

# *Nevada*

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Historical Society Quarterly



WINTER 2009



## *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*

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## Historical Society Quarterly

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## Editor's Note

This is an unusual issue of the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*. It is a thematic issue, dealing mainly with one subject. In this case, the subject is the connections between Basques and environmental history. John Bieter, the author of *An Enduring Legacy: A History of the Basques in Idaho* and a professor at Boise State University, has provided an introduction to the articles that follow. Rather than repeating Professor Bieter's fine analysis of the value of these articles, I would like to comment on how this issue came about and about some changes coming to this journal.

First, the articles you have seen published here emerged from a variety of venues. Some have been seminar papers by students whose professors encouraged them to pursue publication (as was the case with my first published article here nearly—gulp—a quarter of a century ago). Others have come from professors who conduct research and are eager to share some of their findings. And non-academics with an interest in Nevada have sent in work that referees have approved and we have printed.

The articles in this issue came about differently. One of the things I do as editor is scan conference programs for presentations that might become articles in the *Quarterly*. This issue consists of the papers from a panel of the American Society for Environmental History's 2008 meeting in Boise. When I saw it listed, I invited Professor Bieter as panel chair and the five presenters to submit their work to the *Quarterly*. They revised their original papers and sent them in, and two evaluators made suggestions to which they responded. The result is an issue focused on what may seem to some like an arcane subject—but which actually is very diverse, combining environmental, ethnic, social, legal, political, Native American, and local history to examine an understudied aspect of the Basque experience in the West. It also provides us with an opportunity to devote some attention to an important group that has affected—and been affected by—the Nevada and western experiences.

This issue will reach you a little later than we prefer, and we apologize for that. Unfortunately, we, too, are feeling the effects of the economic crisis. As you may know, the Nevada Historical Society has suffered through budget cutbacks and setbacks, along with the rest of the Department of Cultural Affairs—and, at this writing, more may loom in the future. We are doing our best to continue to produce what we hope is a high-quality historical journal that comes out four times a year and appeals to both academics and the general public.

But we will be doing so in the future without one of the key cogs in our little operation here. Aware of the budget problem and presented with a new opportunity elsewhere, Mella Rothwell Harmon resigned as the society's curator of history in 2009, but has continued as managing editor of this journal. This will be her last issue. We are not sure of what comes next, except that we will continue to try to get out a journal you will like, but we are sure of this much: Whatever you have liked about this journal for the last few years has had a great deal to do with Mella's hard work, attention to detail, and good cheer. Further, she has done all of this work as managing editor from Reno while I have been serving as editor in Las Vegas. E-mail and phone calls have made the four hundred and forty miles seem like a lot less, thanks to her. We will miss her as a colleague, but she will remain among us as a friend, reviewer, and contributor.

We always look forward to hearing from our readers and welcome submissions of articles or ideas for articles. Please feel free to e-mail me with your comments and, yes, corrections, at [michael.green@csn.edu](mailto:michael.green@csn.edu). Thank you, and happy reading!

Michael Green  
*Editor-in-Chief*

# *Basque Environmental History*

JOHN BIETER

“What are you doing?” [*Zer egiten ari zara?*] This is what the mother of my host family said to me while I worked on their family farm. I was using an old, hand-made wooden rake to gather grass and was raking the easiest way—down the mountain slope of the field. “Don’t ever pull the grass down the hill, always pull uphill. We don’t want to lose the mountainside.” This was my introduction to Basque environmental history.

I was working on a small farm not far from the homestead that my grandfather left when he came to America. It was an intensive language-immersion program sponsored by the Basque government and designed for those who wanted to immerse themselves in the language, customs, and way of life of the baserri—the Basque farmhouse and the traditional icon of Basque culture. The interaction between people and the land, the identity that this forged, the desire to re-learn and preserve this way of life—all of these issues were at the heart of what I was doing. They are also central to the issues that emerge in the articles that make up this issue of the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, which is devoted to Basque environmental history.

In “Forrest Gump Was Basque: Prospects for Basque Environmental History” Amahia Mallea attempts to convince both environmental historians and those in Basque studies to gain new perspectives by reading in each other’s field.

John Bieter is an associate professor in the History Department at Boise State University. He received a B.A. in Economics/Social Science from the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota, his M.A. in History from Boise State University and earned his doctoral degree from Boston College. He is the author of *An Enduring Legacy: A History of the Basques in Idaho* and serves as the Assistant Director of the Boise State University Basque Studies Center.

Her creatively titled piece speaks to the reality of encountering the Basques throughout global environmental history. Similar to the film's Forrest Gump, who appears in some of America's most defining post-World War II events, Basques arise in key historical episodes: European mercantilism, the maritime history of the Atlantic, the exploration and colonization of the Americas, and the ensuing transnational exchange. However, few historians identify the Basques in these episodes, and very few explicitly connect the environment with the Basques in these events. Mallea corrects this shortcoming.

She uses two scenarios to depict the "island and the diaspora" that she argues have dominated Basque history. In the first scenario, she uses an urban environmental history of the city of Bilbao and the Nervion River to highlight the Basques' role in whaling, shipbuilding, fishing, and the iron industry. She accurately concludes that the history of the "Columbia exchange" and "ecological imperialism" is part of Basque history as well. Basques have been part of an "imperial diaspora."

In the second scenario, Mallea uses the rural region of the Urdaibai River to depict migration, the diaspora, and use of symbol. "If Bilbao and the Nervion River represent the Basque connection to the world, the town of Gernika and the Urdaibai River symbolize the wellspring of Basque culture." From prehistoric cave paintings to the Nazi bombing of the region made famous in Pablo Picasso's *Guernica*, Mallea depicts the Basque heartland and the ironic juxtaposition of an intense love of this land and a long history of leaving it. The Basque labor diaspora resulted in Basques working as "Roman mercenaries, servants, soldiers, global merchants, secretaries, friars, accountants, fishermen and herders" and Basques appeared in disproportionate numbers among those emigrating to America. Moreover, Basque artists have used the materials of this rural region to inform cultural symbolism and politics. The stone, wood, and iron materials of Basque artists Jorge Oteiza, Eduardo Chillida, and Agustin Ibarrola explicitly connect rural Basque identity and traditions with elements of the environment. Not coincidentally, this region boasts some of the strongest Basque nationalists as well as strong adherents to the environmental movement.

While Mallea's essay broadly frames Basque environmental history, and uses examples from the southern (or Spanish) Basque region, D. Seth Murray brings our attention to Iparralde, the northern Basque country. In "Enduring Conflicts and Cooperation: The Contested Spaces of the Basque Countryside," Murray sketches the historical ecology of Basque agriculture from the eighteenth century to today. He focuses his study on the "vast grassy meadows and forests of the mountains" designated as "common-pool resources." These commons are essential to pastoralism in Iparralde since they allow farmers to graze their sheep in mountain pastures from May to October, while they are growing hay on their own fields.

Murray then proceeds to document historical arrangements that encouraged cooperation among Basque farmers such as the *foruak* (Basque customary

practices that were codified into law), which established and maintained a land-tenure system that ensured access to certain resources regardless of social rank. Until the French Revolution, representatives of households would gather at meetings in each of the three provinces of Iparralde to determine individuals' rights and responsibilities regarding common-pool resources.

However, Murray also points to instances of conflict. Specifically, he documents violent incidents between communities of the north and south sides of the Basque Country as well as conflicts between farmers over access to common-pool resources within the same community. Murray emphasizes the significance of demographic growth of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This population increase, alongside the practice of primogeniture, resulted in migration and new homes and villages being built near common-pool resources that violated previously agreed upon rules.

Murray contemporizes the debate by citing examples of cooperation: the *Syndicats de vallees*, which essentially reproduced many of the rights and responsibilities previously outlined in the *foruak*, and instances of *auzolan*, or communally shared labor for farming practices that are particularly labor intensive, such as stocking fodder for the winter or hay baling. He concludes with examples of conflicts that modern-day practices present. He cites instances where *auzolan* has diminished and demonstrates where the multiplication of non-farming actors (recreational hikers and bikers, bird watchers, hang gliders) on the land, together with farming innovations such as introducing different breeds of sheep, has resulted in an increase in conflict rather than cooperation.

Michael Baldrice and Carrie Smith present a case for preservation of cultural artifacts in their article "Research, Management, and Interpretation of Historic Sheep Camps on the East Side of the Tahoe National Forest." Baldrice and Smith trace the establishment of the sheep industry in the American West and the subsequent increase in government regulation. They proceed to document Basque participation in the sheep business and focus their attention on four sheep camps in the Tahoe National Forest. Baldrice and Smith provide detail as to the specific owners, site structures of the camps and their eligibility for placement on the National Register of Historic Places. In conclusion, the authors highlight preservation efforts with respect to certain sheep camps and particularly the Basque brick ovens, "the most visible evidence of Basque culture in these camps."

The preservation of these camps and Basque brick ovens presents another interesting chapter in the changing interaction between Basques and the environment. Today, sheep-industry practices such as portable corrals and modern pick-up have made all but one of the four sheep camps obsolete. However, preservation efforts have ensued at each of these sites. Although the Whiskey Creek sheep camp falls within a wilderness area in which Forest Service policy deems historic structures to be "incompatible with wilderness character" and calls for their removal, the Forest Service supervisor "made the decision that the cultural values of the site were more important and the site has been preserved."

Conflict also remains central to Kevin Hatfield's paper, "We Were Not Tramp Sheepmen: Joe Odiaga and Acculturation, Resistance, and Identity in the Bizkaian Basque Community, 1890-1946." Hatfield tells the story of the arrest of Basque sheepmen Joe Odiaga, Cleto Achabal, and Joaquin Arte for trespassing in violation of the Taylor Grazing Act (TGA) of 1934. Although the sheepmen consciously committed these acts of civil disobedience to challenge the constitutionality of the TGA, Hatfield highlights greater social acceptance as the true result of these efforts.

The arrests of the sheepmen represented the culmination in the Nampa Triangle (western Idaho, eastern Oregon, and northern Nevada) of the Basque community's legal campaign to defend their customary grazing grounds on the public domain. Through political organization, administrative hearings, civil lawsuits, criminal "test" cases, and finally civil disobedience, the Basques sought to protect their rights. However, in this process, "a focused legal contest regarding land rights, gradually transformed into a cultural discourse renegotiating the individual and group identity of the Basques." They realized that any long-term legal victory largely depended upon their success in establishing their social legitimacy as members of the broader community. The reputation of the Basques as "tramp sheepmen"—along with the derogatory cultural traits such as landlessness, tax evasion, draft dodging, transience, and clannishness—would have to be overcome.

Hatfield argues that the documentary evidence Basques presented for adjudication—evidence of property ownership, long-term leaseholds, tax receipts, military service, naturalized citizenship, and permanent residency—were directed toward two overlapping audiences: "federal officials determining their legal status as federal grazing permittees and non-Basque residents questioning their social standing as acculturated members of the community." The drive to protect small and minority-owned sheep outfits brought together the Basques, other ethnic groups, and the broader community. Hatfield maintains that this chapter serves as a testimony to the Basques and their contribution as honorably recognized members of the community.

From sheep-camp preservation to episodes of conflict and cooperation, this issue of the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* surveys an emerging field of study. The following articles deepen our understanding of the symbiotic relationship between the Basques and the environment. Throughout time, Basques have played significant roles in global environmental history. However, this viewing lens rarely has been applied. In addressing this shortcoming, the following issue invites more work to be done in this field.

# *Forrest Gump Was Basque*

## *Prospects For Basque Environmental History*

AMAHIA MALLEA

The Basques have something in common with Forrest Gump. *Forrest Gump* was an award-winning movie from the 1990s starring Tom Hanks, whose character, as a child and adult, inadvertently participated in some of America's most defining post-World War II events. He innocently taught Elvis to shimmy and was present for the civil-rights movement, the Vietnam War, and the invention of the smiley face. An unintentionally lucky "common man" who was always in the right place at the right time, the character Forrest Gump narrated American history.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, we can use Basques to narrate global environmental history. It would be difficult to study European mercantilism, the marine history of the Atlantic, the exploration and colonization of the Americas, and the exchange of animals, seed, and germs without encountering Basques. For example, the popular author Mark Kurlansky, in writing histories of cod (the fish that changed the world) and salt (also a world history), could not avoid the Gump-like Basques who were seafarers engaged in fishing, shipping, and trade. Hence, amidst these commodity histories he wrote *The Basque History of the World*, a study focused on the Basque Country. Kurlansky's work on cod and salt suggests ways that environmental history can be applied to Basque studies, and his survey of Basque history lays groundwork for other, more global interpretations.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps most promising is that historians can use Basques to narrate a rich environmental history by allowing a focus on place and process without being bounded by the nation-state.<sup>3</sup>

Amahia Mallea teaches environmental history at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa.

