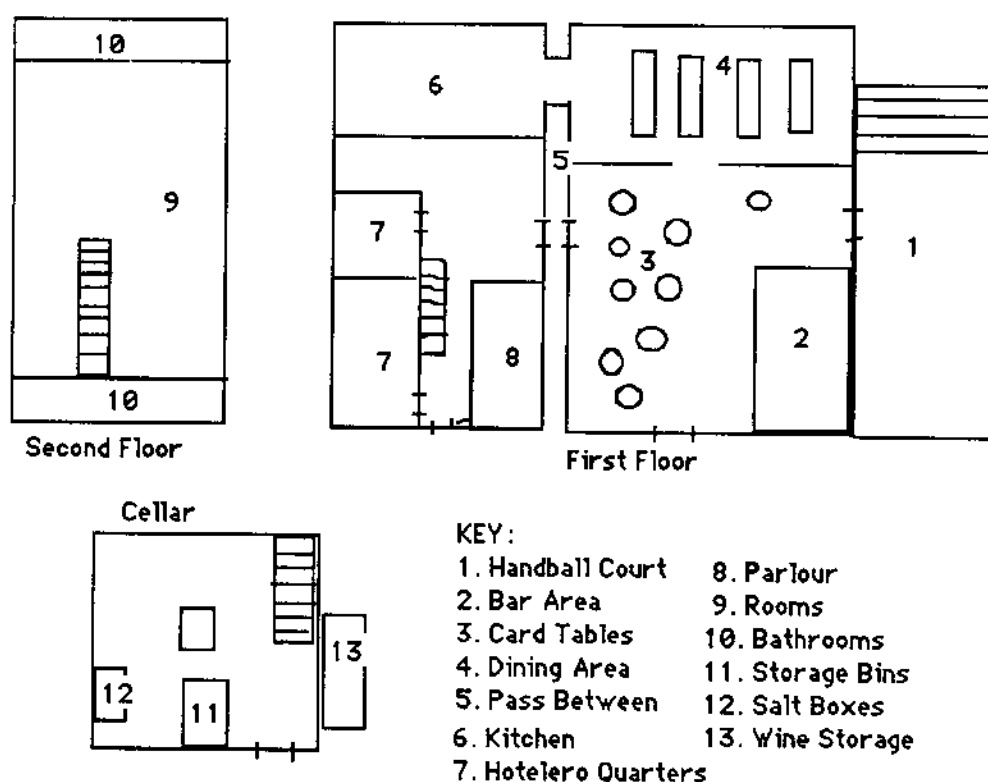


Fig. 9. Layout of the Noriega Hotel, Bakersfield

large barroom with tables for card playing or private visiting. Most of the socializing occurs in this area, which also serves as an access to all other portions of the hotel. If one crosses from the newer to the older section, one can easily step into the Prohibition period or earlier. The parlour room, for example, was separated from the main area and used by the ladies during the pre-1920s for visiting, while their men socialized in the barroom or played hand ball in the *cancha*. In the cellar directly beneath the parlour, the ramp that hotelkeepers rolled enormous wine barrels down for storage still leans against the wall. Also in the cellar are large wooden salt boxes once used for curing

meats, pipes suspended overhead where *chorizo* sausage were hanged and dried, and a screened-in cupboard where dry goods were stored.

To accommodate its boarders and visitors, Noriega's has thirteen upstairs rooms, with washrooms at either end of a long corridor. Guest rooms appear as they must have earlier in the century. Each is small, sparsely furnished, and clean. Interestingly, visitors know which rooms are preferred. For instance, a room at the back of the hallway tends to be one of the last chosen because of the early morning noises rising from the kitchen, and rooms in the front of the hotel are considered less pleasant because of the hot Bakersfield sunshine in summer months. In addition, the thirteen hotel rooms are numbered one through fourteen and there has never been a room "13" at the Noriega, reflecting a tendency toward superstition among Basque boarders.¹³

In the years since 1901, when the Etcheverrrys left the Iberia, a number of hotelkeepers have made the hotel their home. From 1901 through 1906, for example, Jean and Jeanne Burubeltz operated the hotel. Before moving to Bakersfield, Jean Burubeltz managed the Ballade House in Los Angeles's "Basque town." A native of Lasse, France, Burubeltz arrived in southern California in 1873, where he began herding sheep and struck up a friendship with Pascal Ballade. The Hotel des Pyrenees became his "second home" and was also where he met Jeanne Erreca, the niece of Marie Ballade and his future

¹³Louise Amestoy Maitia, interview with author, Bakersfield, California, 2 April 1987.

wife. After the two were married in 1890, Burubeltz sold his sheep interests and went to work for Ballade. In the early 1890s, J. Ordoqui and Sons leased the Hotel des Pyrenees and the Ballades relocated to 604 Alameda Street, which became the Ballade House.¹⁴ Directories for that year listed Pascal Ballade as manager and restaurateur, with Jean Burubeltz as proprietor.¹⁵ The Burubeltzs continued to work at the Ballade House until 1901, when they learned that Faustino Noriega of East Bakersfield was looking for someone to manage the Iberia Hotel.

The Burubeltzs then moved to Bakersfield, managed the Iberia until 1906, and made the town their permanent home. In one account, Jean and Jeanne Burubeltz are credited with opening the Hotel d' Europe in 1901, but more than likely this date is incorrect.¹⁶ Instead, the couple managed the Iberia until 1906, when they moved to the Hotel d' Europe, owned by "Frenchman" Pierre Roux.¹⁷ Jean Burubeltz died in 1911 and Jeanne continued to operate the Hotel d' Europe until 1915, when she purchased the hotel from La Roux.¹⁸ She

¹⁴Los Angeles City Directory 1891 (Los Angeles: W. H. L. Corran, 1891), 753.

¹⁵Mariana Etcheverria, personal correspondence, Paquette Papers. Private Collection, Sonora, California. Refer to Tables 4 and 5 and Figure 5 in Chapter 4.

¹⁶Wallace W. Morgan, History of Kern County, California, with Biographical Sketches (Los Angeles: Historic Record Company, 1914), 1335.

¹⁷Paquette, Basque to Bakersfield, 87.

¹⁸Ibid.; Morgan, History of Kern, 1335; and Thelma B. Miller, History of Kern County (Chicago: S. J. Clarke, 1929) 309.

operated the hotel until 1921, when the Hotel d' Europe faded from East Bakersfield history.

Information on the Noriega during the period from 1906 until 1920 is sketchy. One account mentions that a Jean B. Estribou managed the Metropole Hotel during this period, even though biographical sketches and supplementary materials do not include the hotel.¹⁹ From 1915 through 1920 a Spaniard named Fernandes-Aja managed the hotel. Other than his unusual nickname, very little has been reported on "Rothschild's" five years at the Noriega.

On the other hand, information regarding the Noriega Hotel since 1920 is more accessible. In that year, a fire at the hotel caused some structural damage. After the conflagration, Faustino offered a month's free rent to Francisco Amestoy if he would manage the hotel and make the needed repairs on the building.²⁰ Amestoy was born in Irurita, Spain, and went to the Philipines to work the sugar plantations with his two older brothers after the death of his parents. In 1904, Francisco left the Philipines and travelled to southern California. Arriving with fifteen dollars in his pocket, he first stopped in Los Angeles at the Hotel Español on Aliso and Alameda Streets. There he enjoyed visiting with other *Eskualdunak* and played handball at the Español's court.²¹ Not long after his arrival, he began herding sheep

¹⁹John A. Stafford, "Basque Ethnohistory in Kern County, California" (Master's thesis, Sacramento State, 1971), 22, and Morgan, History of Kern, 1214-15.

²⁰Frank Amestoy, interview with author, Bakersfield, California, 2 April 1987.

²¹*Ibid.*

for Pierre and Jacob Loustalot and, later, for the Anchordoquy brothers.²² Eventually, Amestoy made his way to Bakersfield where Faustino Noriega hired him to work at the hotel.

Later, when an offer came to manage the hotel, Amestoy accepted. Eight years before his acceptance, Francisco met his future wife, Anselma Ballaz, at the hotel. She began working at Noriega's as a maid in 1912.²³ Together, the two Amestoys ran the Noriega from 1920 to 1931. In addition, they had purchased the Cesmat in 1927, formerly a French-owned hotel that was located a few blocks away on East 21st Street. Descendants of the Amestoys assert that Anselma never considered making Noriega an offer on his property because she was always concerned about a possible third fire in the old wooden building, and she detested the bats that resided in the hotel attic and old handball court. As the story goes, Anselma arranged for the purchase of the two-story brick Cesmat Hotel without consulting Francisco and immediately signed a loan agreement with Ardizzi and Olcese, a firm that helped many early Bakersfield Basques with loans and financing.²⁴

In contrast to "Basque town" in Los Angeles, Bakersfield Basques had a difficult time with Prohibition. Indeed, a number of bootlegging stories come from the decade when the Amestoys were in business at

²²Paquette, Basque to Bakersfield, 88.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Louise Amestoy Maitia, interview with author, Bakersfield, California, 2 April 1987. Douglass and Bilbao mention at least eight such loans in Amerikanuak, 235.

Noriega's. Hotelkeepers kept wine and other alcoholic beverages on hand for Basque clients but excluded non-Basque customers. One observer noted that all "Bascos" drank and made their own wine, and "if you didn't have wine [at your hotel], the Bascos wouldn't stay."²⁵ In order to solve this problem, Anselma, whose Basque friends called her "Chaparita," developed a number of clever ways to hide alcohol from "the public."²⁶ A private bottle in the upstairs bathroom, a teapot on the kitchen stove, and a flask tucked into her bra were Anselma's solutions. Any Basque could go into the kitchen, pour himself a shot of whiskey from the teapot, put fifty cents in the cigar box above the stove, and return to his card game, dinner seat, or courtside perch without attracting attention.²⁷

Despite ingenious decoys, however, the Bakersfield police "pinched" the Amestoys three times.²⁸ On one occasion, the police entered the Noriega, marched downstairs to the cellar, axed every wooden cask of wine in the supply, causing a minor flood and eventual mud-bath in the dirt-floored cellar.²⁹ On other occasions, however, the local hotel operators evaded the local constabulary. One of the favorite stories locals tell is the usage of "chicken orders" as a decoy

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶John Yturry, interview with author, Brea, California, 28 April 1987.

²⁷Frank Amestoy, interview with author, Bakersfield, California, 2 April 1987.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Janice Elizalde, interview with author, Bakersfield, California, 1 April 1987.

for ordering bottles or kegs of wine. Orders were placed by telephone with party lines and hotelkeepers had to be careful how they ordered. It was privately understood, for example, that an order for "three chickens for Sunday dinner" really meant three barrels of wine for Sunday's meal.³⁰

After eight years of managing the Noriega without a vacation, the Amestoy family took a four-month trip to Europe in 1928. Upon returning, they renewed their lease at Noriega's and extended the lease at the Cesmat. On 31 January 1931, after eleven years at the Noriega, Francisco and Anselma moved with their three children to the Cesmat. For the first ten months of 1931, Marcelina Noriega Recatune and her husband took over at Noriega's. A few blocks away, on East 21st, the old Cesmat boasted the new nameplate, "Amestoy," which it still bears today. To the Amestoys, their new hotel was beautiful compared to the old Noriega. The comparatively modern brick structure underwent a thorough cleaning, some remodelling, and reinforcement to the downstairs before the Amestoys re-opened the hotel.³¹

By the mid-1930s, three *ostatuak* prospered in Bakersfield's Basque neighborhood-- Noriega's, Amestoys, and the Pyrenees. Late in 1931, Jean and Grace Elizalde took over at the Noriega, Francisco and Anselma Amestoy were at their hotel, and Jenny Iribarne Dunns and

³⁰Frank Amestoy, interview with author, Bakersfield, California, 2 April 1987.

³¹Louise Amestoy Maitia, interview with author, Bakersfield, California, 2 April 1987.

Inocencio "Jack" Juarena were partners in the restaurant portion of the old Pyrenees, which Noriega and Etcheverry built three decades earlier. At this time, lunch at their restaurant cost fifty cents; and dinner, seventy-five cents.³² Some early patrons claim that the Pyrenees served the very best Basque meals and, for a time, was the most popular stop in "Basque town." When Jenny died in 1943, sole ownership of the Pyrenees Cafe went to Inocencio. Today, Jenny's third-generation descendants are running the business.

Another Basque establishment operating in Bakersfield from the mid-1920s through the 1930s was the Metropole Hotel, located at the corner of Sumner and Baker Streets.³³ Its operators, Jacques and Grace Iriart, moved from Tehachapi in 1926 when they became managers of the second-story hotel located across the street from Bakersfield's train depot.³⁴ Directories indicate that the Iriarts were at the Metropole for a minimum of fifteen years. Curiously, however, interviewees likely to have remembered the hotel never mentioned the Metropole. Perhaps the Metropole may have limited its meals and drinks exclusively to its boarders or close associates, occasionally found to be the pattern at some hotels.

³²Paquette, Basque to Bakersfield, 92.

³³Bakersfield City Directory, 1930 (Los Angeles: R. L. Polk and Company, 1930), 279; Bakersfield City Directory 1935 (Los Angeles: R. L. Polk and Company, 1935), 266; and Bakersfield City Directory, 1940 (Los Angeles: R. L. Polk and Company, 1940), 279.

³⁴Paquette, Basques to Bakersfield, 57.

Possibly the most well-known and loved managers of any Basque hotel in Bakersfield were the Elizaldes. In the Bakersfield community, Gracianna (Grace) Elizalde's legacy is enormous. At the age of twenty, she came to Tehachapi in 1914 to work as a maid at a hotel owned by family friends from her home town of Anhaux.³⁵ There, at the old Franco-American Hotel, she met Jean Elizalde who had come to California in 1905 under the sponsorship of his uncle Jean Burubeltz. Grace and Jean married, and when they lost their flocks in the crash of 1929, Grace went to work at the Old Commercial Hotel in Tehachapi. After two years there, the Elizaldes came to relieve Marcelina Noriega Recatune in late 1931.

Bakersfield Basques rarely fail to remember at least one of Gracianna's kindnesses. In part, the number of "Mama Elizalde" stories may be due to Gracianna's unusually long stay at the Noriega, from 1931 through 1974. But more to the point, her compassionate actions left a legacy for local hotelkeepers. Whether buying a large burial plot in the local cemetery for bachelor herders, tending to the needs of infirm boarders, or making a quiet loan to a local rancher, Gracianna seems to have touched most Bakersfield Basques.³⁶ If an elderly boarder needed special care or bathing, Grace would climb the stairs and harass the oldtimer until she succeeded. Oftentimes, she

³⁵Ibid., 89.

³⁶Paquette, Basque to Bakersfield, 90; Janice Elizalde, interview with author, Bakersfield, California, 1 April 1987; and Mayie Maltia, interview with author, Bakersfield, California, 2 April 1987.

gave or loaned herders suits of clothing to wear on special occasions such as funerals, weddings, and baptisms. Grace never learned to drive but insisted on helping others when they needed aid. Her kitchen help and children knew they needed to be ready to drop whatever they were doing and drive her to her destination on a moment's notice.

One of the most charming Elizalde stories is told by Mayie Maitia, who came to Bakersfield in March of 1947. Soon after her arrival, she worked as a serving girl at the Amestoy Hotel, until she met Jean Baptiste Maitia, who was working at the neighboring Pyrenees. The two married in the early 1950s, and a few years later, Mayie went to work for Grace Elizalde at Noriega's. When Mayie and "J. B." were expecting their first child, Grace, who loved to gamble, decided to wager on the gender of the expected child. By the time their daughter was born, Grace had wagered more than two hundred dollars, betting that the child would be a girl. When Grace was proven correct, she collected the money and opened a savings account in their child's name.³⁷

Despite illness from cancer in her last years, Grace Elizalde had managed Noriega's continuously since 1931. On 14 April 1974, she died. Even a casual visit to Bakersfield, however, indicates that Gracianna lives in the memory of many local Basques. Her two sons,

³⁷Mayie Maitia, interview with author, Bakersfield, California, 2 April 1987.

Albert and Louie Elizalde, took over management of the Noriega after their mother's death and today her descendants still manage the hotel.

The Noriega Hotel, as well as the Pyrenees and Metropole, were located directly across the street from Bakersfield's train station.³⁸ In 1930, Frank Maitia arrived via train and spotted the three hotels as he disembarked. Following his two older brothers "J. B." and Raymond from their home village of St. Jean Pied de Port, he herded sheep around Bakersfield for twelve years, saving enough money to buy the French House on East 21st Street, directly across from Amestoy's. Marius Plantier built the French House in 1898 and the old hotel had been a headquarters for stockmen from all over southern San Joaquin Valley.³⁹ Maitia renamed it the Basque Cafe, and the establishment became a landmark for Basques in the 1930s and 1940s.⁴⁰ After renovating the building, the Maitias lived upstairs at the Basque Cafe but did not take boarders. During these years, Frank Maitia served Madera, Fresno, and Bakersfield ranchers as something of an employment agent. First he would wire to the Basque country, stating that a certain number of men were needed for ranch jobs. Upon the herders and ranch-hands arrival, Maitia would arrange rooms for them at the Noriega or the Amestoy. Next, he would put their names in a

³⁸Note the diagram of Bakersfield's "Basque town" in Figure 10.

³⁹Bakersfield and Kern City Directory, 1902-1903 (Bakersfield: W. A. Cannady, 1903), 120.

⁴⁰Frank Maitia, Sr., interview with author, Bakersfield, California, 1 April 1987.

hat and draw slips of paper to discover which man would work for which rancher.⁴¹

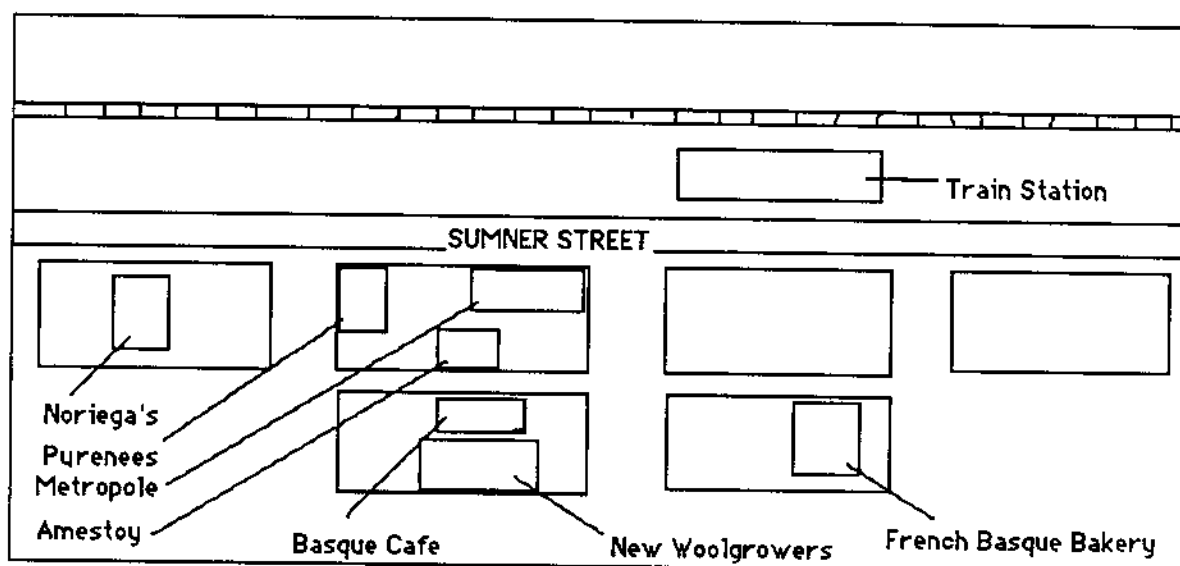


Fig. 10. Bakersfield's "Basque Town"

Another service that Frank Maitia particularly enjoyed providing was scheduling handball matches and tournaments between local players and out-of-town visitors. Maitia was probably well aware that this service also boosted weekend business for the Basque Cafe and its neighboring hotels. Maitia would collect teams of players from Orange County, Chino, and Puente, for example, and schedule Sunday matches against local competition. Such tourneys brought out the local Basque community and attracted Basques from other southern California towns as well.

⁴¹Ibid.

By 1950, the complexion of Bakersfield's "Basque town" began to undergo changes. In 1954, "J. B." and Mayie Maitia opened The Woolgrowers Restaurant down the street from the Pyrenees and Noriega's. Twenty years later, they moved to a new location on 21st Street, which Mayie and her daughter Jenny operate today. Also in the 1950s, one of the Amestoy daughters, Josephine, purchased her parents' business from Anselma and operated it for eleven years until she sold to Raymond Maitia in 1964. By the early 1960s, the Frank Maitias had sold their Basque Cafe to Raymond Echeveste.

Perhaps the only strand of continuity in the rapidly changing Bakersfield Basque hotel business was Grace Elizalde at Noriega's. As many have lamented, when Grace passed away, an entire era in the history Bakersfield's *ostatuak* was sealed and hotelkeeping changed.⁴² Most of the restaurants have discontinued one serving at noon and another at six in the evening, as Grace insisted upon, and have switched to serving individual tables family-style. Now a majority of the restaurants offer a variety of choices for their customers where, at Grace's, the client was expected to receive the daily fare without complaint.

In addition, the recent years have marked the close of Bakersfield's Basque boardinghouse period. The Noriega is the only Bakersfield *ostatua* that continues to limit its boarders to Basques. The others, such as the Pyrenees and Amestoy, either cater to a mixed clientele or

⁴²Bakersfield Californian, "Rites for Basque Hotel Keeper, Restaurateur Set," 16 April 1974, 11:5-6.

closed their doors to boarders long ago. Still, Bakersfield has numerous successful restaurants in the old "Basque town" area. The Woolgrowers, Noriega's, and the Pyrenees are three excellent examples. In other parts of town, there are numerous Basque restaurants from which to chose. For example, Frank Maitia and his son recently opened the new Maitia's Basque Restaurant and have received acclaim.⁴³ In addition, "J. B." and Marie Curuchague's Chalet Basque, the Echeveste's Chateau Basque on Union Avenue, Dominique's Basque Restaurant on New Stine Road, and Benjie Arduain's restaurant offer Basque cuisine.⁴⁴ In the thirteen-year period since Grace Elizalde left her kitchen for the last time, many of these restaurants have opened, and while the Noriega hangs onto a dwindling Bakersfield tradition, many of the town's other *ostatuak* have also closed their doors.

Bakersfield was not the only town in Kern County to welcome Basques in the 1890s. Approximately forty miles southeast of Bakersfield, up in the foothills of the Sierra Nevadas, is the small town of Tehachapi. The town is nestled in a gorge about 4,000 feet above sea level, overlooking Bakersfield. Founded in the summer of 1876, when the Southern Pacific Railway finally surmounted the difficulties of the grade and reached the little valley at the summit, Tehachapi is

⁴³Bakersfield Californian, "Biggest, Best Basque Eatery Rising on Union: Maitia's New Basque Restaurant," 21 October 1979, E1:1-6 and E2:1-3, and "Basques Celebrate at Maitia's House," 11 July 1980, D2:3-6.

⁴⁴Bakersfield Californian, "Basque Restaurant Fulfills His Dreams," 26 June 1983, F1:1-3.

still a major highway and rail route connecting the San Joaquin Valley to the southern deserts and Mojave.⁴⁵ In the 1870s, the town sported four or five saloons, one hotel, and a population of about three hundred residents.⁴⁶

In the next twenty years, the small town began to expand with an influx of miners and stockmen. A combination of events in 1894 spurred the immigration of Basques from different parts of California to Tehachapi. The Wilson-Gorman Tariff became effective in the summer of 1894 and allowed foreign wool to compete more easily with the domestic market. In addition, a severe drought that year forced sheepmen to "retreat to the mountains," and Tehachapi proved a potential refuge for stockmen.

In 1893, the Los Angeles based Basque-language newspaper published an article claiming that Tehachapi had the largest Basque colony in the United States.⁴⁷ While inaccurate, this boast suggested an increasing number of Basques in the vicinity. The article also announced a day of festivities, including a regional handball tourney between local Basques and French Bearnais. For a few years around the mid-1890s, the Piute Hotel operated by Austin and Marianne Goyehen Young served local Basques and may have accommodated these early handball matches. Unfortunately, a fire destroyed the Piute

⁴⁵Morgan, History of Kern, 89.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

⁴⁷California'ko Eskual Herria, 15 July (*Uztailaren*) 1893, Lib. 1, no. 1: 2.

in 1895.⁴⁸ Before the hotel's destruction, however, an advertisement appeared in California'ko Eskual Herria that listed the Piute as an "*Ostatua Eskualduna*," or Basque hotel.⁴⁹

Jean Pierre Martinto is one example of the Basque exodus to Tehachapi, which occurred during the 1890s. Jean Pierre made his way to Los Angeles in 1887 from his natal village in Osses, France.⁵⁰ After herding sheep in southern California for a year, he began herding for one of his older brothers, "J. F.," in Kern and Fresno counties. After the disastrous year of 1894, Martinto invested the remainder of his savings in Tehachapi. He was originally attracted to the town because one of his older sisters, Marie Martinto Laffargue, had settled there with her family.⁵¹ Jean Pierre purchased six unimproved lots on Main Street, Tehachapi, built the largest hotel in town, the Basses-Pyrenees Hotel, and put up an adjoining livery barn.⁵² Martinto also constructed a handball court of stone and cement on the premises. One account described the court as "substantial and complete as good workmen and good material could make it and said it to be the best in

⁴⁸Paquette, Basques to Bakersfield, 48.

