Bay Area residents all know that Oakland and San Francisco are very different places; take the longstanding folk images contrasting Oakland Raider fans as crazed biker outlaws and the San Francisco 49er fans as wine drinking, quiche eating wimps. In the 19th century, Oakland was the suburb, San Francisco the city; Oakland was the railroad town, San Francisco was maritime; Oakland was family oriented and safe, San Francisco diverse, sophisticated and dangerous (Figure 10.1). A recent history of San Francisco nicely sums up that city’s characteristics:

San Francisco has always drunk eagerly from the mother’s milk of materialism (the Forty-Niners, after all, didn’t come for the view), but it has always also had a place for the visionary and the otherworldly. . . . San Francisco’s artistic contribution probably lies in its style of doing things rather than in a high-priced finished product. . . . The arts in San Francisco . . . are products of a long tradition of experimentation, very much a part of the ethic so prevalent in this city: democratization, participation, innovation, sharing, having fun.

Always a city of the unexpected, from Gold Rushes and earthquakes to tragedy and style and experimentation, never quite the same, always San Francisco [Cole 1988:139–140].

This chapter will provide some background on San Francisco and on some literary perspectives on the historical differences between San Francisco and Oakland before presenting the statistical findings related to the recovered archaeological assemblages from the two cities. The statistical differences seem to vary in ways not connected with the sum of their parts.

Figure 10.1. Oakland, 1900 (left) and San Francisco, 1878 (right). (Images courtesy of Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division)
Writers and artists employed by “illustrated” magazines got rich on the wonders of California. An almost endless variety of materials presented themselves for description (Figure 10.2). California boosters, such as Charles Nordhoff (1873) and General James Brisbin (1881) sought to lure prosperous easterners from their complacent superiority and love of home by reassuring them that numerous opportunities presented themselves to those willing to work and that Californians were a no less cultured group then themselves: That California possessed the “finest climate, the most fertile soil, the loveliest skies, the mildest winter, the most healthful region” (Nordhoff 1873:118). This grandeur failed to win over Bret Harte, who longed for the smaller scale refinements of New England:

The country is youthful and ambitious, and nature has not yet completely adjusted herself to new conditions. She offers grandeur, sublimity and picturesqueness, and delights in heroic attitudes before the tourists, but of purely bucolic and pastoral comfort she knows nothing. She offers you quantity instead of quality—opulence in place of refinement. The same law she obeys in producing monstrous cabbages and gigantic trees is shown throughout the details of her landscape. If she has to make a mountain it is something stupendous; if a valley, it is perpendicular chasm of several thousand feet, like the Yo Semite; if she has even to cover a field with flowers, it is done so extravagantly that the scentless blossoms seem to have been furnished by contract. Her rains are deluges—her droughts are six months long. What she loses in delicacy she makes up in fibre—whether it be strawberries that look as if they should be arrested on their way to become pine-apples, or a field of wild oats, whose every
stalk is a miracle of size, but whose general effect is most unpastoral and unmeadow-like. The effect on inhabitants may be readily conceived [1866a].

The natural site of San Francisco has been described as a lump of baker’s dough:

The peninsula, as you looked westward, presented the appearance of a lump of baker’s dough, which had been kneaded into fantastic hills and vales—a lump of baker’s dough, too, which, after having been worked, had been forgotten for so long that the green mould had begun to creep over it [Upton 1869:238].

Edwin Bryant visited San Francisco in September 1846. The town had a permanent population of between 100 and 200, a garrison of marines, and sailors connected with merchant and whaling vessels. He saw its potential for commerce as the best port on the Pacific Coast and the fertility and richness of the surrounding lands. Bryant predicted that San Francisco would become “one of the largest and most opulent commercial cities in the world” (1846:301–302). With the discovery of gold a few years later, San Francisco became the jumping off point for adventurers from around the world. The population exploded and an “instant city” blossomed. An instant city impeded by lumps of sand hills and real hills blocking the easy flow of traffic and the superposition of an orderly citiescape (Figure 10.3).

Figure 10.3. Earliest Panoramic View of San Francisco, ca. 1851. Taken from the 60-foot sand ridge at First and Howard streets, this panel shows Howard’s Row. Yankee trader W.D.M. Howard imported the first 24 precut wooden houses in 1851 and put these up between the sandhills on Natoma Street within his 100-vara lot at First and Mission. This area is now, of course, the center of downtown crossed by freeways and home of the Transbay Transit Terminal (Daguerreotype courtesy San Francisco Maritime NHP)
JEAN-JACQUES VIOGET IMPOSES A GRID

Well in advance of the Gold Rush, the founding fathers began to layout the future city of San Francisco, never suspecting it would arise so quickly. French Captain Jean-Jacques Vioget in possession of a theodolite received the assignment. Vioget’s grid has been questioned ever since:

He had before him the most beautiful and picturesque site for a city that could anywhere on the face of the earth be found! . . . What if he had terraced these hills, and applied the rule and square only to the space lying between them! . . . He little knew, when he was at work in his adobe office, with his compasses and rulers, that every line he drew would entail a useless expenditure of millions upon those who were to come after him; and that he was then, in fact, squandering money at a rate that would have made a Monte Cristo turn pale [Upton 1869:240].

So in Vioget’s name, but really in the name of progress and commerce, the “Steam Paddy”—a combination steam-shovel and railroad-car—moved sandhills to fill the marshes and the infamous “Second Street-Cut” blasted through Rincon Hill to connect the city (Figure 10.4). But the chaos of the baker’s dough was not easily subdued: “We have gone on leveling hills and filling up valleys till we have got ourselves into such a bewilderment of grades that the most lame and impotent conclusions are reached by many of our thoroughfares, and jumping-off places

Figure 10.4. Second Street Cut in Progress, Looking Northwest from Bryant Street, 1869. Two hundred and fifty teams of horses and wagons, together with five hundred men, worked from April through November trying to shore up the cut as avalanches, “sometimes fatally interrupted” grading (SF City Directory 1869-1870:16). The peaked-roof and gabled house at the west corner of Harrison and Second Street eventually fell into the ditch below, as did the house across the street (Photo courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley: 1905.07052--PIC).
are as plentiful as the most suicidal could possibly desire” (Upton 1869:244). These same cut-
fill sequences formed the earliest part of the West Approach project’s archaeological sensitivity
study and the basis of our predictive models. It was complicated for us to reconstruct and very
difficult while in progress. The city while beautiful from afar, appeared desecrated up close:

Nature has been cut and slashed, dug down and filled up, out of existence;
unsightly defiles confront him wherever he goes. He finds a house, like
an inquiring urchin at a dinner-table, barely peeping over the sidewalk,
and evidently straining itself in the operation; while five good stories are
revealed in the rear. Others still, elevated in so reckless and impertinent a
manner, above grade, as to be suggestive rather of a pigeon-house than a
human habitation [Upton 1869:246].

M.G. Upton, a harsh critic of this work in progress, nevertheless predicted that it would result in
“a metropolis in every way adapted for trade and commerce; but by no means as handsome and
picturesque a city as might have been built, if some attention had in the beginning been paid to
the suggestions of Nature” (1869:246). Ironically, this small-scale historic city is now viewed as
natural in opposition to the new massive high-rises proposed for the South of Market area in the
21st century.