The two extremes of Basque history are represented by the island and the diaspora. The island refers to the Basque Country itself, an historic region with unique cultural and linguistic traits. With the exception of the arable land in the Ebro River valley, most of the terrain is not that of a breadbasket; the country is coastal and mountainous as it straddles the Pyrenees in a region that today is part of northern Spain and southwestern France. Basques have inhabited this land for hundreds of generations and, as one historian of the Basques writes, place and people "cannot be separated one from another."<sup>4</sup> The Basque Country is a good place to study people and place over the long term, an historical practice the Annales school of historians called *longue durée*.<sup>5</sup> In some ways, the Basque Country is physically, historically, and culturally isolated, yet Basques have migrated beyond cultural or political borders and have a *global* history. Basques are just as likely to be in Nevada or Argentina as they are in the Basque Country. Even with dispersal, the maintenance of a strong sense of identity makes it possible to follow Basques across the diaspora.

This essay seeks to formulate a Basque environmental history by encouraging environmental historians—who investigate facets of the relationship between humans and their surroundings—to consider the Basques as a subject of inquiry and by encouraging those in Basque studies to read in the field of environmental history, thus providing new lenses to view both fields. By presenting two scenarios for examining Basque environmental history, I sketch ways in which these two fields can be joined. I touch broadly on the global history of the Basques in the last millennium and present local and global aspects of that story—and the connections between. The Gump-like qualities of the Basques provide opportunities for tracing and telling a local *and* global story.

#### SCENARIO 1: AN URBAN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY OF THE CITY OF BILBAO AND THE NERVION RIVER

The city of Bilbao is at least seven hundred years old and located on the Nervion River (called Ubaizabal in the Basque language), which flows into the Bay of Biscay.<sup>6</sup> Blessed by "favorable economic geographical circumstances," as one historian put it, Bilbao was one of the most important cities in the commodity web of the late Middle Ages, serving as a bridge between northern Europe and Iberia.<sup>7</sup> By 1350, Basque merchants were sailing from ports in Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa carrying Castilian wool, Basque-mined iron, and Atlantic whale oil, pausing to pick up wine in Bordeaux, then delivering to Flanders and returning with textiles and manufactured goods. Drawing on the region's timber and iron resources, Bilbao became a shipbuilding center that supplied both sailors and ships for whaling, fishing, trade, and navigation around the world. By 1500, the port of Bilbao was in "full power," funneling goods in and out of Europe, and connecting the continents with vessels as large as seven hundred

and fifty tons.<sup>8</sup> Basque ships, as an historian noted, were an “essential” part of the “American run.”<sup>9</sup>

Already dominant in the whaling industry, Basques exploited the fisheries of the north Atlantic into the eighteenth century. Ships left Bilbao with locally mined salt or picked up salt in Portugal before heading to Atlantic fisheries. It is likely that cod fisherman were in the Americas before 1492 because, only a few years later, a European voyager reported seeing in Newfoundland dozens of Basque cod boats and their on-shore processing systems that involved Native Americans. Cod was an important commodity in the Triangle Trade and a main source of protein on the Iberian peninsula and for slaves in the Caribbean.<sup>10</sup> By the 1700s, the golden age of Basque whaling and cod fishing was over. Today, researchers are studying whalebone DNA found at the old Basque processing ports in Labrador to determine whether over-fishing played a role in the decline of some species of whales.<sup>11</sup> The legacy of Basque cod fishing survives on the Canadian coast with names like Port aux Basques.

In addition to shipbuilding, sailing, and fishing, Basques also mined and manufactured metals for use in Europe and the Americas. The presence of ironworks and foundries can be found in the folktale of “Patxi the Blacksmith.” Patxi’s many bad deeds made him a good candidate for hell, but the blacksmith foiled each devil sent to retrieve him, so the devils returned to hell empty-handed. The blacksmith’s favorite ploy was to trick the devils into getting stuck in pitch. Among other things, pitch was used as a sealant in shipbuilding. Patxi was such a mean trickster that eventually hell refused to take him, and he got into heaven by default. The tale mentions that Patxi made “axes, plowshares, and other iron implements” which presumably were consumed locally, providing evidence of a mining, timber, and farming economy as well as domestic manufacture.<sup>12</sup> The adoption of Basque names to refer to iron implements—the bayonet is named for the city Baiona, for example—shows the association between Basques and iron. Local manufacturers like the fictional Patxi were eventually outmoded by a technological transition—the use of larger furnaces to manufacture steel—that centralized production and labor. By the nineteenth century, it was Bilbao that was to meet the increased British demand for iron ore and steel, helping fuel an industrial revolution and forging a close alliance between Basque and British industrialists.<sup>13</sup>

While the focus of an urban environmental history could remain on Bilbao, this city and its river clearly had a hinterland of oak forests, mines, and merchant families, and wider circles of influence in faraway lands. Illustrating this at the end of the seventeenth century, a writer noted of Bilbao and its river, “From here, the estuary is filled with foreign ships, which bring and carry away merchandise, and that which they take most is wool and iron, with so many ships and with smaller craft as well that cross it, the estuary is like another settlement of people, moving upon the water.”<sup>14</sup> This writer described the port as a floating factory, its sailors and merchandise-laden ships as a mobile community connecting a

global marketplace. The locally produced and traded goods included "planks, nails, rigging and other equipment," wool, herbs for dyeing, "hides, wine, olive oil, cod, fish salt, wheat, bacon, building materials, barrels, silver and gold"—all of it connecting the American continents, the Caribbean, and Europe.<sup>15</sup>

Basque history overlaps with food history, an increasingly popular historical lens that illuminates cultural, economic, and environmental change beyond borders.<sup>16</sup> The aforementioned fishing for whale and cod, and the continental exchange of foodstuffs like tomatoes, peppers, chocolate, corn, potatoes, tobacco, and domesticated animals all had ramifications from the global to the local level. The continental collision changed ecology, trade, agriculture, and diets around the world, as well as in Bilbao. For example, a quick look at a Basque menu reveals the importance of seafood and the adoption of New World crops to create traditional dishes.

Bilbao was to become a city whose industrial ovens lit the night and darkened the daytime sky. Rural Basques and non-Basque immigrants flocked to the city for work. Bilbao had twenty thousand people by the early nineteenth century and a hundred thousand by the end of the century, making it one of the most important industrialized areas in Spain. Today its metropolitan area, snaking along the river, nears one million urbanites. A nineteenth-century Basque, Miguel de Unamuno, wrote of Bilbao's river: "You are, Nervion, the history of the Villa, you are her past and her future, you are memory always turning into hope and on your firm riverbed a fleeing flow."<sup>17</sup> Unamuno considered the river central to the successes of Bilbao. The river's "fleeing flow" was a benefit because industrialization and urbanization were dependent upon the river's services—like the carriage of industrial and human waste.

By the late twentieth century, Bilbao had become a rusty, depressed, polluted, post-industrial city. But out of the industrial ashes arose a model city, dramatically symbolized by the shiny, titanium Guggenheim museum.<sup>18</sup> Defying the grimy city, even making it sexy, was Frank Gehry's Basque Guggenheim, which secured Bilbao's place in the global art world. Led by nationalists, the Basque government paid handsomely to secure the museum, a design that seems to honor the city's past. It does so not only because the museum resembles a whale or a ship, but also because it continues to connect Basques to the wider world; as a hip tourist destination, the museum helps redefine Bilbao as a global city, not a Spanish one.

The Nervion River was so polluted and had such low oxygen levels that it was considered dead, yet the museum kisses the Nervion River. Since the 1990s, the museum and other regenerative infrastructural developments such as a parkway, bridge, and cultural center have brought people back to the river's banks. A clean-up campaign to reduce raw sewage and industrial waste has been partially successful since 1990, and "it is no longer taboo to look at the river," as a Basque anthropologist put it.<sup>19</sup>

Soot and rust have given way to titanium and tourists, but the juxtaposition goes beyond architecture and is evident in the social landscape as well. Hillsides

dotted with sheep are visible from the center of the city, and urban gardens are notched into every possible cranny. These gardens provide subsistence food to the working classes who migrated to the city from rural areas. These squatter gardens are a significant part of the city's landscape but likely will disappear in a generation.<sup>20</sup> The city is socially coded by proximity to industry; the declining, industrial left bank houses the working classes while the flourishing right bank contains middle-class suburbs like Getxo, the University of the Basque Country, and an exurban shopping mall. A comparison of environmental and health statistics between the river banks would be an important addition to this urban environmental history.

As these examples suggest, Bilbao's urban environmental history presents an opportunity for historians. Through navigation and exploration, as merchants and missionaries in search of fishing grounds and gold, Basques helped secure wealth in the Americas for Spain and Europe. They were part of an "imperial diaspora."<sup>21</sup> Basque people, their cities, rivers, vessels, and trade goods were at the forefront of colonization, mercantilism, industrialization, and capitalism. This means that the history of the "Columbian exchange" and "ecological imperialism" is Basque history, too.<sup>22</sup> Bilbao and the Nervion River were anything but isolated; they were the channel through which people, ideas, raw resources, and finished goods passed.<sup>23</sup> By focusing on this specific place, we are able to examine the environmental history of the Basques, a city, a region, and the world.

#### SCENARIO 2: THE RURAL REGION AND URDAIBAI RIVER: MIGRATION, DIASPORA AND SYMBOL

Only twenty miles east from Bilbao and the Nervion is the Urdaibai River valley. The Urdaibai and its watershed are characterized not by city and industry, but by small towns, agriculture, and fishing. If Bilbao and the Nervion River represent the Basque connection to the world, the town of Gernika and the Urdaibai River symbolize the wellspring of Basque culture.

The Urdaibai watershed contains significant historical landmarks and cultural symbols. In the rocky mountains overlooking the valley, caves containing prehistoric paintings are juxtaposed against giant white wind turbines. The mid-valley town of Gernika is the provincial capital and location of the Tree of Gernika. This white oak tree (the youngest of a succession of oaks) represents Basque legal and political independence, and its acorns have been planted by Basques elsewhere in the world as statements of identity and history.<sup>24</sup> Under this tree, the centuries-old laws governing the Basque region (called *lege zaharrak* in Basque or *fueros* in Spanish) were upheld. These laws covered topics of interest to environmental historians, like land-use practices. Gernika was immortalized by Pablo Picasso in his painting *Guernica*, which depicts the violence of early

World War II, when Nazi airplanes purposely bombed the town on a market day in 1937 and killed many civilians. The painting belongs to the world as much as it does to the Basques. Finally, at the end of the Urdaibai watershed is an estuary and Bermeo, the most significant fishing town.

Mountainous terrain and a lack of arable land in valleys like this one have resulted in an agricultural system characterized by small farms averaging twenty acres in size, subsistence crops, and pasturage in high, steep, rocky, or forested areas. Agriculture never became very mechanized or profitable in this limiting landscape and this was a major factor contributing to out-migration.<sup>25</sup> The folktale "Makilakixki" illustrates the common experience of migration and a system in which young people worked away from home. The story tells of a father who had sent his eldest son "far away to work as a servant" in a "certain household," and the son returned home with a gift for his service—a donkey that defecated gold nuggets. The story revolves around the lessons of the gift but, for our purposes, it is significant that in "Makilakixki," all of the sons eventually left to work temporarily elsewhere.<sup>26</sup>

Basque society has long been marked by migration, resulting in a "Basque labor diaspora," as one researcher put it.<sup>27</sup> Basque men worked as Roman mercenaries, servants, soldiers, global merchants, secretaries, friars, accountants, fishermen, and herders, and their numbers were represented "disproportionately" among those working in and moving to the Americas.<sup>28</sup> Consequently, daughters were considered viable candidates for primogeniture inheritance, and the Basque region had a high percentage of female land ownership. Environmental historians—seeking to understand both how society, economy, and culture shaped the land, and how the environment shaped people—could lean in to tell us about the landscapes of migration. What knowledge, assumptions, and practices existed, were transferred abroad, and what returned? From the busy port in Bilbao, we already know that landscapes of production and consumption were evolving in the Americas and Europe. How were the environments that Basques emigrated from and migrated to altered?

Examples of migration are diverse and include Juan Sebastian Elkano, the first to circumnavigate the globe (the trip's leader, Ferdinand Magellan, whose name continues to be associated with the voyage, was killed in the Philippines).<sup>29</sup> Basques influential in religious affairs include the founder of the Jesuits, Ignacio Loyola; the first bishop of the Philippines, Domingo Salazar; and the first bishop of Mexico, Juan Zumarraga. Some Basques led revolutions in the Americas, including Simon Bolivar and Agustin Iturbide. In the eighteenth century, Basques in Mexico and the present-day American Southwest established missions, served as politicians, and directed ranching, agricultural, and mining interests, including Juan Bautista de Anza.<sup>30</sup> In the mid nineteenth century Basques searching for gold established ranches that provided California miners and the Bay Area with meat, linking them to a complex set of social, economic, and environmental changes in the American West. As mining and herding expanded in the West,

Basques migrated up from the pampas of Argentina and Chile and later from the Basque Country. Herding was a common occupation in labor dispersal, and domesticated animals were a significant agent of ecological change.<sup>31</sup>

These new immigrants came to the American West as laborers, which gave them first-hand knowledge of the landscape and its resources. Often, such laborers were on the front lines of environmental changes as they dug irrigation ditches, cut forests, and grazed sheep.<sup>32</sup> In the case of sheepherders, many left their diaries behind on the soft bark of aspen trees. These tree carvings can help us understand land-use practices and ecological changes, not to mention the cultural aspects of "wilderness."<sup>33</sup> The heyday of sheepherding, the job most associated with Basque immigrant men, occurred early in the twentieth century, just as Americans were adopting new concepts of land use—like preservation and conservation.