⁴⁹California'ko Eskual Herria, 30 December (*Abendoaren*) 1893, Lib. 2, no. 9: 3-4. The same issue carried an advertisement for an *Ostatua Frantsesa* (French Hotel) in Bishop, California, owned by a Mr. H. Fletcher. Despite the hotel's distant location in neighboring Inyo County, it was probably associated with Kern and Fresno County Basque shepherds who seasonally travelled through Bishop with their flocks.

⁵⁰Morgan, History of Kern, 1350.

⁵¹Paquette, Basques to Bakersfield, 53.

⁵²Morgan, History of Kern, 1351.

the country."⁵³ The handball court received much attention from local players as well as Basques throughout the state. In fact, one issue of California'ko Eskual Herria included a feature article entitled, "Jean Martinto Builds Ball Court at His Hotel."⁵⁴

In 1896, Jean Pierre married Veronica Borda, and for the next twelve years, the two continued to expand the Basse-Pyrenees until 1908, when they retired from the business. Then they leased the hotel to Vicente Iriarte.⁵⁵ From Tehachapi, the Martintos moved with their three children to a home on California Avenue in Bakersfield.⁵⁶ A few years later, Jean Pierre opened a saloon on 19th Street in the heart of Bakersfield's "Basque town" area.⁵⁷

In same year as the Martinto-Borda marriage, George Esponda built the Basko Hotel in Tehachapi. Unfortunately, Esponda and his wife, Marie Alzuet Borda Esponda, experienced a number of setbacks. Before marrying Esponda, Marie's first husband, Jean Borda, had died, leaving her a widow with three children. After placing the children in an orphanage, she moved to Tehachapi for work. There she met and married Esponda. The Espondas lived in a home on West E Street in

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴California'ko Eskual Herria, 15 May (*Maiatza*)1897, Lib. 2, no. 37: 2.

⁵⁵Paquette, Basques to Bakersfield, 53, 55-56.

⁵⁶Morgan, History of Kern, 1351. Jean Pierre's niece Lyda later married Felix Esain and became a successful hotelkeeper in her own right at the Basque Hotel in Fresno, California.

⁵⁷Paquette, Basques to Bakersfield, 92.

Tehachapi, which a fire destroyed. Eventually, financial setbacks forced Esponda to sell the Basko to Jacques and Grace Iriart. By 1914, the Iriarts had taken on a French Bearnais partner, L. Escoulie, and the old Basko was renamed the Franco-American Hotel.⁵⁸

In addition to Martinto's Basse-Pyrenees, the Espondas' Basko Hotel, and the Goyehen-Young's Piute Hotel, a fourth Basque hotel emerged in Tehachapi in the decade between 1893 and 1903. John Iribarne, whose brief ownership of the Cesmat Hotel in Tehachapi can be documented between 1900 and 1903, arrived in 1886 and, together with two non-Basque partners, built the town's first warehouse at the railway station in 1889.⁵⁹ Near the turn of the century, Iribarne decided to enter the hotel business. Not much is known of Iribarne's venture, except that he advertised in the local newspaper a few years later: "Hotel Cesmat, John Iribarne, Prop. First class house, new and modern. Meals 25 cents; Regular French dinner from 5:30 to 8:00, 50 cents; no Chinese cooking. Stable in connection. Telephone Main 74. 1 mo."⁶⁰ The comment regarding Chinese suggests a strong community reaction to Chinese who had settled in the area after construction of the railroad line through town.

⁵⁸Ibid., 53-56.

⁵⁹Memorial and Biographical History of the Counties of Fresno, Tulare, and Kern, California (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1892), 325.

⁶⁰Tehachapi Tomahawk, 18 April 1903. Paquette Papers. Private Collection, Sonora, California.

Unfortunately, platt maps of Tehachapi in 1901 include only two of the above-mentioned hotels. Figure 11 is based upon Kern County platt maps and reveals the locations of the Martinto and Iribarne properties, yet Esponda's Basko Hotel does not appear.⁶¹ The omission of the old Piute Hotel is understandable, however, since it was destroyed by fire in 1895.

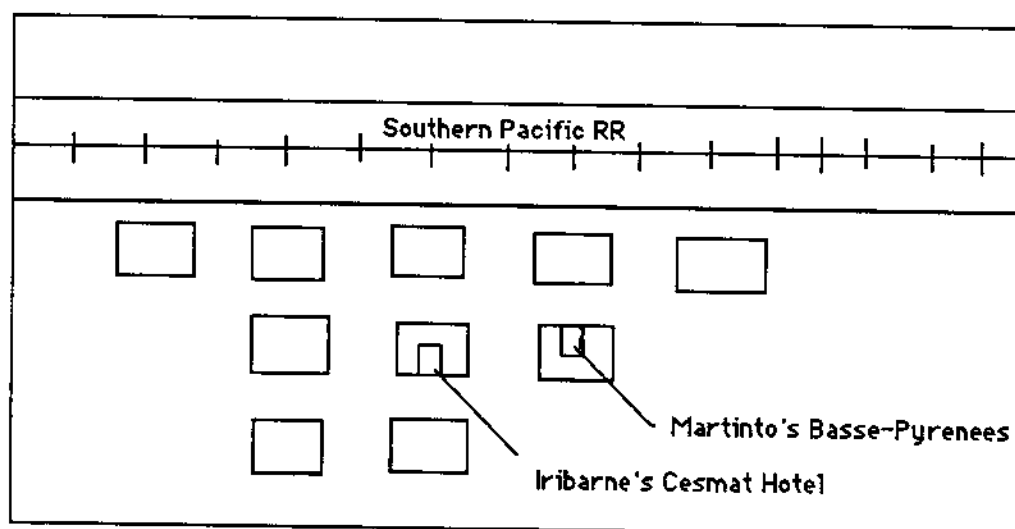


Fig. 11. Tehachapi Platt Map, 1901

By 1920, Basques seem to have been steadily moving from Tehachapi to Bakersfield. Still, in 1922, Jacques Iriart of the Franco-American Hotel and his brother constructed the Iriart Building across the street from their hotel in Tehachapi. The building

⁶¹Index Atlas of Kern County, California, 1901 (Bakersfield: Randell-Denne, 1901), 58-59. Pages 24 and 25 of the Kern County index also contain platt maps of Kern City, or early Bakersfield. The Iberia (Noriega's) was the only Bakersfield hotel located on the maps and was, therefore, not reproduced here.

contained a pool hall, two bars, drugstore, barbershop, beauty salon, and two restaurants. Upstairs in the brick structure was the Juanita Hotel. Whether this establishment could be called a Basque hotel remains a mystery, yet Jacques Iriart probably would have sent any overflow customers across the street to the Juanita. As mentioned earlier, the Iriarts left Tehachapi in 1926 and moved to Bakersfield where they managed the Metropole Hotel on Baker Street. In 1931, they returned to Tehachapi as the proprietors of the Tehachapi Hotel. After two months there, however, they leased the hotel to Pete Errecart and went back to Bakersfield. Pete Errecart and his wife ran the hotel until 1936 when Hortense (Anchordoquy) and Francisco Ciaurritz began managing the Tehachapi. The two operated the hotel until 1942, when Francisco died.⁶²

Despite leaving Tehachapi in 1926, the Iriarts maintained their interest in the Iriart Building until 1952, when an earthquake completely destroyed it. As the headlines on the front page of the Bakersfield Californian stated on 21 July 1952, the earthquake devastated Tehachapi's downtown area.⁶³ In fact, the temblor ruined some of the older buildings in Bakersfield as well. The Metropole Hotel on Bakersfield's Sumner Street was flattened, and photographs

⁶²Paquette, Basques to Bakersfield, 57-58.

⁶³Bakersfield Californian, "Tehachapi Devastated," 21 July 1952, 1, 17-18, 21, and 31.

of its destruction appeared on the cover pages of larger newspapers, such as the Los Angeles Times and Denver Post.⁶⁴

The effect of the quake in 1952 on Tehachapi's Basque community was significant. After the disaster, little remained of the Basque colony; many of the oldtimers left for Bakersfield or other farming communities in the San Joaquin Valley. And, of the old *ostatuak*, none remained intact. While the quake also caused damage down in Bakersfield, it closed only the Metropole, which had long since ceased to function as a Basque establishment. The old brick Amestoy and Pyrenees, and even the older wooden Noriega, withstood the quake without a major interruption in business.

Bakersfield and Tehachapi were not the only Kern County towns that hosted Basques in the early part of this century. About thirty miles due west of Bakersfield, near the highway that leads over the coastal mountains toward Santa Maria and San Luis Obispo, lies the small town of McKittrick. After leaving Tehachapi's Cesmat Hotel in 1903, John Iribarne appeared in McKittrick, where he married Bernarda Arrache.⁶⁵ In one account of early ranching days in the San Joaquin Valley, Sodie Arbios mentioned that John Iribarne's saloon in McKittrick was a popular stop for Basques and local oil field workers.⁶⁶ In addition, a copy of a legal agreement leasing the saloon

⁶⁴A clippings file in Bakersfield's Public Library included stories on the quake and its aftershocks. Los Angeles Times, 23 August 1952, and Denver Post, 23 August 1952.

⁶⁵Paquette, Basques to Bakersfield, 94.

⁶⁶Sodie Arbios, Memories of My Life: An Oral History of A California Sheepman (Stockton, California: Techni-Graphics, 1980), 243.

for a one-year term in 1924 indicates that the Iribarnes' McKittrick establishment was also a hotel or boardinghouse. In the agreement, the leasee agreed to take on management of the "Headquarters, Pool Hall, Rooming House, Grainery, and Stable from 1 November, 1924, through 1 November, 1925."⁶⁷ The McKittrick establishment may have been another of Kern County's Basque hotels.

The presence of Basques in Kern County is reflected in census material for 1900 and 1910. In 1910, the county had the fifth largest Basque community in California, after San Francisco, Los Angeles, Alameda, and Fresno counties.⁶⁸ Compared to the first three counties, Kern had a large number of single adults, most of whom were males (59.4 percent). The adult portion of the population consisted of 213 males and fifty-four females, revealing that 79.8 percent of the adult Basque population was male. Put another way, the number of Basque men was almost four times greater than the number of Basque women. Because more mature Basque communities approached a one-to-one ratio between males and females, these statistics for Kern County suggest that it was in an earlier stage of demographic development than Los Angeles, San Francisco, Fresno, or Alameda counties.⁶⁹

⁶⁷Iribarne Contract, Paquette Papers. Private Collection, Sonora, California.

⁶⁸Arrizabalaga, "Statistical Study," 70.

⁶⁹Ibid., 42-72.

Basques were younger in Kern county than in the other counties, were more frequently first-generation, and often aliens.⁷⁰

Not all Basques leaving Los Angeles chose the inland towns of Kern, Tehachapi, or McKittrick, however. A few selected the coastal towns of Santa Barbara and Ventura about eighty miles north of Los Angeles. For instance, José Borderre, a French Basque from Urepel, arrived in Los Angeles with an older brother about 1880. José began herding in the Cucamonga area and, within a few years, had acquired more than 1,100 head of sheep which he pastured near Ventura, Santa Barbara, Santa Paula, and Simi Valley.⁷¹ One account notes that Borderre occasionally drove his herd through downtown Santa Barbara, using the dusty road that eventually became State Street.⁷²

In his travels through southern California, José often stopped in Los Angeles's "Basque town." There he met Jennie Alfaro, also of Urepel, who was working as a maid at the Basque Hotel on Aliso Street. In 1898, they married and moved to Santa Barbara where the following year they purchased a hotel on the Plaza de la Guerra.⁷³ The Borderres bought a prime piece of property that fronted on Santa Barbara's busy de la Guerra Plaza and extended back to Anacapa Street.

⁷⁰Ibid., 70-71.

⁷¹Paquette, Basques to Bakersfield, 71.

⁷²Bernard Borderre, interview with Patricia Cleek, Santa Barbara, California, 6 December 1983. Borderre Hotel File, Santa Barbara Historical Society, Santa Barbara, California.

⁷³Deed of Records, County of Santa Barbara, 68:64. Borderre Hotel File, Santa Barbara Historical Society, Santa Barbara, California.

At the north end of the Plaza stood the old red-tiled de la Guerra adobe, built in 1826. Not far from it, along the east side of the Plaza, the Abadie Adobe and the St. Charles Hotel and Cafe, which later became the Raffour House, served Santa Barbarans French cuisine and hospitality. The third building along the Plaza from the de la Guerra adobe was the one which Borderre purchased from the estate of Leander Sawyer.⁷⁴ By the turn of the century, the old Spanish Plaza housed three French-owned businesses, one of which was French Basque.⁷⁵

One photograph of Borderre's French Hotel from the period shows a crowd of Basques standing in front of a two-story wooden building, with a broad sign atop reading "Borderre French Hotel."⁷⁶ A second photograph of the same year shows another two-story wooden building with a different facade. Upon interviewing elderly Santa Barbarans, it seems that the original French Hotel faced the Plaza and that, within ten years of their arrival, the Borderres constructed a two-story house that faced Anacapa Street. Sanborn Maps from the 1890s, for example, show the hotel building on the Plaza, a handball court behind, and a shed, workspace, or livery that faced Anacapa, but no separate domicile.⁷⁷ When the photographs, maps, and interviews are

⁷⁴Borderre Hotel File, Santa Barbara Historical Society, Santa Barbara, California.

⁷⁵Paquette, Basques to Bakersfield, 71.

⁷⁶Photographs from the Borderre Hotel File, Santa Barbara Historical Society, Santa Barbara, California.

⁷⁷Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Santa Barbara, 1898, Map 13. Borderre Hotel File, Santa Barbara Historical Society.

corroborated, however, the Borderre complex must have appeared as it does in Figure 12.

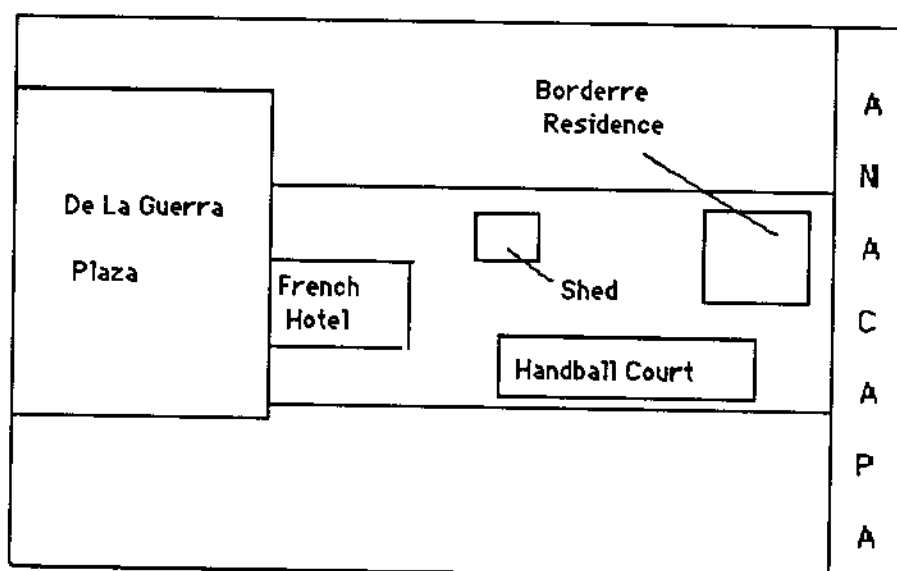


Fig. 12. Borderre's French Hotel, Santa Barbara, 1910

Santa Barbara directories indicate that, by 1910, both of the two-story structures on the property were taking in boarders. In fact, directories show that José Borderre lived at 721 Anacapa and rented furnished rooms there while, under the Borderre Hotel listing, Antonio Bastanchuri was renting rooms from the City Hall Plaza address.⁷⁸ This arrangement suggests that the Borderres took Bastanchuri on as a partner when they expanded their business. In

⁷⁸Santa Barbara City and County Directory, 1909-1910 (Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Directory Company, 1910), 60 and 53.

addition, Bastanchuri probably came to work with the Borderres earlier, since directories list him as a boarder at the Borderre as early as 1901.⁷⁹

José and Jenny Borderre and their French Hotel were a critical part of Basque social life in Santa Barbara and Ventura for the first two decades of this century. One Basque-American remembered travelling to Borderres for special Sunday meals and handball tournaments with her parents. The Amorena family would leave Ventura early in the morning and travel the distance in order to make it in time for Sunday's midday meal.⁸⁰ Another Basque-American noted that Borderres was very popular with the non-Basque middle and working classes of Santa Barbara. The hotel's popularity peaked during Prohibition, when Jenny Borderre "always held a bottle of wine in her ample white apron."⁸¹

In 1925, the Borderres sold their property to Tom Storke, founder of the Santa Barbara News Press, the offices of which still stand on the south end of De La Guerra Plaza.⁸² From 1925 through 1931, when José passed away, the Borderres continued to operate the French

⁷⁹Borderre Hotel File, Santa Barbara Historical Society, Santa Barbara, California.

⁸⁰Blanche Amorena Johnson, interview with author, Santa Barbara, California, 5 June 1987.

⁸¹Dominica Borderre, interview with Mary Paquette. Noted in Basques to Bakersfield, 72.

⁸²Borderre Hotel File, Santa Barbara Historical Society, Santa Barbara, California, and Walter Tompkins, Thomas Storke: California Editor (Santa Barbara: Pacific Coast Publications, 1968), 55.

Hotel. After José's death, Jenny Borderre retired, and the Storke family rented the hotel to Pierre and Hortense Anchordoquy Heguy. Before coming to the French Hotel, Hortense ran a small boardinghouse near the beach west of the Santa Barbara train station. As one observer noted, Basques could go to Anchorodoquy's and get "*tragitos bajo la ley*."⁸³ Not long after they began working at the French Hotel, Hortense's husband Pierre died, leaving his widow alone to manage the hotel. During this period, Hortense had a contract with the City of Santa Barbara to feed the inmates and jailers at the city jail across the Plaza. By 1932, however, Hortense married for a second time to Francisco Ciaurritz, a Spanish Basque, and moved to Los Angeles. The Ciaurritz's departure from Santa Barbara marked the final chapter for the Borderre French Hotel but Hortense and Francisco Ciaurritz continued hotelkeeping as their occupation, later moving from Los Angeles to Tehachapi where they managed the Tehachapi Hotel in 1936.

After 1932, the Borderre was no longer in operation, and today, the Borderre property serves as the parking lot for the Santa Barbara News Press. While Borderre's was the major Basque hotel in Santa Barbara, early residents also remember other small boardinghouses before the 1930s. The Anchordoquys had one and José and Martina Layana Campos operated one in their two-story home near Chapala and De la Guerra. The Campos family rented six rooms out, mostly to

⁸³Spanish for "drinks beneath the law" or bootlegging. José Campos, interview with author, Santa Barbara, California, 4 June 1987.

Basque field workers and ranch hands, from 1933 through 1937. During the summer months and the weeks of *Fiesta*, each August, the small house was likely to swell with family and friends from around southern California.⁸⁴

In addition to the Anchordoquy and Campos boardinghouses, two others operated during the years the Borderre was open. The first was a small concern operated by José Egu and his wife, who rented rooms of their home to two or three boarders at a time. The Egus were only open for business for two years, in 1917 and 1918.⁸⁵ The second was the Hotel España on Haley Street between State and Anacapa Streets. Eduardo Lizuaín and his family owned and operated the small hotel in the late 1920s. During those years, it had a large dining hall that appealed to local Basques, until 1932, when the España also closed its doors. That year seems to close the period of Basque hotelkeeping in Santa Barbara. With the exception of the Campos, limited by inadequate space and a staff of two, Basque hotelkeeping had disappeared in Santa Barbara by 1938.

Up the road some seventy miles, however, another Basque hotel may have existed at one time. In the small town of Guadalupe, northwest of Santa Barbara, a restaurant, called the Basque House, occupies part of a century-old hotel building.⁸⁶ The possibility that

⁸⁴Blanche Amorena Johnson, interview with author, Santa Barbara, California, 5 June 1987.

⁸⁵José Campos, interview with author, Santa Barbara, California, 4 June 1987.

⁸⁶"Where Cowboys and Basques Eat," Sunset Magazine, November 1985, 56-57.

Basques frequented this spot at an earlier time is made even more plausible by the fact that Guadalupe lies on the western end of the highway which leads across California's coastal mountain range to the small town of McKittrick mentioned earlier. Basque herders, ranchers, and travellers in the 1920s and 1930s, then, may have used the Guadalupe-to-McKittrick run and made both extremes stopover places.

In addition to heading northeast to Bakersfield and Tehachapi and north to Santa Barbara and Ventura, a number of Los Angeles's Basques left the metropolitan basin, heading south toward Orange County, Chino, and Puente. A solitary report also exists of a Basque hotel even further south in San Diego in 1893. One edition of California'ko Eskual Herria contains an advertisement for the Hotel d'Europe, operated by a P. Etcheverry.⁸⁷ City directories ranging from 1887 through 1905, however, fail to list the hotel or its operator.⁸⁸ A town the size and location of San Diego might have hosted an *ostatua* or two but only this reference exists to date.⁸⁹

To the north of San Diego in San Juan Capistrano, Oyharzabal's French Hotel was in operation until 1903. Other Basques had followed Oyharzabal and Salaberri south from Los Angeles, but not all of them

⁸⁷California'ko Eskual Herria, 30 December (*Abendoaren*) 1893, Lib. 2, no. 9:3-4.

⁸⁸For the San Diego City and County Directories consulted, see the Directory section in the Bibliography.

⁸⁹This situation is even more curious as San Diego's neighbor to the south, Tijuana, Mexico, has hosted a couple of hotels, a Basque colony, and a *fronton* which has primarily employed Basque *pelotaris*.

went to Capistrano. From 1910 through 1930, for example, the Bastanchury Ranch near Fullerton, California, in Orange County employed numerous Basques and became a meeting place for *Euskaldunak* south of Los Angeles. In 1913, the Bastanchury family built a handball court near their main farmhouse, and Sunday gatherings under their grape arbors became popular events among local Basques. When interviewed independently decades later, the Ondaros, Oxandaboures, Yriartes, Arroques, and Oxararts all described Sundays at the Bastanchury Ranch.⁹⁰

Sunday gatherings at local southern California ranches provided Basques the opportunity to get together, keep cultural values alive, and socialize. In the Orange County area between 1910 and 1920, there were thirteen Basque-owned citrus ranches of ten acres or more.⁹¹ One American-born Basque remembers that nearly every Sunday, the county's ranchers would alternate hosting Sunday gatherings.⁹² In the 1930s, two other large ranches began to host the larger functions, the Chilbolost Ranch in Chino and the Changala Ranch in El Toro. Both had large barns that local Basques used for dancing, listening to music, playing cards, and visiting.

⁹⁰These interviews are part of the "Early Basques in Orange County" Collection at California State University, Fullerton, Oral History Collection.

⁹¹Eagle, "Basques at Work and Play," 107. Surnames of these citrus ranchers were Yturri, Erramuspe, Bastanchury, Oyharzabal, Sansinena, Yriarte, Dunhart, Erreca, Lacougue, Ondaro, Echeto, Lorea, and Oxandaboure.

⁹²John Yturri, interview with author, Brea, California, 28 April 1987.

As the number of Basques in the Puente, La Habra Heights, and Chino area mushroomed, so did the demand for a local *ostatua*. Finally, in the 1930s, two Basque hotels were built in Puente. The Puente Hotel in the Bidart Building, on the corner of Main and Second Streets, lasted until 1948, when a gas explosion demolished the entire structure.⁹³ Across the street, on another corner of that intersection, was the Old Roland Hotel. In 1930, Jean Nogues purchased the Roland, renamed it the Valley Hotel, and opened for business. A few years later, Nogues put up one thousand dollars to begin funding the construction of a handball court adjoining his property. With contributions of twenty-five dollars and up, other local Basques could become charter members of the Puente Handball Club and donate to the construction project.⁹⁴ Also in the neighborhood was the French American Bakery, which employed many Basques. Ironically, the court is still standing and serves as the part of the parking lot for employees of the French American Bakery. The Valley Hotel was torn down in 1964 for new construction in central Puente.⁹⁵

About a thirty-minute drive southeast of Puente, is the town of Chino, California. Almost fifty years ago, in 1940, Jean Baptiste and Grace Robidart built the Centro Vasco Hotel on Chino's Central

⁹³Eagle, "Basques at Work and Play," 164.

⁹⁴David Echeverría, interview with author, Brea, California, 29 March 1980.

⁹⁵Eagle, "Basques at Work and Play," 165.