A Nation of Gamblers

As predicted San Francisco became a metropolis, a “magnet” to which the wealth of the
gold fields flowed along with conservative social aspirations for permanence and order (Cole
1988:43). The incredible mix of fortune seekers who came to “see the elephant,” the shortage of
material goods, and the unpredictability of fortune—both good and bad—spawned a society in
which social status was so vague and changeful as to be essentially useless as a ranking devise.
Bret Harte characterized Californians as “not much affected by titles or position, at least not to the
extent of older civilizations; there is very little toadying to place or office, and public sentiment
runs rather to satire and skepticism than to tuft-hunting or toad-eating. Men and women
pass for what they are worth from a California standard, which I need not say is remarkable
elevated” (1866j:97). While the general state of flux with its tremendous, but often unpredictable,
opportunities did not last past the coming of the railroad, its spirit and expectations continue in
some ways to this day.

While miners gambled on finding and then keeping their fortunes, San Francisco merchants
gambled on commodities. Merchants brought in whatever goods they could ship from the East
Coast. If their shipments brought goods in scarce supply, they made a fortune; if on the other
hand, they found an already quenched market, they faced ruin and the goods became landfill
(see Boom/Bust sidebar, this chapter). Others speculated in land; any good or service that could
be bought and sold contributed to the community’s chaotic field of commerce.

Recklessness in life as in financial matters also characterized San Franciscans, where
negligence is said to have caused more deaths than disease. Bret Harte regaled his East Coast
readers with their horrors:

Californians are a nation of gamblers—taking chances ever as the
regular operations of natural laws; speculating even upon the merciful
interventions of Providence. We are whirled over our mountain roads,
galloping down declivities where Eastern drivers would walk their horses
and lock their wheels; we race with the opposition steamboat, with a rag
stopping yesterday’s leak in the boilers; we live in shells, erected over night like Aladdin’s palace and as likely to disappear, as if by enchantment, at the first earthquake; we drive half-broken horses with a free rein, or leave them standing unhitched before our doors; our milkmaids milk cows but one removed from the vicious wild cattle of the Spanish rancho, and our tourist and pleasure-seekers risk their lives in picnics at inaccessible mountains and precipitous canons. But that a special Providence looks after this impulsive people, we would soon be depopulated [1866f].

THE QUEST FOR PLEASURE AND THE MEANING OF POVERTY

The combination of boom/bust cycles and material shortages created from the beginning of the Gold Rush a propensity to splurge when able without cares of future scarcity—to live for the present. San Franciscans appreciated and participated in the good life. Bret Harte quoted the “discreet remark” of a French philosopher that the “great secret of happiness was in doing what you liked, provided you didn’t prevent others from doing what they liked” and concluded that “San Francisco nearly approaches the perfection of such a moral atmosphere. A higher privilege than that guaranteed by the signers of the declaration—that of doing as we please, when in quest of pleasure, is indulged in here” (Harte 1860a). He also quoted an “epicurean individual who uttered that flashing social paradox, ‘Give us the luxuries of life and we will dispense with its necessaries’” another principle at work in San Francisco where “music, dancing and flowers had been in continental significance as great social elements as bread, clothing and beef” (Harte 1860b).

Those with money in 1860s California only wanted to purchase the “best” and poverty was a relative matter. More than one author ironically wrote on the markings of poverty: “Where, but in San Francisco, would a sturdy beggar ask alms with a cigar between his lips?” (Brooks 1868:466). “The few beggars who appear on the streets and flout their rags in the true mendicant style, are promptly arrested as imposters” (Harte 1867:148). San Franciscans dressed well and took pride in their appearances:

Even the stranger, who accosts you with the request for money to buy his breakfast, wears spotless linen, the spendthrift or bankrupt contemplating suicide to-morrow, to-day at least passes you in carefully brushed broadcloth. It may be parenthetically remarked here as a kind of illustration of our habits, that according to a rude, unwritten code of propriety and honor, few Californians permit themselves to sink into the seedy stage of poverty—stopping by crime or suicide that humiliating condition [Harte 1867:148].

The California boosters did not misrepresent the California’s bounty, at least not in relation to the San Francisco Bay Area. The local markets always filled with something fresh, cheap, and good to eat. Bret Harte raved about the “picturesque and showy” fruit:

Golden pumpkins that might have contained Cinderella’s coach without great stretch of the imagination; potatoes, like small boulders, but clear-skinned and pink-eyed; cabbages, graceful in outline—perfect Brobdignagian roses; radishes, “pink as Aurora’s fingertips,” but somewhat large for that goddess; beets of a preposterous bigness and carrots of exasperating length, heap the stalls of the green-grocer.... Nothing is so wonderful to the stranger as the extraordinary quality, quantity and variety of grapes in California [1866e:58–59].
Chapter 10: Rivals Across the Bay

The cyclical nature of economics in California is both well known and easily forgotten. From the beginning, San Franciscan merchants gambled on getting best price on the first shipment of sparse commodities or housing unsalable overstocked merchandise. The value of a given thing ranged according to its perceived scarcity and potential uses:

A singular extravagance and reckless disregard of things for the time valueless pervaded society. I remember, several years ago, to have been shown the foundations of a house near one of the wharves built up on boxes of plug tobacco, which, at the time it was laid, was worth less than the necessary, though scarcer, timber. It had been of course ruined by salt water. A sidewalk of the same material is said to have been once put down in front of what is now known as the Montgomery block, on the principal avenue of the city [Harte 1866f].

Mining stocks provided one of the first California examples of “the reign of stock gambling.” Once “bubble prices had been pricked and fictitious values exploded,” business settled down and found its legitimate channels. During the mining boom of 1864 a second stock board, the Pacific board of brokers came into existence:

Here, stocks which had no value beyond the artistic beauty of their prettily printed certificates, shares of mines not yet opened and often not yet discovered, were bandied about at enormous but hypothetical figures. Here sharpers found their dupes, or “diamond cut diamond.” Over its desk, now tenantless, were lost hard-earned fortunes, and often harder-earned reputations, the savings of poor men, the integrity of clerks and employees. . . . Companies were incorporated at the rate of 40 or 50 per day, and the county clerks waxed fat upon the fees. . . . Nice young men found openings at fair salaries, with the contingency of fine stock-jobbing opportunities, as secretaries; superintendents were appointed to oversee mines whose office was as illusionary as that of the Adelantado of the Seven Cities. Every man you met was a president, every other one a trustee, and all stockholders. Your washerwomen had ten feet in the “Highflier,” your office-boy held certificates for 50 shares of “Aladdin.” . . . Everybody talked stock. It was the subject of the conversation in parlor and kitchen, at ball and soiree [Harte 1866i].

The bubble burst and the Pacific board of brokers shut down, leaving a trail of failure and ruin: “People who supposed themselves wealthy, found themselves reduced to exceedingly small practical incomes. Riches vanished; no one knew where or why. It is roughly estimated that over $20,000,000 evaporated thus mysteriously” [Harte 1866i]. Perhaps visions of easily plucked gold still inspire and explain why so few small investors heeded warnings that neither the recent dot.com nor real-estate booms could last indefinitely.
Of course, as usual, he continues in disparaging fashion against all but the worthy grape, which in “flavor and delicacy really surpasses Eastern products”:

In spite of size and prolific bearing, with this exception, the pomological exhibition of this country is deceitful; your mammoth strawberries are stringy, your pears are fibrous, your large apples are Dead Sea fruit, and your magnificent looking peaches are leathery. But the grape alone is sincere [Harte 1866:59].