John Muir, iconic environmentalist and founder of the Sierra Club, mentions crossing paths with a Basque shepherd in the Sierra Nevada. "The California sheep owner is in haste to get rich, and often does," remarked Muir, as he traveled the Sierra Nevada in 1869. The "sheepman," however, usually is "degraded" and rarely rises to the same socioeconomic status as the owner. Muir noted a similar degradation of the pastures and mountains due to poor grazing methods.<sup>34</sup> Like Muir, many regarded herders with disdain and considered them "tramps;" although they spent many months of the year in the beautiful mountains of the West, herders were considered laborers, unschooled in the aesthetics of the outdoors and more likely to tarnish than to appreciate nature.<sup>35</sup>

The male immigrant recruited for herding experienced a dichotomy of wilderness and civilization. Work involved isolated months in the mountains punctuated by visits to town and stays in Basque hotels.<sup>36</sup> Hotels were, in the words of William Douglass, the "key social institution of the Basque immigrant Diaspora."<sup>37</sup> Those hotels were a part of city infrastructure, places that undermined prohibition and were subject to progressive reform—sometimes undermining it, too, as was the case when a Basque hotel owner warned off the city sanitarian with a gun when the public health official recommended new plumbing. Other social practices, like butchering animals to make chorizos and housing corpses in hotels before funerals, may have bumped up against sanitarians and the new sanitary principles of American cities.<sup>38</sup>

Scholars are increasingly noticing that, over the centuries, Basques have tended to keep their identity.<sup>39</sup> Young male sheepherders who had immigrated from around Gernika, for example, may have returned to the same rural region to marry. If they returned to the United States, these Basques maintained family ties, joined ethnic communities, participated in cultural festivals, and continued to speak the Basque language. Today, the Basque diaspora is represented by ethnic clubs that reach from Canada to Uruguay and Cuba to Australia, with the largest number occurring in Argentina and the United States.<sup>40</sup> This maintenance among the Gump-like Basques makes them easier to follow around the world and remain available to answer questions of environmental history.

At the center of Basque family history stands the farmhouse, or *baserri*. Made from local resources—siltstone, limestone, oak, and chestnut—houses have a material connection to the landscape and are imbued with much cultural meaning.<sup>41</sup> Even for those who migrated to the city or left the Basque Country altogether, the farmhouse remains important. An Uruguayan Basque, the first to return to visit the Basque Country in five generations, related: “Can you imagine that I just visited my family’s farmhouse. . . ? I wept. I wept for all that I have missed . . . . All my ancestors in Uruguay died without knowing, without feeling, without smelling, without completing.”<sup>42</sup> Or, as the American Basque author Robert Laxalt described the Basque Country, “A thousand generations of my ancestors have gone down into this ground. Sometimes when I walk through the aisles of stone, the smell of the ground rises up. It is old and familiar, and I know instantly that this ground is in me.”<sup>43</sup> Rural areas like Urdaibai, therefore, hold significance for those who live there and those who no longer do—or perhaps never did.

Because the environment represents culture and history, it is important to Basques to preserve rural culture and landscape. This preservation has political undertones because rural culture and landscape have become politically symbolic. The use of the *baserri* as a political symbol is most powerfully illustrated by Gabriel Aresti’s 1963 poem “Nire Aitaren Extea”—or “My Father’s House”—in which the farmhouse is arrestingly defended at all costs, even life. In the poem, the *baserri* becomes the symbol of family and nation and stands at the core of Basque culture and politics. An example of how nature has become symbolic is seen in the work of Basque artists. The stone, wood, and iron materials of Jorge Oteiza and Eduardo Chillida, and the painted forest of Agustin Ibarrola, remind us of Basque history and rural traditions. The art of these artists has come to represent not just culture, but also to be a political statement. Traditional sports are another example; these sports—like wood chopping, rowing, stone-lifting, and oxen pulls—represent rural labor and environment. People in rural areas like Urdaibai are some of the strongest supporters of nationalism and, conversely, nationalists see preservation of rural lifestyles and landscapes as a political and cultural necessity. These two factors are main contributors to a strong environmental movement in the Basque Country.<sup>44</sup>

Hiking clubs, developed in the twentieth century, were important to rural youths as the mountains became the location of freedom during political oppression. Securing independence required finding secretive locations where the Basque language and culture could be freely expressed.<sup>45</sup> Hiking clubs were a “pillar” of nationalism, and hiking became an “essentialist” activity for Basques. One Basque put it this way: “It [hiking] seems to be something inseparable from the Basque people, who live surrounded by mountains.”<sup>46</sup> In time, the hiking clubs have become de-politicized, but the act of hiking remains popular. Hiking is now connected to a sense of being an environmentalist and is popular among urbanites.<sup>47</sup>

Another aspect of late-twentieth-century Basque environmental values has been opposition to nuclear power. In the 1970s, the Basque Country had a strong antinuclear movement, one of the most adamant in the world. Today, one still spots the sticker with a smiling yellow sun that reads "Nuklea rrik? Ez, eskerrik asko," (or "Nuclear power? No, thank you.") People in the Basque region opposed nuclear installations in the 1970s because those installations challenged their sovereignty. Private energy companies planned a set of nuclear plants at Lemoiz, between the Nervion and Urdaibai watersheds. Begun in the 1970s, these plants represented environmental risk, the encroachment of centralized government, and a denial of local control. Public opposition was firm but, despite "widespread and tenacious popular backing," plant construction continued. It was the added influence of the ETA separatists—an underground militant organization supporting Basque political independence—that made a difference. After years of bombings, threats, and kidnappings, ETA actions put a lid on the Lemoiz nuclear plants in the 1980s. The three inert plants still sit on the seacoast as testament to a strong political and environmental movement.<sup>48</sup>

In the twentieth century, Basques largely maintained rural landscapes in spite of global forces. But threats to rural areas like Urdaibai are real and multiple. For the reduced number of farmers, subsistence agriculture is practically out of the question, and nearly 80 percent of rural households are employed off the farm today. The European Union and the local Basque government seek to preserve farm families, the foods they produce, and the landscape that results. Hence, land-use laws that regulate development, prevent the building of "chalets" and suburbs, and subsidize local economies and small agriculture have been instituted in specially designated places. Urdaibai is one such place. Most broadly, Urdaibai is a UNESCO biosphere reserve, and at the local level it is a landscape managed to preserve Basque history and culture. While limited in territory and scope, the watershed's protection does cause tension among the visions of policy makers, urban environmentalists, and those of the rural people restricted by the preserve.<sup>49</sup>

Carried out with funds from the European Union and the regional government, environmental programs protect the wetlands, wildlife, and forests but do so in a way that recognizes human uses of the land—like fisheries, timber harvest, agriculture, and pastoralism. This environmental sensibility—one nurtured by the philosophy of European Union programs to preserve rural lifestyles, economies, and landscapes—includes humans in its definition of environment and avoids misanthropic myopia. This is distinct from traditional American concepts of wilderness and environment that contrast humans and nature and assume that they are antagonistic. In Urdaibai, watershed management aims to preserve a way of life that is seen as central to the essence of what defines Basques.<sup>50</sup>

In 2008, the Basque government announced that a second Basque Guggenheim will open.<sup>51</sup> Its location will not be Bilbao, or even urban. It will be in the Urdaibai watershed, where river meets estuary. Although little is known about

the project at this early stage, the new museum is expected to be a sustainable "green" building and its design to reflect the rural region. While the shapes of the two Basque Guggenheims may contrast rural and urban, agricultural and industrial, green and metallic, these two museums—only twenty miles apart—would also represent connections between these two landscapes, and connections to the world.

In conclusion, by looking at small spaces—two watersheds—we see how the Basque Country can be used at the local level to illuminate complex environmental processes of land use in agriculture and maritime economies, industrialization, urbanization, migration and the connection to politics. But we can also see how these two watersheds, in different ways, are connected to the rest of the world.

Basques can, with their Gump-like characteristics of appearing as part of so many historical forces, provide a way to traverse boundaries and focus on processes of global change, especially in the Atlantic world. Yet, Basques also have spent millennia in the same location, so a *longue durée* study is possible. The diaspora and the island are an exciting combination for the field of environmental history because, like Forrest Gump, the Basques relate to so many events and processes relevant to our inquiries and allow us to address those questions beyond the nation-state. Infusing environmental history into Basque studies can complicate a field of study that is dominated by political questions, and it may also shed light on the assumptions of environmental determinism for Basque uniqueness. But Basque environmental history also can be as distinctive as the people at the heart of it.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>For critical discussions of the film and how it has contributed to a discussion about popular-culture interpretations of history, see: Judith Zinsser "Real History, Real Education, Real Merit – Or, Why Is 'Forrest Gump' so Popular?" *Journal of Social History* (Fall 1995), 91-97; Jennifer Hyland Wang, "'A Struggle of Contending Stories': Race, Gender, and Political Memory in 'Forrest Gump,'" *Cinema Journal*, 39:3 (2000), 92-115; Thomas Byers, "History Remembered: 'Forrest Gump,' Postfeminist Masculinity and the Burial of the Counterculture," *Modern Fiction Studies*, 42:2 (1996), 419-44.

<sup>2</sup>Mark Kurlansky, *Cod: A Biography of the Fish That Changed the World* (Walker & Co., 1997; New York: Penguin, 1998); *The Basque History of the World* (New York: Walker & Co., 1999); *Salt: A World History* (New York: Walker & Co., 2002; New York: Penguin, 2003).

<sup>3</sup>Examples of histories that go beyond national borders include Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972); Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and John McNeill, *Something New under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001). For discussions of environmental history at the global level, see Paul Sutter, "Reflections: What Can U.S. Environmental Historians Learn from non-U.S. Environmental Historiography?" *Environmental History* (January 2003) <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/eh/8.1/sutter.html> (1 March 2008); Thomas Lekan, "Globalizing American Environmental History," *Environmental History* (January 2005) <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/eh/10.1/lekan.html> (accessed 1 March 2008). An excellent global history, albeit with a socioeconomic and not environmental focus, is Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin, 1985).

<sup>4</sup>Roger Collins, *The Basques* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), xi.

<sup>5</sup>Annales school scholars like Marc Bloch, Fernand Braudel, and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, who pioneered social history and integrated fields such as geography, provided a building block for environmental history. For example, see Ladurie, *Times of Feast, Times of Famine: A History of Climate since the Year 1000*, Barbara Bray, trans. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1971).

<sup>6</sup>Environmental histories of cities and rivers include works by Ari Kelman, *A River and Its City: The Nature of Landscape in New Orleans* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Andrew Hurley, ed., *Common Fields: An Environmental History of St. Louis* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1997); Dale Porter, *The Thames Embankment: Environment, Technology and Society in Victorian London* (Akron: University of Akron Press, 1998).

<sup>7</sup>Roman Basurto, "Bilbao in the Economy of the Basque Country and Northwestern Europe during the Modern Era," *Essays in Basque Social Anthropology and History*, William A. Douglass, ed. (Reno: Basque Studies Program, 1989), 215.

<sup>8</sup>Selma Huxley Barkham, "Guipuzcoan Shipping in 1571 with Particular Reference to the Decline of the Transatlantic Fishing Industry," in *Anglo-American Contributions to Basque Studies: Essays in Honor of Jon Bilbao*, William A. Douglass et al., eds. (Reno: Desert Research Institute, 1977), 74; Basurto, "Bilbao," 217.

<sup>9</sup>Basurto, 218.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 225-26; Kurlansky, *Cod*; N. D. Jarvis, "Curing and Canning of Fishery Products: A History," *Marine Fisheries Review* (Fall 1988), 180-86.

<sup>11</sup>On whaling, see Nancy Shoemaker, "Whale Meat in American History," *Environmental History*, 10:2 (April 2005). She mentions that Basques used to eat whales until the sixteenth century, when the number of whales declined. Shoemaker considered the tenth through the sixteenth centuries the most important years for whaling. One reason for the decline in the Basque share of the cod catch was the 1713 Utrecht treaty that gave England fishing rights to the Canadian Atlantic and limited Basque access to these marine riches. For 2006 Canadian research on whale bones, see Lonny Lippsett, "Diving into the Right Whale Gene Pool," *Oceanus* (19 January 2006) <http://www.whoi.edu/oceanus/viewArticle.do?id=9212&archives=true> (accessed 11 March 2008).

<sup>12</sup>Jose Miguel de Barandiaran collected the folk history nearly a century ago and his work is edited by Luis de Barandiaran Irizar and translated by Linda White, *A View from the Witch's Cave:*

*Folk Tales of the Pyrenees* (Reno: University of Nevada Press), 53-5, 53. Basurto, "Bilbao," 221. Wishing to keep the local iron industry strong, Basque leaders in the eighteenth century advocated local production and consumption, as the fictional Patxi would have been doing. A strong local economy would have bolstered the industry's ability to supply finished goods to the Americas but, over-all, because of wars, treaties, and energy costs, it lost its competitive edge.

<sup>13</sup>Eduardo Jorge Glas, *Bilbao's Modern Business Elite* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1997). Note that the decentralized manufacture of iron was fueled by vegetable coal and water power.

<sup>14</sup>G. Henao, quoted in Basurto, "Bilbao," 229.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*; Barkham, "Guipuzcoan Shipping," 75.