Avenue.⁹⁶ The two managed the business until 1947 when they sold to Valentín and Victoria Juarena. After ten months at the Chino Hotel, the Juarenas sold to the current owners, Ben and Melanie Sallaberry.⁹⁷ The Sallaberrys operated the hotel themselves for a few years and then began leasing out the business to others, which Melanie continues to do today.

In the period between 1957 and 1963, when Henry Idiart leased the Chino Hotel, one advertisement described the hotel as "the Centro Basque Hotel and Trailer Court," indicating that Basques could bring their trailer and stay on property adjoining the hotel. Taking one's trailer to a Basque hotel suggests the contemporary nature of Chino's Basque hotel. Rather than facing the local train station, as so many in this study have, the Centro Basque is located on a large street with easy access to a southern California freeway. The Chino Hotel's clients tend to be local meat packinghouse workers, gardeners, and dairymen, rather than herders, stockmen, and ranchers.⁹⁸

The distinct nature of the Chino Hotel reflects in part its southern California setting and in part its comparatively recent date of construction. Still, despite its modern characteristics, the Chino Hotel offers local Basques many of the same amenities of other *ostatuak*. The old handball court, once the scene of many weekend

⁹⁶Juliette Robidart Campos, interview with author, Caruthers, California, 23 April 1987.

⁹⁷Melanie Sallaberry, interview with author, Chino, California, 30 April 1987.

⁹⁸Monique Berterretche, interview with author, Chino, California, 30 April 1987.

tournaments, stands at the back of the property lot and is still used. The small garage that used to stand alongside the front wall of the *cancha* and served as a dance hall for decades is gone now. Also gone are the grape arbors that shaded the long picnic tables used for special functions and festivities. In their place is a new extension of the hotel, added in 1970, that includes banquet rooms, an expanded kitchen, and a large room able to accommodate dances and large gatherings. Today, only a few back rooms have long tables that are filled with local Basque diners on weekends.⁹⁹

Until 1970, the Sallaberrys rented to a number of tenants who usually remained six or seven years. In 1970, however, Pierre and Monique Berterretche began renting. Melanie Sallaberry still manages the small motel that was constructed alongside the hotel.¹⁰⁰ At one time, in the early 1970s, Monique reports their seven upstairs rooms held twenty-two boarders.¹⁰¹ Two boarders currently reside at the Chino Hotel, and both have been living there for more than twenty years. "Pushulu," the oldest boarder, has lived there twenty-nine years and is retiring from the Chino Feed and Grain Company, located down the street.

In addition to the Chino Basque Hotel, another southern California outpost for Basques was located in San Juan Capistrano. In 1903, the

⁹⁹Nancy Harding, "Basques Leave Pyrenees for Rolling Hills of Chino," *Santa Ana Register*, 9 March 1980, A3.

¹⁰⁰Melanie Sallaberry, interview with author, Chino, California, 30 April 1987.

¹⁰¹Monique Berterretche, interview with author, Chino, California, 30 April 1987.

Oyharzabal family retired the old French Hotel, but a number of local Basque families still resided in southern Orange County and continued using San Juan Capistrano as their central meeting place. Occasionally, they gathered at the Changala Ranch in El Toro but, in the 1940s and 1950s, they often preferred Nick (Nicomedes) and Carmen Arbonies's *cantina* in downtown San Juan Capistrano.¹⁰² Their old two-story building was located within a half block of the old Oyharzabal French Hotel. The downstairs level housed a bar, liquor store, and soda fountain; upstairs were a few rooms, rented for a small fee to visiting friends and family. In addition, a handball court stood behind the premises. Whether this was the same court constructed by the Oyharzabals decades earlier is unclear.

What the *ostatuak* of Bakersfield, Santa Barbara, and southern California have in common is similar roots--that is, their origins could be traced to the "Basque town" neighborhood of Los Angeles. They were "spin-offs" of an earlier day. Beyond that, they differ. Bakersfield and Santa Barbara's Basque colonies had developed by the twentieth century and formed "Basque towns" of their own, one with a San Joaquin Valley agricultural base, the other with a coastal town flavor. To the south, Puente and Chino's hotels matured differently. First, large ranches took on part of the role that the Los Angeles hotels might have filled. Then, forty and fifty years after their cousins had developed in Santa Barbara and Bakersfield, the towns of Puente and

¹⁰²Lorenzo Echanis, John Yturry, and Francisca Echeverria, interview with author, Brea, California, 3 June 1987.

Chino produced three hotels that catered to an urban, southern California lifestyle, in a time when comparatively few Basques were immigrating to the United States.

To the north, however, several colonies of Basques clustered in the central and northern San Joaquin Valley. That valley had provided ample territory for sheep raising, and, when the sheep industry declined, many Basques turned to ranching and farming. Towns like Fresno, Merced, Los Banos, and Stockton, all in the San Joaquin Valley north of Bakersfield, provided the setting for many *ostatuak*, and to their history we now turn our attention.

CHAPTER 6

OSTATUAK IN THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY

During the later half of the 1870s, the San Joaquin Valley emerged as the principal sheep raising district in California. As the sheep censuses in Los Angeles and Monterrey counties declined, for example, flocks of sheep and their herders became increasingly common sights in the San Joaquin Valley.¹ By 1880, the county of Fresno had the state's largest sheep population with 383,243 animals.²

One practice that distinguishes sheep raising in the San Joaquin and Sacramento Valleys from techniques found in the formative years of the southern California sheep industry was that of taking herds into the High Sierras for summering.³ A trail from the Bakersfield area southeast through Tehachapi to the Mojave was a major route for sheepmen from the southern San Joaquin Valley. To the north, outfits from Fresno, Stockton, and Los Banos developed seasonal patterns whereby the animals grazed on the valley floor in winter and summered in the Sierras through the hot months of July through

¹Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 235. Los Angeles still reported a substantial 330,350 head and Monterrey 126,644 in the 1870s. Numbers in Kern, Merced, San Joaquin, Sonoma, Tulare and Stanislaus, on the other hand, were growing and each had between 117,000 and 180,000 sheep per county.

²*Ibid.*

³Figure 13 demonstrates California's major transhumance sheep trails from 1865 through 1905. Source: Warren A. Beck and Ynez D. Haase, *Historical Atlas of California* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974), 73.

September. With the seasonal east-to-west flow of herders and their flocks and the north-south transportation lines which developed in the basin, *ostatuak* sprang up throughout the San Joaquin Valley.

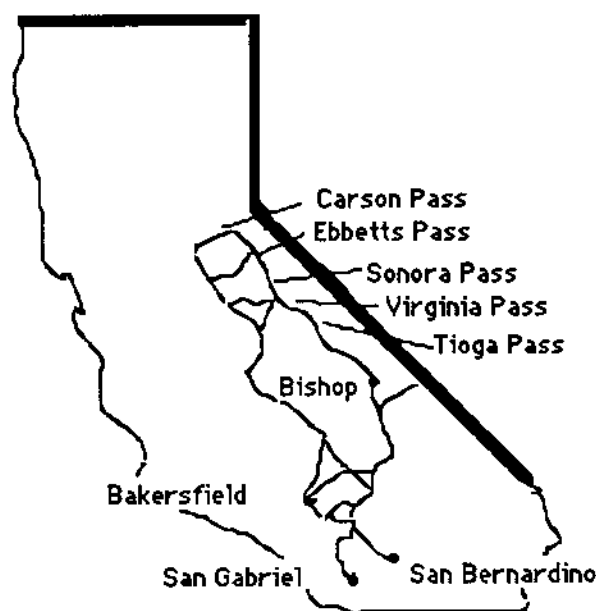


Fig. 13. California's Transhumance Sheep Trails, 1865 to 1905

Basque sheepmen began to appear in Fresno County in the 1870s and 1880s. Many had their first jobs with Miller and Lux Ranches in Merced, Madera, and Fresno counties.⁴ Some joined family members who had arrived earlier to work the county's fertile soil. In fact, to this date, Fresno County leads the state as well as the nation in agricultural income.⁵ The Southern Pacific Railroad replaced the

⁴Beck and Haase, Historical Atlas, 69, and Sodíes Arbios, Memories of My Life, 22-25.

⁵Ibid., 93.

Overland Stage that had served Fresno since 1852 and its completion twenty years later made the sojourn to Fresno much easier.⁶ Access to Fresno via rail routes was increased again in 1896 when the Santa Fe Rail system opened.⁷ In addition to calling attention to the small town of Fresno, both rail services eventually became a lifeline carrying Basques north from Los Angeles and Bakersfield, south from Stockton, and southeast from San Francisco.

In the 1890s, Basque hotels appeared in Fresno and in three nearby towns of Firebaugh, Mendota, and Huron.⁸ "Idiart and Son" owned and operated the Firebaugh Hotel in the 1890s. During the decade, Firebaugh had only three hotels, four saloons, and one restaurant.⁹ At this time, Miller and Lux dominated the area's sheep business on the west side of the Valley. Firebaugh swelled into a commercial center whenever shearers gathered from throughout the state to crop the enormous herd.¹⁰ During the high point of shearing

⁶Charles W. Clough and William B. Secrest, Jr. Fresno County-The Pioneer Years: From The Beginnings to 1900 (Fresno: Panorama West Books, 1985), 44.

⁷Ibid.

⁸All three towns are now much smaller than Fresno is today and are located in a north-to-south line about 50 miles east of Fresno. See Figure 14 for a map of the Fresno County area with major early transportation routes. Also, note that the development of early Basque hotels occurred in the "west side" of the San Joaquin Valley, presumably due to sheep transhumance.

⁹Fresno City and County Directory, 1898 (Fresno: C. T. Cearley, 1898), 234, and Clough and Secrest, Fresno County, 255.

¹⁰Thelma Miller, "Valley Homes of the Paisanos," Fresno Bee, 1 February 1943.

season, local newspapers reported shooting scrapes, brawls, and other unruly incidents.¹¹

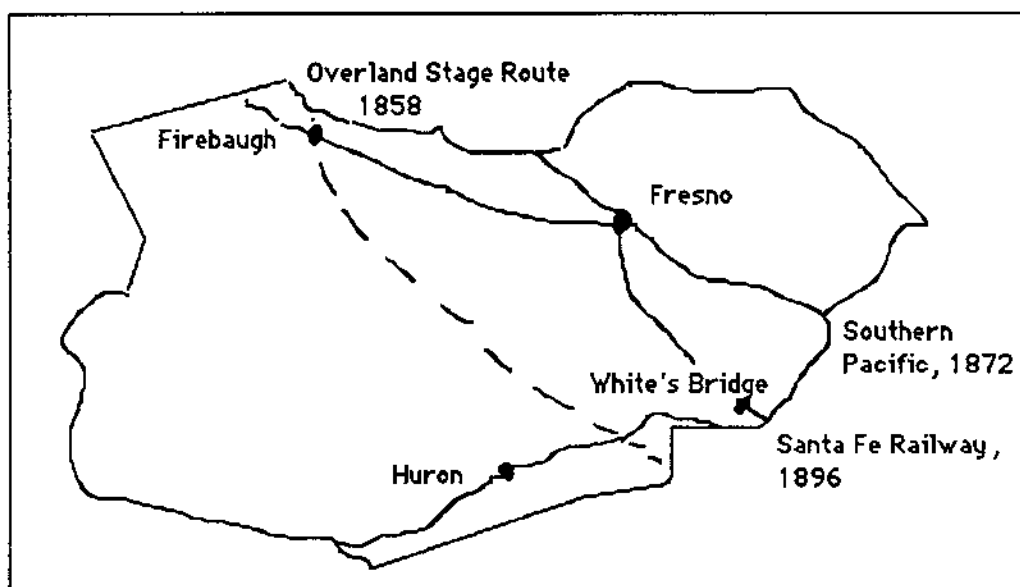


Fig. 14. Fresno County Transportation Map, 1890

As a result of Firebaugh's unruly reputation, the management of the Southern Pacific Railroad decided to avoid construction of a switching station there in 1890. Instead, the company chose to construct its own town ten miles southeast of Firebaugh in 1891. The new town, named Mendota, grew to a population of two hundred citizens by the mid-1890s. Alfred Joseph Arnaudon built the Arnaudon Hotel and General Merchandise Store in 1893 on Main Street. By 1900, the hotel and store became a major town center, which housed the water

¹¹Ibid.

company, telephone exchange, and post office. Both Arnaudon and his store clerk, Pierre Arripe, were Basques.¹²

Before moving to Mendota, Arnaudon operated a hotel at White's Bridge, Fresno County, which he had opened in 1886.¹³ In those years, he also ran a small store and served as assistant postmaster of White's Bridge. In addition, Arnaudon owned approximately 4,000 sheep that pastured in the White's Bridge area. When the railroad to Mendota was built, Arnaudon relocated to his new hotel and continued his ranching interests there as well. Some thirty years later, in 1917, Arnaudon left the hotel business and went into full time ranching in Mendota.¹⁴

Like Firebaugh, Mendota was a sheep shearing center for the ranches on the west side of the county. One Fresno newspaper reported in 1896 that Arnaudon had "erected a new sheep corral and will probably shear the great majority of sheep in this district. Already have arrived many 'Knights of Golden Fleece.'"¹⁵ Not surprisingly, as hotelkeeper and grocer, Arnaudon arranged for shearing near his

¹²Ibid., 256. Fresno County Naturalization Records, 8 June 1896, Fresno County Courthouse, Fresno, California, show that Arripe became a citizen around the time he was working with Arnaudon. Amerikanuak Papers, Basque Studies Collection, University of Nevada, Reno.

¹³Paul E. Vantor, History of Fresno County, California, with Biographical Sketches (Los Angeles: Historic Record Company, 1919), 1927.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Fresno Daily Evening Expositor, 6 May 1896, 2. Cited in Clough and Secrest, Fresno County, 256.

hotel property. One would assume that many local sheepmen were Basque and that the hotelkeeper profited from this arrangement.

A second newspaper clipping on pioneer days in Mendota mentioned the Arnaudon Hotel, in which the author described a walking tour through the alleys of Mendota, complaining that "something must be done" to clean up the town.¹⁶ Behind Arnaudon's, according to the article, were large pens containing horses, cows, chickens, ducks, dogs, cats, and pigeons. It is somewhat unusual to discover a description focusing upon a hotel's "livestock" supply and excluding the hotel itself. Nonetheless, this particular narrative leads one to speculate that the horses and dogs belonged to hotel guests, while the ducks, pigeons, chickens, and cows were raised for client consumption.

About fifty miles directly south of Firebaugh and Mendota lies the small town of Huron. There, about 1890, Joseph and Angela Mouren purchased the Central Hotel. A French Basque, Joseph had worked as a sheep buyer throughout the San Joaquin Valley since the 1870s. In 1889, he met and married Angela in San Francisco.¹⁷ In addition to the Central Hotel, Joseph and his wife bought a livery stable in town, operated a grocery store, and raised sheep. Huron was a very small outpost in the late nineteenth century and remains so today. In fact,

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid., 262.

its small size caused one early correspondent to quip that the town had "four buildings, a visible population of five men, and one dog."¹⁸

By 1920, the population of Huron dropped below fifty. Despite the attrition, descendents of the Mouren family continue to reside in Huron but the Central Hotel has long since disappeared. One source suggests 1919 as the hotel's last year of operation.¹⁹ Standing at the corner of what are now 10th and M Streets in Huron, the Central became headquarters for the Mouren Farm Company after its last two operators, Pierre Oxoby and Alfred Quintana, retired from the hotel business.

To summarize, then, three small towns east of Fresno contained hotels owned or operated by Basques in the 1890s. Interestingly, each had strong ties to the sheep business through their hotelkeepers. The Idiarts, Arnaudons, and Mourens hired herders to tend their herds during their hotelkeeping years and maintained keen interest in both businesses. As Douglass and Bilbao have suggested, hotel operations were often dependent upon the sheep industry, so the most effective proprietor was often the one with personal experience in that industry.²⁰ A familiarity with the sheep business undoubtedly proved advantageous for Idiart, Arnaudon, and Mouren as well.

¹⁸Ibid. The article originally appeared in the Tulare Register, 1888. Cited in Clough and Secrest, Fresno County, 262.

¹⁹"Mouren Farm Company of Huron," Fresno Bee, 28 August 1981, C4.

²⁰Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, 376.

In comparison to Huron, Firebaugh, and Mendota, the town of Fresno was a thriving metropolis. By 1890, Fresno had 10,890 residents, and the number grew to 12,470 at the turn of the century.²¹ Among California's five largest Basque communities, Fresno numbered fourth largest in 1900 and 1910.²² As was the case in Bakersfield, Fresno County's Basque males outnumbered Basque females by a nearly four-to-one ratio, suggesting its status as a relatively young Basque community. In addition, 86.2 percent of the Basque population in Fresno County was involved in sheep or cattle raising by 1910.²³

The first Basque hotel to appear in Fresno city directories was the Hotel Bascongado at 1223 G Street.²⁴ John Bidegaray, who arrived in the United States in 1892 at the age of eighteen, owned and operated the Bascongado. Before settling in Fresno, Bidegaray worked in Huron and Coalinga as a ranch hand and stockman. From these ventures, he was able to save eight hundred dollars, which he used to buy the small hotel and store located west of the Southern Pacific Railroad Depot.²⁵

²¹Clough and Secrest, History of Fresno, 310.

²²Arrizabalaga, "Statistical Study," 70.

²³*Ibid.*, 72.

²⁴Fresno City and County Directory, 1900 (Fresno: Hedges, 1900), 51. Actually, this directory locates the Bascongado at 1223 G but all subsequent directories indicate that 1228 G was the hotel address.

²⁵Vandor, History of Fresno County, 1585.

In 1902, Bidegaray took in Martín Echeverría as a partner, but the arrangement was a short-lived one.

Before Bidegaray purchased the Bascongado, however, another Basque, Martín Iribarren, owned the hotel. Iribarren built the hotel in the late 1890s and, when his friend Bidegaray approached him proposing a partnership at the Bascongado, Iribarren was skeptical. According to one of Iribarren's daughters, "Papa didn't believe in partners. 'Either you buy or the other way,' he told Bidegaray."²⁶ Evidently, Iribarren convinced Bidegaray to purchase the Bascongado and, by 1902, had built another hotel on the other side of town, across the street from where the new Santa Fe Depot was constructed.²⁷ Iribarren's second hotel was officially named the Fresno Hotel, but oldtimers in Fresno remember it as the "Sheepcamp" Hotel.

Photographs of the Bascongado and a Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of the neighborhood help us outline what the hotel might have been like.²⁸ In one photograph, the building is a two-story wooden frame structure with a deep second-story balcony. The porch under the balcony must have provided an inviting shaded area below for visiting during hot summer afternoons. High above the balcony, "J. Bidegaray & Co. Hotel Bascongado" was emblazoned in two-to-three feet tall letters. To the right, another sign reading "General Merchandise"

²⁶Juanita Iribarren Marquand, interview with author, Fresno, California, 11 June 1987.

²⁷Ibid, and Hilaria Frechou, interview with author, Fresno, California, 7 May 1987.

²⁸Paquette, Basques to Bakersfield, 61.

indicates a neighborhood grocery within. The bar, general quarters, and kitchen seem to have been downstairs to the left and entrance to the second story was gained via a wooden stairway on the exterior of the building. While the hotel was likely to have been well known among Fresno's Basques, it was not mentioned in Basque-language newspapers.

In 1893, California'ko Eskual Herria contained a *Fresno Berriak* section that included names of new arrivals and local notices.²⁹ Interestingly, an advertisement for the Bascongado was not listed. Possibly the Bascongado opened after the newspaper terminated. As the directories suggest, the Bascongado was probably Fresno's first *ostatua* and opened in 1897 or 1898. Its second owner, John Bidegaray, remained at the hotel for a number of years and, in 1901, took in a new partner, Martín Echeverría, who was soon replaced by Gratien Indart in 1904.³⁰

A second Basque hotel appeared at the corner of Kern and O Streets in 1901.³¹ Dominic Bordagaray and Frank Frechou were listed as the original proprietors for this Hotel des Pyrenees.³² Bordagaray worked at the Pyrenees for two years and, after saving 350 dollars,

²⁹California'ko Eskual Herria, 7 October (*Urtia*) 1893, 3. *Fresno Berriak* translates to "News of Fresno" and headed a regular column on local events.

³⁰Fresno City and County Directory, 1901 (Fresno: F. M. Husted, 1901), 75, and Fresno County Directory, 1904 (Fresno: F. M. Husted and Company, 1904), 79, 163, and 167.

³¹Vandor, History of Fresno County, 1901.

³²Fresno County and City Directory, 1901 (Fresno: F. M. Husted, 1901), 75 and 120.

decided to move to the Coalinga area, raise sheep, and homestead 140 acres.³³ Upon his departure, Bordagaray sold his portion of the business to his partner, Frank Frechou.

Frechou is listed as the proprietor at the 2504 Kern address for each year thereafter until 1909 when his wife Eulalia is first listed as owner and operator of the business.³⁴ Between 1910 and 1920, the boardinghouse was renamed "The Frechou House," and Eulalia Frechou managed it on her own. Of the fourteen rooms in their *ostatua*, the Frechou family occupied two rooms downstairs, with a tub bath on the lower floor and a toilet outside. The Frechou property also included a small livery.³⁵ Sanborn Maps indicate that, sometime between 1915 and 1933, the old Pyrenees was torn down and the Frechou brothers opened a gas station on the same corner lot.³⁶ At that time, Mrs. Frechou lived in a private home on the northeast corner of the lot and her sons John and Michael ran the gas station.

The Frechou House and the old Bascongado across town were simultaneously in their final years of operation. While subleasing to others, John Bidegaray managed the Bascongado for more than twenty years. In 1910, for example, he signed a two year lease arrangement

³³Vandor, History of Fresno County, 1901.

³⁴Fresno City and County Directory, 1908-1909 (Fresno: Polk-Husted, 1909), 153.

³⁵Hilaria Frechou, interview with the author, Fresno, California, 7 May 1987.

³⁶Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Fresno, California, 1915 and 1933, Volume 1, map 30. Fresno County Library, Fresno, California. The first directory listing for the Frechou Brothers Station was 1933 but the last citation for the Frechou House appeared in 1920. The station may have been constructed in the mid-1920s.

with John Echeverry and Angelo Iruleguy.³⁷ Between 1912 and 1918, another hotelkeeper remembered affectionately as Madame Chabriolet made her mark on the Bascongado's history. To some, she was distinguished for the tasty impromptu omelettes she prepared in the kitchen after regular hours.³⁸ Sodie Arbios, then a young shepherd relatively new to California, claimed that he would never forget Madame Chabriolet's kindness during a difficult bout with malaria.³⁹

Finally, in 1918, Bidegaray sold the Bascongado to George Bazterra from Abaurrea, Alta Navarra. Bazterra came to the United States at the age of five with his father in 1891 but returned to Navarra after four years.⁴⁰ As a teenager, Bazterra returned to California and drove wagon teams for Miller and Lux in Firebaugh. Eventually, he returned to Fresno with enough earnings from his Los Banos sheep interests to buy the Bascongado. After four years of managing the Bascongado, however, Bazterra probably sold the hotel and took a job with a neighborhood grocer on G Street. By 1922, the Bascongado disappeared from all local directories and, seemingly, was no longer in existence.⁴¹

³⁷Fresno City and County Directory, 1910 (Fresno: Polk and Husted, 1910), 174.

³⁸Elena Celayeta Talbott, interview with the author, Los Banos, California, 10 March 1987.

³⁹Sodie Arbios, Memories of My Life, 77.

⁴⁰Vandor, History of Fresno County, 2514.

⁴¹Fresno City and County Directory, 1922 (Fresno: Polk-Husted, 1922), no page numbers in the directory.

Just before the Bascongado and Frechou closed, the Hotel de Spanio terminated its ten-year lifespan in 1917. José and Raymond Lugea, two American-born Basque brothers who were Nevada sheep ranchers before coming to Fresno, owned and operated the Spanio.⁴² The Lugeas managed the hotel and their local sheep interests for ten years, until 1917, when they sold the Spanio and returned to full-time sheep raising.

The Bascongado, Frechou House, and Spanio became a chapter of Fresno's past by 1924. The following year, Baptiste Laxague opened the tiny Laxague House on F Street and it folded by 1926.⁴³ The closure of these *ostatuak* in the mid-1920s marks a turning point in the history of Fresno's Basque hotels. The old hotels were defunct by then, and the new Vitoria, Basque, and Santa Fe Hotels were becoming increasingly popular among area Basques. Two of these hotels remain today and span a sixty-year bridge from the 1920s to the present. Both the Santa Fe and Basque Hotels still offer room and board to Basques in much the same style as they might have in 1935. The third Fresno *ostatua* currently operating is the Yturri Hotel, which is the youngest of the Fresno's Basque hotels and opened for business in the early 1940s.

One of Fresno's "new" hotels is the Vitoria. In 1929, Tomás and Maria Ballaz met and married in Bakersfield. That same year, they

⁴²Vandor, History of Fresno County, 2559.

⁴³Fresno City and County Directory, 1925 (Fresno: Polk-Husted, 1925), 228.

bought a ten-room boardinghouse at 1018 N Street in Fresno which became their first home and first business. While locals refer to the boardinghouse as the "old Vitoria," the small *ostatua* never had an official name.⁴⁴ Business expanded, and within three years, the Ballazes were looking for a larger hotel. In 1932, they bought a hotel at 2520 Tulare Street.