Within this Garden of Eden, the good life held sway for decades as reported by newspapers and journals of the times. A good life enabled by a mild climate, abundance of cheap fresh food, and relatively high wages for the working classes. San Francisco restaurants adopted the French framework of dinner, with multi-courses from soup to fruit and café noir to cordials, with French cooking and French wines and they reportedly set these meals out at one-fourth the cost of similar repasts in major cities on the East Coast (Brooks 1868:467–471). One journalist suggested: “this cheapness and convenience of living, added to the harrowing reflections which most young men have upon the extravagance of women, has something to do with keeping the ranks of bachelors so full” (Brooks 1868:471). While in the late 1860s there was no California specialty dish, the beginnings of California cuisine could be seen in the artful combination of fresh, varied, rich and inexpensive ingredients from around the world.

Poverty, apparently, did not manifest itself in the same way in San Francisco as elsewhere:

Leaving out the abjectly and squalidly poor, it is nevertheless true, that the lowest and most moneyless classes of society have more daintiness of palate and contempt for coarse or homely fare than the same sort of people anywhere else. . . . The butchers complain that they cannot find customers for the coarser cuts of meats; . . . A distain for the lower grades of flour, and beefsteaks “off the round” seems to pervade all ranks of life. If a few pieces of coin stand between the San Franciscan and beggary, he must have his sirloin and café noir to-day; to-morrow may be leanness and abstinence; to-day he must have the best that the markets yields [Brooks 1868:466].

In April 1876, the San Francisco Morning Call printed an article titled “What We Live On” including “Statistics of Our Daily Consumption of Animal and Vegetable Food”; “The Enormous Amount of Victuals that Annually Passes Down our Throats”; subtitled “An Exhibit that Will Doubtless Astonish many Readers” (SF Morning Call 9 April 1876:8). This intriguing article ranges from discussions of beasts of prey, cannibalism, and the usefulness of eating rats, mice, and horses before tackling the eating habits and markets of San Franciscans. The author provides figures developed from seven chief caravansaries and a detailed list of the costs for meals for one day at the Palace Hotel ($1,194.20). The Palace Hotel opened in October 1875 to wild public acclaim as San Francisco’s most magnificent address. It housed 755 rooms, main dining room seating 600, two “grille” rooms, a hall for receptions, and a private dining room (Cooper 2008; Figure 10.5). The detailed account did not include alcohol or

Figure 10.5. Palace Hotel American Dining Room, 1895 (Cooper 2008). (Courtesy Bruce C. Cooper, ThePalaceHotel.org)
staff time, just provisions and one would assume, relatively expensive provisions. “What We Live On” also provided quantities of game and other food products brought into the city. Table 10.1 displays that information along with quantities consumed in the chief hotels. Taken together, these figures suggest the relative amounts of food types consumed in a city of approximately 275,000 (SF Morning Call 9 April 1876:8).

Eight years later, the San Francisco Morning Call revisited the topic with an article titled: “Paradise for the Poor: How Much May be Accomplished with a Small Income” bragging that there was no city in the United States where a man with a small income could live so comfortably as in San Francisco (24 April 1884:5). High wages, mild climate, and cheap food each factored into this Mecca for the low paid. The average weekly wage for skilled and unskilled workers in San Francisco was $18.22 in 1878 in comparison to New York where it averaged only $12.07 (Decker 1976:166). Wages for 1884 as reported by the SF Morning Call are provided in Table 10.2 and appear to be in the same range. The Call reporter interviewed a laborer, grocer, butcher, young independent woman, and a mill worker on their income, expenses and quality of life and concluded that employed workers in San Francisco lived more comfortably than their counterparts anywhere in the America or Europe.

Once again the San Francisco Morning Call visited the topic of “What We Eat” in February 1887 concluding (yet again) “there is no city in the world where there is better eating, or more of it” (19 February 1887: supplement p. 1). To the usual recital of cheap foodstuffs and favorable comparisons relative to the East Coast, this article adds the perspective of the food critic in discussing “How We Spoil it in Cooking.” In the 19th century, beef was the centerpiece of good eating: next to “the liberty of the press and the habeas corpus,” Americans “put a livelier faith in beef than in anything else” (SF Morning Call 19 February 1887:1). At this time, San Francisco’s average beef consumption was said to exceed the half-pound average in New York and London. The reporter compared costs of various meals prepared at home and in various classes of restaurants concluding that restaurants fared very well (Table 10.3). The price of poultry was noted as a “standing disgrace” and more expensive than in midwestern cities hampered by snow and frost. The price of eggs at this time was also notably high in relation to other staples.

**Literary Visions of Oakland and San Francisco**

Over the decades novelists from Bret Harte to Armisted Maupin have used Oakland and/or San Francisco as the backdrop and subject of their stories. Bret Harte parlayed the stories (a.k.a., lies) told around Gold Rush mining camps into a lucrative literary career that fed romantic images of Western life to the hungry reading public around the world, modernized the short story, and gave birth to the Western genre popularized in novels, films, and television series to this day. “The Lost Heiress,” one of Harte’s earliest stories, published in February 1861, provides distinct images of San Francisco and Oakland. Subtitled “A Tale of the Oakland Bar,” the story parodies an overly elegant literary style now lost to us in the 21st century.

Bret Harte lived with his mother for two years in Oakland upon arriving in California. While the literary “burlesque” may be lost upon us, Harte’s budding talent and humor shine through in this story, which begins: “Not a hundred miles from the luxurious and glittering metropolis of this State breaks upon the enraptured view the fair city of Oakland. Its inhabitants are chiefly composed of pure and exalted beings whom it is a pleasure to visit and an honor to know. They are generally affluent and genteel” (1861:83). It continues with a love story told by a third
Table 10.1. San Francisco Victuals in 1876

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Stuff</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deer</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo saddles</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>11 pounds each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bear</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>200 pounds of meat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hares and rabbits</td>
<td>10s of 1,000s</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Purchased by French and German restaurants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild pigeons</td>
<td>10,000 dozen</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Numbers of game birds sold outside of the markets incalculable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prairie chickens</td>
<td>7,500 pairs</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild turkeys</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild geese</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild duck</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snipe</td>
<td>10s of 1,000s</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partridges</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quail</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oysters</td>
<td>750 bushels</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clams</td>
<td>125 bushels</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>10,000 barrels</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnips and such</td>
<td>750 barrels</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hogs</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Consumed by Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef, short loins, and ribs</td>
<td>2,000 pounds</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Seven chief hotels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutton chops</td>
<td>1,800 pounds</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Seven chief hotels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring lamb</td>
<td>4,000 pounds</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Seven chief hotels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veal hind quarters</td>
<td>1,000 pounds</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Seven chief hotels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corned beef</td>
<td>80 pounds</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>Seven chief hotels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goats and kids</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Seven chief hotels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roasting pigs</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Seven chief hotels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hams</td>
<td>1,000 to 1,500</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>Seven chief hotels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tame turkeys, ducks, geese, guinea fowls</td>
<td>400 tons</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10.2. Wages for Working Men in San Francisco in 1884

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary Day Laborer</td>
<td>$1 – $2</td>
<td>$12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Labor, requiring familiarity w/work</td>
<td>$2.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled, machinists, jewelers, etc.</td>
<td>$3 – $4+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bricklayers</td>
<td>$2 – $3.50</td>
<td>$21.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenters</td>
<td>$2 – $3</td>
<td>$18.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masons</td>
<td>$21.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painters</td>
<td>$2 – $3.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacksmiths</td>
<td></td>
<td>$21.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet-makers</td>
<td>$2.50 – $3.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoemakers</td>
<td></td>
<td>$16.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailors</td>
<td></td>
<td>$17.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tinsmiths</td>
<td></td>
<td>$15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone-cutters</td>
<td>$3 – $4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbers</td>
<td></td>
<td>$14 – $18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woolen Mill Workers</td>
<td>$1.60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