<sup>16</sup>Examples include Michael Pollan, *Botany of Desire: A Plant's Eye View of the World* (New York: Random House, 2001); Jack Turner, *Spice: The History of Temptation* (New York: Knopf, 2004); Mark Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How It Transformed Our World* (New York: Basic Books, 1999); Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*, to name but a few. For a broader overview, see Jeffrey M. Pilcher, *Food in World History* (New York: Routledge, 2006). A study that looks at French-Basque chocolatiers is Susan J. Terrio, *Crafting the Culture and History of French Chocolate* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

<sup>17</sup>Unamuno, quotation from Joseba Zulaika, "Postindustrial Bilbao: The Reinvention of a New City," *Basque Studies Program Newsletter*, 57 (April 1998), 3.

<sup>18</sup>Alan Riding, "A Gleaming New Guggenheim for Grimy Bilbao," *New York Times* (24 June 1997).

<sup>19</sup>This anthropologist added: "No longer do they need to avert their eyes from the prodigious River, the very soul of their history and identity." Zulaika, "Postindustrial Bilbao," 3-6, 9, quotations from p. 6.

<sup>20</sup>Amahia Mallea, "The Garden City: An Examination of a Bilbo Huerta," manuscript (1999). Interviews, oral histories, and photographs need to be collected on this topic now because the gardening generation is elderly, and younger urban generations have lost interest and agricultural knowledge. The city considers the gardens eyesores and has begun to bulldoze some of them.

<sup>21</sup>Gloria Toticaguena, *Identity, Culture, and Politics in the Basque Diaspora* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2004), 192.

<sup>22</sup>Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Co., 1972); *idem*, *Ecological Imperialism*; *idem*, *Guns, Seeds and Animals: Studies in Ecological History* (M.E. Sharpe, 1994). Also a good global environmental history, one that focuses on European scientists and colonial islands, is Grove, *Green Imperialism*.

<sup>23</sup>For a seminal history of city and hinterland, see William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991).

<sup>24</sup>For example, a Basque culture center in San Francisco planted an offspring of the Tree of Gernika in 1982. John Flinn, "Rooted in the Bay Area, South San Francisco Center Preserves Traditions," *San Francisco Chronicle* (21 August 2005).

<sup>25</sup>Angel Garcia-Sanz Marcotegui and Alejandro Arizcun Cela, "An Estimate of Navarrese Migration in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century (1879-1883)" in *Essays in Basque Social Anthropology and History*, edited by William A. Douglass (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1989), pp. 235-250.

<sup>26</sup>Barandarian, *View from Witch's Cave*, 29-31, quotation from p. 29.

<sup>27</sup>Toticaguena, *Identity, Culture, and Politics*, 192.

<sup>28</sup>William A. Douglass, foreword to Marciano de Borja, *Basques in the Philippines* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2005). On land ownership see, for example, the work of Marie-Pierre Arrizabalaga.

<sup>29</sup>de Borja, *Basques in the Philippines*. The Philippines were part of Spain's empire from 1521 to 1898, and Basque families were influential shippers and sugar millers, once again connecting people and places with commodities.

<sup>30</sup>Donald T. Garate, *Juan Bautista de Anza: Basque Explorer in the New World* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2003); John McNeill, "From Magellan to Miti: Pacific Rim Economies and Pacific Island Ecologies: Since 1521" in *Studies of the Economic History of the Pacific Rim*, Sally M. Miller et al., eds. (New York: Routledge, 1997). The "Magellan exchange," as McNeill calls it, transferred goods from the Americas to Asia, particularly food stuffs like potatoes, corn, and peanuts. Series

editors Dennis Flynn and Arturo Giraldez write, "It turns out that trade history is intimately intertwined with epidemiological, ecological, demographic, and cultural histories," in *Religions and Missionaries around the Pacific, 1500-1900*, Vol. 17 of *The Pacific World*, Tanya Storch, ed., (Aldershot, VT, Ashgate Publishing, 2006), xiv.

<sup>31</sup>For the importance of sheep as an ecological agent, see Elinor Melville, *A Plague of Sheep: Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>32</sup>For an example of laborers on the frontlines of environmental change, see Joxe Mallea-Olaetxe, *The Power of Nothing: The Life and Adventures of Ignacio Idaho Urrutia* (Susanville, Calif.: Idaho Grocery, Inc., 2000); Richard Lane, "Trouble in the Sweet Promised Land: Basques in Early Twentieth Century Northeastern Nevada," in Douglass, *Anglo-American Contributions*, 33-42. Immigrant herders in the American West were often called tramps and experienced discrimination, causing some to return home. In time, those who stayed sometimes established themselves in the industry, purchased land, and employed their own ranching techniques—though Basques seem not to differ significantly from other ranchers, according to one study on Wyoming: Joseph Castelli, "The Basque Community in Buffalo, Wyoming," in Douglass, *Anglo-American Contributions*, 19-32. On knowing nature through labor, compare to environmental histories by Richard White, *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995); Donald Worster, "Cowboy Ecology," Ch. 3, *Under Western Skies: Nature and History in the American West* (New York: Oxford, 1992); and Mart Stewart, "What Nature Suffers to Groe": *Life, Labor, and Landscape on the Georgia Coast, 1680-1920* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996).

<sup>33</sup>Joxe Mallea-Olaetxe, *Speaking through the Aspens: Basque Tree Carvings in California and Nevada* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000).

<sup>34</sup>John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierras* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1990), 22-23.

<sup>35</sup>For a discussion of wilderness, labor, and class issues, see William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness, or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature" in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, William Cronon, ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995); White, *The Organic Machine*; and Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>36</sup>Gretchen Osa, "The Overland: The Last Basque Hotel," in Douglass, *Essays in Basque Social Anthropology*, 317-23. On the herder experience, see Mallea-Olaetxe, *Speaking through Aspens*; William A. Douglass and Jon Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1976).

<sup>37</sup>Douglass, "Introduction," in *Essays in Basque Social Anthropology*, 5. In the same collection, see Jeronima Echeverría, "California's Basque Hotels and their Hoteleros."

<sup>38</sup>Osa, "Overland," 320-21.

<sup>39</sup>On the maintenance of Basque identity and its significance, see Joxe Mallea-Olaetxe, "Juan Zumarraga, First Bishop of México, and the Basques: The Ethnic Connection" (Ph.D. diss., University of Nevada Reno, 1988); Garate, *Juan Bautista de Anza*; and Douglass's opening comments in the foreword to Marciano de Borja, *Basques in the Philippines*, as well as de Borja's work. Globalization has aided the upkeep of Basque identity, not diluted it, as Tororicaguena argues in *Identity, Culture, and Politics*, 197.

<sup>40</sup>Toricaguena, *Identity, Culture, and Politics*, map 6.1.

<sup>41</sup>Rodney Gallop, *A Book of the Basques* (MacMillan, 1930; Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1981).

<sup>42</sup>Toricaguena, *Identity, Culture, and Politics*; the quotation is from front matter.

<sup>43</sup>Robert Laxalt, quoted in "The Basques in Western American Literature," in *Basques of the Pacific Northwest*, Richard Etulain, ed. (Pocatello: Idaho State University Press, 1991), 72.

<sup>44</sup>A strong environmental movement may also be connected to the fact that this is one of the most industrialized and wealthiest parts of the Iberian peninsula, because it involves the protection of place, and place is at the heart of identity, as well as the link to nationalism. Michael Redclift, in *Frontiers: Histories of Civil Society and Nature* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), mentions that the Spanish environmental movement made its earliest appearance in the Pyrenees and was related to transhumance.

<sup>45</sup>Alfonso Perez-Agote, *The Social Roots of Basque Nationalism*, Cameron Watson, trans. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2006), 182. Compare the treatment of *space* both to serve environmental purposes and to secure concepts of freedom in Douglas Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom: Russian*

*Nature Protection from Stalin to Gorbechev* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). Also, note the importance of identity and nature in studies of Germany. See, for example, Thomas Lekan and Thomas Zeller, "Introduction: The Landscape of German Environmental History," in *Germany's Nature: Cultural Landscapes and Environmental History*, Thomas Lekan and Thomas Zeller, eds. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 1-14; Franz-Josef Brüggemeier, Mark Cioc, and Thomas Zeller, eds., *How Green Were the Nazis? Nature, Environment and Nation in the Third Reich* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005). Thomas Lekan, *Imagining the Nation in Nature: Landscape Preservation and German Identity, 1885-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 15, says that Germans saw humans as part of nature, liked the pastoral landscape, and saw these places as "harmonious" regions.

<sup>46</sup>Perez-Agote, *Social Roots*, 183.

<sup>47</sup>Douglass, foreword in Perez-Agote, *Social Roots*, xi. Perez-Agote indicates this (pp. 181-83). Also, see John Hooper, *The New Spaniards*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Penguin, 2006), 393, in which he connects political radicalism with environmentalism: "Not surprisingly in view of where they live, the Basques are celebrated hill-walkers and rock-climbers, and their mountaineering clubs have traditionally been a breeding-ground for radical nationalism sentiment." Though not the strongest scholarship in his coverage of the Basques, Hooper also says that "Herri Batasuna has increasingly become a refuge for radical ecologists, feminists, and other rebels."

<sup>48</sup>On Lemoiz, see Luiz Nunez Astrain, *The Basques: Their Struggle for Independence* (Cardiff, Welsh Academic Press, 1997), 131-13, quotation from p. 133; Kurlansky, *Basque History*, 279; Perez-Agote, *Social Roots*, 151. Scholars have found that social movements opposing nuclear power have been prominent in minority regions. For an image of 1978 protests see <http://www.euskonews.com/0047zkb/gaia4701es.html>; for a poster with the slogan "Lemoiz Gelditu" ("Stop Lemoiz") see [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lemoiz\\_gelditu.png](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lemoiz_gelditu.png).

<sup>49</sup>Amahia Mallea, "From the Ground Up: The Basque Country and Environment in the European Union," manuscript (2000); Kurlansky, *Basque History*, 317-18. Valuable insights on rural subjects come from 1999 discussions with Agurtzane Elordui, professor at the University of the Basque Country.

<sup>50</sup>Mallea, "From the Ground Up."

<sup>51</sup>Joseba Vivanco, "Otro Guggenheim en Urdaibai para Frenar la Crisis Económica," *Gara* (25 June 2008), available <http://www.gara.net/paperezkoa/20080625/83922/es/Otro-Guggenheim-Urdaibai-para-frenar-crisis-economica> (accessed 10 January 2008).

# *Enduring Conflicts and Cooperation*

## *The Contested Spaces of the Basque Countryside*

D. SETH MURRAY

### INTRODUCTION

The provinces of Labourd, Lower Navarre, and Soule in France together make up the northern Basque region, separated from its Basque counterparts in Spain by the Pyrénées Mountains. The mountainous countryside of these three provinces is home to a long-standing practice of pastoralism, and the success of Basque farmers here largely depends on common-pool resources, namely large tracts of pastures. In the analysis here, I suggest that past instances of violent conflict, as well as strategies for cooperation among Basque farmers, came to indelibly characterize agricultural practices in this region. However, although conflicts over resources still exist, I argue that these instances have repercussions different from their historical antecedents, as today they are no longer adequately counterbalanced by cooperative strategies among Basque farmers.

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The provinces of Labourd, Lower Navarre, and Soule in France together make up the northern Basque region, separated from its Basque counterparts in Spain by the Pyrénées Mountains. (Map created by D. Seth Murray © 2007)

Historical ecology is a conceptual framework that examines local human and environmental situations and then superimposes diachronic, external factors in order to analytically fuse historical depth with spatial breadth.<sup>1</sup> In this sense, historical ecology espouses a multiscalar approach in terms of both space and time: It is simultaneously responsive to the local and the extra-local, and attuned to the influence of the past on the present. As an extension of this emphasis on scale, landscape is a central concept to historical ecology and has become a familiar unit of analysis to anthropologists, geographers, and historians alike. For the purposes of the research presented here, landscape is the symbolic and material record of both intentional and incidental human actions, and provides a canvas for examining the legacy of past relationships between humans and their non-human environment.

Some scholars emphasize the differences between historical ecology and environmental history, arguing that the latter fails to adequately connect human ecological with non-human ecological processes<sup>2</sup> and claiming that environmental history does not translate and apply our historical knowledge to

present-day social and environmental issues.<sup>3</sup> Others convincingly argue that environmental history has successfully carved out a place for itself over the past three decades as a means for understanding "the history of the mutual relationships between humankind and the rest of nature."<sup>4</sup> In truth, historiographical, geographical, or anthropological approaches are less notable for their differences than their complementarities in light of the case study of the northern Basque region presented here. The approach of historical ecology reflects a particular understanding of the emergent properties in current interdisciplinary research, and offers a means for understanding the development of Basque agriculture, the evolution of resource use, and the resulting changes in the over-all socio-economic system.