When they moved to their new thirty-room hotel on Tulare, Tomás and Maria tripled the capacity of their old house. At the Vitoria, all rooms were located on the second floor. The Ballaz family reserved three of these rooms for their own private use and rented out the remainder. The new hotel staff consisted of one bartender and one cook. During their first ten years at the Vitoria, Maria provided all cooking needs, and Tomás served drinks exclusively for at least their first five years of business. In 1930, eating lunch at the Vitoria cost fifty cents, and dinner and breakfast were twenty-five cents a piece. Eventually the Ballazes hired a woman to clean upstairs rooms and another person to wash dishes and work in the kitchen. As was the custom, hired help lived on the premises and received partial payment in room and board.

As their business expanded in the 1940s, the Ballazes were able to hire additional help to relieve their small staff. Within fifteen years of purchasing the new Vitoria, Tomás and Maria were able to pay the cost of the building in full. Each day began with cooking breakfast for

⁴⁴Maria Ballaz, interview with the author, Fresno, California, 7 May 1987. Unless otherwise indicated, the following description of the Vitoria is also from Maria Ballaz.

the Ballaz children downstairs in the hotel's kitchen. Their early morning departure for school was followed by preparation for the large noon day meal. Also, boarders willing to fix their own breakfasts might be found at the large stoves between seven and ten in the mornings. After ten, kitchen privileges were terminated and preparation for the noon meal began in earnest.

After thirty-two years of good food, warm family events, and fine hospitality, the Vitoria Hotel closed.⁴⁵ In the early 1950s, Tomás and Maria had moved into their newly purchased private home at 409 Peach Street and, roughly ten years later Tom Ballaz, suffering a stroke, was confined to the Peach Street home.⁴⁶ After the stroke, the Ballazes leased the Vitoria to Javier and Rosana Sanchez and retired. The old Vitoria Hotel was sold in 1964, and the building torn down soon after.

Back in 1929, when the Ballazes opened their first *ostatua*, John Villanueva was managing a boardinghouse across town at 1102 and 1106 F Street.⁴⁷ Villanueva's name dropped from public records shortly thereafter, and George Bazterra's widow Marie managed the *ostatua* for a few years. Then, in 1935, Felix and Lyda Esain bought the building and named it the Basque Hotel.⁴⁸ In their sixteen-year tenure

⁴⁵Ibid., and "Vitoria Hotel, Noted for Its Basque Food, Closes," Fresno Bee, 18 May 1962.

⁴⁶Ibid., and L. Schuster, "My Basque Friend . . . Tom Ballaz," The Fresnoopolitan, July 1956, 31-34.

⁴⁷Fresno City and County Directory, 1929 (Fresno:Polk-Husted, 1929), 445.

⁴⁸Lyda Martinto Esain, interview with author, Fresno, California, 18 February 1987.

at the hotel, Felix and Lyda played an important role in the local Basque community and are fondly remembered throughout Fresno. Two years earlier, before buying the Basque Hotel, Felix Esain worked with Javier Eleano and Ascensión Curutchet at the Santa Fe Hotel.⁴⁹ Felix and Lyda were married in 1932 and, for the first three years of their marriage, worked a ranch outside of town. In 1935, they sold the ranch, purchased the hotel, and moved back into Fresno.

In many ways, Felix and Lyda were the ideal hotelkeeping couple. Born in *Euskal herria*, Felix's command of Basque and Spanish exceeded his abilities in English by far. Lyda, on the other hand, is an American-born Basque raised in the San Joaquin Valley. Upon his arrival in California, Dominique Martinto, Lyda's father, joined his older brother Jean Pierre at the Basses Pyrenees Hotel in Tehachapi.⁵⁰ After working in the Tehachapi lime kilns, Dominique and Marie Amestoy Martinto moved to Fresno County with their young children and began ranching. With an Old World Basque like Felix and a New World Basque like Lyda, the two were able to offer their clients and friends an ideal combination of services and skills.

If a boarder needed assistance with some aspect of surviving in the greater Fresno community, for instance, he asked Lyda to advise him. Oftentimes, Lyda accompanied her boarders during doctor's

⁴⁹Asunción Curuchet Goñi, interview with author, Clovis, California, 7 May 1987; Fresno City and County Directory, 1929 (Fresno: Polk-Husted, 1929), 241; and Fresno City and County Directory, 1933 (Fresno: R. L. Polk, 1933), 194.

⁵⁰Vandor, History of Fresno County, 2576.

appointments or at the lawyer's office, for example. If a visiting herder wanted to open a savings account at the local bank, Lyda was the likely candidate to serve as translator. Felix, on the other hand, could not have served in this capacity. He tended to represent and maintain Old World social and cultural aspects of the Basque community which were vital to Basque boarders. Felix, for example, organized all the *mus* or handball competition at the hotel. He also made a point of stopping to visit other *hoteleros* in Fresno, buying drinks for their customers, and encouraging neighborliness on a regular basis. In the Basque Hotel itself, Felix discussed local ranching, the concerns of his customers, and shared relevant information with his boarders and clients in *Euskera*.

Felix, Lyda, and their son Victor occupied the small downstairs apartment in the Basque Hotel. In addition, the lower floor contained a large kitchen, dining hall, bar and small office, while the upstairs had twenty-eight rooms for boarders.⁵¹ In the 1930s, when the Esains began at the Basque Hotel, boarders paid a dollar per day for room and board, including three meals and wine. After remodelling, the kitchen and dining hall were expanded and a dance area was added. Also, a new partially covered handball court was built along the north side of the hotel and is still in use. When the court was built, the Santa Fe was the only other hotel in town with a *cancha*, and according to its owners, the new handball court greatly improved

⁵¹Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Fresno, California, 1933, Volume 1, Map W, 71. Fresno County Library, Fresno, California.

business at the Basque Hotel. In 1951, after the Esains sold the hotel to Jean and Marie Nouqueret, the Esains opened the Villa Basque Restaurant on Blackstone Avenue in Fresno.⁵²

Coincidentally, the Santa Fe Hotel appears for the first time in the 1929 Fresno directories, the same year that the Ballazes opened the Vitoria and Villanueva the Basque Hotel. In this case, however, it is unclear whether Martín Iribarren's old "Sheepcamp" Hotel became the Santa Fe or the two were distinct enterprises.⁵³ At any rate, when the Santa Fe appeared in 1929, Javier Eleano was listed as the hotelkeeper. In 1932, John Baptiste and Asunción Curutchet leased the business, but within their first year at the Santa Fe, "J. B." died and Asunción continued to work there until 1936. During this four-year period, she was the hotel's only cook. She was unable to hire either a cook or cleaning help, and cleaned boarder's rooms whenever possible. Asunción describes this period of her life as "four years of work with thirty minutes off per day."⁵⁴ In 1936, when the Dolagarays made arrangements to take over the lease and manage the Santa Fe, Asunción began working at the Europa Cafe on G Street with "J. B." Bidegaray.⁵⁵ Martín and Marcelina Dologaray operated the Santa Fe

⁵²"The Basque Hotel Closes and Reopens," Fresno Bee, 1 February 1980.

⁵³Some informants describe two neighboring hotels and others infer that the two occupied the same building during different years.

⁵⁴Asunción Curutchet Goñi, interview with author, Clovis, California, 7 May 1987.

⁵⁵Fresno City and County Directory, 1933 (Fresno: R. L. Polk, 1933), 135.

Hotel through the war years and were followed by the Toqueros and, eventually, by Segundo and Benita García.⁵⁶ Today "J. B." and Yvette Bidegarary manage the Santa Fe.

The most recent *ostatua* built in Fresno is the Yturri Hotel, which was constructed around 1940 by Paul and Marcelina Yturri and stands about a block away from the Santa Fe. Its original owners married in 1932 and farmed in the Reedley area before deciding to go into the hotel business.⁵⁷ After Paul's death in 1957, Marcelina leased the hotel to a series of managers including Bernard and Marie Uhart, Pete Idiart, and Frank and Rosana Sanchez.

Today, the Yturri, the Basque, and the Santa Fe Hotels are still crucial to the Fresno Basque community, as they have been for the past thirty years. The meetings of the local Basque club are held regularly at the hotels, and local Basques are certain to alternate the meeting sites of each occasion. In addition, all three of these hotels still take boarders, though rarely are their rooms full to capacity. The early hotels that opened in Firebaugh, Mendota, and White's Bridge, for example, appeared concurrently with the earliest Fresno hotels. Probably due to the decline of immigrating Basque sheepmen, the hotels in outlying areas disappeared by 1930, while those in town continue to serve Fresno Basques.

⁵⁶Fresno City and County Directory, 1937 (Fresno: R. L. Polk, 1937), 197; Fresno City and County Directory, 1958 (Fresno: R. L. Polk, 1958), 588; and Fresno City and County Directory, 1962 (Fresno: R. L. Polk, 1962), 704.

⁵⁷"Paul Yturri, 57, Hotel Man, Dies," Fresno Bee, 8 August 1950, 1B.

About sixty miles north of Fresno, the two small communities of Los Banos and Merced developed three Basque hotels between 1915 and 1930. The first *ostatua* in Merced County opened in Los Banos, located on the west side of the valley and still serving as the eastern terminus of the Pacheco Pass, the same highway travelled by earlier ranchers heading to and from San Juan Bautista's Plaza Hotel in the 1850s and 1860s. After the turn of the century, Anton and Josefa Lassart arrived in Merced County and purchased property in what is now downtown Los Banos.⁵⁸ There they opened the Lassart Hotel in 1914 but, unfortunately, the two-story wooden hotel was completely destroyed by a fire after four years of operation.⁵⁹ The second Basque hotel in Los Banos has a more fortunate history, however.

By 1925, Joe Goñi built the Woolgrowers' Hotel on H Street across from the train station, and it has since been continuously open.⁶⁰ Local residents speak fondly of Sunday festivities at Goñi's in the late 1920s and 1930s. The Barcelona family, for example, left their ranch in the Panoche just after sunrise in order to reach Los Banos in time for nine o'clock Mass. After church, the family went to Goñi's to visit, play cards, and have Sunday dinner with friends and family. In the late afternoon, a group might attend a local movie or another social

⁵⁸Mrs. Albert Lassart, interview with author, Los Banos, California, 26 February 1987.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰Mrs. Barcelona, interview with Ralph Milliken, Los Banos, California, 1945. Talbott Papers, Los Banos, California.

gathering before heading back to the Panoche. In any case, Sunday outings to the Woolgrowers' were part of a full day's excursion.

Since the 1930s, the Los Banos Woolgrowers' has had a number of operators, including Valentín Pozueta, Andrea Larrainzar, and the Arrechés.⁶¹ While today's Woolgrowers' occupies the same building as Goni's old hotel and must appear similarly, the business itself is limited to restaurant and bar service. Rooms once reserved for boarders are home for current owners Michel and Jeanine Iturbide and their children. In 1962, Michel Iturbide left *Euskal herria* and came to San Francisco, where he worked for Joe Gestes at the Basque Hotel.⁶² From Iturbide moved to Stockton where he cooked at John and Pete Ospital's Villa Basque before deciding to buy the Los Banos Woolgrowers'. Similar to the training that many Bakersfield Basque *hoteleros* received in the early Los Angeles hotels, Iturbide was trained in San Francisco and Stockton before moving to Los Banos.⁶³

On the east side of the county on Highway 99 in Merced, another small Basque hotel was opened in 1929.⁶⁴ John Elgart built and operated his Hotel des Pyrenees for ten years until he sold it to

⁶¹Elena Celayeta Talbott, interview with author, Los Banos, California, 26 February 1987.

⁶²Michel Iturbide, interview with author, Los Banos, California, 26 February 1987.

⁶³Pat McNally, "Family Style Basque Restaurants," Merced Sun Star, 10 October 1980, 5.

⁶⁴Polk's Merced, Madera, and Chowchilla California Directory, 1928-1929 (San Francisco: R. L. Polk, 1928), 68.

Bartolo Goñi and his family in 1939 and moved to Madera.⁶⁵ The Goñis managed the small two story hotel, located at the corner of I and 16th Streets, together with Angie and Fortunato Anaut, their daughter and son-in-law.⁶⁶ The family occupied the three small downstairs rooms at the back of the hotel, leaving the thirteen private rooms upstairs for boarders and customers.

In the 1940s and 1950s, before construction of the highway overpass, the Pyrenees Hotel was located on the main highway that passed through Merced. According to the Anauts, their clientele was always a mixture of Basques and non-Basques. Because of size and location, this small *ostatua* welcomed "outsiders" more than the larger, more selective hotels of Fresno and Bakersfield. For example, the non-Basque truck drivers passing through town were welcome to stay at the Pyrenees. And, during a five month period in the 1940s when crews were expanding Castle Air Force Base in nearby Atwater, the Pyrenees was jammed with construction workers every evening for dinner. By 1955, the Anauts built a home in Merced, expanded the Pyrenees Bar, and closed the kitchen portion of the hotel. When the Anauts sold the Pyrenees in 1968, the sale marked the end of Basque hotelkeeping in Merced.

If one were travelling north and south from Merced along California's state Highway 99, he would encounter a number of

⁶⁵Mary Jean (Elgart) Uhalde, interview with author, Madera, California, 23 April 1987.

⁶⁶Angie Goñi Anaut, interview with author, Merced, California, 30 January and 17 February 1987.

additional Basque colonies. At the southern extreme lies Bakersfield, while Stockton can be found at the northern end of the San Joaquin Valley. Between them are a number of towns, such as Firebaugh, Mendota, Los Banos, McKittrick, and Merced. Just as Bakersfield had a special link with Los Angeles's "Basque town," the Basque community in Stockton had a particularly close relationship to San Francisco's "Basque town."

In 1881, the city of Stockton was an ideal terminus for transportation and shipping. Situated at the head of the Stockton channel, just two miles from the Sacramento River, Stockton had a ninety-one mile rail connection with San Francisco via the Central Pacific Railroad.⁶⁷ In 1870, the Stockton Woolen Mills were erected on the south bank of Mormon Channel where about 200,000 pounds of wool was used annually to produce blankets and flannels.⁶⁸ Area wool production undoubtedly encouraged Basque migration to Stockton in the late nineteenth century.

Some twenty years elapsed, however, before the first Basque hotel appeared in Stockton. In the interim, the population of the small agricultural town nearly tripled from 12,000 to 30,000 between 1880 and 1905.⁶⁹ Judging from the city's population records, much of this

⁶⁷City and County Directory of San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, and Toulumne, 1881 (San Francisco: L. M. McKenny and Company, 1881), 57-58.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 61.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 57, and Stockton City Directory, 1905 (San Francisco: R. L. McKenney and Company, 1905), 30.

influx was comprised of immigrants, and the largest increase in Basque immigration to Stockton occurred within this period as well. County and city directories for the 1880s, for example, include only a small number of Basque surnames, but by the first decade of 1900, a sizeable importation of Basques is evident.

Directories, informants, and other scholarship indicate that the Basque Hotel at 203 East Hazelton was Stockton's first *ostatua*. The original owners of the Basque Hotel were Raymond Narbaitz and Jean Ospital, his brother-in-law.⁷⁰ Raymond Narbaitz ran from 3,000 to 7,000 head of sheep in Fresno, Merced, and San Joaquin counties and was considered one of the valley's finest sheepmen.⁷¹ As was frequently the case elsewhere, the tie between hotelkeepers and sheep raisers was very close in Stockton and often Basques were in both businesses simultaneously.

At least eighteen Basque hotels existed in Stockton between 1907 and 1970. Some, like the Hotel de France, Bilbaina, Basco, España, and Woolgrowers occupied the same building within the sixty-three year period.⁷² Between 1911 and 1917, for example, non-Basques

⁷⁰Steve Ybarrola, a native of Stockton, has compiled an exhaustive list of hotels in Stockton's "Basque town" and shared it generously with the author. Pete Iroz and Jon Domench, two informants who lived in the neighborhood for years, assisted him. Ybarrola's list has been checked against directory information and the memory of other informants and modified only slightly. See Table 12 for a summary of Stockton *ostatuak* from 1907 through 1970.

⁷¹George H. Tinkham, History of San Joaquin County (Los Angeles: Historical Record Company, 1923), 1404 and Tom McKay, "Last Pioneer of San Joaquin Valley Sheep Ranchers Reviews 56 Years' Progress," Stockton Record, 7 May 1949.

⁷²See Table 12 for years of operation and proprietorship.

operated and occupied the hotel, and when Saturnio Domench opened the Hotel España at 325 South Hunter, it became again a Basque *ostatua*. The listing of operators and hotels in Table 12 reveals that hotelkeepers frequently moved. Pierre Recault, for example, turned up at the Hotel de France in 1908 and in 1916 at the Hotel Basco.

Reviewing this list of hotel ownership in Stockton indicates that

TABLE 12
Stockton's Basque Hotels, 1907 to 1970

1. Basque Hotel	203 E. Hazelton	1907-1911
1907	John Ospital and Raymond Narbaitz	
1908-1911	John Ospital	
2. Basque Hotel	548 S. Hunter	1912-1925
1912	Fermin Aluztiza	
1913-1924	John Ospital	
1925	Elroy Perez	
3. Hotel Royal	341 S. Hunter	1908-1919
1908-1916	Raymond Narbaitz and Joe Oyarbide	
1917	Peter Mentaberry	
1918-1919	Victor Badaya	
4. Hotel de France	325 S. Hunter	1907-1909
1907-1909	Pierre Recault	
5. Hotel La Bilbaina	325 S. Hunter	1909-1911
1909-1910	Miguel Olano and Severiano Legarra	
1911	Miguel Olano	
6. Hotel Basco	325 S. Hunter	1912-1916
1912	Nicolás Aldamos and Marcos Edoyaga	
1913-1915	Marcos Edoyaga	
1915	Pierre Recault	
7. Hotel Español	303 S. Hunter	1916-1925
1916-1924	Severiano Legarra	
1924	Mrs. Eulalia Legarra	

Continued on next page

Table 12--Continued

8. Hotel Central	122 W. Main	1916-1960
1916-1917	Victor Badaya	
1917-1919	Fermin Alustiza	
1920	Victor Badaya and Nicolas Ylarraz	
1924	Bernardo Yoldi	
1925	Victor Badaya	
1931	Frank and Richard Artozqui	
1933-1937	Frank Artozqui	
1938-1941	Manual Artozqui	
1942-1943	Mrs. Irene Artozqui	
1945-1946	Julia Beamish	
1947-1948	Mrs. I. F. Artozqui	
1949-1958	M. A. Artozqui	
1960	Mrs. Irene Artozqui	
9. Hotel España	325 S. Hunter	1917
1917	Saturnio Domench	
10. Estrella Hotel	401 S. Hunter	1921-1931
1921-1924	Joseph Solaequi	
1925-1926	Tomás and Florentino Uriarte	
1931	Tomás and Florentino Uriarte	
11. California Hotel	403 S. San Joaquin	1924-1969
1924-1952	Fermin Alustiza	
1953	Alfonso and Fermin Alustiza	
1955-1956	Fermin Alustiza	
1958-1969	Alfonso Alustiza	
12. Hotel Basque	343 S. San Joaquin	1935-1946
1935	John Idiart	
1936-1937	W. P. Aluiso	
1938	Teresa Idiart	
1939-1941	John Idiart	
1942-1943	Paul Etcheberry	
1945-1946	G. A. Russell	
13. Pyrenees Hotel	335 S. San Joaquin	1935-1940
1935	Mrs. Dominica Predagne	
1940	Mrs. Louise Olson	
14. French Hotel	243 S. Hunter	1935-1940
1935	Dominic Olcomendy	
1940	Ellen Lamar and Jean Marlow	
15. La Coste	39-43 S. Hunter	1936-1955
1936	Michael Coron	
1937-1946	Etienne La Coste	
1949-1950	Peter Iturria and Joaquin Erro	
1955	Mrs. Damasa Erro	

Continued on next page

Table 12--Continued

16. Woolgrowers Hotel	325 S. Hunter	1949-1970
1949-1958	Benjamin and Teresa Mariones	
1959-1971	John and Pete Ospital	
17. Basconia Hotel	343 S. San Joaquin	1949-1955
1949-1952	Mrs. Jesse Gainza	
1953-1955	John Gainza	
18. Royal Hotel	310 S. Hunter	1924-1925
1924	Peter Balgorri	
1925	John Errecart	
19. Royal Hotel	310 S. Hunter	1952-1960
1952-1956	Clifford T. Ito	
1958	Mrs. Francisca Contrera	
1960	Herbert Yuerra	

terms of ownership have been brief, for example, were the Artozqui and Alustiza families who were at the Central and California hotels for thirty and forty-five years respectively. Much more frequent were one-to-three year contracts. In fact, the average hotelkeeping tenure among this group of Stockton *hoteleros* was four years.⁷³

Another characteristic revealed in this table is that businesses were rarely inherited successfully. Perhaps the major exception was Fermín Alustiza's son Alfonso. In that case, father and son ran the California Hotel together, and then, after his father's death, Alfonso managed the California for eleven more years.⁷⁴ In addition, only a few examples exist of a widow taking over management of a hotel after her husband's death, yet in every case, her tenure was short-lived.

⁷³This average was calculated by dividing the number of distinct proprietor entries in Table 12 into the total number of years of operation shown in the table.

⁷⁴Pete Iroz, interview with author, Stockton, California, 11 June 1987.

Because Stockton's Basque neighborhood sprung up after California'ko Eskual Herria was discontinued, hotel owners, of course, were unable to advertise in a state-wide newspaper catering to Basques. Undoubtedly, competition among hotelkeepers was keen, since frequently three or four hotels competed for clients. A local publication in 1908, however, contained two business-card size advertisements for Basque *ostatuak*. One advertisement for the Hotel Royal stated the hotel name, address, and telephone number, and below: "*Eskualdun Bilkura. Establia Eta Pilota Plaza.* (Where Basques Gather. Stable and Handball Court.)"⁷⁵ In the second advertisement, the hotel management appealed to both Spanish and French Basques, despite the hotel name. The Hotel de France included logistical information and then boasted, "*Hescualdun Etchea, Pension Francaise I Espanola, Pilota Plaza Eta Cabellerisa* (Basque House, French and Spanish hotel. Handball Court and Barn)."⁷⁶

According to Stockton *Euskaldunak*, the local Basque community was aware of each hotel and the clientele that frequented it. A Spanish or "Viscaino" hotel might be less preferable, for instance, to a French Basque whose friends regularly attended another hotel. In an earlier study, one informant reported attending her favorite Basque hotel with her parents every Tuesday and Sunday night.⁷⁷ When asked

⁷⁵History of Stockton Fire Department (Stockton: Atwood Printing, 1908), 104.

⁷⁶*Ibid.* The mixture of Spanish, French, and Basque terms in this quotation is noteworthy.

⁷⁷Carol Pagliarulo, "Basques in Stockton: A Study of Assimilation" (Master's thesis, College of the Pacific, 1948), 59.

why they went to that hotel, she responded, "that's where we always went. It's where 'our crowd' went and there was always something happening there."⁷⁸ Her comments underscore an awareness of who frequented which hotels and is substantiated throughout subsequent interviewing. Few Basques deny the competitive nature of hotelkeeping, and Stockton's Basques were no exception.

An article in the Stockton Record featured the local Basque colony, its hotels, and handball courts in 1917. Among Basque hotelkeepers and their clients, it was considered advantageous for a hotel to have a handball court. And, if it was sufficiently large, it allowed local players to strap on their wicker *jai alai* *cestas* and play full court *jai alai*. At the time the Record article was written, there were four *ostatuak* in Stockton: Jean Ospital's Basque Hotel; Pierre Mentaberry's Hotel Royal; Pierre Recault's Hotel Basco; and Fermín Alustiza's Hotel Central. While a handball court adjoined each of the four hotels, according to one Stockton Basque, the only location with a court long enough to accommodate *jai alai* was the Basque Hotel.⁷⁹ That all four Stockton hotels had courts is unusual since in the other Basque communities only one-half or two-thirds of the *ostatuak* might have built handball courts. The higher percentage of Stockton handball

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹The Stockton Record, 5 April 1917, Talbott Papers, Los Banos, California; Pete Iroz, interview with the author, Stockton, California, 11 June 1987; and Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Stockton, California, 1917, Volume 1, Maps 74 and 82. Fire insurance maps give details for one court adjacent to the Royal and a second at the Español. While the other two are not shown on Sanborn Maps, they were probably there as reported.

courts is possibly an indication of the degree of competition among hotelkeepers in Stockton or reflective of the size of the local Basque community.

Like Los Angeles, San Francisco, Bakersfield, and Fresno, Stockton had a "Basque town" of its own by 1915. The neighborhood was located on San Joaquin and Hunter Streets between Main and Hazelton.⁸⁰ On the southern edge of "Basque town" was the Mormon Slough and, across the trench, the Santa Fe Depot. The northern boarder was formed by Main Street and Stockton's early Japanese and Chinese neighborhoods.