San Francisco Morning Call 24 April 1884:5

Table 10.3. Representative Costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-room house w/yard</td>
<td>$12.00 per month</td>
<td></td>
<td>1884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groceries</td>
<td>$2.50 – $3 per week</td>
<td>Family of 4, everything except fresh meat and vegetables, clothing and coal</td>
<td>1884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh beef</td>
<td>7 – 8 cents per pound</td>
<td></td>
<td>1884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh mutton</td>
<td>4.5 – 6 cents per pound</td>
<td>Cut from forequarters with an occasional good steak or batch of chops</td>
<td>1884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef on the hoof</td>
<td>67.5 cents</td>
<td></td>
<td>1887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef choice cuts</td>
<td>18 – 25 cents</td>
<td></td>
<td>1887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring lamb</td>
<td>15 – 20 cents</td>
<td></td>
<td>1887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutton</td>
<td>10 – 12.5 cents</td>
<td></td>
<td>1887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 lb. leg of mutton</td>
<td>85 cents</td>
<td>Cooked at home w/ fixings for 5 people</td>
<td>1887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken broilers</td>
<td>50 – 60 cents</td>
<td></td>
<td>1887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full grown fowl</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
<td>33 cents per pound</td>
<td>1887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>20 – 22 cents per pound</td>
<td>Serves 4</td>
<td>1887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinner w/wine</td>
<td>25 cents – $1.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

San Francisco Morning Call 24 April 1884:5; 19 February 1887:1
party. The heroine grew up in a stately Oakland mansion: “She had all the accomplishments, and performed with equal ease upon the piano and accordéon. Accustomed from her earliest infancy to gymnastics, in the Indian Club and Parallel Bar exercise she stood unrivaled. Sent to a fashionable boarding-school at a tender age, she received a diploma for ‘manners’” (Harte 1861:84). The hero, a young man of high estate and noble bearing though down on his luck due to gambling, worked as a deckhand on the Oakland–San Francisco ferry—“the transition from ‘poker’ to the furnace was natural” according to the narrator, refraining “from mirth” at his wit.

The two met when the hero retrieved the young lady’s forgotten luggage to be rewarded with a playful smack on the head with her parasol: “This characteristic act proved that from thence their hearts were one. Such is inconsistent girlhood” (Harte 1861:85). Unfortunately, the affluent father disapproved and sought to relocate his daughter from the “soft seclusion of Oakland” to San Francisco where “in the giddy whirl of fashion and aristocracy” she would forget the past (Harte 1861:85). His plan failed when the late night ferry hit a sand bar in the dense fog and the couple escaped in a small boat; he “holding the American flag in one hand,” and she “leaning upon his arm in the favorite attitude of the Goddess of Liberty”; neither ever to be seen again (Harte 1861:86–87).

Fanciful romanticism aside, Oakland clearly represents the secluded, safe, suburb; and San Francisco the sophisticated, entertaining, and dangerous city. By the late 19th century, Naturalism arose as a literary genre in contrast to the soft romanticism going out of vogue. Naturalists use scientific principles such as Social Darwinism to objectively view and detachedly describe the human condition. They explore questions of heredity and environment in people’s lives. They also avoid the flowery, classical image-laden prose en vogue with the Romantics. According to literary historian Donald Pizer: Naturalistic novels usually contain two sources of tension. In writing of the lower classes and fictionalizing commonplace, unheroic, everyday events, they also discover and relate human behaviors that are heroic, extraordinary or excessive. While focusing on characters controlled from the outside by environment, heredity, or circumstance, the novels nevertheless offer the possibility of humanistic values in the characters and their fates to affirm the significance of individual lives (Campbell 2008:1–2, citing Pizer 1984:10–11). In some ways, this is not too different from the goals of a humanistic historical archaeology.

Two practitioners of the Naturalism school wrote about our area; each provided vivid details on life at the time: Frank Norris on late 1890s San Francisco in McTeague (1899) and Jack London on approximately the same period in West Oakland in Valley of the Moon (1913) and other works. This was a period of economic depression and profound social strife based on race, ethnicity, and class. Both authors followed Social Darwinism, but Norris took the more brutal approach; London’s stances, Socialist and Social Darwinian, having softened with his relocation to his Beauty Ranch on Sonoma Mountain.

Frank Norris’ Sensate San Francisco

Frank Norris populated his San Francisco with a mishmash of individuals struggling to make their simple ways in a city they did not comprehend, but whose riches appeared vast and ever just out of reach in the chaotic, changing post-Gold Rush world. These are the characters left over from Harte’s yarns; the ones who did not strike it rich, overcome the odds, or even find their ways. Born of wealth and privilege, Norris created characters far from his own ilk. According to literary critic Kenneth Rexroth, “Frank Norris is not just a California writer, but a San Francisco one. . . . Not only are his people sensate, they are not Protestant. Frank Norris knew as little about the existential dilemma as Aristotle, and cared less. This is San Francisco speaking, and
a city mercifully spared the westward radiation of the great light from Plymouth Rock” (1964:346–347). Norris’ main character, McTeague, is large, brutish, insensitive, and deficient, perhaps genetically inferior, slow, and dim. A dentist, who learned his trade informally as an apprentice, McTeague manages a basic practice, marries a young German woman, Trina, who promptly wins $5,000 in the lottery. The couple is comfortable and happy; Trina invests her winnings and makes wooden toys for sale by a relative. McTeague drinks bottled, rather than steam, beer, eats well, sports a silk hat, and receives a large tooth to advertise his trade as a present from his wife. Everything falls apart when an enemy reports McTeague for operating without the appropriate dental credentials and he is prohibited from practicing. Trina’s avaricious streak grows with their poverty and she withholds money from McTeague, who eventually gives up trying to find a job, walks the streets, gets drunk when he can, abuses Trina when he pleases, eventually killing her for the lottery winnings.

Rexroth (1964:342) applauds Norris’ “restless photographic veracity”—referring to Norris’ ability to fully create an authentic physical environment of things, sounds, smells, and tastes within which his characters live (Figure 10.6). These things provide the images that reinforce the materialistic theme running through the novel. Each step of McTeague’s downward spiral includes the loss of his prized possessions from his stone pug and steel engraving to his large golden molar, concertina, and finally the canary in a gilded cage, as if these material objects housed his humanity. Prior to his marriage, McTeague frequented Frenna’s corner grocery. Like corner groceries throughout the South of Market, Frenna’s had a bar in the back:

Advertisements for cheap butter and eggs painted in green marking ink upon wrapping paper, stood about on the sidewalk outside. The doorway was decorated with a huge Milwaukee-beer sign. Back of the store proper was a bar where white sand covered the floor. A few tables and chairs were scattered here and there. The walls were hung with gorgeously colored tobacco advertisements and colored lithographs of trotting horses. On the wall behind the bar was a model of a full-rigged ship enclosed in a bottle [Norris 1964:110].