Within the growing body of Basque scholarship, the northern Basque region has often been relegated to the shadows of its southern counterpart during the past quarter century of Basque studies, although the contributions of Sandra Ott and James Jacob<sup>5</sup> are notable exceptions to this pattern. In truth, the northern Basque region is a much smaller geographical area than the Foral Community of Navarre and the three provinces of the Autonomous Basque Community. The three provinces that make up the northern Basque region—Labourd, Lower Navarre and Soule—only represent fifteen percent of the over-all surface area of the Basque Country. In demographic terms, the northern Basque region is home to a mere ten percent of the total population, and, generally speaking, it is less economically developed, with a smaller industrial base and a proportionally larger rural economy.<sup>6</sup>

In spite of the northern Basque region's comparatively smaller demographic and economic weight, its agricultural sector remains quite vibrant. The northern Basque region was also an important source of emigration during the Basque diasporas of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly to western North America, which served as an important link between Old and New World Basque cultures.<sup>7</sup> The history of farming practices and their legacies make the northern Basque region an attractive site for the historical ecology analysis that is suggested here. Indeed, agricultural practices, especially those associated with pastoralism, can be traced back over at least the past eight hundred years, and in all probability, they date back several millennia.<sup>8</sup> Although corn production is dominant on the plains of the northern Basque region, sheep husbandry, and cattle to a much lesser extent, is the principal agricultural activity.<sup>9</sup> Most farms on the northern face of the Pyrénées are owned and operated by individual families who raise sheep on relatively small properties that average a little over twenty-two acres, which is not enough graze land to support the average herd size of a hundred and fifty sheep over the course of the entire year.<sup>10</sup> In many parts of the northern Basque region, the vast grassy meadows and forests of the mountains are designated as common-pool resources.<sup>11</sup> These common-pool resources are of central importance to pastoralists in the northern Basque region because they allow sheep herds to be sent to graze in the mountain pastures

from May to October, while the farmers are producing hay in their privately owned fields in the valleys. This annual movement of sheep between two ecological zones is known as transhumance, and this cycle of animal movement has historically been, and remains today, essential to sheep farming in the northern Basque region, as it is throughout much of the Pyrénées Mountains.<sup>12</sup>

Pastoral activities have persisted in this area over time in no small part because of the availability of common-pool resources to farmers. However, these resources are constantly under threat of misuse by individuals, abuse by a community of users, or encroachment by outside polities, and a rich literature explores the issues of the commons and common-pool resources.<sup>13</sup> In the following section, I put forth several examples to illustrate how potential conflicts over resources have been historically addressed in the mountains of the northern Basque region, most notably through common-property regimes that rely on cooperation and collaboration among community members and resource users.

#### HISTORICAL EXAMPLES OF COOPERATION IN BASQUE AGRICULTURE:

Over the past fifty years, a number of scholars have presented cooperation as a persistent characteristic of Basque farming for a variety of reasons.<sup>14</sup> Shepherding and transhumance in a preindustrial context were labor- and time-intensive activities. Moving animals over great distances required the collective mobilization of household members or village neighbors. A farmer's prolonged periods of absence guarding herds in the mountains also meant that people assisted each other in farm work. Thus, the practices of transhumant pastoralism create inherent material constraints that have historically encouraged cooperation among farmers, and many institutions associated with Basque agriculture continue to reflect this trait. Contemporary examples include the *olha* (a cheese-making syndicate consisting of a group of shepherds who combine flocks during the summer and take turns tending and maintaining the flocks during that period) that Sandra Ott vividly describes in her ethnography of Santa Grazi in the province of Soule<sup>15</sup> or the *auzolan* system of mutual aid between neighbors in Lower Navarre<sup>16</sup> both of which have been significantly transformed over the past decade.

Historical examples of institutional arrangements that encouraged cooperation among Basque farmers were the agreements alternately referred to as *fuegos* or *fors*. As elsewhere in the Basque Country, the *fors* in the northern Basque region included a wide array of customary practices that were subsequently written into law and which governed many socioeconomic activities, including farming practices, until the early nineteenth century.<sup>17</sup> The focus and content of each of these *fors* varied by province, and there were often additional *fors* in between individual valleys or communities. In essence, these *fors* guaranteed

certain rights and responsibilities for Basques under the kingdom of Navarre and later under the French monarchy until the Revolution of 1789. In regard to agriculture, the *fors* were particularly important in establishing and maintaining principles of *franc alleu*, which was a land-tenure system that ensured people's access to certain resources regardless of their social rank. They also established land-use agreements between neighboring communities or valleys on both sides of the Pyrénées, pertaining in particular to pasturage and water in the mountains. Thus, *fors* historically extended rights of access to numerous households and thereby encouraged Basque communities to cooperate in order to determine individuals' rights and responsibilities in their use of common-pool resources.

Until the French Revolution, in the three provinces of the northern Basque region, representatives from each household would regularly come together under the aegis of the *fors* to determine individuals' responsibilities with respect to common-pool resources, as well as to deal with other issues facing the community. In Lower Navarre, these assemblies were called *Berrogain*<sup>18</sup> or *Cour Générale*. These were occasions in which representatives from each household in the community would collectively determine, for example, the dates for transhumance, the permissibility of harvesting timber from common-pool resources, or the penalties and fines for those disobeying these rules.<sup>19</sup> These assemblies had enough social clout and political power that the Basque anthropologist Pierre Bidart<sup>20</sup> has described them as embryonic micro-democracies that were particularly novel in the context of feudal Europe. Indeed, from within each local assembly, representatives were elected and sent to the annual meetings of parliament in the three provinces of the northern Basque region: the Biltzar of Labourd, the Silviet in Soule, and the États in Lower Navarre. Because of the *fors*, and through the accountability fostered by these public assemblies, I suggest that the historical misuse of common-pool resources by Basque farmers was minimized through cooperatively establishing and enforcing rules—although, as I illustrate in the following section, misuse and abuse were not entirely absent.

#### HISTORICAL EXAMPLES OF CONFLICTS IN BASQUE AGRICULTURE

In spite of the cooperative, institutional means for reducing conflicts over common-pool resources, the mountains of the northern Basque region have echoed over time with conflicts between local Basque communities, which inevitably involved external polities. For example, Basque common-pool resources centered in the negotiation of the 1785 and 1856-58 border treaties between France and Spain, as well as in Napoleon Bonaparte's failed attempts to reform the common-property land-use system in the northern Basque region, efforts which were successful in many other parts of France.<sup>21</sup> Conflicts between

communities located on the opposing north and south slopes of the Pyrénées were relatively common until the mid nineteenth century. The tensions typically arose when access to water sources in the mountains was in dispute between farmers from different villages,<sup>22</sup> or if shepherds from one village grazed their animals in the mountains in a place or manner that others deemed abusive.<sup>23</sup> These local disputes periodically resulted in outbreaks of violence, such as an occasion in 1768 when, after a dispute over the theft of several hundred sheep from the mountains, a group of armed farmers from the Baigorri valley in the Lower Navarre province of the northern Basque region killed or injured several dozen inhabitants from the neighboring Erro valley.<sup>24</sup> As a matter of fact, the historian Fernando Arvizu uncovered a total of 134 violent incidents between 1568 and 1833 that involved farmers from the Baigorri valley and their counterparts from villages on the south side of the Pyrénées. This averages to one recorded violent incident every other year, and this in spite of *fors* between the valley communities, which was supposed to determine the consensual, joint use of common-property resources.<sup>25</sup>

However, local conflicts between farmers over access to common-pool resources could also originate from within a given community. For example, during the eighteenth century, increasing demographic pressure throughout much of the Basque region led many people to migrate from the rural hinterlands towards the urban centers of the Atlantic coast and even beyond, to North America. This was in part because of an increase in over-all population, but also because of the Basque practice of primogeniture, whereby only the eldest child—and regardless of their sex in the province of Lower Navarre—inherited the family estate so as to preserve the integrity of the *etxe*, or house. Other people surreptitiously migrated into the mountains looking for places to make their new homes, and, contrary to the rules agreed upon in the *Berrogain* or *Cour Générale*, these families often settled in areas nearer to common-pool resources when establishing their households.<sup>26</sup> These locations offered a clear advantage in terms of the allocation of time for transhumance and the labor demands of sheep farming. In the Baigorri valley, for example, as new farmsteads were built and then outright villages founded over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the ensuing rise in the over-all number of users of common-pool resources exacerbated tensions between older and more recently established communities. The older communities would regularly petition the regional representative of the king and request that the houses and barns of these new homesteaders be demolished, mostly to little or no avail.<sup>27</sup> On the eve of the French Revolution and in the decades immediately afterwards, the common-pool resources that sustained much of Basque agriculture in the northern Basque region were under significant strain, as were the customary institutions that regulated them. In the following sections, I discuss two examples of how Basque farmers continue to cooperatively manage the resources indispensable to their agricultural livelihoods.

## CONTEMPORARY EXAMPLES OF COOPERATION IN BASQUE AGRICULTURE

The *Syndicats de vallées* were first created in 1837, sanctioned by the French national government and with the support by many local Basque communities. The primary purpose of these bodies was to formalize and institutionalize the management and use of common-pool resources by farmers in the northern Basque region. In practice, the *Syndicats* reproduced many of the rights and responsibilities pertaining to common-pool resource use that were originally articulated in the *fors*. For example, the *Syndicats* maintained the local autonomy and decision-making capacities of their predecessors, which suggests a strong impetus to preserve this particular facet of cooperation in Basque agricultural practices.<sup>28</sup> In this sense, the steadfast objective of the *Syndicat* was to defuse conflicts and maintain the viability of the agricultural system through the judicious and just governance of common-pool resources.

Another example of cooperation among farmers in the Baigorri valley is the *auzolan*, an informal social alliance system for mutual assistance between neighbors from different *etxe*, or house(hold)s. The *auzolan* was typically called upon for farming activities that are time- and labor-intensive, such as cutting and stocking fodder for the winter, baling hay, or for the transhumance of livestock herds over longer distances. One recurring theme from field research and interviews with farmers in Lower Navarre during the past decade was that people did not help each other as they once did, that the *auzolan* of neighbors cooperating in agricultural activities was increasingly absent in the Baigorri valley. The decline or disappearance of this network is significant in terms of its material implications since it suggests that households are each investing more time and capital into their own farms, without necessarily mitigating the risks of their investments and labor by sharing the burden with their neighbors. However, the decline of the *auzolan* is equally notable in terms of the ideals of cooperation that such a network historically represented in Basque social life. For one middle-aged, single male farmer, the labor demands of his modern farm were tremendous: "In order for this to work," he opined one afternoon during a coffee break, "we've got to be together on this! Without my neighbors, I just don't know how I can make it happen." The transformation of agriculture and the changing economic realities of the past fifty years have contributed to the fraying of *auzolan* networks that were historically important to farming communities in the Baigorri valley and elsewhere in the northern Basque region. The weakening of social networks for cooperation does not mean that each farmer works entirely on his or her own; of course, family members or neighbors may assist one another as needed. Nevertheless, the systematic decline of the *auzolan* system has dramatically reduced the margin of maneuverability and flexibility of farmers in an increasingly risky economic setting and unpredictable environmental context, and this pattern presents additional pressure points on common-pool resources.

## CONTEMPORARY EXAMPLES OF CONFLICTS IN BASQUE AGRICULTURE

Within the context of the modern nation of France, and in light of the sociopolitical and economic interconnections with the European Union, instances of overt conflict are rare, but not entirely absent, in Basque agriculture. Since the early 1980s, conflicts over common-pool resources in the northern Basque region have intensified once again, this time between full-time, specialized sheep farmers who fundamentally depend on the common-pool resources in the mountains for their economic success, and other farmers who have diversified their economic bases.<sup>29</sup> The surge in popularity of rural tourism in France and Spain has allowed some farmers to establish bed-and-breakfast operations, or create guided equestrian tours or services for hikers.<sup>30</sup> An increasing number of people in the rural parts of the northern Basque region work away from the farm, a practice which has certainly offered new, sometimes vital, economic opportunities. Yet this change also means that some households in these traditionally agricultural areas are either only part-time farmers or not farming at all. Consequently, today not all community members are intrinsically dependent on the common-pool resources for their economic survival, and so there is no clear consensus as to the function of these resources being primarily or solely for farming purposes.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, over the last two decades, the proliferation of recreational users such as hikers, bird watchers, or hang-gliders in the mountains has complicated the cooperative management of traditional agricultural resources, leading to disagreement and conflict between pastoralists and non-farmers over how the *Syndicat* should manage these mountain spaces.

Another new source of tension and conflict among farmers in the northern Basque region has emerged recently over the choice as to which breed of sheep farmers raise. Although many farmers continue to raise the indigenous black- or red-headed Manex, which are hardy and well adapted to the wet mountain environment but are not a top milk producer, other farmers now choose to raise Lacaunes, an exogenous breed that produces more milk but does not transhume to the mountains proper.<sup>32</sup> While this adoption has decreased the over-all number of users of common-pool resources, it has had the perverse effect of weakening the authority of the *Syndicat* to manage these Commons. Those shepherds still utilizing common-pool resources are less inclined to cooperate and coordinate their farming activities via the *Syndicat*, and have instead sharply increased their average herd size over the past decade, thereby amplifying the pressures on finite ecological resources. It is inevitable that the multiplication of non-farming actors utilizing these common-pool resources, coupled with competing modes of pastoral production, only adds additional layers of complexity to the conflicts in Basque agriculture.