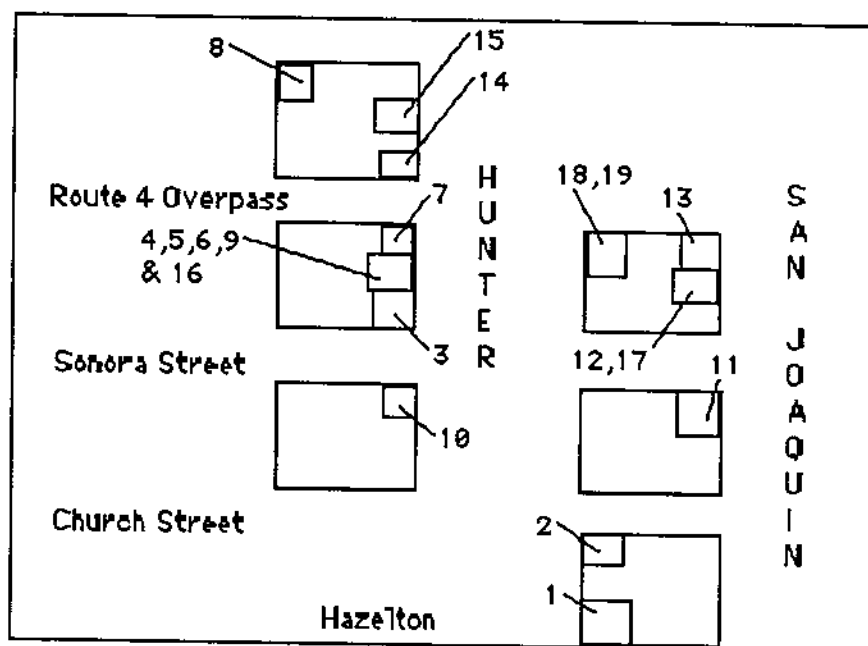


Fig. 15. Map of Stockton's "Basque Town"

⁸⁰See Figure 15 for a map of Stockton's "Basque town." Numbers on the map correspond to the hotel numbers listed in Table 12.

By 1938, only two of Stockton's "Basque town" hotels were sufficiently large to merit mention in the Works Progress Administration history of Stockton. At that time, there were a total of forty-six hotels throughout Stockton with "Basque town" containing five *ostatuak*. The two selected for mention probably were picked because of their size. Fermin Alustiza's California Hotel had forty-two rooms, charged fifty cents per day and up for room and board, and also offered garage rates.⁸¹ Across San Joaquin Street and over one block, the Idiarts' Hotel Basque had sixty-six rooms. Charging the same daily rate as the California Hotel, the Basque also offered weekly rates of two dollars and fifty cents.⁸² Both of these three story hotels were large when compared with Basque hotels in other locations. The three *ostatuak* not mentioned in the 1938 publication were the La Coste, the French Hotel, and the Pyrenees Hotel.⁸³ Because of their smaller size, they were probably dismissed as boardinghouses and therefore not included.

From the earlier table of hotels and proprietors, a second table can be constructed indicating relative years of operation. Table 13 indicates that only three Stockton *ostatuak* were in business for more than twenty years, and just one lasted between fifteen and twenty

⁸¹Works Progress Administration, "History of Stockton and San Joaquin County," (Unpublished Manuscript, Stockton Public Library, 1938), 88.

⁸²*Ibid.*

⁸³Refer to Table 12 for years of operation.

years. Eight *ostatuak* opened in the first decade of their existence in Stockton, between 1907 and 1917. In the subsequent decade, four new hotels were launched, and eight of the combined total closed.

Table 13
Chronological Display of Stockton's *Ostatuak*

NAME OF HOTEL	SPAN OF YEARS IN OPERATION	1970
1. Basque Hotel	1907__1911	
2. Basque Hotel	1912____1925	
3. Hotel Royal	1908____1919	
4. Hotel La Bilbaina	1909__1911	
5. Hotel de France	1907__1909	
6. Hotel Basco	1912__1916	
7. Hotel Español	1916__1925	
8. Hotel Central	1916_____1960	
9. Hotel España	1917_1918	
10. Estrella Hotel	1921__1931	
11. California Hotel	1924_____1969	
12. Hotel Basque	1935_____1946	
13. Pyrenees Hotel	1935_____1940	
14. French Hotel	1935_____1940	
15. La Coste	1936_____1955	
16. Woolgrowers Hotel	1949_____1970	
17. Basconia Hotel	1949__1955	
18. Royal Hotel	1924_1925	
19. Royal Hotel	1952_____1960	

From 1937 through 1947, the third decade in Stockton's Basque hotelkeeping history, no new *ostatuak* were introduced. Between 1949 and 1952, however, "Basque town's" last three hotels opened.

Clearly, then, the peak years of Stockton *ostatuak* occurred between 1915 and 1935. By the 1950s and 1960s, for example, hotel business in "Basque town" emphasized the restaurant portion of the hotel, with an appeal to non-Basque dinner trade. Four of the seven Basque restaurants shown in Table 14, for example, were located in Basque hotels. This group of restaurants included Alustiza's that opened the year after Fermín closed the old California Hotel. In addition, for the last five years that the Hotel Central was in business, the Artozquis opened a tavern and restaurant on the premises. Likewise, the La Coste and Woolgrowers attempted to increase their business by opening their boardinghouse restaurants to the general public in their last few years of operation.

In 1948, Carol Pagliarulo conducted a study of 219 *Euskaldunak*, including eighty-seven family groups, all of whom lived within Stockton city limits.⁸⁴ The purpose of the study was to ascertain the degree to which Stockton Basques had assimilated by 1948, a topic equally useful to this project. Pagliarulo reported 58 percent of the Basque population was born in America. In addition, most of the second-generation Basques were found in urban settings, as opposed to the rural distribution of earlier generations. She also reported a

⁸⁴Carol Pagliarulo, "Basques in Stockton: A Study of Assimilation."

modification in the nature and function of the city's Basque hotels. As she stated, "They are no longer exclusively Basque boardinghouses; they now cater to other guests; serve the general public food, and have added public bars."⁸⁵

TABLE 14
Stockton's Basque Restaurants

RESTAURANT NAME		SPAN OF YEARS IN OPERATION		1988
1. La Coste Inn	1949_____	1955		
41 S. Hunter				
2. Jessie's Place	1952_____	1955		
347 S. San Joaquin				
3. Sofi's Place		1955_____	1965	
27 S. Hunter				
4. Hotel Central		1955_____	1960	
124 W. Main				
5. Woolgrowers Inn		1955_____	1971	
325 S. Hunter				
6. Alustiza's			1970_____	1982
403 S. San Joaquin				
7. Ospital's Villa Basque		1972_____		
448 S. Hunter				

Today the only Basque establishment in Stockton's "Basque town" is Ospital's Villa Basque restaurant. Located at the corner of Hunter and Church Streets, it stands in what was once the heart of one of the busiest Basque communities in California's history. On the northern

⁸⁵Ibid., 63.

edge of the neighborhood, the new Highway 4 overpass bisects Hunter and San Joaquin Streets. Nearby, the old La Coste and Central Hotels, and Saint Mary's Catholic Church, where so many early Basques were baptized, married, and worshipped, are now part of Stockton's Chinatown. South of the highway, closer to the Ospital's, a few of the old hotel buildings have been destroyed and replaced with a market, a parking lot, and a broadened street. Only through discussions with the elderly Basques of Stockton, and a walk with them through the "old neighborhood," do the stories of these *ostatuak* come to life.

Unlike the Basque hotels in Bakersfield and Fresno, Stockton's *ostatuak* closed, and the larger Basque community has dispersed. Still, a review of hotels throughout the San Joaquin Valley reveals that the area was one that has attracted Basque ranchers and sheepmen since 1900. For example, in the 1920s and 1930s, the state capitol hosted two Basque hotels.⁸⁶ Their lifespan was relatively short, and rapid urbanization in Sacramento likely drove Basques to outlying areas. A discussion of hotels in California, however, is grossly incomplete without inclusion of the San Joaquin Valley communities. In fact, in the twentieth century, the towns of Bakersfield, Fresno, and Stockton grew to be better known for their Basque populations than did the coastal cities of Los Angeles and San Francisco. At the heart of

⁸⁶Pete Iroz, interview with the author, Stockton, California, 11 June 1987. According to Iroz, the two Sacramento *ostatuak* were called the Hotel España and the Hotel Español.

these colonies were their *ostatuak*, which had peaked by the second World War and began changing in form thereafter.

CHAPTER 7

SAN FRANCISCO'S TWENTIETH-CENTURY *OSTATUAK*

The San Francisco earthquake and fire remains one of the most spectacular disasters in California history. The quake struck shortly after five in the morning on 18 April 1906; with the initial shock lasting for about one minute and subsequent waves continuing for much of the day. While it impossible to measure, the San Francisco quake has been estimated at 8.3 on the Richter scale. About 5,000 buildings were destroyed, railways and roads mangled, and public services halted. Sporadic fires broke out immediately after the first quake, and within two hours, the east end of Market Street, Chinatown, the city hall, and North Beach area were ablaze. An area measuring four square miles was wiped out and not until seventy-four hours after the initial temblor was the fire put out.¹

San Francisco's *ostatuak* were also consumed by the devastation. José Aguirre's and Juan Francisco Yparraguirre's hotels were two of the over 23,000 buildings demolished in the inferno of 1906.² Immediately after the devastation, however, a second Basque district emerged in the Broadway and North Beach neighborhood. The first indication of a post-quake *ostatua* is that of Ambrosio Yrionda on 734 Broadway. According to directories of 1907, "lodgings and furnished

¹Beck and Haase, Historical Atlas, 80.

²*Ibid.*

rooms" were available at Yrionda's, but none of the pre-quake *ostatuak* remained.³ By the following year, the Hotel España appeared at 785 Broadway, and Justino and Mañual Yriarte opened the Hotel Yberico at 1034 Pacific.⁴ In the same year, the adult Basque population living in San Francisco in 1908 was 949, a markedly small percentage of the 342,782 residents in the city by the Bay.⁵

Yet a distinct "Basque town" was rapidly emerging in San Francisco's Broadway-North Beach area. By 1916, the neighborhood hosted a number of hotels that may have been Basque-owned or operated. Among some of the most likely names were the Hotel des Alpes, Hotel de France, Hotel de España, Hotel des Pyrenees, and Hotel du Midi.⁶ Unfortunately, directory listings dated 1910 through 1918 fail to include the names of proprietors, leaving the researcher to select "possible" hotels based upon name, location, and later hotels known to be Basque. An exception was the Hotel España, under the management of two brothers, José and Miguel Lugea.⁷

In 1907, José Lugea invited two of his brothers to join him in San Francisco and help him construct a new hotel. After the quake, Lugea

³San Francisco Directory, 1907 (San Francisco: H. S. Crocker Company, 1907), 1715.

⁴San Francisco Directory, 1908 (San Francisco: H. S. Crocker Company, 1908), 905, 1888.

⁵World Almanac and Encyclopedia, 1908 (New York: Press Publishing, 1908), 637, and Arrizabalaga, "Statistical Study," 67.

⁶ San Francisco Directory, 1912 (San Francisco: H. S. Crocker Company, 1912), 862, and San Francisco Directory, 1916 (San Francisco: H. S. Crocker Company, 1916), 834.

⁷San Francisco Directory 1912 (San Francisco: H. S. Crocker Company, 1912), 1065.

arranged a long-term lease on a lot at 785 Broadway.⁸ He then contacted Miguel and Ramón Lugea in the hopes that his oldest brother, a carpenter, would supervise construction. Miguel was living in Elko, Nevada, at the time but consented to the project and moved to San Francisco. The Lugea brothers operated the España until 1924, when Miguel passed away. After Miguel's death, José sold his interest in the San Francisco hotel and moved to Fresno where he dedicated his efforts to sheep ranching.⁹

Despite competition from other *ostatuak*, the Lugeas' hotel seems to have been one of the most popular in the decade between 1910 and 1920.¹⁰ José and Dionisia Lusaretto Yriberri's *ostatua* is the only other neighborhood competition mentioned by interviewees.¹¹ Yet oldtimers remember most the Lugeas' crowded Sunday night dances. There young John Bidegaray, whose father owned Fresno's Bascongado Hotel, often played his accordion until early morning hours.¹² Early San Francisco Basque residents and visitors also recall Jerónimo and Selernia Meabe's handball court, which could be reached via the rear

⁸Grace R. Lugea, interview with author, San Francisco, California, 13 May 1987.

⁹The Lugeas also operated the Spanio Hotel from 1907 to 1917 in Fresno, California. Vador, *History of Fresno*, 2559.

¹⁰Maria Ballaz and Elvira Yparraguirre Root, interviews with the author, Fresno, California, and San Francisco, California, 7 May 1987 and 15 May 1987.

¹¹*Ibid.*, and Honoria Juvney, *History of Sonoma County, California* (San Francisco: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1926), 382.

¹²Pete Iroz, interview with author, Stockton, California, 11 June 1987.

exit of Lugeas' and "down the alley."¹³ It was a favorite gathering place on Sunday afternoons.

By 1920, and perhaps earlier, San Francisco's "Basque town" had become a regional center for San Joaquin Valley Basques, particularly those living in the northern portions of the state. In 1929, for example, Tomás and Maria Ballaz honeymooned at the Hotel Español, then operated by Martín Ayoleta Abaurrea.¹⁴ Occasionally, out-of-town Basques would take up temporary residence in San Francisco *ostatuak*. For example, Elena Etcheverry of Los Banos lived at Henry Yrigoyen's Hotel España for ten months while completing a business school course, and Dominica Arambel enjoyed a long visit to Dominica Olargue's Du Midi Hotel in 1928.¹⁵

Many other Basque families from the Stockton area summered in San Francisco for a few months, thus avoiding the suppressive valley heat while enjoying San Francisco's "Basque town" neighborhood.¹⁶ In addition to those already mentioned, an early favorite was the three-story brick Hotel Iriarte on the southeast corner of Powell and Pacific. "Gernika" Basabe owned the hotel in the 1920s, which was

¹³Ibid, and San Francisco Directory, 1930 (San Francisco: R. L. Polk, 1930), 957.

¹⁴Maria Ballaz, interview with author, Fresno, California, 7 May 1987.

¹⁵Elena Etcheverry and Dominica Arambel, interviews with author, Los Banos, California, 17 May 1987. San Francisco Directory, 1930 (San Francisco: R. L. Polk and Company, 1930), 681.

¹⁶Pete Iroz and Elena Celayeta Talbott, interviews with author, Stockton, California, and Los Banos, California, 11 June and 26 February 1987.

opened again in 1932.¹⁷ The bar in the lower floor was re-named the "Jai alai," as adjacent to the building stood one of the city's larger handball courts.¹⁸

The Broadway area continued to host about a half dozen Basque boardinghouses and hotels up to and during the Second World War. In the war years, San Francisco restaurateurs and hotelkeepers were obliged to report to the War Price and Rationing Board on menus and pricing every week. Jean and Marie Cazahous, owners of the Des Alpes Restaurant and Hotel, attempted to cooperate, as did other *ostatua* owners.

In conformity with the Office of Price Administration, the Des Alpes reported its six-course evening meals on a weekly basis. For the week of 4 April 1943, for example, the evening meals included soup, hors d'oeuvres, an entree, a roast of some sort, salad, coffee, french bread, and dessert. On Friday and Sunday nights, the price of dinner was one dollar, and on the other evenings, customers were charged eighty-five cents.¹⁹ The menus indicate that diners were not offered a choice and that meals were served family-style. Entrees included items such as steak with spinach, fried sole, lamb stew, broiled chicken with sweet peas, tripes a la mode or calf's head, and roast

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid. and Crocker-Langley San Francisco City Directory, 1930 (San Francisco: R.L. Polk, 1930), 681.

¹⁹Letter to War Price and Rationing Board from Jean and Marie Cazahous. San Francisco File, Amerikanuak Papers, Basque Studies Library, University of Nevada, Reno.

beef with lentils. One can imagine the reaction of a non-Basque city dweller attending the Wednesday evening meal and being presented with a calf's head for dinner! Nonetheless, the Des Alpes Restaurant enjoyed a fine reputation among its customers and is still noted for its cuisine among San Franciscans.

From 1956 through 1975, Ganish and Ana Iriartborde managed the Des Alpes. During these years, the establishment was both restaurant and boardinghouse. Fifteen rooms on the second and third floors accommodated boarders comfortably, and because there were so many Basques visiting San Francisco in those days, the Iriartbordes claim they never rented to non-Basques.²⁰ Ciriaco and Elaine Iturri have been operating the Des Alpes since 1975.²¹ Today the boardinghouse function is nearly defunct, yet food from the Des Alpes kitchen still attracts locals, out-of-towners, both Basque and non-Basque.²²

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, a full regiment of hotels had emerged in the Broadway district, including the more well-known Hotels España, France, Du Midi, Cosmopolitan, Obrero, Pyrenees, and Des Alpes. About 1960, Fermín Huarte and Louis Elu began managing the old España formerly owned by José and Miguel Lugea; John Etchevers; and Claude Berhouet conducted the Hotel de France

²⁰Ana Iriartborde, interview with author, San Francisco, California, 15 May 1987.

²¹Ciriaco Iturri, interview with author, San Francisco, California, 15 May 1987, and Voice of the Basques, June 1975, 3.

²²Merrill Schindler, "Calories Don't Count in A Basque Boardinghouse," Los Angeles Times Calendar Section, 104.

restaurant and boardinghouse on 780 Broadway; Jean Pierre Arretche and Lucy Etchemendi were at the Du Midi; Juan and Nieves Yriarte managed the Hotel Obrero on Stockton Street; John Bordalampe took over for the Iriartbordes for a two-year period at the Des Alpes; and Amelie and Jean Sorhondo opened a lodging house at 517 Broadway that they called the Pyrenees.²³

Eventually, Fermin Huarte sold his interest in the España to Louis and Marie Elu, and they opened a new family restaurant and bar on the lower floor.²⁴ For over two decades, Elu's Basque Restaurant was a favorite of visiting Basques and local San Franciscans. Advertisements for Elu's appeared regularly in the Boise-based Voice of the Basques newspaper. One such advertisement claimed that Elu's was the "Headquarters for Wool Sheep Cattlemen."²⁵ The claim was undoubtedly correct insofar as Elu's was a central meeting place of Basques in the West throughout the 1960s and 1970s. On the other hand, it did not cater exclusively to Basque sheepmen.

Down the street and around the corner from Elu's, Juan and Nieves Yriarte had managed the Obrero Hotel since 1952. After nine years there they discontinued their lease on the three-story Obrero. Then Pierre and Catherine Goyenette began their fourteen-year term as

²³Catherine Inda Goyenette, interview with author, San Francisco, California, 13 May 1987, and San Francisco Directory, 1960 (San Francisco: R. L. Polk and Company, 1960), 685, 1096, and 374.

²⁴San Francisco Directory, 1964-1965 (San Francisco: R. L. Polk and Company, 1964), 446.

²⁵Voice of the Basques, Boise, Idaho, June 1975, 3.

the hotel managers. Ten rooms were used for boarders, and the Goyenette family used three rooms for their private quarters.²⁶ When they began at the Obrero, the Goyenette's eleven-year-old daughter served tables, and their thirteen-year-old son helped with clean up and dish-washing. Catherine cooked all meals, and Pierre tended bar. At the evening meals, which were priced at two dollars and fifty cents a person, up to sixty diners might appear. Beyond this number, the small Obrero had to turn customers away.

Many San Francisco Basques ate in the Obrero's compact dining room and claimed it as their favorite place to dine. They describe plentiful and tasty meals and a warm atmosphere, enhanced by Catherine's jovial spirit. One oldtimer, for example, recalled that Catherine would get people who before dinner were strangers to sing together after their meals. Passers-by heard anything from "Frere Jacques" to "Oh Susanna" as they walked down Stockton Street in the evenings.

In 1975, the Goyenettes retired from business. Catherine's niece and her husband, Marie and Arnaud Mendisco, leased the Obrero for a two-and-a-half-year period. They continued the management of the hotel in much the same style as their aunt and uncle but encouraged the restaurant more than the boardinghouse business. During their years at the Obrero, the Mendiscos used more rooms for their

²⁶Catherine Inda Goyenette, interview with author, San Francisco, California, 13 May 1987.

personal use and only rented five rooms to boarders.²⁷ Such emphasis can be seen in one Mendisco advertisement that pronounced, "The Obrero-Where Old Friends Meet...Distinctive French Basque Cooking."²⁸

Since 1978, an Irish-American woman named Bambi MacDonald has managed the Obrero. The hotel's current situation strikes many a Basque as ironic: the owner is Irish, the cuisine is Basque, and the neighborhood is Chinatown. When Bambi came to the Obrero, she intended to maintain the hotel and cuisine, but doing so has been challenging. The Obrero has progressively appealed to American clientele interested in a dose of ethnicity, while the old Basque clientele has dropped off. Bambi maintains that, "one does not have to be a Basque to cook Basque," but this argument does not convince many local Basques. A few interviewees stated that they occasionally go back to the Obrero to reminisce but that "it's not the same anymore." Quite possibly the comment has more to do with their attachment to the "good old days" than it does with Bambi's cooking. The Obrero's recent face-lift also contributes to a change in its customers.²⁹ Painted, scrubbed, and redecorated, the Obrero appeals more to those interested in a unique dining experience or weekend

²⁷Bambi MacDonald, interview with author, San Francisco, California, 13 May 1987.

²⁸Voice of the Basques, Boise, Idaho, September 1975, 3.

²⁹Marie Walker, "San Francisco's Obrero," Air California Magazine, June 1980, 66.

get-away in the city more than to a group of Basques looking for a place to socialize.

When Catherine and Pierre Goyenette were still at the Obrero, around 1964, a Basque family named Biguet leased and re-opened a hotel at 15 Romulo Place.³⁰ Located on an alley off Broadway, the Basque Hotel has had a managerial turnovers in five-year intervals. After the Biguets, Joe Gestes operated the Basque until 1975 when Sauveur and Anna Anchartechahar took over.³¹ Then Antoinette and Daniel-Francisco Oroz leased the twenty-five room hotel from 1979 to 1985.³² The Orozs bought the Chalet Basque Restaurant in San Rafael in 1985, and now Rebecca and Jean-Emile Idiart manage the Basque Hotel and Restaurant.³³

Across the street from the intersection of Romulo and Broadway is perhaps the most authentic of all boardinghouses still in existence. The Pyrenees, owned by Amelie and Jean Sorhondo, is located on the second and third floors of an old Broadway hotel building. The front door is unmarked and, other than word of mouth, there is little chance that one would encounter this small *ostatua*. The Sorhondos have leased the hotel since 1957. The twenty-six-room house caters to single Basque men who labor in the city. After one rings the bell

³⁰Jean Emile Idiart, interview with author, San Francisco, California, 14 May 1987.

³¹*Ibid.*, and Voice of the Basques, Boise, Idaho, June 1975, 3.

³²Francisco Oroz, interview with author, San Rafael, California, 14 May 1987.

³³Lindsay Fenley, "Ex-Basque Boy Buys Le Chalet Basque," San Rafael Independent, 17 December 1986, 6.

and gains entry, he or she ascends a narrow and creaky stairway to the second floor. If it is around midday, the aroma from the kitchen might give one hope of an invitation for lunch. Sorhondo's is a true boardinghouse setup where "outsiders" must be invited in order to stay for meals. The dining room and kitchen are practically the only common rooms in the Pyrenees, with the exception of one poorly attended television room. But far back on the second floor, the kitchen-dining room serves as "home" for most boarders.

Within San Francisco's Basque neighborhood, Jean and Amelie Sorhondo are fondly regarded. As one Basque observed, "Amelie still helps the oldtimers and boarders and is a great cook."³⁴ In addition, many Basques stop in at the Pyrenees on Sunday afternoons and play *mus* in the dining room. When asked by another Basque why they have not yet retired, Amelie responded that they are "too old to go to work now."³⁵ Probably closer to the truth is that the Pyrenees and the Sorhondos have become synonymous. Neither they nor their boarders could imagine one without the other.

The Pyrenees might be considered a "classic" *ostatua* model, yet other forms of Basque hotelkeeping exist in San Francisco. One form is where Basques manage hotels but do not offer cooking or kitchen services to their customers. They are more like Basque-run apartment buildings that do not cater exclusively to Basques. For example, Grace

³⁴Francisco Oroz, interview with author, San Rafael, California, 14 May 1987.

³⁵Catherine Inda Goyenette, interview with the author, San Francisco, California, 13 May 1987.

Iribarren has operated the Liguria Hotel on Columbus Street for the past eight years. She supervises the leasing of thirty apartments and their upkeep.³⁶ Not far away, Martín Minaberry at the Hotels Trevore and Cable Car and Terese Huasqui at the Castro perform the same services. While these establishments do not resemble the *ostatuak* that are the focus of this work, they suggest that San Francisco Basques were flexible enough to develop new forms of hotelkeeping that differ from the more traditional Basque hotel.