McTeague brought his pitcher to be filled with beer on Sunday afternoons. Other men played piquet and talked politics.
Upon their marriage, McTeague and Trina moved into a three-room flat, composed of a sitting room that doubled as a dining room, a bedroom and a tiny kitchen, in part furnished by her lottery winnings:

The sitting room was particularly charming. Clean matting covered the floor, and two or three bright-colored rugs were scattered here and there. The backs of the chairs were hung with knitted worsted tidies, very gay. The bay window should have been occupied by Trina’s sewing machine, but this had been moved to the other side of the room to give a place to a little black-walnut table with spiral legs, before which the pair were to be married. In one corner stood the parlor melodeon, a family possession of the Sieppes, but given now to Trina as one of her parents’ wedding presents. Three pictures hung upon the walls. . . . These pictures were hung on either side of the mantelpiece. . . .

A door hung with chenille portieres...admitted one to the bedroom. The bedroom could boast a carpet, three-ply ingrain, the design being bunches of red and green flowers in yellow baskets on a white ground. The wallpaper was admirable . . . This room was prolific in pictures. Most of them framed colored prints from Christmas editions of the London Graphic and Illustrated News, the subject of each picture inevitably involving very alert fox terriers and very pretty moon-faced little girls.

Back of the bedroom was the kitchen, a creation of Trina’s, a dream of a kitchen, with its range, its porcelain-lined sink, its copper boiler, and its overpowering array of flashing tinware. Everything was new; everything was complete [Norris 1964:125–126].

After McTeague closed his Dental Parlor, the couple sold their personal possessions and moved to cheaper accommodations:

She and McTeague stood in a tiny room at the back of the flat and on its very top floor. The room was white-washed. It contained a bed, three cane-seated chairs, and a wooden washstand with its washbowl and pitcher. From its single uncurtained window one looked down into the flat’s dirty backyard and upon the roofs of the hovels that bordered the alley in the rear. There was a rag carpet on the floor. In place of a closet some dozen wooden pegs were affixed to the wall over the washstand. There was a smell of cheap soap and of ancient hair oil in the air [Norris 1964: 210].

McTeague and Trina failed to find the California life; each died a violent death on losing their most coveted possession: Trina her lottery winnings and McTeague the gilded bird cage and beloved, protected canary.

McTeague did not just vividly recount the downfall of his hero, others in the flat and its vicinity met similar fates connected with deficient heredity and the inability to function in the materialistic world that was 19th-century San Francisco without access to the promised riches. Norris’ depictions of flat life that mixed the ethnicities and genders in close proximity provided fodder for domestic reformers of the time who decried the immorality of such places. But those living these lives also functioned as fictive kin, looking out for each other and providing what little help could be mustered. The only couple whose fates were not twisted by selfishness connected under these circumstances. Miss Baker, a retired dressmaker, and Old Grannis, an English pamphlet binder and helper at the dog hospital, never spoke, but occupied adjoining rooms that shared a thin wall:
Old Grannis came home from his work at four o’clock, and between that
time and six Miss Baker would sit in her room, her hands idle in her lap,
doing nothing, listening, waiting. Old Grannis did the same, drawing his
armchair near to the wall, knowing that Miss Baker was upon the other
side, conscious, perhaps, that she was thinking of him; and there the two
would sit through the hours of the afternoon, listening and waiting, they
did not know exactly for what, but near to each other, separated only by
the thin partition of their rooms [Norris 1964:17].

One day Miss Baker impulsively knocked on Old Grannis’s door and the two connected:

It had come at last. After all these years they were together; they
understood each other. They stood at length in a little Elysium of their
own creating. They walked hand in hand in a delicious garden where it
was always autumn. Far from the world and together they entered upon
the long-retarded romance of their commonplace and uneventful lives
[Norris 1964:254].

This is as happily ever after as Norris could provide.

**Jack London’s Oakland: A Place to Start From**

Oaklanders exalt in the claim their city can make upon one of America’s most famous
authors—visitors can follow the “wolf paws” etched on a path to Jack London’s waterfront
haunts. Ironically, Jack London had no such heartfelt ties to Oakland, although the city itself
takes center stage in many of his best writings.

Jack London was born in San Francisco in 1876, the son of Flora Wellman, a runaway from
a respectable Ohioan family and follower of spiritualist astrologer “Doctor” William Chaney.
Chaney is widely believed to have been Jack’s father, although he never acknowledged it. When
Jack was an infant, Flora married John London, a widower with two young children. The family
lived briefly in Oakland from 1879 through 1881 and then moved back to Oakland when Jack
was 10, after the family lost their Livermore ranch to foreclosure. The family’s fortunes continued
on a steady decline from a position of middle-class respectability and land ownership to the
precarious footing of the laboring class, John working as a night watchman and renting their
home by the month. Jack spent a painful adolescence in Oakland and fled the place and its
memories at his first brush with success (Figure 10.7).

With his parentage in question and his family’s declining social status, London wrote from a
very different perspective than Norris. His heroes are pure Anglo-Saxons, who through superior
heredity are able to overcome, for the most part, the obstacles posed by the environmental factors
of capitalism, materialism, and immigration. London identified with his heroes and reworked
his past. With his monetary success, Jack London moved from Oakland to rural Sonoma County.
Oakland became for him a metaphor for the workings of capitalism, its residents representative
of the downtrodden working class. In various guises, he reconstructed his past in this image with
workingman Jack London defeating, disarming, exposing the wily capitalists. As a storyteller, Jack
wrote about what he knew, as a socialist he worked toward the revolution. It is not surprising that
he recast his own history and that of Oakland in his revolutionary sagas. A historical materialist,
Jack focused on social structure and the role of commodification in creating the moral—or in this
case, immoral—foundation of both society at large and the individuals which the system debased.
Jack loved this particular metaphor and used it generously in his writings. London condemned
Capitalism by exaggerating the material deprivations suffered by West Oakland’s working class.
This kept them pure in relation to their morally depraved, spiritually dead employers. In missing
the materialism that increasing pervaded all classes in America at the turn of the 19th century, London lost an opportunity to explore deeper consequences of the industrial revolution. Were workers really better off because they ate steak off white ceramics?

Like many of his contemporaries, he saw that the material benefits of the consumer revolution masked deep inequities and in so doing effectively prevented political revolution. Through labor unions, the working class strove to improve their conditions of employment, not to overthrow the capitalist relations of production itself. According to Jack, some unions did their job too well. In his futuristic revolutionary tome *The Iron Heel*, London wrote: “The members of the favored unions became the aristocracy of labor. They were set apart from the rest of labor. They were better housed, better clothed, better fed, better treated. They were grab-sharing with a vengeance” (1957 [1908]:199).

Jack London was an incredibly successful and prolific author. Having achieved success, London wrote for money: money to finance the building of his boat the *Snark*, for expansion and improvement of his ranch, and for building his fantasy home, the Wolf House. London drew heavily from personal experience for his writing. After moving to Glen Ellen, the inspiration for his work came in part from his travels, his relationship with his wife Charmian, his studies of agriculture, and—at least for the first few years—from his conviction in the inevitability of a Socialist Revolution. However, London’s responsibilities and diverse interests produced a cash flow problem of immense proportions; he took and spent cash advances long before producing final copy. A friend once lamented that Jack had “mortgaged his brain.” He had to write just to make good on these cash advances.