## CONCLUSION

Cooperation is not only a strategy but also a process that has come to characterize Basque agriculture in the northern Basque region through the institutional legacies

of the *fors* and *Berrogain*. This historical characteristic is still intact in both substance and spirit through the institutional composition of the *Syndicat*, and persists in how local Basque farming communities at least still remember the past solidarity of the *auzolan* networks. The outright violence of conflicts between Basque farmers from the north and south sides of the Pyrénées has practically disappeared, especially ever since the consolidation of French and Spanish control over the political border a century and a half ago. However, conflicts between Basque farmers continue to percolate in other forms, now mediated in large part by the extent to which farmers have embraced the European market economy and the long shadow cast by the intensive industrial forms of agricultural production. Conflict over the use of common-pool resources has also surfaced between those individuals still actively engaged in traditional farming—and who require the use of those common-pool resources for their livestock—and enterprising individuals who capitalize on the mountains in the Basque region to market a non-agricultural, recreational space. These more recent developments are consequences of the mechanization and modernization of European agriculture over the last half century, and have not only undercut cooperation among Basque farmers, but have the potential to undermine the future sustainability of common-pool resources in the northern Basque region.

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# *Research, Management, and Interpretation of Historic Sheep Camps on the East Side of the Tahoe National Forest*

MICHAEL BALDRICA AND CARRIE SMITH

## INTRODUCTION

Sheep grazing has been one of many economic activities pursued in the North Central Sierra Nevada since the 1850s. Large sheep companies recruited Basque men from the Basque Country between Spain and France to perform many of the shepherding and camp tender duties. On the east side of the Sierra Nevada in California and in Nevada, camps were constructed in the summer grazing ranges to serve as bases for logistical support of herding activities. These camps, commonly called sheep camps, usually consisted of a variety of structures for habitation and storage, and corrals. A distinct architectural feature found at sheep camps appears in the domed brick ovens built in traditional Basque style. At the Truckee and Sierraville ranger districts, stabilization, reconstruction, and interpretation at four summer base camps is ongoing.

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Vicinity map of the Tahoe National Forest. (Map created by Michael Baldrice © 2008)

#### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SHEEP INDUSTRY AND GOVERNMENT REGULATION

While ranches and farms had long been part of the landscape, a large-scale livestock grazing industry in California began immediately after the discovery of gold in 1849. By the spring of 1850, meat supplies in California were extremely low. The first response to this crisis came in the form of several thousand bands of sheep from New Mexico. Between 1850 and 1854, there was a vast movement of sheep into California to feed the miners. Many of these trail drives followed the same routes as the emigrants.

The high demand for meat and wool prompted the establishment of ranches and breeding stock. By 1851, Frank and J. Parker Whitney from San Francisco had located a ranch midway between Auburn and Sacramento in Placer County.<sup>1</sup> Other early pioneer families settled in the foothill country of the Sierra Nevada, Sierra Valley, and Truckee Meadows during the 1850s and began grazing sheep and cattle in the higher elevations of the Sierra Nevada during the summer months.<sup>2</sup>

By the late nineteenth century, the growth of the livestock industry became a concern for the federal government. Overgrazing on public land was one of several issues that led to the passage of the Forest Reserves Act in 1891 and the establishment of the forest reserves. On February 1, 1905, the federal government transferred these reserves to the Department of Agriculture and within six months the Bureau of Forestry was renamed the United States Forest Service.<sup>3</sup> In the North Central Sierra Nevada, the Lake Tahoe Forest Reserve was established on April 13, 1899. By 1902, an inspector for the Bureau of Forestry was reporting severe overgrazing and fire protection problems.

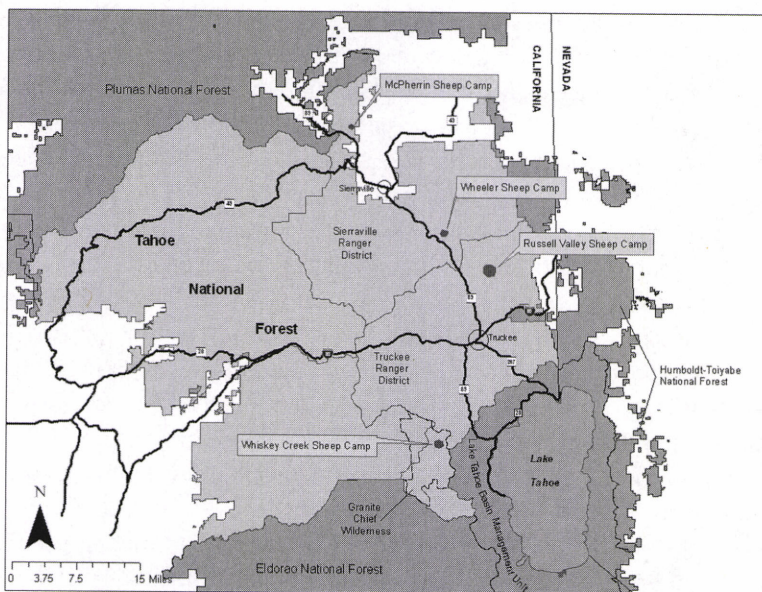
His recommendations were to expand the reserve to more than nine-hundred thousand acres. The Forest Service acknowledged this recommendation with the expansion of the Lake Tahoe Forest Reserve and the establishment of the Yuba Forest Reserve in 1905. The next year brought the establishment of the Tahoe National Forest with the combination of the previous two reserves. Further expansions and subdivisions occurred throughout the years with the lands in Nevada transferred to the Toiyabe National Forest after World War II.<sup>4</sup>

A priority of the early forest rangers was to set up grazing allotments to better manage grazing in the National Forests. Rangeland was surveyed to determine range conditions; carrying capacities; suitable areas to allot to sheep and cattle; and attempt to regulate and control through a permit process the number of individuals and stock allowed to graze within the Tahoe National Forest boundaries.

#### BASQUE INVOLVEMENT IN THE SHEEP INDUSTRY

Basque immigrants became involved in the sheep industry of the American West during the California gold rush. Originally from the Pyrenees in Spain and France, many of the first Basques to arrive in California came directly from South America, where they were previously involved in the livestock industry. By the 1860s, Basques were leaving the gold fields and entering the sheep and cattle industries. They had an established reputation as the finest sheepmen in the West by the 1880s, although a Department of Agriculture report dated 1884 gives them little mention and less regard.<sup>5</sup> In addition, by the turn of the century, many Basque people had become the owners of hotels that catered to, and became a magnet for, Basque men working in the sheep industry.

Basques were the most numerous ethnic group involved in what became known as the itinerant sheep business. Young, single men would be recruited by either a sheep company or a fellow Basque (often a person from the same village or a family member) and signed into a three-year contract. Upon termination of the contract, they were eligible to apply for permanent resident status. Most men entered the industry with the single intention of making money and returning to the Old World. Herders who wanted to make more



Sheep camp location map. (Map created by Michael Baldrica © 2008)

money faster would sometimes choose to be paid in ewes. They in turn would run their sheep with their employers' flocks until they had enough to form an independent band, at which time they would break off on their own. These landless owner-herders were called tramp sheep outfits and consisted of a one- or two- man operation with about a "thousand head of sheep, a pack animal, a tent, bedroll and grubstake."<sup>6</sup> The sheep would be grazed on public and private lands without permits or permission and would travel on county roads grazing on the grass along the side of the road.<sup>7</sup> Conflict arose as these itinerant bands came into competition with established sheep companies and cattlemen for grazing areas. The resolution to these and other grazing conflicts led federal land-management agencies to exert more control over grazing on public land. The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 put an end to the itinerant sheepman as it excluded landless shepherds from the public range.<sup>8</sup> In many cases, these itinerant shepherds eventually became successful and purchased their own ranches throughout California and Nevada.

The life of a shepherd while out on the range is one of extreme physical and social isolation as the herder was completely alone with his band of sheep. Often this isolation lasted up to five months. Once a week, the camp tender would arrive with supplies, but these visits were often as short as one hour.

The two common misconceptions about Basque shepherders currently held are (1) that the Basques who came to the United States had a background

in herding from the Old World, and (2) that they were culturally predisposed to withstand the extreme isolation associated with sheepherding without outwardly exhibiting any of the effects. Most of the herders who came from the Old World had no prior herding experience at all. As for the second misconception, William Douglass, the founding director of the Basque Studies Program at the University of Nevada, Reno, attributed this to the lifestyle imposed on the herder. Often the herder lived in almost unbroken social isolation, and the nature of the business excluded a family life. Fellow sheepherders, when talking among themselves, expressed greater concern about the problems of boredom and keeping their sanity than about the physical difficulties of life on the open range.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the first thing that many Basque sheepherders communicated to new acquaintances was their unhappiness with their isolation.<sup>10</sup> Phrases such as *sagebrushed* or *sheeped* are used "to describe the mental state of the herder who has remained in the hills too long."<sup>11</sup>

There are early newspaper accounts of Basque sheepherders who had gone crazy or committed suicide. This led in 1907 to the formation of a mutual-aid society by the Basques of Boise, Idaho, to return those who developed mental problems to their families in Spain or France.<sup>12</sup> As one author said, "The herder, as the official chaperon for fifteen hundred strong minded, but misguided, females, has a perfectly valid excuse (if he wishes) for going crazy at any moment he may elect."<sup>13</sup>

Throughout many parts of the American West the most common activity the sheepherders conducted seeking to occupy their time and cope with solitude was to carve on aspen trees. Many groves are the living galleries of this art form. These carvings, called *arborglyphs*, can be classified according to the following categories: Dates and names; human figures; females, sex, and courtship; interpersonal relationship among herders; ethnic pride and linguistic divisions. According to José Mallea, "The vocabulary of the carvings is derived from several languages and much of it is slang, peppered with curses and other words difficult to translate in a meaningful way. But there is also poetry, humor, and pure art. The messages are stark, laconic, and sometimes raw. Their historical value as a record of the experience of immigration and the sheep industry is significant."<sup>14</sup>

The carving technique involves serrating the bark with a knife. As the tree grows the scars widen, bringing out the designer's image. Herders always inspected the carvings left by earlier herders, and they rarely moved on without leaving their own marks. These acts gave the herder a sense of connection and communication with both past and future sheepherders.

The Tahoe National Forest in conjunction with the Basque Studies Program at the University of Nevada, Reno, entered into a participating agreement to record *arborglyphs*. This agreement resulted in Dr. Mallea conducting video recordings of many of the *arborglyph* sites on the Truckee and Sierraville Ranger Districts. This research by Dr. Mallea provided a preliminary assessment of the information that can be interpreted from *arborglyphs* about the sheepherders who worked in this part of the Sierra Nevada as well as provide additional information on the sheep industry.

## SHEEP CAMPS

Before the widespread use of vehicles to transport sheep to various locations, the typical pattern for moving sheep during a year was to herd them from the main ranch headquarters—located in lower elevation zones such as the Sacramento Valley or the Reno area—up to sheep camps in the summer ranges in late spring or early summer. Upon arrival at the summer camp, the sheep would be divided into bands of a thousand with a herder assigned to each band. Each herder would leave the camp and go out into designated grazing areas, remaining with the band 24 hours a day, seven days a week, all summer. At the end of summer, the bands would be returned to the sheep camp, where the ewes were separated from the lambs. The lambs were then sold and shipped away. The remaining ewes were then herded back to the main ranch headquarters and placed on the winter pasture ranges.

## FOUR SHEEP CAMPS ON THE TAHOE NATIONAL FOREST

*Russell Valley Sheep Camp*

The Russell Valley Sheep Camp was started by George Washington Mills some time around 1894, and he grazed sheep until his death, in 1915. George's wife Elizabeth continued to run the company with the help of foreman Joe Subiria. Joe was Basque, from the village of San Sebastian in Spain. Elizabeth's son Milburn began to help his mother in the business in 1926. Pete Laborde became a partner with Milburn in 1966. They ran sheep and the camp until 1968, when Milburn sold to Pete Laborde and Abel Mendequia.<sup>15</sup> Abel and his wife, Judy, bought out Laborde in 1982 and grazed sheep out of the sheep camp until 1991. They sold their sheep company to the Little Panoche Sheep Company, which was owned by two Basques, Victor Arretche and Bernard Etcheverry. Arretche and Etcheverry stopped using the Russell Valley camp, and began using cell phones and pick-ups.<sup>16</sup>

The camp consisted of a cook house, spring house, outdoor oven, barn, water tower, bath house, cabin, logging camp skid shack, well, outhouse, and fences with a loading ramp. Milburn Mills hired Steve Landa to construct the outdoor brick oven in 1942. Landa was assisted in the construction by foreman Joe Subiria, and camp tender Ignacio Badostain.<sup>17</sup> The site has been determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Carrie Smith directed a Passport in Time volunteer project to restore and stabilize the structures at the camp. This involved rebuilding the water tower, replacing siding, replacing roofs, and cleaning out the French drain for the spring house.<sup>18</sup>

*Wheeler Sheep Camp*

Dan C. Wheeler entered the sheep business in 1867 when he brought a herd of sheep from southwest Oregon to the Truckee Meadows. Wheeler's home ranch, the Lake Ranch, was located in what is now southwest Reno.<sup>19</sup> Eventu-

ally Wheeler held grazing rights on public and private land west and north of Lake Tahoe, extending as far north as Sardine Peak. The Wheeler sheep camp, located in Kyburz Flat, was one of the main camps.<sup>20</sup>

John Martin Gallues left his home in Ibar, in the region of Nafarroa, Spain, in 1907. He eventually arrived in Nevada after spending time in the cane fields of Cuba and the mines in California. In 1913 or 1914 Martin became a limited partner in the Wheeler Sheep Company, then run by Sam Wheeler. Martin and his brother Felix built the structures at the Wheeler sheep camp some time before 1921.