On 15 February 1982, the San Francisco Basque Cultural Center opened and, in some ways, offered another option to the *ostatuak* in North Beach. Built with funds generated by local Basques, the new south San Francisco complex includes a large enclosed handball court with grandstands for spectators, a spacious restaurant with individual seating, a variety of meeting rooms, a dance hall and bar, and a recreation room or day care area for children. The center also has a small library of Basque books and offers classes in Basque dancing, singing, and speaking. Downtown hotelkeepers feel that the center has hurt *ostatua* business, particularly on weekends. One owner asserted that local Basques are obliged to ensure the cultural center's financial viability, since they funded its construction. The reported loss of Saturday and Sunday business among hotelkeepers may also result from choosing a modern hotel over the boardinghouse style. If usage has been reduced primarily to a single weekend visit, then San

³⁶Grace Iribarren, interview with author, San Francisco, California, 14 May 1987.

Francisco's Basques are forced to choose between the cultural center and Broadway hotels. And, as many a hotelkeeper admits, his customers are increasingly non-Basques, which further encourages local Basques to choose the cultural center. Despite the potential for over-simplification, San Francisco's new cultural center can be regarded as an evolutionary form of the city's older *ostatuak*.

While the San Francisco Basque Cultural Center may rival the downtown hotels, it has not supplanted the role of the Broadway district's hotels. For example, Jean DeCroos identified four areas of Basque concentration in the city but noted that only one hosted *ostatuak*.³⁷ That the former owners of the Des Alpes were also the first managers at the cultural center suggests a strong link to Broadway Street hotelkeeping, however.³⁸ Ana and Ganesh Iriartborde and their clients enjoyed a new and spacious environment at the center but never attempted to provide a boardinghouse atmosphere. In a sense, they were clear that they were providing something new, a cousin twice-removed from their Hotel Des Alpes.

Just as Basque centers developed around Los Angeles in southern California, small enclaves of Basques developed in northern California as well. As Arrizabalaga pointed out, the County of Alameda, just south of San Francisco, hosted the third largest California Basque colony in

³⁷Jean Francis DeCroos, *The Long Journey*, 46-47. The three other areas hosting Basque cafes and bars were the Richmond, Sunset, and Marina districts of San Francisco.

³⁸Ana Iriartborde, interview with author, San Francisco, California, 15 May 1987.

1910.³⁹ Basques living there had atypical occupations. By comparison with other counties, Alameda Basques did not primarily raise sheep, cattle, or farm, but, on the other hand, about one out of every three Basques in the county were involved in the laundry industry.⁴⁰ While evidence of Basque hotels and boardinghouses in Alameda is lacking, probably a few existed. Further south, in San Jose, there is record of a Basque hotel in the late nineteenth century. There Madame D. A. Bayle's New Lake House ran an advertisement in California'ko Eskual Herria which claimed that the house was a "*Ostatua Eskualduna*."⁴¹

Far to the north, on the eastern side of the Sierra Nevadas in northeastern California, the small lumbering towns of Susanville and Alturas also developed Basque populations. There Basques predominantly worked in saw mills and on lumbering teams. The Bartolo Goñi family, for example, ran a fourteen-room boardinghouse near the Alturas saw mill, which they called the Pyrenees.⁴² The Pickering Lumber Company in Alturas employed numerous Basques in their mills, hired the Goñis to operate the *ostatua*, and encouraged their Basque employees to live at the Pyrenees.⁴³

³⁹Arrizabalaga, "Statistical Study," 69.

⁴⁰Ibid., 70.

⁴¹California'ko Eskual Herria, 30 December (*Abendoaren*) 1893, 4.

⁴²This is the same Goñi family that moved to Merced a decade later and purchased The Pyrenees Hotel there in 1929.

⁴³Angle Goñi Anaut, interview with author, Merced, California, 30 January 1987.

Directly south, in another lumber town, Susanville, John and Marie Beterbide ran a boardinghouse at the old Lassen Mill, from 1930 to 1942.⁴⁴ Because most of their boarders were mill workers, dinners at Beterbide's were served after the plant's second shift closed down around nine in the evenings. While Marie tended to cooking, cleaning, and raising the children, John Beterbide worked a twelve-hour shift at the mill and then returned home to help with chores at the Pyrenees. Not far away, in downtown Susanville, Jane Goñi purchased the granite, three-story, thirty-six room St. Francis Hotel. Before coming to Susanville in 1947, Jane had managed hotels in Reno and Wellington, Nevada.⁴⁵ While the St Francis was never exclusively Basque and not designed in the *ostatuak* style, the hotel and downstairs restaurant still serves as a gathering place for a few local Basques.

When compared with southern California and the central valley, northern California has fewer Basque colonies that developed viable *ostatuak*. Basque restaurants in Walnut Creek, Dixon, and Maxwell suggest a Basque presence in the foothills east of San Francisco, but no indication of hotels was found. Similarly, valley sheepmen trailed sheep throughout the Monterrey Peninsula but were temporary visitors there.⁴⁶ Most likely area Basques preferred travelling west or east to the already established hotels of San Francisco and Stockton.

⁴⁴William and Albert Beterbide, interview with author, Susanville, California, 22 May 1987.

⁴⁵Jane Goñi, interview with author, Susanville, California, 21 May 1987.

⁴⁶Arthur McEwen. "Basques 'Invade' Fort Ord," Monterrey Peninsula Herald, 8 April 1961, Peninsula Life Section, 1-4.

This discussion of San Francisco's recent hotels concludes the presentation or general outline of California's Basque hotels. That is, each *ostatua* discovered or exhumed has been presented in the last few chapters. But what seems to be more important is that which is yet to be discussed. The critical role of the *ostatuak* within the Basque community, the similarities and distinctions found among them, and their relationship to one another is the subject of chapter eight.

CHAPTER 8

THE *OSTATUA EUSKALDUNA*

To speak of Basque hotels in the present tense is anachronistic. In the past four decades, the *ostatuak* of the American West have evolved into scaled-down versions of their former selves. The few that remain as ethnic boardinghouses no longer function in the full hotel capacities of an earlier era. In addition, when a Basque uses the word "hotel" for one of these boardinghouses, he is applying the term to a complex set of social functions. A Basque's concept of "hotel," therefore, is distinct from the general usage of the term. For this reason, one needs to describe what Basques mean by "hotel."

As suggested earlier, *ostatuak* reached their zenith in influence and breadth in the half century between 1890 and 1940. During these years and since, the hotels have been linked to the expansions and contractions of the sheep industry in the American West. For the single Basque sheepman who came to earn his fortune and then return to the Basque homeland, the hotel became a home away from home. In the absence of a New World family setting, it also became the major social institution of this immigrant group.

As a second home, the hotel was likely to offer a number of conveniences that helped a newcomer cope with the unfamiliar. Many who entered the United States via New York, for example, went directly to Valentín Aguirre's hotel where they encountered other

Basques who could assist them with their travel plans, brief them on the "ways of the New World," and send them on their way properly labelled with nametags, instructive notes written in English for train conductors, and names of contacts at their future destinations.¹

After the traveller arrived at his final train depot, say Boise, Los Angeles, or Los Banos, he was greeted by a local Basque sent to meet him at the station. If not, as may have been the case in Bakersfield and Fresno, he had only to gaze across the street to find the Basque hotel recommended to him. Once inside, he found his language spoken, familiar food and drink, and a hotelkeeper who was likely to make his transition from Old World to New as smooth as possible.

In the hotel the sojourner discovered a number of provided conveniences. In some instances, *hoteleros* arranged employment for herders and then sent for them in the old country. If a Basque did not have a job upon arrival, the hotelkeeper was likely to set about in search of work for him in the community, on a neighboring ranch, or with a sheep outfit in the area. In the meantime, the hotelkeeper might extend liberal credit, room, and board in exchange for the newcomer's future business and eventual repayment.

In addition, Basques travelling from one hotel to another would have noticed that the physical layout of the *ostatua* was fairly consistent. The lodgings were usually two- or three-story buildings

¹Emilia Doyaga, "The History of Eusko-Extea of New York," Proceedings of the First International Basque Conference in North America (Bilbao: Gran Enciclopedia Vasca, 1982), 131-41, and Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, 374.

with the kitchen, bar, dining hall, and card or parlour rooms occupying the first floor. Private quarters for the hotelkeeper and his family were often found on the first story near the kitchen, toward the back of the building. The second and possibly third stories contained dormitory-style rooms for boarders and hotel employees. Bathing facilities were most often found at the front and back of long hallways that halved the upper floors. Breezes, the direction of sunlight, and street and kitchen noises often affected room selection. Long-term boarders usually took the favored rooms, leaving the others to less frequent visitors. Some of the newer hotels had wash basins in individual rooms. Exploration of the lower floor and cellars might also have yielded a storage area for foodstuffs, a wine cellar, a tool shed, and an area where pork sausage and other meats were salted and dried. Attached to one side of the building might have been a handball court and, in earlier days, a stable and livery.

One factor that had a directly effected the *ostatuak* was the seasonal nature of the sheep industry. In the summer, while on the high mountain ranges of the Sierra Nevadas, for example, a herder might individually tend up to one thousand ewes and lambs, but in the fall, lambs were sold, and the remaining ewes were grouped into winter bands. Consequently, about one half of the herders were released until the next lambing season, and many came into town, rented rooms in the Basque hotels, and began looking for additional work. Whether they were on the range or in the hotels, herders used the *ostatuak* as their permanent mailing address and as a storage

facility for their Sunday suit and extra gear. Many a hotel set a room aside for storing bedrolls, suits, camp gear, dated mail, and personal papers. Moreover, if a herder was injured on the job and needed to recuperate, his boss was likely to send him to the nearest Basque hotel for care. And, finally, upon retirement, many elderly herders made the hotels their home.

In addition to being the herder's home away from home, the *ostatuak* served other important functions for Basque-American families. Wives living on remote ranches would come to stay at the hotels during the last stages of their pregnancies and frequently gave birth there. Not uncommonly, outlying Basque ranchers sent their children to the hotels to board during the school year. Moreover, special occasions such as marriages, family celebrations, dances and wakes often took place in the *ostatuak*. For example, one Stockton Basque reported that when members of her family had a birthday, they expected all local Basques to gather at their favorite *ostatua* to help them celebrate.²

Often Sunday was a day to visit the local hotel. Basques from outlying areas packed up their families and, depending upon available transportation, made their way to a favored *ostatua*. There they might share Sunday meal, cheer at a handball match, play a few rounds of *mus*, or attend a dance. For many hotelkeepers, Sunday was both dreaded and anticipated, for it was the most profitable day of the week

²Pagliarulo, "Basques in Stockton," 54.

and yet required the most intense work. As one *hotelera* stated, "Sunday was our toughest day."³

Hotels supported Basque-American families in yet another way. Hotel owners often sent to Europe for Basque serving girls to work in their hotels. So frequently did Basques meet their future wives at the hotels that the hotels have been referred to as "marriage mills."⁴ In fact, many couples mentioned in this work married someone they had met through frequenting Basque hotels.

Most of the functions of the *ostatuak* are remembered fondly by Basque-Americans. When interviewed, Basques are likely to speak of the friendships they formed there. Occasionally, a Basque couple will discuss their lifelong friendship with other newlyweds they met while honeymooning at an *ostatua*. Nevada Basques even developed a special term for the relationship, calling these friends their *urtekoak*, and report celebrating anniversaries and special events together throughout their lifetime.⁵

At times the *ostatuak* gave Basques *urtekoak*, employment, storage space, a convalescent or retirement center, and even been a place to birth their children. There they enjoyed handball, *jai alai*, dancing, and gambling. During Prohibition and earlier, ladies gathered in a separate "women's parlour" where they drank a coffee or chocolate

³Catherine Inda Goyenette, interview with author, San Francisco, California, 13 May 1987.

⁴Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 377.

⁵Gretchen Holbert, interview with author, Gardnerville, Nevada, 20 May 1987.

and exchanged news. If they preferred wine or alcohol, it was available for them in the kitchen.⁶

Although most Basques reacted positively to the *ostatuak*, a few have had negative reactions. In one discussion, an interviewee suggested that the hotels could also be a "prison" that limited job possibilities and delayed mastery of English. For example, he remembered a few elderly Basques who had come to America seeking their fortunes and had herded most of their lives but for some reason had been unable to amass a savings. Upon retirement, these herders had neither the finances nor the will to return to the Basque country as planned. Because they had depended upon the hotels for their social and employment contacts for years and spoke only Basque, their choice of residence upon retirement or unemployment was limited to the most familiar hotel. There they might live out their days in relative solitude. In so many words, the hotel had made the transition to the New World easier while at the same time limiting the herders' ability to become part of it.⁷

Hotelkeeping could also be difficult for the families running the hotels. In one interview, a *hotelera* stated that in the hotels "there was no room for weakness" and the daily demands of cleaning, cooking, and serving interfered with the family's desire to be together. Another interviewee stated that during the years she and her husband

⁶Noriega's Hotel in Bakersfield had such a "parlour room" through the 1920s, which boarders currently use as a television room.

⁷Anonymous. Interview with author.

owned a hotel, they could "never get away together." In addition, a child of a hotelkeeper reported that, "we kids never wanted to run a hotel . . . your front room was always a bar."⁸

Herders and *hoteleros*' families encountered the less attractive aspects of living in Basque hotels as well as the pleasant. On some occasions and in some locations, hotelkeeping was not highly regarded among Basque-Americans. From around 1890 to 1920 in Stockton, for example, such a period occurred when hotelkeepers were thought to have less status than local ranchers and stockmen.⁹ The marked preference for making one's living directly from the land among recently arrived Basques probably related to the Old World distinction between *baserritarak* and *kaleterrak*. There, as in parts of the American West, it was far better to have an "honest" job working the soil or raising livestock on one's *baserria* than to depend directly upon another for one's livelihood, as was often the case among village dwellers or *kaleterrak*.

Another Old World cultural experience that played a part in the development of Basque hotels in the West is that of first neighbor or *lenbizikoatia*. While the practice of aiding one's nearest neighbor evolved in the Old World *baserria* setting, manifestations of *lenbizikoatia* among Basques in the New World are also apparent. One notable example occurred in Bakersfield on 6 November 1979, when

⁸Anonymous. Interview with author.

⁹Elena Celayeta Talbott, interview with author, Los Banos, California, 8 May 1987.

the staff at Noriega's awaited the large funeral party that had been attending the services for Dr. Clerou, a French-American physician who had cared for many Bakersfield Basques. Just before the one hundred and fifty guests arrived, Louie Elizalde of Noriega's had a fatal heart attack. Word of Louie's death flew through the neighborhood, and when the news reached Mayie Maitia at the Woolgrower's Restaurant, she left her restaurant and went to Noriega's to manage the large dinner party on behalf of the Elizalde family. When everyone had been served, Mayie slipped unnoticed back to her own restaurant. In a more practical instance of American first neighbor behavior, Amelie Sorhondo welcomed Catherine Goyenetché into San Francisco's "Basque town" with everyday advice for exterminating troublesome roaches. Hotelkeepers transferred the spirit of *lenbizikoatia* to the New World, whether pragmatic or selfless in nature, and readily helped one another through difficult times.

Clearly, the hotelkeeping couple were crucial to the success of the each *ostatua*. For example, the hotelkeeper was oftentimes called upon to represent both New and Old Worlds. For the newly arrived Basque, he served as interpreter of American culture. For the New World Basque and his children, he provided a sense of Old World heritage. In essence, the hotelkeeper had to win the trust of the Old World Basques while accommodating the demands of the younger generations as well.

Very rarely was a hotelkeeper alone able to manage a *ostatua*. More often, a husband and wife team operated the hotels with the occasional

assistance of other family members. Traditionally, he ran the bar from morning until closing while she supervised the preparation of noon and evening meals, the serving girls who waited tables, and the *camerera* (cleaning girls) who maintained the rooms. If business was good and there was ample demand, hotelkeepers were able to hire additional bartenders, serving girls, *camereras*, and cooks. If the couple could not afford to hire additional help, the two did the work themselves. Also, hotelkeepers rarely advertised to fill job openings since they preferred verbal recommendations.

Generally speaking, an Old World-born Basque male and an American-born Basque female have produced the "perfect" hotelkeeping couple.¹⁰ With this combination, the first generation client could share common Old World concerns with the hotelkeeper in their native *Euskera* but turn to the *hotelera* when he needed assistance with New World dilemmas. She was generally more familiar with "American ways" and could serve as translator, escort, and adviser. Among the eleven San Francisco hotelkeepers interviewed by Jean Decroos, for example, nine were Old World Basques and a majority had married New World Basques.¹¹

¹⁰The "perfect couple" concept is presented in DeCroos, Long Journey, 44-47; William A. Douglass, "Home is A Hotel," American West 17 (July/August 1980), 31; and Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, 379.

¹¹DeCroos, Long Journey, 45.

Two studies are currently investigating the role of the *hoteleras* and their workloads.¹² Preliminary reports suggest that, when compared with the male Old World Basque *hotelero*, the *hoteleras* had more demanding schedules than the men and did more than their share of the work. While a number of informants are female and potentially biased, there is reason for investigating the claim. Moreover, one male resident in "Basque town" Los Angeles stated that women who worked in the hotels were virtually slaves, performing the variety of tasks needed to keep the enterprise going. Daily work hours began around six in the mornings and lasted until the last customers were served, with breaks and or free afternoons granted during lulls in the hotel's busy routine.

Undoubtedly, women's work at the hotels was challenging. A number of variables, such as the hotel's popularity, the relationship between the hotelkeeping couple, the hotel's location and competition, and the year, affected how challenging her work was. At this point, however, one would be hard pressed to claim all women's work in the hotels was more difficult than men's. John Beterbide in Alturas, for example, worked a daily twelve-hour shift in the 1930s before returning to his family's boardinghouse, eating dinner, and tending bar until closing time.¹³ Also, it should be noted that in some

¹²In Nevada, Gretchen Holbert and Mateo Osa have interviewed approximately fifty *hoteleras* and, in eastern Oregon, Poquita Garatea is conducting interviews of women who worked the hotels there. Completion of the Nevada research and a Master's thesis from the University of Oregon is scheduled for the summer of 1988.

¹³William and Albert Beterbide, interview with author, Alturas, California, 22 May 1987.

tending bar until closing time.¹³ Also, it should be noted that in some cases, such as Stockton, *hoteleras* found it particularly difficult to manage the boardinghouses alone. Whether enough information regarding the work distribution between hotelkeeper couples was unbalanced remains to be seen, however.

Such rigorous daily schedules undoubtedly contributed to hotel operators' relatively brief tenure in business. In fact, *hoteleros* rarely remained in operation beyond fifteen or twenty years, if that long.¹⁴ The strain of the daily morning-to-night work hours in part explains the short term of hotel ownership. In addition, *ostatuak* rarely passed successfully to second-generation family members. One exception, however, was Alustiza's California Hotel in Stockton, California. In that case, father and son together operated the business until Fermín retired, and Alfonso stepped in as sole proprietor. In other examples, however, second-generation hotelkeepers were too far removed from the Old World village, the sheep camp, and the language to earn the herder's trust.

In addition to the challenges of their daily schedules, hotelkeepers had to be sensitive to the needs of their clients and changing customer demands. A number of potential client groups existed; among them were single Basque residents, Basques who lived in the

¹³William and Albert Beterbide, interview with author, Alturas, California, 22 May 1987.

¹⁴Table 12 in Chapter 6, for example, demonstrates that only three Stockton hotels lasted for over fifteen years. Of those three, only the Alustizas at the California Hotel and the Artozquis at the Hotel Central exceeded twenty years of ownership.

local non-Basque residents.¹⁵ Pleasing as many as possible of these client groups has been one of the major challenges hotelkeepers have faced. During peak periods of Basque immigration, from 1890 through 1920, for example, the hotelkeeper could cater to the first three client groups. Since the 1940s, when the decline in numbers of Basque immigrants became evident, hotelkeepers have gradually and increasingly solicited non-Basque clientele and second and third generation Basques.

For the unsuspecting non-Basque, a visit to a Basque hotel might have completed a search for good food, conviviality, and ethnicity. To the Basque who made the hotel his home, however, the visitor might have been a target for speculation and discussion. Indeed, as one analyst has suggested, *ostatuak* Basques displayed "front" and "back" behavior.¹⁶ For example, when the visitor arrived a few minutes before noon to eat lunch at the hotel, he waited in the barroom until lunchtime seating was announced. When he entered, Basques at the bar stopped speaking and turned to see who had just arrived. After a moment, they returned to their conversation in Basque, Spanish, French, or English and asked, "Who is that?" or jokingly, "What is that?"

¹⁵Douglas G. Hale, "Quasi-Groups and Boundary Maintenance in a Basque Hotel," Student Paper, University of Montana, undated. Basque Studies Collection, University of Nevada Reno.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 5.

If an American were able to engage a Basque in conversation at the bar or lunch, the Basque might have told him stories of the Old Country, herding, or the "mysterious" Basque character. Such an exchange would have been an example of "front" behavior, where an "outsider" was allowed to penetrate an exterior facade of *Amerikanuak* culture as encountered in the hotels. If, on the other extreme, a newcomer had just arrived from Guernica in pursuit of promised employment on a local ranch and could speak Basque fluently, he would be welcomed into what has been called "back" or "insider's" behavior.

For the few non-Basque hotelkeepers interviewed in this study, evidence of "front" and "back" behavior among Basques and other *hoteleros* has been painfully evident. In two instances, the lack of full acceptance has been uncomfortable and has threatened business. In one case, the embittered hotelkeeper felt forced to pursue non-Basque business and has done so fairly successfully.

In addition to supervising and orchestrating the complex functions that took place within the *ostatuak*, hotelkeepers also had to be aware of the hotel network or system that developed throughout the United States and especially in the western states. A Bakersfield Basque vacationing in a San Francisco hotel, for example, would return home with assessments of the hotel, the service, and the hotelkeeper. Because his business was dependent upon referrals to and from other hotels, the hotelkeeper had to be well informed regarding services available elsewhere and sensitive to the greater network of hotels.

Complex familial affiliations throughout the hotel network also substantiated the referral system among *ostatuak*. For example, *hotelera* Anselma Ballaz Amestoy of Bakersfield and *hotelero* Tomás Ballaz of Fresno were sister and brother; Jean Elizalde of Bakersfield and Jean Burubeltz of Bakersfield and Los Angeles were nephew and uncle; and Jean Pierre Martinto of Tehachapi was uncle to Lyda Esain of Fresno. Family ties also existed in Los Angeles' "Basque town," where the Errecas, Ballades, and Burubeltzes were all related by marriage. In Bakersfield, ownership of the Basque Cafe, the Amestoy Hotel and the Woolgrowers Restaurant was temporarily complicated by marriages between Frank Maitia and Louise Amestoy and "J.B." and Mayie Maitia. As mentioned earlier, Basque-Americans rarely succeeded in their parents' hotel businesses, but that did not exclude Basque families from hotelkeeping as a profession. In addition, when *hoteleros* had cousins, uncles, and siblings who were also *hoteleros*, it is likely that they referred customers to one another.

The second major means for *hoteleros* to gain business, in addition to word of mouth, was advertising. Business card-size advertisements frequently appeared in the issues of California'ko Eskual Herria and Esculdun Gazeta in the 1880s and 1890s. In addition, East Bakersfield directories dated from 1899 through 1915 indicate that all local hotelkeepers competed for business with advertising. The general rule has been, however, that *hoteleros* have limited "outside" advertising in general publications and purchased advertisement space

in specialized newspapers, such as Voice of the Basques in the 1970s, and specific annual picnic bulletins.

By the early twentieth century, three areas seemed to be the most likely areas for American Basques to vacation or honeymoon. Those from the eastern seaboard regions tended to stay at Valentin Aguirre's in New York City. Basques from the Great Basin states usually visited hotels in Ogden, Utah, and, during the winter months, semi-retired or elder Basque sheepmen from the Great Basin would congregate in southern California *ostatuak* to enjoy the comparatively warm weather. California Basques, on the other hand, most often chose San Francisco's hotels as a vacation spot. In a sense, then, New York, San Francisco, and Ogden became large regional hubs for the entire hotel network.¹⁷ On a smaller scale, the hotels of Boise, Idaho, and Los Angeles, California, likewise served eastern Oregonians and Basques of the southwest. Basques congregating at these large and medium size regional centers tended to support the longevity and vitality of the entire Basque hotel network in the United States.

While Basque couples and families came to regional centers to honeymoon and vacation, the bachelor herder might visit a local and regional *ostatuak* with a slightly different intention. For some, a vacation in town without a visit with "the ladies of the night" would have been an incomplete trip. Without exception, *hoteleros* interviewed for this project insisted that such a transaction had to be

¹⁷Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, 371-84.

negotiated and completed outside hotel premises. In the two examples where herders attempted to bend house rules, other boarders reported to the hotelkeeper that "old Dave in room twelve" had just taken a lady upstairs. In both reported instances, the *hotelera* on duty stormed the door, key in hand, and insisted that the visitor leave, threatening that she would enter immediately and escort the visitor to the door. As can be imagined, this direct approach toward confronting prostitution embarrassed a few customers, but curtailed a potentially troublesome situation for *hoteleros*. In addition, such a scene had only to occur once to reinforce house rules.

