“Nearly Neighbors”
The historical archaeology of the Stephenson, Pryde, and Orimoto families has delved into these past lives through a careful combination of the documentary and oral accounts, and material remains. Analysis of this information has created an image of three households of similar economic standing that held similar values of thriftiness, the importance of work, and independence. And yet in spite of their common ideals there is evidence that two of these families were caught up in national and class-based ethnic divisiveness.

The analysis of the Stephenson and Pryde assemblages suggests that these were frugal and temperate households. Norman Pryde was at the upper end of the working class. The Pryde table setting was not extravagant. The vessel types themselves comprised a basic table setting, with at least some evidence of refined drinking in the form of stemware and a cordial glass. The small number of alcohol bottles recovered indicates minimal domestic alcohol consumption. The faunal remains suggest some indulgence in diet—with expensive cuts of meat predominating in the assemblage—but the extra expense may have been compensated for by buying the cheapest cuts at other times.

The Stephenson household assemblages speak of frugality and temperance, but also of a long-term material conservatism. While economically working class, the Stephensons were largely self-employed, owning their own businesses. Artifacts associated with the Stephensons reflect the values and strategies of small family-owned business people, rather than a more encompassing and undifferentiated notion of working class.

The 1905 assemblage showed moderate alcohol consumption, with a decline by the 1940s. This may have been due to the intervening period of prohibition, but the presence of a YMCA badge indicates participation in temperance. The YMCA’s appeal was strongest among workers of “vaguely middle class standing” (Boyer 1978:210), which might well describe the class position of the Stephensons. With its emphasis on temperance, muscular Christianity, and self-improvement, participation in the YMCA is consistent with the conservative, thrifty, and family-oriented Stephenson household.

The vulnerability and anxieties of this class seems also to be expressed by at least one family member’s participation in the Native Sons of the Golden West. This is evidenced by a delegate’s badge to the 1919 “parlor” (annual meeting) of the Native Sons. By the 1920s, this organization’s nativist agenda was explicit. While not a working-class group, its rhetoric of nativism had strong appeal to native-born working-class (and middle-class) people who felt immigration posed an economic threat to their standard of living though low-wage competition.

The Orimoto family was anathema to the Native Sons, which sought to create a White historical landscape in California. There is a grim irony in the fact the end date for the Orimotos’ archaeological collection can be established by the signing of Executive Order 9066 in February 1942, which authorized the internment of all Japanese and Japanese Americans on the West Coast. The culmination of post-Pearl Harbor hysteria, this action was in part due to the pervasive nativist feeling fostered by groups such as the Native Sons. It is interesting to contrast this rhetoric of separation with the realities of the domestic realm of the home. Oral accounts suggest and family photographs document that Japanese and non-Japanese children played freely together. Neighborliness, at least among the women, was the norm.