Reginald Meaker purchased the Wheeler Sheep Company in 1937. This included five thousand head of sheep, miscellaneous equipment, and the Wheeler sheep camp. Meaker retained Martin Gallues as sheep manager.<sup>21</sup>

Typically, in June a herd of up to five thousand head of sheep would be trailed from Reno to the Wheeler sheep camp and subsequently divided into five bands (a band equals a thousand sheep), with a herder assigned to each band. These bands then would spread out into the ranges until August. In the middle of August all five bands were brought back to the main camp where the lambs were sold. The remaining sheep were trailed back down to the Truckee Meadows to leased pastures.<sup>22</sup>

The Wheeler sheep camp consisted of a three-room cabin, an outdoor brick oven, an outdoor wood stove, a developed spring, a bathhouse, a chicken coop, a horse barn and corral, five tent platforms, sheep corrals, chutes, and livestock scales. Two herders in their off time split cedar posts for the various corrals during wood-splitting competitions, while drinking copious quantities of wine.<sup>23</sup> Today the only remaining feature of the Wheeler sheep camp is the brick oven that was built around 1927. A cement cap and a protective shed were built over the oven in 1929. Prior to the construction of the brick oven an earthen oven had been used. The oven was used to bake bread and stews. Fresh bread was supplied to the herders every five days and was considered one of the two most important items delivered by the camp tender each week. The other essential item was red wine.<sup>24</sup>

The entire Gallues family (Martin, his wife Margarita, daughter Irene, and sons Albert and Henry) spent the summers at the Wheeler sheep camp. In addition, a camp tender stayed at the camp while the herders would periodically visit.<sup>25</sup>

Martin Gallues continued to work for the Wheeler Sheep Company after it was sold to Meaker, and retired in 1955. Meaker gave up his grazing allotments in 1960 and also retired, citing reductions in the maximum number of sheep on any one allotment that made it hard to make a profit.<sup>26</sup> The camp buildings were torn down in 1968 by the Forest Service in accordance with policy. The oven was left standing because it was considered to have cultural significance.

The brick oven lasted until the early 1980s, when the shed collapsed and exposed the oven to the elements, eventually causing its collapse. During the summer of 1992, José Mallea of the Basque Studies Program volunteered his

time to coordinate the reconstruction of the oven in coordination with Sierraville Ranger District personnel. Funding for this project was obtained through the America's Great Outdoors program. In rebuilding the oven, Mallea enlisted the help of people from the Basque Studies Program, members of the Reno Basque community, and the past holder of the Kyburz sheep-grazing allotment. Henry (Hank) Gallues, Albert Gallues, and Irene Giosi (the children of Martin and Margarita) contributed family history and photographs. The Forest Service provided the tools and material to rebuild the oven. The shed, which stood over the oven to protect it from snow, was rebuilt by Tahoe National Forest recreation personnel.

The Wheeler sheep camp has been determined to be ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places because not enough of the original camp is left. The site is now included as part of the Kyburz Flat Interpretive Area. It is now a day-use recreation site and the oven is used by large and small groups during the summer months.

#### *McPherrin Sheep Camp*

The McPherrin Sheep Company was started in 1916 by John McPherrin and his son Elwood on the east side of the Sutter Buttes in Live Oak, California. Elwood's son Calvert took over the company in 1947 and still runs it today with his son-in-law Francisco. The McPherrins began leasing grazing rights in Carman Valley from the Davies-Johnson Lumber Company in 1921. The sheep camp was established in 1924 on the current site, which had been the Knuthsen Dairy from around 1870 to 1920 and a Davies-Johnson Lumber Company logging camp, 1923.<sup>27</sup>

The sheep camp consisted of a cabin (most likely a Davies-Johnson structure), a barn, a corral with loading chute, cold storage building and a brick outdoor oven. Calvert hired a Basque herder with oven building experience to construct the oven some time around 1942. Although the McPherrins are not Basque all of their herders have been Basques from Spain, except for one French Basque, Gene Bernetche, until 1970s and 1980s. Starting in the 1970s decreasing numbers of Basque men were becoming herders, and more men from Mexico, Peru and Argentina were taking their place.<sup>28</sup> Today most herders are Mexican or Peruvian although there are more Basques who own the Sheep Companies.

Today the McPherrin sheep camp is the only camp still used, and the corral is still used to sort and gather sheep. The McPherrin sheep camp has been determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.<sup>29</sup>

#### *Whiskey Creek Sheep Camp*

According to Forest Service grazing records, the area around Whiskey Creek was being grazed as early as 1909 by the Jensen Brothers and was known as the Five Lakes Range. By 1925, there was a summer base camp, corral, and camptender located on Whiskey Creek. In 1927 the Whitney Estate Company,

headquartered in Rocklin, California was using the range and had rebuilt the corral. Although unclear at this time, the Whitney Estate Company sheep operation may have been purchased by the Kuhn and Miller Company. Following established routes, the Whiskey Creek area became a base camp for Alfred Kuhn and Verne Miller's sheepherding operation. The sheep would be herded up into the summer ranges from the Sacramento Valley or the Reno area along the Lincoln Highway.<sup>30</sup> In the late summer and early fall the bands would be trailed to Soda Springs where the lambs would be separated from the ewes, sold, and shipped out on the Central Pacific Railroad. Soda Springs was one of the primary shipping yards in the North Central Sierra Nevada during this time.<sup>31</sup>

The Whiskey Creek sheep camp cabins were constructed in 1954 by two Basque sheepherders, Severino Ibarra and Pete Bengoechea, who worked for the Kuhn and Miller Company.

On January 28, 1991, a personal interview was conducted with Severino Ibarra and his brother Juan, both of whom were retired and lived in Reno, Nevada. The following information was gained during this interview. José Mallea, from the Basque Studies Program, set up the interview and acted as interpreter.

The Ibarra brothers were born at Uriz, Arze Valley, in the Spanish region of Nafarroa. They came to America together in 1952 with a job offer from the Kuhn and Miller Company, which sent them money for the airfare. Their father was a sheepherder in America. They flew into San Francisco with five other young men from the same locality. The next day they were given the choice of working as either a sheepherder or a camp tender. Juan chose to "go with the sheep,"<sup>32</sup> while Severino became a camp tender. Juan did have previous experience as a herder in the Old Country although these herds numbered only a hundred or hundred and fifty in size.

Juan and Severino came without contracts; however, most Spanish Basque herders had three-year contract commitments with the Western Range Association. Juan worked for three years as a herder and later was employed by Sierra Pacific. For two summers the sheep were trucked into Reno, and Juan would stay in one of the local Basque hotels. Severino stayed with the sheepherding operation for six years, and, after several odd jobs, went to work for a Mr. Holmes.

Severino and his friend Pete built the two log cabins during the summers of 1954 and 1955. They cut and peeled the logs and dragged them with mules or horses. They learned to notch the logs and build the walls after seeing some cabins in Squaw Valley, which is two miles to the northeast. The lumber for the interior came from Squaw Valley. The outdoor Basque-style oven at the camp was built by Fausto Lavari, from Aoiz, Nafarroa, in 1956. Lavari had knowledge of masonry and was familiar with bread ovens, as they are common in the Basque county. Severino said he that had one just like it at his home in Spain.

The oven at Whiskey Creek sheep camp is constructed of unshaped, mortared granite stone in a bee-hive shape over a mortared brick sub-structure, and has a corrugated tin roof to protect it from the severe winters. José Mallea states

that he has seen many dilapidated ovens, which are normally built with brick and mortar. This one, made with granite, is unusual.<sup>33</sup>

The Whiskey Creek sheep camp was determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C. This determination was made even though the site was at the time less than 50 years old. The site is also now situated within the Granite Chief Wilderness, established in the early 1980s. Although historic structures are seen as incompatible with wilderness character and should ordinarily be removed, the Forest Supervisor at the time made the decision that the cultural values of the site were more important, and the site has been preserved.

During the summer of 1992 a Basque film crew came to the United States to film a documentary on the American Basque experience. This film crew jumped at the opportunity to visit the Whiskey Creek sheep camp. José Mallea, Carrie Smith, and Dick Markley, the Forest Archaeologist, were interviewed by the crew.

#### DISCUSSION

The most visibly recognizable physical evidence of Basque culture on the east side of the Tahoe National Forest are the sheep camps with domed brick bread ovens. These camps show us that there was a long and stable presence of managed grazing in the forest by Basque immigrants. The presence of domed brick ovens tells that the herders practiced traditional food preparation and also indicates that they viewed their new world through traditional cultural values learned in the Basque Country. These learned values would have included traditional land-management practices for grazing animals.

The groves of carved aspens have names, dates, places of origin, and messages to other herders.

These carvings tell us who the herders were, identify their towns and provinces, and can reveal patterns of immigration. Date carvings can be specific to the month and day, so that we can in a given season track a herder or herders within and between allotments. Carvings with personal communications can tell us about events in the herder's life such as where he has been and what kind of grazing season it was, and also include farewell messages saying goodbye to herding and the mountains.

Grazing records are kept for each allotment since about 1912 and give us the agency's management perspective. These records are an accounting of how many grazing animals there are in order to make sure the terms of the permit are met, and to determine how much to charge in use fees. These records are dry and mostly just numbers except for a few comments like the one the historian Cindy Baker found<sup>34</sup> in examining the grazing records. An associate forester inspecting the Mount Lola Range, now the White Rock Allotment, wrote of

Martin Gallues in 1941: "Taking into consideration the manner in which Martin manages the Wheeler sheep on his range, the way he handles his sheep, and the very evident good condition the feed areas are now, no reduction in numbers will be made." As range inspections usually resulted in reduction in numbers of grazing animals, this is high praise from the Forest Service inspector.

At the Wheeler sheep camp site, an interpretive sign was placed by the brick oven which describes what the camp looked like, who lived at the camp, and the role of the camp in the summer sheep-grazing activities. A brochure is available, funded by the America's Great Outdoors program, providing an over-all history of Kyburz Flat and detailed information about the Wheeler sheep camp.

An unexpected aspect of the oven reconstruction was that people expressed an interest in using the oven. It was successfully test fired in the fall of 1992. Forty people showed up to bake bread, biscuits, pizza, and other food items. Attendants included Irene Giosi and Albert Gallues, both children of Martin Gallues. Their recollections, photographs, and oral histories obtained during this time provided an idea of what life was like at the camp. In addition, José Mallea held his wedding reception at the camp in October of 1992. At least fifty people attended and many expressed a desire to use the oven. Since then the oven has been used by numerous groups of people who spend the day using the oven to cook, reading the interpretive material, and enjoying the edge of the meadow.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Edward Norris Wentworth, *America's Sheep Trails: History, Personalities* (Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State College Press, 1948), 186.

<sup>2</sup>Turrentine W. Jackson, R. Hurbert, and S. Wee, "History of the Tahoe National Forest 1840-1940: Cultural Resources Overview," Tahoe National Forest Cultural Resource Report No. 15 (Nevada City, Calif., 1982), 165-66.

<sup>3</sup>Carmel Meisenbach, "Centennial Celebration, 100 years of Conservation, Tahoe National Forest" (document on file at Supervisor's Office, Tahoe National Forest, Nevada City, Calif., 1990).

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>Ezra Carman, H.A. Heath, and J. Minto, *Special Report on the History and Condition of the Sheep Industry of the United States*, United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Animal Industry (U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1892).

<sup>6</sup>William A. Douglass, "Lonely Lives under the Big Sky," *Natural History*, 82 (1973), 30.

<sup>7</sup>Louis Payen, Sr., personal communication with author, 1992.

<sup>8</sup>Douglass, "Lonely Lives," 30-33.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup>Barbara Land, "Lonely Nevada Nights," *Reno Gazette Journal*, Section C (30 August 1989).

<sup>11</sup>William A. Douglass, "The Basques of the American West: Preliminary Historical Perspectives," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, 82:4 (Winter 1973), 20.

<sup>12</sup>Douglass, "Lonely Lives," 37.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 403.

<sup>14</sup>José Mallea-Olaetxe, "History that Grows on Trees: Basque Aspen Carving in Nevada," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, 35:1 (1992), 21.

<sup>15</sup>Cindy L. Baker, "National Register of Historic Places Evaluation of Three Sheep Camps, Tahoe National Forest, California" (document on file at Supervisor's Office, Tahoe National Forest, Nevada City, Calif., 2004), 22-34.

<sup>16</sup>Victor Arretche, personal communication with author, 1992.

<sup>17</sup>Baker, "National Register," 24.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>Byrd Wall Sawyer, *Nevada Nomads, A Story of the Sheep Industry* (San Jose, Calif.: Harlan-Young Press, 1971), 8-9.

<sup>20</sup>Jackson, Hurbert, and Wee, "History," 167.