While in-house prostitution was strongly discouraged among hotelkeepers, many forms of gambling seemed to have been considered part of a visit to the hotels. Frequently, card players gambled for rounds of drinks, handball players competed for a percentage of the afternoon's wagers, and others placed bets on anything from the outcome of a televised sporting event to which sheep dog could corral six sheep fastest. Instances of enormous wagers, say of over one hundred dollars, were comparatively rare, but the frequency of smaller bets was striking.

Hotels have provided a physical meeting place where Basques from Old and New Worlds could mix, where Basques from one of the seven European provinces could meet those from another, and where Basques from one state could visit with those from another. In fact, providing a physical environment where such mixing could occur has been a crucial function of the *ostatuak* in the United States. For

example, Old World Basques who had trouble understanding unfamiliar Basque dialects assert they learned to speak with one another in the hotels and sheep camps of the West. Some even claim that they learned English at the hotels because of gradual exposure to the language via non-Basque visitors and from barroom television sets in recent years.

The decline of the *ostatuak* in the last two or three decades has been accompanied by the emergence of the "tourist hotel." As opposed to the traditional *ostatuak*, these hotels offer room and board to Basques and non-Basques, or rent rooms and do without board. They tend to employ non-Basques who dress in Basque costume, decorate their interiors more than traditional hotels, offer a menu including non-Basque dishes, accept all major credit cards, and advertise in the local media. Such establishments are a step or two removed from the traditional *ostatuak* and, in many cases, represent a gradual evolution from a Basque hotel to a restaurant with a Basque theme.

In California, this devolution from hotel to restaurant over recent decades has been apparent. Basque hotels in Los Angeles, Stockton, Merced, Tehachapi, McKittrick, Alturas, Puente and Santa Barbara have disappeared; and in Los Banos, Chino, Susanville, parts of San Francisco, Bakersfield, and Fresno, hotels have either closed their doors to boarders or severely limited the number of new residents. Instead, they encourage their restaurant businesses, catering to both Basques and non-Basques. In San Francisco and Bakersfield, the

construction of a club house or cultural center has, in some ways, replaced the old downtown *ostatuak*.

As the central and crucial gathering place for groups of American and European Basques in the United States over the past century, the *ostatua* has clearly served as an important social institution. In the first decades of Basque migration to the United States, when young herders arrived unmarried to seek their fortunes and return to *Euskal herria*, the hotels served as the immigrants' job agency, extended family, and assistance league. Without question, the *ostatua* was the group's major social institution in those early years. As more and more Basques arrived and began raising their own families, however, the central role of the hotel shifted somewhat. Nonetheless, in any consideration of Basque-American society, the hotels and *hoteleros* are critical.

CHAPTER 9

OBSERVATIONS, COMPARISONS, AND DISCUSSION

Although California's Basque hotels preceded others in the United States, they were not the first in the western hemisphere. In the first half of the nineteenth century, as Basques migrated to Buenos Aires and Montevideo, *ostatuak* were opened to serve the needs of the migrants from *Euskal herria*. Two authorities, for example, referred to the "Basque *barrio*" in the Río de la Plata region crowded with Basque-owned bars, hotels, and boardinghouses by 1842.¹ Like those found in California and in the American West, they were established as way stations, employment agencies, and recreational centers.

Those "Argentine Basques" who transplanted large-scale transhumant sheep raising to California's central valleys also carried with them a vital social institution that had served them well in South America. In fact, wherever the migratory Basque has travelled, *ostatuak* have been established. For example, in the five years preceding the outbreak of World War I in Europe, Viscayans rested at a Basque hotel in Liverpool, England, before boarding the ships that carried them across the Atlantic.²

Initially, the Basque hotel emerged as a response to the needs of the migratory single Basque male. Whether he was a Montevideo

¹Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 151, 160.

²*Ibid.*, 129.

dairyman, a Australian sugar cane cutter, or a California herder, he had common needs that exceeded room and board. As we have seen, the single Basque male was more than a guest at the *ostatuak*, since he often became part of the hotelkeeper's extended family. Eventually, Basque hotels expanded to become more than a Basque bachelor's home away from home. By the twentieth century, with the increasing numbers of Basque women migrating to the United States, working in the hotels, and marrying herders who had preceded them, the *ostatuak* developed a full complement of services.

In *Euskal herria*, however, there is nor was any establishment exactly like the *ostatuak* of the American West. The Old World custom of frequenting the local tavern in the town's plaza before lunch is similar to the pre-lunchtime gatherings at the American *ostatuak*. In Europe, like in America, locals have congregated to exchange the most recent news, gossip, or discuss a wide variety of topics. Obviously, this pre-luncheon ritual is not exclusive to Basques but it does suggest a parallel between Old World gatherings and those that occur in the *ostatuak*.

In the Old World village, the local tavern was the gathering place for Basques to collect and, in the New World, the *ostatua* was the corresponding setting. In the latter case, the Basque-American encountered a larger facility in which he could reside, eat, play handball, dance, or play cards. In this way, hotels became an American extension of the *taberna* found in the Basque region.

Scholarly literature dealing with Basque *ostatuak* is rare. When hotels are mentioned, they are often referred to generally. For example, one analysis of the Stockton Basque colony written in the 1940s discussed the importance of the hotels within the community without citing an example.³ Similarly, a thesis on the history and development of handball playing among Basques failed to name specific hotels although underscoring the close relationship between hotels and handball.⁴

The tendency to lump together hotels may be more reflective of Basque culture than an oversight of scholars, however. In interviews conducted for this project, Basques also talked generally rather than specifically about the hotels.⁵ Rarely mentioned were names of the hotels. For example, one Basque who moved to southern California from Boise in 1922 stated that he went to a hotel upon his arrival in Los Angeles. Interestingly, he included the name of the hotelkeeper and the hotel's location in his description of the trip but had to be asked for the hotel name before recalling it.⁶ It is possible that the generalized discussion of *ostatuak* in scholarly literature reflects the

³Carol Pagliarulo, "Basques in Stockton: A Study of Assimilation" (Master's thesis, College of Pacific, Stockton, 1948).

⁴Teresa Urquidí Baksh, "Jai Alai of the Basques" (Master's thesis, San Diego State University, 1979).

⁵For example, of the twelve Orange County Basques interviewed for the California State Fullerton Oral History Collection a majority of interviewees mention staying at Basque hotels upon arrival, but not one directly named the hotel.

⁶Lorenzo Echanis, interview with author, Brea, California, 20 October 1987.

manner in which Basques themselves have spoken of their hotels, supporting the idea of *ostatuak* as "invisible institutions."

William Douglass and Jon Bilbao made the major contribution to our knowledge of Basque hotels in Amerikanuak: A History of Basques in the New World. Published in 1975, this monograph is the definitive work on Basque-Americans to date. A small but useful portion of Amerikanuak introduced and underscored the importance of the *ostatuak* in Basque communities throughout the western hemisphere, as well as delineating some of the major Basque communities where they have existed.⁷

Scattered from Montana south to Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico, and then west through Idaho, Utah, Arizona, Washington, Oregon, Nevada, and California, Basque *ostatuak* dotted the western American landscape. The towns of Yakima, Washington, Miles City, Montana, Flagstaff, Arizona, and Grants, New Mexico, at one time boasted Basque hotels. Wyoming and Colorado each had two towns with sufficiently large Basque populations to host *ostatuak*; they were Buffalo and Rock Springs, Wyoming, and Grand Junction and Montrose, Colorado. In addition, hotels in Jordan Valley, Ontario, Vale, and Burns, were located in eastern Oregon and in close proximity to Idaho and Oregon Basques. In Utah, three towns had Basque hotels: Ogden, Salt Lake City, and Price, while in California,

⁷Douglass and Bilbao, Amerikanuak, 430-33. Appendix E contains a summary of hotel locations listed in Amerikanuak. As in the case of California, however, the list is not exhaustive and others may have existed. Note, for example, that appendices C and D include additional California *ostatuak* uncovered in this project.

Nevada, and Idaho, communities with Basque hotels far exceeded those in other states.

Despite the number of *ostatuak* that dotted the American West, few have been discussed. An exception was the closing of the Hogar Hotel in Salt Lake City, Utah. The Hogar's owners, John and Claudia Landa, greeted Basques from the Intermountain area for more than fifty years.⁸ Similar to other *ostatuak*, the Hogar's 2nd Street location was near a major rail line that transported Basques to and from Los Angeles and Boise.

The Basque hotels of Nevada have enjoyed even more newspaper and magazine exposure than those in neighboring states. Such is the case within a lengthy newspaper article on the history of the Martin and Winnemucca Hotels in Winnemucca, Nevada.⁹ In addition, magazines focusing upon Nevada's history occasionally include articles on local *ostatuak*. One recent example includes a listing of Basque hotels and restaurants located in Ely, Elko, Winnemucca, Gardnerville, Carson City, and Reno.¹⁰

An article describing the Sabalas' Overland Hotel in Elko, Nevada, appeared in the Winter of 1975.¹¹ Building the Overland in 1908,

⁸Bob Ithurralde, "Agur Hogar Agur," Voice of the Basques, April 1977, 6.

⁹Doug McMillan, "Living History: Winnemucca's Basque Hotels," Reno Gazette, 5 March 1978, 3A.

¹⁰William A. Douglass, "The Hotels," Nevada Magazine 39 (Spring 1979): 22-23. The story of Louis' Basque Corner in Reno is found in Monty Norris, "Chef's Special," Friends Magazine 36 (October 1979): 26-28.

¹¹Gretchen Holbert, "Elko's Overland Hotel," Northeastern Nevada Historical Quarterly 5 (Winter 1975): 13-20.

Domingo and Gregoria Sabala operated it until the 1930s when economic hardships and the Depression forced them out of business. While in operation, however, the Sabalas offered hospitality typical of California's *ostatuak*. One atypical dilemma encountered by Elko Basques in the 1920s, however, was the absence of a local Catholic church. In Elko, hotelkeepers offered their hotel lobbies or halls for wedding ceremonies, confirmations, baptisms and wakes.¹² That such services were performed in *ostatuak* throughout the West whenever a local church was missing is probable.

The most frequently mentioned Basque hotel is that of Valentín Aguirre's Eusko-Extea in New York City. As Douglass and Bilbao have noted, Aguirre's "hotel and travel agency are today legendary among Basques of the American West."¹³ Oftentimes, a Basque sojourner left the Old Country clutching the address of his ultimate destination on a slip of paper. After debarking in New York City and passing through Ellis Island, Thomas, John, or Peter Aguirre greeted the newcomer dockside, shouting "*Euskaldunak emen badira?*" (Are there any Basques here?)¹⁴ One of Valentín's three sons greeted every vessel arriving from Europe. After an evening or two at Aguirre's, the newcomer was sent along his way, often with travel instructions affixed to his beret or lapel. Aguirre's Eusko-Extea softened many a

¹²Ibid., 15-16.

¹³Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 374.

¹⁴Ibid. and Emilia Doyaga, "Euzko-Extea," *Basque Conference*, 135.

Basque's initial contact with the New World and, in written and verbal accounts, is fondly and frequently remembered by *Americanuak*.¹⁵

Generally, then, scholarly literature on Basque hotels is rare and often disappointing. In fact, research on ethnic boardinghouses is scanty. While the Italians, French, Chinese, and Portuguese established boardinghouses throughout California's San Joaquin Valley, very few studies report their histories.¹⁶ Verbal descriptions indicate that non-Basque ethnic groups also divided their loyalties between hotels when more than one existed in a town. For example, the Italian-Americans in Stockton might have chosen between Sicilian and Genovese houses, and the French in Bakersfield might have preferred a Dauphinois house over a Bearnais or Alpine French-run hotel, just as the French and Spanish Basques did in "Basque towns."¹⁷

In a recent study of Italian immigration in Toronto, Canada, the author focuses upon the emergence of the Italian neighborhood and the development of Italian elite by 1915.¹⁸ In Toronto, Italian middlemen generated services similar to those found in the *ostatuak* by providing work, banking services, steamship tickets, Italian

¹⁵For example, interviews with Frank Arnestoy, Lorenzo Echanis, and Mayie Maitia included descriptions and discussions of Aguirre's hotel.

¹⁶Census records of many San Joaquin Valley towns suggest that single males of various ethnic groups tended to congregate and share residences throughout the valley.

¹⁷Mary Grace Paquette, Lest We Forget: The History of French in Kern County (Bakersfield: Kern County Historical Society, 1978), 99-101.

¹⁸John E. Zucci, "Italians in Toronto: Development of a National Identity, 1875-1935" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1984).

foodstuffs, and newspapers in Italian. There, "ethnic services" were provided by other Italians living in the neighborhood and, while the Italian boardinghouse was one aspect of the newly arrived Italian's experience, it did not prove as critical to his livelihood as the Basque hotel was to an *Euskalduna*.

Another study of ethnic boardinghouses among Yugoslavian miners concluded that very few Old World formal and informal institutions were transported to Nevada.¹⁹ Similar to the earliest Basque settlements, the first Yugoslav communities in Tonopah and White Pine counties were comprised mostly of young single males. The three critical social institutions for these young miners were the ethnic boardinghouse, saloon, and lodge. The boardinghouse was one of three equally important social institutions developed by Yugoslavs whereas, among Basques, the saloon, lodge, and boardinghouse were all located in the *ostatuak*.

Also of note is a study of mining town boardinghouses in western Pennsylvania.²⁰ In the case of Vintondale, a majority of the immigrant population came from Germany, Scotland, England, Hungary, and Serbo-Croatia. Members of different ethnic groups tended to live near one another on a particular street or streets, so that Main Street, for example, may have been primarily Hungarian. Most of the houses in

¹⁹Thomas A. Michalski, "A Social History of Yugoslav Immigrants in Tonopah and White Pine County, Nevada, 1860-1920" (Ph.D. diss., New York State University at Buffalo, 1983).

²⁰Heidi Weber, "The Mining Town Boarding House: A Surrogate Family for The Immigrant," Pennsylvania Ethnic Studies Newsletter (Winter 1985).

Vintondale, including boardinghouses, were company-owned and many immigrant families took in two or three boarders to make ends meet, but those of different backgrounds were generally accepted. As opposed to the Basque *ostatuak*, Vintondale's boardinghouses stressed economic expediency over ethnic identification.

Even this small number of articles on ethnic boardinghouses reveals that they developed diverse styles for a variety of reasons. For one thing, ethnic diversity contributed to their differences and challenged their similarities. For example, the Toronto Italians had in common with Basques the need to congregate, share a common language and culture but were less dependent upon their boardinghouses for work, travel assistance, and advice than the Basques. Were there more written on the ethnic boardinghouse, more detailed comparisons could be drawn.

Other observations should be made regarding the relationship between Basques living in and operating the *ostatuak* and neighboring ethnic groups who visited them occasionally. In Tehachapi, for example, the positive and close relationship between the local Bearnais French and Basques has been documented.²¹ For instance, early hotel operator Jean Martinto organized handball competitions between the two groups at his Basses-Pyrenees Hotel and followed with large picnics for all attendants.²² Three decades later, in nearby

²¹Paquette, *Lest We Forget*, 135-42.

²²*California'ko Eskual Herria*, 15 July (*Uztailaren*) 1893, 2.

Bakersfield, French, Italians, and Basques regularly attended Saturday night dances at the Basque Cafe and Amestoy Hotel.²³ Numerous marriages within the Basque and Italian communities of Bakersfield and San Francisco also testify to the close relationship between the two groups.²⁴ Fresno's *hoteleros* likewise reported a good relationship with the Mexican-American farm laborers who frequented their bars and restaurants, and many Basque herders learned Spanish listening to Mexican radio broadcasts on their transistor radios while watching their flocks.

While interviewees rarely complained about relations with other ethnic groups, *hoteleros* generally took measures to avoid problems before they might occur. As a result, renting rooms exclusively to Basques served to diminish potential problems in dealing with "outsiders." If a non-Basque asked to rent a room, the standard answer was a politely stated, "I'm sorry, there are no rooms." Every hotelkeeper interviewed in this study used this response to weed out non-Basques. In order to decipher the "bad ones," the *hotelero* based his decision upon the language they spoke, their birthplace, looks, and cleanliness.

Hotelkeepers and boarders generally policed their hotels themselves. As in the earlier example of a boarder who brought in a

²³Frank Maitia, Sr., interview with author, Bakersfield, California, 1 April 1987.

²⁴Two sources, one an oral history of Joe Mosconi and the other a paper written by Debi Del Papa, are available on the relationship between Basques and Italians in Reno and Bakersfield. Basque Studies Collection, University of Nevada Library, Reno.

prostitute, hotel residents were quite aware of whether others were violating house rules, although challenges to those dictates were likely to create a confrontation among group members. At some point, for example, a loud or obnoxious drunk was likely to have been physically ejected from the bar by the hotel residents. And "outsiders" were usually served a drink or a meal, even if other customers were less likely to initiate a conversation with them.

One area where internal policing was less effective was in the matter of payment. *Hoteleros* reported that collecting money from an itinerant herder was occasionally a problem. When a Basque herder requested room and board, he was assigned a room number and asked how long he intended to stay. During "signing in," the exchange of money was rare, as was an official record of the visit. The understanding was that the customer would pay upon departure, or if his stay was to exceed seven days, he would either pay at the end of the week or at an arranged time.

Hotelkeepers knew, however, that during "hard times" they might absorb the loss until a herder or sheepman could earn enough to repay his debt. According to *hoteleros*, collection on back payment was probable if the customer was from the area, but itinerant herders, however, were more likely to enjoy hotel facilities and leave town before paying. One recourse for the hotelkeeper was to embarrass the customer by letting others know that "this one did not pay his bills." But, if it were truly a hardship case, the *hoteleros* might absorb the

loss quietly in hopes of future payment, or they might give the boarder work around the hotel to earn his keep.

If a herder who stayed at the hotel left without paying, apologizing, or making some arrangement to pay in the future, he was likely to face in the future the threat of ostracism from the community. Certainly, he would not be welcomed back to the same hotel, and if the Basque community was small enough, others would know him as unreliable or dishonest. Being "known" in such a fashion would damage the likelihood of securing work in the area.

All interviewed *hoteleros* reported a few "bad deals" and failures to collect. Generally speaking, this problem was viewed as a part of the business. Notably, while retired hotelkeepers remembered who had failed to pay their bills, they were hesitant to reveal those names. Given that Basques pride themselves as a honest, straightforward people, it has been difficult even for *hoteleros* to admit that this generalization has a few exceptions.

Throughout their history, Basque hotels in California have been a part of a larger network of hotels. Within California and throughout the West, hotelkeepers came to know of other *hoteleros* from customers and through a referral system. But this was a gradual process. For example, in the 1890s Basques in southern California knew very little of their cousins in the Pacific Northwest. Editions of the Los Angeles-based newspapers California'ko Eskual Herria and Esculdun Gazeta include scant mention of Idaho or even northern Nevada Basques. A major factor causing such alienation among Basques

in the West was that they primarily joined others in the New World from their home villages or families. Thus, Idaho became a Viscayan colony, and California a mixture of French Basque and Navarrese.

Despite these obstacles, a referral system and network gradually emerged. As Basques became affiliated with the sheep industry in the American West, sheepmen needing of herders began inquiring at local hotels. As Basques travelled from one area to another, they invariably stayed in *ostatuak*. One customer told another of the fine people at that "Viscayan hotel in Ogden," and, eventually, a network was constructed.

In recent years, the spring circuit of festivals and Basque picnics throughout Basque-American communities has supported the hotel referral system. Many California Basques, for example, travel to picnic locations in Chino, San Francisco, Los Banos, Reno, Fresno, Boise, and Bakersfield each spring and early summer. In addition, the growth of the North American Basque Organization and its annual meetings give *Amerikanuak* the opportunity to meet, learn about Basque restaurants, clubs, and hotels in other parts of the nation.

While individual *ostatua* in the network of Basque hotels were strikingly similar, distinctions among them can be made. A combination of factors, including size, location, the *hoteleros'* birthplace, and years of operation, have contributed to making *ostatuak* slightly distinct from one another. Using location and function, one can distinguish basic types of hotels. For example, Valentín Aguirre's Eusko-Etxea in New York City was a transit hotel;

whose primary function was to house sojourners for brief periods, accommodate their intended travel plans, and send them on their way. In a less sophisticated and on a smaller scale than Valentín Aguirre's, the early "Basque town" hotels of San Francisco and Los Angeles served a similar transit function. Because the transit hotels, by definition, moved people in and out of their doors rapidly, they may have contributed to the development of new hotels in surrounding areas. For example, hotels generated as offshoots from Los Angeles' "Basque town," such as Chino, Bakersfield, and Puente, could be called spin-off hotels since they were created in this fashion.

Another type would be the regional Basque hotel. As mentioned earlier, San Francisco hotels served as vacation spots and honeymoon centers for many California and Nevada Basques. In addition, hotels in Ogden, Utah, emerged as key to the movement of Basques through the Intermountain region. Many incoming Viscayans changed railways there on their way to southern Idaho, and later, Montana and Wyoming. Basques travelled through Ogden to reach southern California. Similar to San Francisco, Ogden became a regional focal point for Basque sheepmen in the Great Basin area. Hotels that had a less potent drawing power but still attracted Basques from neighboring counties might be distinguished as the semi-regional hotels, such as those in Reno, Boise, or Stockton.

In addition to the transit, spin-off, and regional hotels, a fourth type might be called the local hotel. Serving the needs of local herders and their families, these hotels were small-scale local centers

found at the county or town level. Puente, Merced, Los Banos, and Alturas have had local hotels, and in Chino, Fresno, and Bakersfield, local hotels currently conduct business. An irony of the local hotel's existence is that, while its survival has been dependent upon those in rural agricultural occupations, it has been most successfully located in urban centers. The small town or rural *ostatuak* of Firebaugh, Mendota, or McKittrick, for example, disappeared decades ago.

In some localities, larger Basque populations have supported a number of hotels within one neighborhood district. Such clusters of hotels have been referred to as "Basque towns" and have been established in a number of California cities, such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Stockton, Fresno, and Bakersfield. A characteristic unique to "Basque town" hotels is that, in these settings, the *ostatuak* tended to take on the Old World Basque identity of its hotelkeepers. In the 1920s, for example, Stockton's "Basque town" had three French and two Spanish Basque hotelkeepers with their customers divided accordingly.

Where "Basque towns" existed, one might encounter a distinction between Basque boardinghouses and Basque hotels. While the terms are still used interchangeably, "Basque towns" occasionally have had a few boardinghouses completely closed to "outsiders." If a Basque ever discusses the difference between boardinghouses and hotels, the major criteria for the distinction seems to be based upon who is served there. The only remaining example of such a boardinghouse is Sorhondo's in San Francisco, which is off-limits to non-Basques.

Clearly these *ostatuak* often fall into some overlapping categories. For example, the Ogden hotels were a regional center for the Great Basin Basques, yet they were also transit hotels. Likewise, both regional and local hotels might be found in a "Basque town." While categorizations for types of Basque *ostatuak* are useful, they should not be regarded as rigid depictions. The final type of Basque hotel would be the one which developed most recently. Described earlier, the tourist hotel spans the distance between the remaining *ostatuak* and the non-Basque public. The name is derived from the fact that the tourist hotels have to attract non-Basque clientele in order to survive.

In addition to distinguishing types of hotels, a few developmental aspects of the hotels should be considered. Some observers have suggested that five years after the appearance of the first Basque in a critical sheep raising town an *ostatua* was likely to open and that, within a decade, the vicinity might host two or more.²⁵ Where the rapid growth of the sheep industry accompanied that "first Basque," this assertion seems realistic. In towns that were stop-offs for rail travellers, where the hotel was usually within sight of the station, the five-year theory also seems accurate. Finally, in high traffic or transition areas, such as Ogden, New York City, or San Francisco, hotels would also have developed rapidly after the arrival of the first Basques.

²⁵Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 375.

One example that tentatively supports the "five-year theory" is the Plaza Hotel in San Juan Bautista. According to the censustaker, ten people with Basque surnames were living in and around the town of San Juan Bautista in 1850.²⁶ Four years later, Angelo and Maria Zanetta re-opened the Plaza Hotel and began entertaining local ranchers and travellers. Among them were Basque ranchers and stockmen from the Mendota and Los Banos areas. While the Plaza was a forerunner to later *ostatuak*, its opening date followed closely after the initial Basque presence in San Juan Bautista, this tending to support the five-year claim.

In a few locations of limited Basque presence and relatively slow growth, however, it may have taken longer than five years for a hotel to be established, if at all. For example, Pete Aguerreberry was a Basque miner who wandered through California's Death Valley wilderness searching for mineral wealth in the early twentieth century. Aguerreberry's story includes mention of a few other Basques and a Basque-owned bar in the area, but in the decades he mined the valley, a hotel never appeared. As an example, Aguerreberry is exceptional in the sense that he lived in an area where relatively few Basques settled, yet his story does cast a different light upon automatic acceptance of the five-year theory. Just as distinctive types of Basque hotels evolved, *ostatuak* may have differed also from one another in their patterns of development.

²⁶U. S. Bureau of the Census. Population Schedules of the Sixth Census of the United States, 1850.