Throughout his career, London’s writing habits were very strict and regimented. He set himself a goal of one thousand words a day, which he reached each morning before socializing or attending to ranch business. By 1912 London was tiring of the pressure of having to write just to keep the ranch going; and he came to hate writing (Watson 1983:3). Nevertheless, London continued to meet his quota, often filling his work with events and scenes close at hand. To meet his goal, Jack London wrote about things that he knew including his homes in Oakland and
Sonoma County. These places figure prominently in many of his best novels: *Martin Eden* (1909), *John Barleycorn* (1913a), and *Valley of the Moon* (1913b), as well as in many essays and short stories. Jack London’s life and writings provide focal points from which much that was important a century ago can be vividly recreated and understood in modern terms.

Jack London simply put words to paper; he did not edit or reflect; his work is an unselfconsciously natural portrait of the times, seen, of course, through the filter of his life. It provides a wealth of everyday details on what his characters wore, what they ate, their surroundings, their pastimes. *Valley of the Moon*, for example, touches on housework, cosmetics, underwear, fishing, gangs, prostitution, roomers, and the interior and neighboring surroundings of 807 Pine Street — the Oakland cottage where London lived as a boy of twelve and where the ASC recently conducted archaeological excavations for the Cypress Replacement Project (Praetzellis and Praetzellis, eds. 2004; Praetzellis 2005). *Martin Eden*, the rags to riches story of a young West Oakland man who becomes a successful author, provides a wealth of detail on laundry work, Portuguese immigrants, dental care, rooming, urban cows, and much more.

In his novel *Valley of the Moon*, Jack London sited his figurative struggle between Capital and Labor in West Oakland—a very logical choice, as the streets and railyards of this city had seen many actual battles. From the front window of his family’s home on Pine Street, Jack had had a good view of the comings and goings at the Southern Pacific Railyards. It is from this cottage that Saxon, London’s heroine, witnessed a brutal confrontation between strikers and Pinkertons. The violence of the event caused the young woman to think deeply about the modern, urban way of life and to conclude that, “jobs are bones” (London 1913b:189) over which poor men fight; and that “the man-world was made by men, and a rotten job it was” (1913b:254). “Her eyes showed her only the smudge of San Francisco, the smudge of Oakland, where men were breaking heads and killing one another, where babies were dying, born and unborn, and where women were weeping with bruised breasts” (London 1913b:256). Even the clams that people gathered from the nearby marsh caused typhoid fever, “still another mark against Oakland, she reflected—Oakland, the man-trap, that poisoned those it did not starve” (London 1913b:286). Hardly material for an Oakland Visitor’s Bureau brochure.

In the midst of her despair, Saxon meets a boy—who surely represents Jack London himself—who casually speaks the words that would change her life: “Oakland,” he says, “is just a place to start from” (London 1913b:267). Saxon then begins her journey to the rural Valley of the Moon, a natural world where men didn’t fight over bones. London’s early Socialist juxtaposition of labor and capital changed to an artist’s conception of the healthy, natural world opposed to the brutal, artificial, man-world that included both labor and capital, by which all human relationships are tainted. His characters’ flight from Oakland and its problems to the countryside mirrored London’s own journey. For Saxon and Billy, at least, the journey had a happy ending.
THE VIEW FROM BELOW

Statistical analyses of the West Oakland/Cypress and San Francisco SF-80 Bayshore and West Approach collections were conducted by archaeologist Dr. Bruce Owen. Owen is a specialist in quantitative methods who has worked in the coastal valleys of Peru for over 20 years. His lack of connection with American historical archaeology benefited this analysis. Owen has none of the preconceived notions or taken-for-granted positions that would be expected of a historical archaeologist and, consequently, no investment in any of the outcomes.

Chapter 1 provides and dates and associations for the archaeological collections used in this analysis. Features from San Francisco are connected primarily with 1868 earthquake deposits and with 1880s sewer construction. As such they span the immediate post-Gold Rush period through the post-Southern Pacific Railroad downturn of the mid 1870s and beyond. Oakland deposits come into being primarily as a by-product of 1880s sewer construction and are associated with the post-Southern Pacific railroad boom related to Oakland’s status as the railroad terminus and hub.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSES: NEIGHBORHOODS AND CITIES

Bruce Owen

The quantitative analysis of archaeological refuse from 19th-century San Francisco and Oakland neighborhoods lived up to its promise, confirming or rejecting ideas based on historical sources and assumptions, and suggesting new ones. Because most of the patterns described here are based on multiple tests of statistical significance, they are reasonably certain to reflect actual behavior in the past. Their interpretations can be debated, but the patterns to be explained are probably real. The detailed statistical report is presented in Appendix F.

Nevertheless, almost all of these general patterns belie tremendous variability in individual and household behavior. While there were real tendencies among, say, Irish households, any given Irish household might have deviated from some or all of them. Noteworthy findings related to the two cities are summarized below.

Maritime, Ironworking, and Railroad Workers Made Different Consumption Choices

People’s consumption decisions may have paralleled the general industries in which they worked. The roles of different industries in San Francisco were difficult to define, however, because although 13 households could be identified as being supported entirely by the maritime industry, only 4 could be categorized as ironworking households. All the rest were either mixed or unknown. Patterns became clearer when Oakland households were added for comparison, but since almost all of the Oakland households were associated with the railroad industry, it is difficult to say how much of the patterning reflects the industries, and how much reflects cultural or economic differences between San Francisco and Oakland. In fact, since in these samples San Francisco was largely a maritime town, and Oakland was largely a railroading town, many of the differences between the cities were essentially differences between the industries, and vice versa (Figure 10.8).

The only significant differences between maritime and ironworking households in San Francisco involved social drugs. Ironworking households consumed more alcohol and tobacco combined, more beer and ale, and less wine and champagne than did maritime households.
Adding 18 railroading households and one maritime household from Oakland brought out some additional contrasts. Maritime households (all but one in San Francisco) drank relatively more wine and champagne, and less liquor, than did the Oakland railroading households, which consumed the most liquor. Maritime households used more white improved earthenware, and less ordinary earthenware. They used proportionally fewer consumables and more equipment in their mix of grooming and health items, took more patent medicines, and had more collecting items than did railroading households. The 4 ironworking households in San Francisco tended to be intermediate on all these counts.

The San Francisco ironworking households consumed higher proportions of hunted game, more beer and ale, and more tobacco than did the Oakland railroading households, while the railroading households drank the most bottled soda water and the ironworking households drank the least, with the mostly San Francisco maritime households in between on all counts. The ironworking households consumed more social drugs in general than did the railroading or maritime households.

Overall, the maritime households tended towards the highest-status consumption patterns, the railroading households were intermediate, and the four ironworking households fairly clearly...
reflected the lowest-status mix of goods. Nevertheless, the patterning by industry was probably more complex than is suggested by a single scale of status. First, the occupation ranks of the maritime and ironworking households were virtually identical, and the railroading households averaged only very slightly lower. By this measure, there was little difference in socioeconomic standing between households supported by the three industries. Second, the consumption patterns are not all consistent. For example, although railroading households consumed the most patent medicines, which were generally associated with low status, they eschewed the game, tobacco, and beer and ale usually preferred by households of lower occupation rank.

While some of the contrasts between these households may relate to general social status differences among the industries, some of the variation must have other causes, such as city-level differences that affected most households in San Francisco in one way and most households in Oakland in another, or non-economic cultural differences between workers in the different industries. The railroad industry might, for example, have discouraged tobacco use, or working in the maritime industry might have increased one’s access to collectable items.

San Franciscans and Oaklanders Consumed Differently

San Francisco households and Oakland households differed in many ways. While households in the two cities were similar in their relative consumption of cheap, medium, and expensive cuts of meat, they differed considerably in the species of meat that they ate. San Francisco households consumed more of both high-status beef and low-status pork, while Oakland households bought more of the intermediate- or indeterminate-status mutton and chicken. Since these differences were not significant in comparisons of San Francisco maritime households and Oakland railroading households, they may reflect other differences between the cities, such as their different geographic positions relative to meat producers and transportation links.

Households in Oakland used more porcelain than did households in San Francisco, which compensated with more opaque porcelain and white improved earthenware. These ceramics suggest somewhat higher average status in Oakland, but that was not corroborated by significant differences in other ceramic markers of status. Since only the difference in white improved earthenware also holds between maritime and railroading households, the ceramic differences, like those in meat species, may relate to factors other than the industries prevalent in each city.

By one measure, households in San Francisco consumed more social drugs overall than did households in Oakland, although the lack of corroborating evidence makes this a tentative conclusion. San Franciscans drank more beer and ale, more wine and champagne, and consumed more tobacco than did Oaklanders, who consumed more liquor. In general, these differences suggest a lower-status pattern of social drug use in San Francisco. The comparison of neighborhoods and the study of status indices (see below and Chapter 11) clarify the dramatic city-level contrasts in social drug use.

While San Franciscans may have consumed more social drugs, Oaklanders took more patent medicines, associated with lower occupation rank and with the railroad industry. Maybe patent medicines were a socially acceptable substitute for some drinking in Oakland or in railroading households. If so, it might be worth considering what beliefs or values might have led Oaklanders or railroad workers to contain their social drug use in this way, as opposed to maritime or San Francisco households.
Households in San Francisco discarded more grooming and health equipment, and a smaller proportion of consumables as a fraction of grooming and health items, than did households in Oakland. The first difference suggests higher status for San Francisco, while the second suggests lower status.

Collecting items were more common in San Francisco than in Oakland, just as they were more common in maritime households than in railroading households. Maritime households might have had greater access to collectable items, or greater interests in the exotic places that they might have represented. Alternatively, the generally more status-oriented society of San Francisco suggested in the status index study may have fostered other reasons to own and display such items.

Some of the differences between San Franciscans and Oaklanders might have reflected differences between the maritime and railroad industries, as noted earlier. The two cities differed in the same ways as did the two industries, plus some additional ones.

On the other hand, the differences between San Francisco and Oakland probably did not reflect overall differences in socioeconomic status. The households from each city comprised similar mixes of occupation ranks. In addition, neither city was consistently on the high or low status side of the comparison, except in one area: social drugs. In this sphere, San Francisco households followed a seemingly lower-status pattern than did households in Oakland.

The patterns in social drugs might suggest differing attitudes towards drinking and tobacco in the two cities. They could also reflect differences between maritime and railroading subcultures, with maritime households consuming more social drugs in general, and proportionally more wine and champagne, beer and ale, and tobacco, in contrast to more restrained railroading households that, when they did drink, preferred liquor. As noted earlier, the characters of the two cities and of the two principal industries might be part and parcel of the same thing. There is a hint, however, that the differences in social drug consumption could be citywide tendencies, rather than reflections of two main industries. The neighborhood analysis below suggests that San Francisco’s generally high tolerance for the low-status pattern of social drug use prevailed not only in the largely maritime Rincon Hill and Mission Bay neighborhoods, but also in Tar Flat, where employment was roughly split between maritime and ironworking industries. Either ironworkers happened to share maritime workers particular attitudes towards social drug use, or there was some citywide effect apart from the influence of the maritime industry.

The Six Neighborhoods in San Francisco and Oakland were Ranked by Status

Adding three Oakland neighborhoods corroborated the findings about the San Francisco neighborhoods (see Chapter 3) and about the differences between San Francisco and Oakland in general. It also defined neighborhood patterns of status and consumption in Oakland, and suggested some additional insights about the differences between the two cities and the nature and expression of social status.

The six neighborhoods fell into a fairly clear rank order by general socioeconomic status, as indicated by the combined neighborhood rank for meat species, meat cut cost, ceramics, and miscellaneous artifacts, although the picture was more complex than it was in San Francisco alone. Social drugs are excluded from this ranking scheme because they were patterned so differently in the two cities, as discussed above. See Appendix F for details of this procedure. From highest to lowest status, the neighborhoods were Rincon Hill and Mission Bay in San Francisco, West of Market, East of Market, and Oakland Point in Oakland, and Tar Flat in San Francisco (Figure
This ranking by consumption preferences corresponds roughly to the ranking of these neighborhoods by mean occupation rank of the primary occupants of households (Figure 10.10), suggesting that both the consumption variables and occupation rank may reflect the same thing: general social status. Neighborhood differences in average occupation rank were fairly minor. The highest and lowest ranking neighborhoods differed by only about the step between a semi-skilled and a skilled worker. The intermediate neighborhoods were even more similar in terms of occupation ranks.
On the other hand, the neighborhoods did differ strongly in the industries in which their residents worked. Although many households could not be assigned to a single industry, based on the known households, most of the residents in all three neighborhoods in Oakland worked in the railroad industry. Most residents of Rincon Hill and Mission Bay worked in the maritime industry. Tar Flat was the only neighborhood with a strongly mixed workforce, including both maritime and ironworking households. The Tar Flat neighborhood stood out in many ways, and either the presence of ironworkers or the mixed nature of the neighborhood might have contributed to that mix.

Material Status is an Emergent Quality across Multiple Spheres of Consumption Behavior

While the status ranking of the three San Francisco neighborhoods was consistent across most spheres of consumption except social drugs, the rankings of the six neighborhoods depended on which artifacts were considered. Neighborhood rankings based on any single type of artifact, such as porcelain or patent medicine bottles, did not agree well. It would be foolish to select any single artifact as an index of general social status.

Neighborhood rankings based on multiple artifact types within a single material category, such as porcelain, export and exotic wares, and earthenware, or four different meat variables, tended to agree with each other better (Figures 10.11, 10.12, and 10.13). All have a general downward trend from high-status Rincon Hill to low-status Tar Flat. Each would result in a similar, but slightly different rank order of neighborhoods if used on its own.

Ranking the neighborhoods by combinations of artifact types across multiple categories, such as several ceramic variables and several meat variables, produced the most consistent rankings. That is, adding meat and ceramic ranks together caused a slight change in the implied rank order (Figure 10.14), and finally adding in miscellaneous artifacts caused no further change in the neighborhood ranking at all (Figure 10.9). The more variables that are considered, the more the neighborhood rank order approaches a consensus that averages out the differences between rankings by any single artifact or artifact category.
This cumulative or averaging quality of gross social status ranking might seem obvious, or even a mathematical necessity, but these archaeological data (detailed in Appendix F) empirically demonstrate it. The social status ranking of neighborhoods was an emergent, collective characteristic that was only apparent when a range of decisions about multiple kinds of consumption were averaged or lumped.

Social status is an emergent, cumulative characteristic probably because only when a wide sample of consumption decisions are combined does the approximate total amount of resources being allocated to all consumption (that is, the household’s general level of disposable income) begin to become apparent. While a beef fancier might buy more beef than his social status would
otherwise suggest, he presumably compensates by also buying more inexpensive pork or cheaper cuts than is typical for his social status. He might look like a wealthy consumer if we consider only beef or a poor one if we consider only pork. We can only begin to appreciate his total budget or broad socioeconomic standing by adding up a number of his consumption practices.