One might also ask how many Basques were needed to support a hotel or group of hotels. For example, Bakersfield in 1900 had a population of 213 Basques and hosted four hotels.²⁷ In 1917, Stockton had "twenty core Basque families and a large floating population of single Basque men" that supported four large *ostatuak* with adjoining handball courts.²⁸ In both instances, the "floating populations" must have greatly augmented business, as the number of potential for "regulars" seems limited. In fact, the survival of *ostatuak* may have been more dependent upon business generated from travelling sheepmen than locals.

Despite the available information on California's *Euskaldun ostatuak*, the record is incomplete. Additional topics relating to Basque hotels abound and are critical to further development of Basque Studies in the United States. For example, a general history of *ostatuak* throughout the western states and eastern seaboard could greatly augment existing scholarship. Such a history would use the first Basque social institution in America as a window through which to view Basque-American history. Furthermore, placing this study of California hotels in its proper geographical context and linking the hotel network more fully seems an appropriate next step for studies on the Basque hotel.

²⁷Arrizabalaga, "Statistical Study," 11.

²⁸Sheldon Davis, "Stockton Citizens From the Pyrenees Mountains," Stockton Record. Talbott Papers, Los Banos, California.

A series of brief studies of those *ostatuak* found in other states would also augment the historical record of Basque hotels. Particularly useful would be histories of hotels in Nevada, Oregon, and Idaho, where many have existed. And, if not on the state level, studies of Basque communities with "Basque town" hotels would be revealing. Prime targets for such research might be Fresno, Stockton, Reno, Elko, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Winnemucca, Ogden, or Boise.

In addition, a collection of essays on varied ethnic boardinghouses throughout the West would be of great utility to the scholar interested in western-American studies and in ethnic groups. For the student of the boardinghouse phenomenon, such a work would offer useful comparisons and contrasts. Of interest is the proliferation of recent articles on the role of minorities and opportunity-seeking in western history, indicating an emphasis in this area.²⁹

Other research could focus on the role of the hotelkeeper. Enough has been written about the role of the Basque shepherd to satisfy contemporary scholarship, for example, yet a biography of a hotelkeeper couple or individual might make a fresh contribution to the field and open up possibilities for new scholarship in other areas as well. Viewing the *ostatuak* from the eyes of the innkeeper would be a useful addition to the record. A biography of a *hotelero* could also be

²⁹Two solid examples are Frederick Luebke, "Ethnic Minorities in the American West," in Historians and the American West, edited by Michael P. Malone (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 387-413, and Robert A. Burchell, "Opportunity and the Frontier: Wealth-Holding in Twenty-Six Northern California Counties, 1848-1880," Western Historical Quarterly 18 (April 1987): 177-96.

a thorough assessment of the division of labor between a hotelkeeping couple. Given the increased interest in woman's work and given that this is a major concern in two current research projects, the field seems ripe for a general study.³⁰ These recommendations should only serve to expand the historical record and lead to a plethora of potentially useful projects relating to the Basque.

³⁰Excellent contemporary examples of literature that focus on women's work in the American West include Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson, The Women's West (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), and Sandra L. Myres, "Women in the West," Historians and the American West, edited by Michael P. Malone (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 369-86.

CHAPTER 10

AGUR CALIFORNIA-KO OSTATUAK

In the 1850s, the first "Argentine Basques" set foot on California soil and brought with them a knowledge of open-range herding and of a New World social institution they called the *ostatuak*. Hopeful miners arrived with dreams of wealth and, in many cases, of a triumphant return to South America or *Euskal herria*. They did not consciously intend the construction of Basque hotels, nor the industry that the hotels supported so well; yet the two became intertwined.

From 1850 through 1880, a few pioneer Basques established way stations along major wagon and railway lines that welcomed travellers and sold them provisions. These early outposts form the first chapter in the history of California's *ostatuak*. By 1880, Basques had arrived in sufficient number to enter the state's booming sheep industry and support the development of Basque boardinghouses catering exclusively to their brothers, sisters, and cousins from *Euskal herria*.

In San Francisco and Los Angeles, clusters of centrally located *ostatuak* opened and formed California's first two "Basque towns." Spin-off hotels from the two centers fanned out, reaching major Basque settlements in the San Joaquin Valley as well as smaller concentrations of Basques throughout the state. But, with the passage of the National Origins Act in 1924 and the Taylor Grazing Act that followed a decade later, the prospects for Basque sheepmen in

California's central valleys began to dwindle. Also, the development of the turbine-powered water pump allowed Sacramento and San Joaquin Valley farmers to plant year round, thus eliminating their dependence upon local shepherds and their flocks for the clearing of stubble.

While the legal importation of herders through the Western Range Association has continued to bring Basques to the United States since the 1940s, their numbers were small in comparison to the years before quota legislation.¹ As Basques whose arrival preceded the restrictive legislation moved on or passed away, the hotels themselves underwent transitions. Much less a home away from home, the *ostatuak* became Basque-owned businesses that served Basques but were progressively less dependent upon them.

In fact, one characteristic of Basque hotels has been their remarkable flexibility in adapting to the fluctuations in the sheep industry since the 1850s. Once tiny outposts along rough wagon roads, the hotels developed into two- and three-story buildings that housed a complicated ethnic institution, providing health care, recreational facilities, employment opportunities, tips for travellers, and potential contacts throughout the western states. When Basque clientele became insufficient to warrant such diverse amenities, some of the *ostatuak* began to devolve through a gradual process.

¹William Douglass, "The Vanishing Basque Sheepherder," *American West* 17 (July/August 1980): 30-31, 59-61, contains a detailed review of post-quota legislation. Between 1942 and 1961, for example, only 383 Basques were granted stays in the United States under the Sheepherders' Bills.

The virtual disappearance of the Basque shepherd in recent decades has signalled the *ostatuak*'s final death knell. Of the 742 herders on Western Range contracts in 31 December 1976, for example, 58 percent were from Latin America and, of the 309 remaining, only 106 were culturally Basque.² That only one-sixth of the contract herders were Basque illustrates the changed ethnic profile of the sheepherding profession in the West, points to the accompanying demise of the dependent *ostatuak*, and underscores the poor prospects for future Basque hotelkeeping in the American West. Unless Basque immigration increases dramatically in the near future, which is highly unlikely, the *ostatuak* will probably be extinct by the twenty-first century.

Throughout this work, the author has argued that the *ostatua* was a major social institution for immigrant Basques. Although this assertion seems appropriate, the suggestion that the *ostatua* may also have been the Basque's single most important institution in America is a more daring claim. That claim rests upon the fact that the earliest Basques were single males who arrived without families and depended upon the hotels and other Basques for their survival. Given the absence of family, the *ostatua* was the Basque's most important social and ethnic institution.

Also, the *ostatuak* may have been more critical to the Basque immigrant's life than boardinghouses were to other ethnic groups.

²Ibid., 61. Of the 433 Latin Americans, 271 were Peruvians, 161 Mexicans, and one Colombian.

Basques who migrated to the western United States were anything but a cross-section of Old World society; instead they represented a very selective group. Such *Euskaldunak* were among the less educated, least likely to inherit, and were usually from the rural-based *baserria* system. In addition, the nature of the sheep industry they entered was isolating and supported future alienation from other cultures in the American West. It was not unusual, for example, for a herder to have taken over eight years to learn to speak English. The *ostatua* made it possible for the single Old World herder to live a transplanted life in the States while supporting a great deal of collective solidarity among Basques. Still, insufficient evidence exists to assert that the *ostatuak* were more critical to Basques than other ethnic boardinghouses were to other ethnic groupings. Nonetheless, as a working hypothesis, some validity exists in the assertion.

Recently, on an early morning walk through the Noriega Hotel in Bakersfield, I was struck by the sense and size of the hotel. Standing in the midst of the old handball court, with its peeling paint and bird-invested bleachers, I was transported to another time, an earlier year. The crack of the *pelota* against the side wall and the cheers of fans encouraging their favorite player rang out from the now silent *cancha*. My father, then a young *pelotari*, with his broad Viscayan smile beaming, had convincingly defeated his opponent. During another hotel visit, I was likewise transported. On a fog-shrouded, sleepy morning in San Francisco, I buzzed the doorbell at Sorhondo's and gained entry through the unmarked doorway. Ascending the

creaking stairway that wrapped around to an upstairs hallway, I was overcome by the rich smells from Amelie's kitchen. So familiar were the aroma and the warmth of the place that, for an instant, I thought I might next see my mother around the corner.

No history can explain the essence of human experience, nor can mine fully explain why the *ostatuak* are so dear to the *Amerikanuak*. A thing of the past, a sense of nostalgia for "times gone by" are part of the fondness. Yet beyond the longing for the past lies a sense of self embedded in one's culture. Whether they emerged in California, Nevada, or New York, the *ostatuak* provided the physical setting where a people could gather and share what they thought themselves to be.

APPENDIX A
GLOSSARY OF FREQUENTLY USED FOREIGN TERMS

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY OF FREQUENTLY USED FOREIGN TERMS¹

abendoaren December

agur goodbye or farewell

Amerikanuak Basques in America

barrio Spanish for neighborhood

baserria(k) farmstead(s), home, and/ or property

baserriatarik those who live in the *baserriak*

Cajon de Santa Ana Spanish for Santa Ana Canyon

California'ko Eskual Herria newspaper title meaning California
Basque Land or Basques of California

camerera:(s) Basque-American term for hotel employee(s), such as
housekeeper(s) and bedmaker(s)

cancha handball or *jai alai* court

cantina bar or tavern

departements French for provinces

Escualdun Gazeta newspaper title, Basque Gazette

Euskalduna(k) speaker(s) or "holders" of the Basque language

Euskal herria, *Euskual herria* land of the Basques

Euskera the Basque language

Eusko-Extea hotel name meaning Basque house

Euzkadi Basque nation, political name for *Euskal herria*

¹Unless otherwise stated, all glossary terms are in Basque. Note the slight difference between dialectical distinctions for the same term, such as *ostatua* and *ostatu* or *Euskal* and *Escual*.

- fiesta* Spanish for festivities or holidays
- fors* French for sixteenth-century legal agreements between Basques and the French Crown
- fronton* Spanish for handball or *jai alai* court
- fueros* Spanish for sixteenth-century legal agreements between the Basques and the Spanish Crown
- hoteleros* Spanish for Basque hotel owners or hotelkeepers
- jai alai* Basque ball game
- jota* Basque dance
- kaleterrak* Old World Basques who live in village centers
- lenbizikoatia* first neighbor in the Old World setting
- maiatza* May
- mus* Basque card game
- ostatua(k)* Basque hotel(s) or boardinghouse(s)
- ostatu Frantsesa* French Basque hotel or boardinghouse
- ostatu Eskualduna* Basque hotel or boardinghouse
- Pays Basque* French for Basque country or provinces
- pelota* or *pelote* Spanish and Basque for handball, handball games
- pelotaris* handball or *jai alai* players
- taberna* Spanish for tavern, inn, or bar
- urria* October
- urtekoak* Basque couples who honeymooned at the same *ostatua*, at the same time, and became life-long friends

APPENDIX B

BASQUE POPULATION IN THE UNITED STATES CENSUS OF 1980

APPENDIX B

BASQUE POPULATION IN THE UNITED STATES CENSUS OF 1980¹

STATE	FRENCH BASQUES	SPANISH BASQUES	MIXED BASQUES	TOTAL BASQUES
Alabama	36	0	46	82
Alaska	10	33	62	105
Arizona	152	199	749	1100
Arkansas	34	0	39	73
California	3619	3813	8098	15530
Colorado	341	168	446	955
Connecticut	36	64	120	220
Delaware	18	0	3	21
District of Columbia	22	12	29	63
Florida	201	315	343	859
Georgia	87	59	77	223
Hawaii	10	4	55	69
Idaho	221	600	3511	4332
Illinois	422	66	165	654
Indiana	94	48	18	160
Iowa	260	24	40	324
Kansas	92	18	50	160
Kentucky	81	15	36	132
Louisiana	133	57	65	255
Maine	22	0	28	50
Maryland	51	48	148	247
Massachusetts	34	80	187	301
Michigan	145	28	158	331
Minnesota	110	8	102	220
Mississippi	7	2	20	29
Missouri	164	18	61	243
Montana	116	6	268	390
Nebraska	2707	6	41	2754
Nevada	371	915	2092	3378

¹Sources: U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Ancestry of Population by State, 1980 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1983), 51-56; William A. Douglass, "Counting Basques: The U. S. Census," Basque Studies Program Newsletter 28 (November 1983): 3-7; and William A. Douglass, "Ethnic Categorization in the 1980 U. S. Census: The Basque Example," Government Publications Review 12 (1985): 289-296.

New Hampshire	3	0	29	32
New Jersey	98	134	265	497
New Mexico	87	83	291	461
New York	202	508	716	1426
North Carolina	57	48	31	136
North Dakota	25	0	0	25
Ohio	207	31	85	323
Oklahoma	21	5	84	110
Oregon	369	224	1660	2253
Pennsylvania	138	14	68	220
Rhode Island	5	44	40	89
South Carolina	25	31	14	70
South Dakota	50	7	5	62
Tennessee	34	4	16	54
Texas	159	170	558	887
Utah	129	134	610	873
Vermont	0	0	28	28
Virginia	168	72	112	352
Washington	124	306	704	1134
West Virginia	78	5	23	106
Wisconsin	189	5	49	243
Wyoming	155	103	241	499
TOTALS	11,919	8,535	22,686	43,140*

* The number of French Basques given for the state of Nebraska is likely to be a coding error, as are those for North Dakota, South Dakota, and Kansas, but the dilemma cannot be resolved until the 1990 Census. If we discount the probable error, the total population of persons claiming Basque ancestry in the United States is approximately 41,000.

APPENDIX C
CHRONOLOGICAL LISTING OF CALIFORNIA OSTATUAK

APPENDIX C
CHRONOLOGICAL LISTING OF CALIFORNIA OSTATUAK ¹

DATE	NAME AND LOCATION	PAGE IN TEXT
1856	Plaza Hotel, San Juan Bautista	39
1863	Indart Adobe, Sentinella Ranch	46
1866	Aguirre Hotel, San Francisco	49
1874	Tres Pinos Hotel, Tres Pinos	52
1878	Oyharzabal's French Hotel, San Juan Capistrano	54
1878	Levque's, Los Angeles	64
1880	Basque Hotel, San Francisco	87
1881	Ballade's, Los Angeles	65
1881	Hirigoyen's, Los Angeles	65
1881	Harotcavena's, Los Angeles	65
1881	Hotel de France, Los Angeles	66
1884	Iribarne Hotel, Chester	53
1886	Hotel des Pyrenees, Los Angeles	67
1886	White's Bridge Hotel, White's Bridge	135
1886	Sartiart's, Los Angeles	67
1888	Hotel des Basse Pyrenees, Los Angeles	68
1890s	Idiart Hotel, Firebaugh	133
1890	Hotel de France, San Francisco	87
1890	Hotel des Basses Pyrenees, San Francisco	87
1890	Central Hotel (Mouren's), Huron	136
1893	Arnaudon Hotel, Mendota	134
1893	Hotel d' Europe, Los Angeles	73
1893	Buena Vista House, Los Angeles	73
1893	Eskualdun Ostatua, Los Angeles	73
1893	Hotel de Bayonne, Los Angeles	73
1893	Hotel Maritonia, Los Angeles	73
1893	Hotel d' Europe, San Diego	125
1893	New Lake House, San Jose	92
1893	Iberia (Noriega) Hotel, Bakersfield	95
1893	Ostatua Frantsesa, Bishop	112
1895	Piute Hotel, Tehachapi	112
1895	Basses-Pyrenees, Tehachapi	113

¹All *ostatuak* presented in this study are included in appendix C. Each *ostatua* is listed once, regardless of changes in ownership, and dates are occasionally approximations. Page numbers indicate where the boardinghouse was mentioned first in this text.

1896	Basko Hotel, Tehachapi	114
1896	Savart's, San Francisco	87
1896	Pension Francaise, Los Angeles	74
1896	European House, Los Angeles	74
1897	Bascongado Hotel, Fresno	139
1899	Hotel Europa, San Francisco	87
1899	New Pyrenees Hotel, San Francisco	87
1899	Borderre's French Hotel, Santa Barbara	119
1900	Fresno Hotel ("Sheepcamp"), Fresno	139
1900	Hiriart House, Los Angeles	81
1900	Hotel Cesmat, Tehachapi	114
1901	Hotel des Pyrenees, Fresno	140
1901	Pyrenees Hotel, Bakersfield	96
1904	Hotel des Alpes, San Francisco	87
1904	Hotel Español, Los Angeles	81
1906	Hotel d' Europe, Bakersfield	100
1906	Yrionda's, San Francisco	165
1907	Hotel España, San Francisco	166
1907	Hotel Yberico, San Francisco	166
1907	Hotel de Spanio, Fresno	142
1907	Basque Hotel, Stockton	153
1907	Hotel de France, Stockton	154
1908	Hotel Royal, Stockton	154
1909	Hotel La Bilbaina, Stockton	154
1909	Mayo's, Los Angeles	81
1910	Frechou House, Fresno	141
1912	Hotel Basco, Stockton	154
1912	Basque Hotel, Stockton	154
1912	Olasso's, Los Angeles	84
1912	Oyamburu, Los Angeles	83
1912	Sempere's, Los Angeles	85
1912	Victoria Hotel, Los Angeles	84
1912	Urruty's, Los Angeles	84
1912	Bengochea's, Los Angeles	84
1914	Franco-American, Tehachapi	105
1914	Lassart Hotel, Los Banos	149
1916	Hotel Español, Stockton	154
1916	Hotel Central, Stockton	154
1916	Hotel des Alpes, San Francisco	166
1916	Hotel de España, San Francisco	166
1916	Hotel du Midi, San Francisco	166
1916	Hotel de France, San Francisco	166
1917	Hotel España, Stockton	155
1917	Egu's, Santa Barbara	124
1920s	Hotel España, Santa Barbara	124
1920s	Basque House, Guadalupe	124
1920s	Metropole Hotel, Bakersfield	100

1920s	Hotel Español, Sacramento	165
1920s	Hotel España, Sacramento	165
1920s	Pyrenees Hotel, Alturas	178
1920s	Anchordoquy's, Santa Barbara	123
1920	Yriberri's, San Francisco	167
1921	Estrella Hotel, Stockton	155
1922	Juanita Hotel, Tehachapi	116
1924	Iribarne's, McKittrick	118
1924	Laxague Hotel, Fresno	143
1924	California Hotel, Stockton	155
1924	Hotel Royal, Stockton	156
1925	Woolgrowers Hotel, Los Banos	149
1928	Yrigoyen's, San Francisco	168
1929	Vitoria Hotel, Fresno	143
1929	Villanueva's, Fresno	145
1929	Santa Fe Hotel, Fresno	147
1929	Hotel des Pyrenees, Merced	150
1930	Valley Hotel, Puente	127
1930	Beterbide's, Susanville	178
1930s	Puente Hotel, Puente	126
1931	Amestoy Hotel, Bakersfield	104
1931	Tehachapi Hotel, Tehachapi	116
1933	Campos's, Santa Barbara	123
1935	Basque Hotel, Fresno	145
1935	Hotel Basque, Stockton	156
1935	Pyrenees Hotel, Stockton	155
1935	French Hotel, Stockton	155
1936	La Coste, Stockton	155
1940	Centro Vasco, Chino	127
1940	Yturri Hotel, Fresno	148
1947	St. Francis Hotel, Susanville	178
1949	Woolgrowers Hotel, Stockton	156
1949	Basconia, Stockton	156
1950s	Cosmopolitan Hotel, San Francisco	170
1950s	Hotel Obrero, San Francisco	170
1950s	Hotel des Pyrenees, San Francisco	170
1952	Royal Hotel, Stockton	156
1957	Sorhondo's Pyrenees, San Francisco	174
1960s	Elu's, San Francisco	171
1964	Basque Hotel, San Francisco	173

APPENDIX D
GEOGRAPHICAL GROUPINGS OF CALIFORNIA OSTATUAK

APPENDIX D

GEOGRAPHICAL GROUPINGS OF CALIFORNIA *OSTATUAK*¹

Los Angeles:

Levque's Boardinghouse
Ballade's Boardinghouse
Hirigoyen's Boardinghouse
Harotcavena's Boardinghouse
Hotel de France
Hotel des Pyrenees
Sartiart's Boardinghouse
Hotel des Basse Pyrenees
Hotel d' Europe
Buena Vista House
Eskualdun Ostatua
Hotel de Bayonne
Hotel Maritonia
Pension Francaise
European House
Hiriart House
Hotel Español
Mayo's Boardinghouse
Olasso's Boardinghouse
The Oyamburu
Sempere's Boardinghouse
Victoria Hotel
Urruty's Boardinghouse
Bengochea's Boardinghouse

Santa Barbara:

Borderre's French Hotel
Egu's Boardinghouse
Hotel España
Basque House, Guadalupe
Anchordoquy's Boardinghouse
Campos's Boardinghouse

¹This appendix groups all California *ostatuak* listed in appendix C and organizes them by geographical area. *Ostatuak* within each grouping are in chronological order.

San Francisco:

Aguirre Hotel
 Basque Hotel
 Hotel de France
 Hotel des Basse Pyrenees
 Savart's Boardinghouse
 Hotel Europa
 New Pyrenees Hotel
 Hotel des Alpes
 Yrionda's Boardinghouse
 Hotel España
 Hotel Yberico
 Hotel des Alpes
 Hotel de España
 Hotel du Midi
 Hotel de France
 Yriberri's Boardinghouse
 Yrigoyen's Boardinghouse
 Cosmopolitan Hotel
 Hotel Obrero
 Hotel des Pyrenees
 Sorhondo's Pyrenees
 Elu's
 Basque Hotel

Stockton:

Basque Hotel
 Hotel de France
 Hotel Royal
 Hotel La Bilbaina
 Hotel Basco
 Basque Hotel
 Hotel Español
 Hotel Central
 Hotel España
 Estrella Hotel
 California Hotel
 Royal Hotel
 Hotel Basque
 Pyrenees Hotel
 French Hotel
 La Coste
 Woolgrowers Hotel
 Basconia Hotel
 Royal Hotel

Bakersfield:

Iberia (Noriega) Hotel
 Ostatua Frantsesa, Bishop
 Pyrenees Hotel
 Hotel d' Europe
 Metropole Hotel
 Amestoy Hotel

Tehachapi:

Piute Hotel
 Basses-Pyrenees
 Basko Hotel
 Hotel Cesmat
 Franco-American Hotel
 Juanita Hotel
 Tehachapi Hotel

Fresno:

Bascongado Hotel
 Fresno ("Sheepcamp") Hotel
 Hotel des Pyrenees
 Hotel de Spanio
 Frechou House
 Laxague Hotel
 Vitoria Hotel
 Villanueva's Boardinghouse
 Santa Fe Hotel
 Basque Hotel
 Yturri Hotel

Greater San Joaquin Valley:

Plaza Hotel, San Juan Bautista
 Indart Adobe, Sentinella
 Tres Pinos Hotel
 Iribarne Hotel, Chester
 White's Bridge Hotel
 Idiart Hotel, Firebaugh
 Central (Mouren's) Hotel, Huron
 Arnaudon Hotel, Mendota
 Lassart Hotel, Los Banos
 Iribarne's Boardinghouse, McKittrick
 Woolgrowers Hotel, Los Banos
 Hotel des Pyrenees, Merced

Northern California:

New Lake House, San Jose
Hotel Español, Sacramento
Hotel España, Sacramento
Pyrenees Hotel, Alturas
Beterbide's Boardinghouse, Susanville
St. Francis Hotel, Susanville

Southern California:

Oyharzabal's French Hotel
Hotel d' Europe, San Diego
Valley Hotel, Puente
Puente Hotel, Puente
Centro Vasco, Chino

APPENDIX E

COMMUNITIES OF THE AMERICAN WEST WITH *OSTATUAK*

APPENDIX E
COMMUNITIES OF THE AMERICAN WEST WITH OSTATUAK ¹

Arizona

Flagstaff

California

Bakersfield

Bishop

Chino

Fresno

La Puente

Los Angeles

Los Banos

Sacramento

San Diego

San Francisco

San Juan Bautista

Stockton

Susanville

Colorado

Grand Junction

Montrose

Idaho

Boise

Caldwell

Cascade

Hailey

Mountain Home

Pocatello

Shoshone

¹This listing includes only those communities that have at present or have had Basque hotels. Other ethnic manifestations, such as Basque social clubs, annual picnics, or handball courts, may have existed within these towns and in additional communities as well. Source: Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 430-433. Please refer to appendices C and D for a more complete list of California *ostatuak*. Note also that the New York City Basque colony hosted an *ostatua* and, given that some Basques settled on the eastern seaboard during the first decades of the twentieth century, there may have been additional hotels on the Atlantic coast.

Montana

Miles City

Nevada

Austin

Carson City

Elko

Ely

Eureka

Gardnerville

Golconda

Lovelock

Reno

Winnemucca

New Mexico

Grants

Oregon

Burns

Jordan Valley

Ontario

Utah

Ogden

Price

Salt Lake City

Washington

Yakima

Wyoming

Buffalo

Rock Springs

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