That the neighborhood status rankings inferred independently from a number of different categories of material remains (meat, ceramics, etc.) fit reasonably well to a single ordering of neighborhoods supports the notion of a single gross scale of socioeconomic status, as does the rough correspondence between the neighborhood ranking and the neighborhoods’ average occupation ranks. On the other hand, the discrepancies in this correspondence suggest that occupation rank may not have been the only factor that affected people’s consumption choices.

Consumption Choices that Reflected the Prestige or Wealth of People’s Neighborhoods

People in higher-ranked neighborhoods tended to buy more expensive cuts of meat, while people in lower-ranked neighborhoods tended to buy more medium-priced cuts, although these patterns did not fit the neighborhood ranking perfectly.

Similarly, households in higher-ranking neighborhoods tended to discard trash with a lower percentage of ceramics in it, just as households with higher occupation ranks did. On the other hand, the amounts of various ceramic wares such as porcelain, export or exotic wares, overseas porcelain, white improved earthenware, and basic wares that households discarded did not particularly reflect the status rank of their neighborhood. Households in the highest-ranked Rincon Hill neighborhood did discard the least low-status earthenware.

People who lived in higher-ranked neighborhoods generally bought more grooming and health items overall, more grooming and health equipment specifically, more perfume and primping items, and fewer patent medicines. The exception to all these patterns was Tar Flat, where people discarded somewhat more grooming and health refuse, more perfume and primping items, and fewer patent medicine bottles than would be expected based on their neighborhood’s low status rank.
Households in different neighborhoods discarded significantly different amounts of apothecary or druggist’s bottles, but the amounts do not correspond to their neighborhood’s status rank, their use of patent medicines, the city they lived in, or the industry they worked in. Residents of the West of Market neighborhood in Oakland were the biggest consumers of apothecary or druggist’s items. Maybe West of Market residents happened to have easier access to apothecary shops than did others.

As in the analysis within San Francisco, households in Tar Flat stood out for using almost three times as much bottled soda water as the next closest neighborhood, Mission Bay. Adding the Oakland neighborhoods to the comparison only further emphasizes the dramatically higher consumption of soda water in Tar Flat.

The comparison of the two cities found that San Franciscans generally had more collectable items, and the neighborhood analysis confirmed this strong pattern across all neighborhoods of both cities. Households in San Francisco’s highest-status Rincon Hill neighborhood averaged over an order of magnitude more collecting items than those in any Oakland neighborhood. Even the lowest-status San Francisco Tar Flat neighborhood had substantially more collectable items than did any Oakland neighborhood did.

The strong differences between the two cities in meat species consumption was also confirmed by the neighborhood analysis, since all the neighborhoods in each city followed the patterns. For example, households in every San Francisco neighborhood consumed more beef than did households in every Oakland neighborhood.

San Franciscans Viewed Alcohol and Tobacco Differently than Oaklanders Did

The one artifact category that did not conform at all to the neighborhood ranking was social drugs (Figure 10.15). The reason was the dramatic difference in social drug use between the two cities. All three San Francisco neighborhoods had much greater proportions of refuse related to alcohol and tobacco than did any of the Oakland neighborhoods (Table 10.4). All three San Francisco neighborhoods had much lower status ranks according to combined social drug
variables than did any of the Oakland neighborhoods. The differences within each city were small by comparison. By Oakland standards, even the highest-status neighborhood in San Francisco was off the low end of the social status scale for social drug use. Social drugs were apparently broadly more acceptable at all status levels throughout San Francisco. In effect, the social status significance of social drugs was measured on a different scale in each city.

These differing attitudes towards social drugs probably reflected cultural differences between the two cities, more than differences between the principal industries there. While all three Oakland neighborhoods were associated with the railroad industry, and the two higher-status San Francisco neighborhoods were primarily supported by the maritime industry, the small sample of classifiable households in San Francisco’s Tar Flat suggests that Tar Flat had a mix of maritime and ironworking households. Nevertheless, people in Tar Flat used social drugs much as did those in the other two San Francisco neighborhoods. The explanation probably lies not in a contrast between San Francisco’s maritime industry and Oakland’s railroad industry, but in differences that affected each city as a whole. For example, differing city laws regarding alcohol sales or public drunkenness might have affected social drug use city-wide, crosscutting the different industries represented in San Francisco neighborhoods. Alternatively, the cities could have differed in their alcohol and tobacco distribution networks, public water quality, or in other ways that affected people in every neighborhood of the city. San Francisco’s renowned tolerance for behavior that is problematic elsewhere may have been present already in the 19th century in its relatively high use of low-status alcoholic beverages and tobacco compared to people of similar social statuses in Oakland.

Being Poor in San Francisco was Different from Being Poor in Oakland

The neighborhood ranking is based on the finding that rankings by different combinations of variables tend to converge on a single, consensus order. This, in turn, probably works because totals of many different expenditures begin to reflect a household’s overall budget. A corollary of this cumulative or total-budget view of social status is that there could be different ways to be high or low on the social status scale. Low-status households all have a small budget, for example, but they might divvy it up in different ways. That is, the clarity gained by ranking neighborhoods by overall status comes at the cost of obscuring different consumption priorities in neighborhoods of similar status. The evidence from San Francisco and Oakland suggests that
neighborhoods did indeed vary within the single scale of status. Specifically, being poor in San Francisco was different from being poor in Oakland.

The lowest-ranking neighborhood was Tar Flat in San Francisco, followed by Oakland Point in Oakland. The households in these two neighborhoods expressed their low status in different ways. People in San Francisco’s Tar Flat ate a dramatically lower-status mix of meat species and cuts, but used relatively more moderate-status assortments of ceramic and miscellaneous artifacts.

The two low-status neighborhoods also differed in some more subtle ways. Households in Tar Flat consumed mixes of meat that were richer in both the preferred beef and the low-status pork, and were richer in both high and low cost cuts. Households in Oakland Point consumed more moderate mixes both by species, with more of the middle-status mutton, and by cost, with more medium-cost cuts. Put another way, low status in San Francisco’s Tar Flat involved more extremes in consumption, perhaps boom and bust spending, or more emphasis on occasional particularly good meals compensated for by particularly poor ones. Low status in Oakland’s Oakland Point involved a more measured husbanding of resources, or more value placed on consistently eating decently, if not particularly well.

In the same way, households in Tar Flat used a more diverse range of ceramics. Tar Flat households discarded more overseas porcelain, opaque porcelain, and export/exotic wares than did their comparably low-status peers in Oakland. All of these wares suggest higher status, and all might be linked to the maritime trade that dominated San Francisco, even though it was mixed with ironworking in Tar Flat. Tar Flat households also discarded more of the low-status basic wares than did Oakland households. As in their meat purchases, people in Oakland Point stuck to a more moderate mix of ceramic wares.

Low status in San Francisco, like every status there, involved more social drugs, wine and champagne, beer and ale, and tobacco than did low status, or any status, in Oakland. Low status in San Francisco, like all statuses, involved more collecting than it did in Oakland. Low status in San Francisco’s Tar Flat involved drinking much more bottled soda water than did low status in Oakland Point, perhaps reflecting some geographic aspect of Tar Flat such as a poor or absent piped water supply.

Moderate and high status was expressed more consistently across neighborhoods, except for the city-level differences in social drug use. Higher-status people may have been more connected to regional networks of interactions, and may have shared more homogenized, widespread concepts about appropriate consumption.