<sup>21</sup>Reginald Meaker, *Nevada Desert Sheepman* (Western Printing and Publishing Company, 1981), 117.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup>Juanita Spencer, interview with Irene Giosi and Henry Gallues (document on file at the Supervisor's Office, Tahoe National Forest, Nevada City, Calif., 1992).

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup>Baker, "National Register," 33-40.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup>James A. Sherritt, "The History and Development of the Donner Summit Area," address to the Truckee, California, Rotary Club (document on file at Supervisor's Office, Tahoe National Forest, Nevada City, Calif., 1949).

<sup>31</sup>Nicholas Chickering, "The History of Summit Soda Springs" (document on file at Supervisor's Office, Tahoe National Forest, Nevada City, Calif., 1977).

<sup>32</sup>Jose Mallea-Olaetxe, "The Story of the Ibarra Brothers," (document on file at the Supervisors Office, Tahoe National Forest, Nevada City, California 1990).

<sup>33</sup>José Mallea-Olaetxe, communication with author, 1991.

<sup>34</sup>Baker, "National Register," 44.

*'We Were Not Tramp Sheepmen'*  
*Joe Odiaga and Acculturation, Resistance, and Identity*  
*in the Bizkaian Basque Community, 1890-1946*

KEVIN D. HATFIELD

THE ODIAGA ARREST

As dusk fell on Joe Odiaga's sheep camp on April 23, 1936, the Basque herder spotted five horsemen riding hard across the eastern Oregon high desert toward his flock. Odiaga had anticipated their arrival since he had defiantly released his eleven hundred unlicensed sheep from private winter pasturage onto the federal range of Vale Grazing District No. 3 earlier that March. Guided along Wild Cat Canyon by a local range rider, the five-man posse commanded an intimidating show of authority, including Division of Grazing Special Agent Sid Stoner, Regional Grazier Marvin Klemme, Vale Grazing District Advisory Board Chairman J. N. Jones, and United States Marshal Cal Pryor. After the riders encircled the camp, the marshal swiftly dismounted to serve Odiaga with a federal arrest warrant for trespassing in violation of the Taylor Grazing Act (TGA).<sup>1</sup> Although Odiaga had instigated the criminal charge by a deliberate act of civil disobedience designed to challenge the TGA's constitutionality, he also hoped to expedite a ruling on his case by saddling the Division of Grazing with his sheep's welfare while he awaited trial.

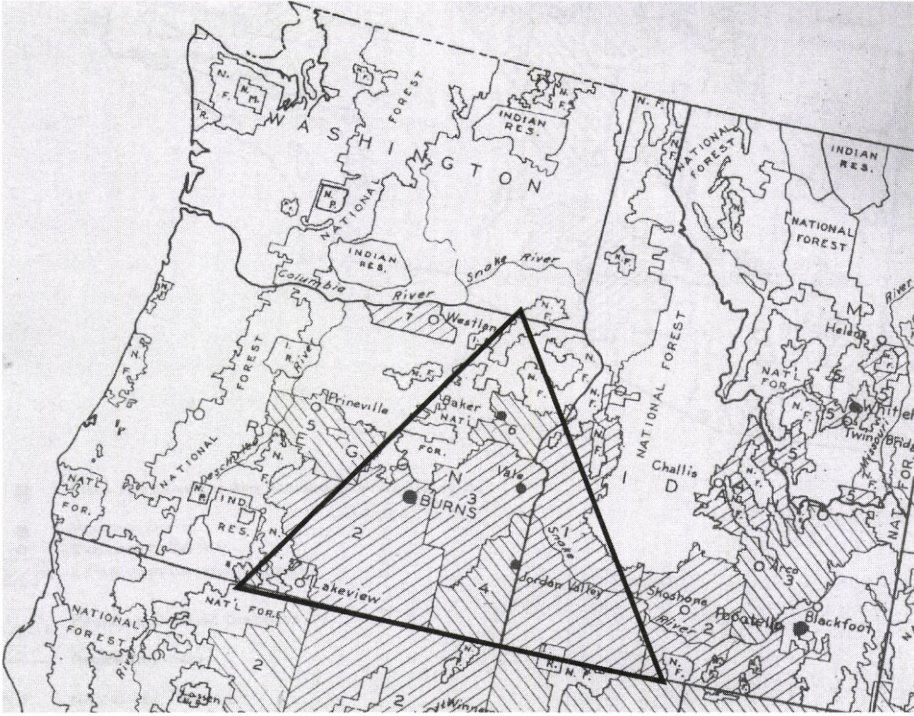
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Consequently, Odiaga bolted toward his apprentice, Bonnie Yraguen, brandishing a bank check for severance wages and ordering him to flee the camp. The marshal misconstrued Odiaga's reaction as an attempt to elude prosecution, and tackled the fifty-six-year-old grazier just as he reached Yraguen. Although Yraguen had received his wages, Chairman Jones persuaded the apprentice, whom he knew personally, to shepherd the animals back to Odiaga's lambing sheds in Vale. Jones, a local elite cattle rancher, ominously reassured Yraguen that his boss would not choose to linger in the Malheur County jail after the first night. The apprentice reluctantly agreed to remove the sheep from the federal range, and the officials walked a handcuffed Odiaga along the five-mile trail back to Juntura that evening. Odiaga informed the local press the next day that the county sheriff had locked him in a cell with a "drunk that tried to beat up on [me]" all night.<sup>2</sup> Whether because of his cell mate's belligerence or the threats of the regional grazier, or both, Odiaga reconsidered his avowal to languish in prison to protest the TGA, and instead asked his attorney, Pat Donegan, the next morning to post his \$500 bail.<sup>3</sup> Within a month, Regional Grazier Marvin Klemme arrested Odiaga's fellow Basque sheepmen, Cleto Achabal and Joaquin Arte, on identical charges. By the end of May federal prosecutors had secured indictments from the grand jury and filed three criminal trespassing lawsuits with the United States District Court.<sup>4</sup>

#### BASQUE LEGAL RESISTANCE AND ACCULTURATION

The arrests of Odiaga, Achabal, and Arte in the spring of 1936 marked the culmination of the Nampa Triangle Basque community's legal campaign to defend their customary grazing grounds—or "accustomed ranges"—on the public domain. The federal adjudication of grazing rights inaugurated by the passage of the TGA in 1934 threatened to exclude small producers from this valuable natural resource. Bizkaian Basques of the Nampa Triangle Region—bordered by Boise in western Idaho, Burns in eastern Oregon, and McDermitt in northern Nevada—resisted federal grazing regulation through political organization, administrative hearings, civil lawsuits, criminal test cases, and civil disobedience. Ultimately, the Basques sought to invalidate the TGA in federal court.

Yet what began as a focused legal contest regarding land rights gradually transformed into a cultural discourse renegotiating the individual and group identity of the Basques. Joe Odiaga, Cleto Achabal, Felix Urizar, and other Basque community leaders realized that any long-term legal victory largely depended on their success in establishing their social legitimacy as members of the broader community. Federal adjudication illuminated enduring racialized perceptions of "Black Bascos" and "tramp sheepmen," accompanied by a negative bias that attributed to them cultural traits of landlessness, tax



Grazing Districts under the Taylor Grazing Act, circa 1939 with Nampa Triangle Basque community cultural boundary superimposed. (*The Grazing Bulletin*, U.S. Division of Grazing, Department of Interior)

evasion, draft dodging, transience, and clannishness. As federal adjudication intensified, the Basque community refashioned this legal framework into a social vehicle for engaging the non-Basque community and refuting exclusionary stereotypes. The Basque graziers ensured that the documentary evidence they presented for adjudication—including evidence of property ownership, long-term leaseholds, tax payments, military service, naturalized citizenship, and permanent residency—addressed two audiences: the federal officials charged with determining their legal status as federal grazing permittees and non-Basque residents who questioned their social standing as acculturated members of the community.

Led by John Archabal, the Boise Basque community founded the Western Range Sheep and Cattle Association (WRSCA) in August 1934 to “seek a liberal interpretation of the new grazing act for the benefit of non-landowners” and “guard the rights of the small sheep and cattle owner” against infringement by state and federal grazing regulations.<sup>5</sup> To achieve this mission, the organization mobilized a class-conscious, multi-ethnic constituency of non-corporate small

producers, including Basque, Greek, Irish, and Mexican livestock raisers. The WRSCA hired former Idaho Governor James H. Hawley and the Burns attorney Pat Donegan to serve as legal counsel and represent their interests at formal Division of Grazing meetings and adjudication hearings. The graziers Felix Urizar, Joe Abasolo, and Joe Odiaga formed Oregon auxiliaries, and launched an educational campaign to explain the TGA's provisions to local sheepmen. By the time of the trespassing arrests in 1936, the WRSCA had provided a platform for Nampa Triangle Basques to mediate their relationship with both the federal government and the local non-Basque community.

The story of the Nampa Triangle Basques echoes Patricia Nelson Limerick's argument that "Western history has been an ongoing competition for legitimacy—the right to claim for oneself and sometimes for one's group the status of legitimate beneficiary of Western resources. This intersection of ethnic diversity with property allocation unifies Western history."<sup>6</sup> Anglo-American attitudes toward immigrant Basque graziers in the West from the 1880s through the New Deal reflect this struggle for legitimacy. A 1934 Interior Department press release titled "The New Deal Goes West" trumpeted: "the Taylor Grazing Act with its promise of regulation of grazing and elimination of tramp sheepmen has come to the Western Graziers as one star of hope."<sup>7</sup> This statement embodied the perception of Basques as foreign, illegitimate, and vanishing, and the contemporary reader understood that the character and identity of these "tramps" disintitiled them from the natural bounty of the American West.

#### BASQUE IMMIGRATION, "ACCUSTOMED RANGES" AND THE TAYLOR GRAZING ACT

Basque immigration coincided with the expansion of the transhumant, open-range sheep-raising industry in the intermountain West. Between the 1880s and 1934, three generations of Basque herders entered the contested western terrain of public-domain grazing and common-law usufruct rights—or rights of use. Born José Luis Odiaga in the village of Amoroto, Bizkaia, on August 24, 1880, Odiaga immigrated to America at age nineteen for the same reasons shared by his peers: to avoid conscription into the Spanish army and to acquire land to support a family. Increasing land scarcity in Bizkaia, accentuated by the entailment of traditional Basque farmsteads, or *basseri*, which average about five to ten acres, left non-inheriting sons few job opportunities.<sup>8</sup>

After arriving in Boise in 1899, Odiaga and his friend Joe Uberuaga found work in the sheep camps of Orrie Cole, an Anglo-American stockman, until they saved enough capital to purchase their own flocks.<sup>9</sup> The partners' frugality, combined with family resources, allowed these single Basque herders to return to their home province of Bizkaia to visit family and court brides. After a whirlwind courtship, Odiaga married Juana Mendasona in her home village of Ispáster on November 28, 1914, and the newlyweds walked twenty miles to



Wedding portrait of José Luis (Joe) Odiaga and Juana Mendasona. Ispáster, Bizkaia 28 November 1914. Photographer unknown. (*Courtesy of the grandchildren of José Luis Odiaga: John Jr., Janice, Tom, Mitch, and Linda*)

the port of Lequetio to embark for America.<sup>10</sup> The couple traveled to Boise for their honeymoon and Odiaga resumed his sheepraising operations before the spring lambing season.<sup>11</sup>

Odiaga's entrepreneurial spirit reflected the fortunes of many Nampa Triangle immigrant graziers who established small businesses after years of saving. In the late 1910s, Odiaga formed the Western Sheep Company, hired apprentices, and expanded his accustomed ranges into Oregon. Juana initially roomed with her cousin at the Uberuaga Boarding House in Boise, and ultimately maintained the family's home in Boise throughout Odiaga's sheep-raising career. Although

the couple spent only a few weeks together each year, during the Christmas holiday, Juana raised three sons—John, Mitchell, and Joseph—whose birthdays, the family wryly notes, were all in the month of September.<sup>12</sup> During the 1910s, community leaders like Odiaga contributed to the emergence of an international Basque community in the Nampa Triangle region, anchored by *ostatuak* (boarding houses) in Jordan Valley, Burns, McDermitt, and Boise. Odiaga's fluency in Euskera and English, combined with his mobility traveling between Basque settlements in the American West and return trips to Bizkaia, epitomized the transnational identity and perspective of many first-generation Nampa Triangle *Amerikanuak* (Basque Americans).<sup>13</sup>

Representative of nearly all Nampa Triangle Basque graziers, Odiaga's first and consistent grazing of natural grasses located on the public domain established accustomed ranges and common-law rights of use to these areas, predicated on the western doctrine of prior appropriation. Basque immigrants quickly learned the maxim that "first in time is first in right" when claiming land and water rights or extracting natural resources from the public domain. From the passage of the Oregon Donation Act of 1850 through the Homestead Act of 1862 to the Oregon Water Code of 1909, federal and state governments assigned vested, senior rights to those claimants successfully asserting beneficial "priority use."<sup>14</sup> Although Basque herders owned private "base lands" for winter pasturage, they depended on the adjacent public range for their livelihoods, and rarely amassed ranches capable of sustaining their livestock year-round. By the late 1910s, Odiaga had established accustomed ranges in eastern Oregon near the Juniper Mountains, John Day, Seneca, and several other locations in Harney and Malheur counties. Odiaga also owned lambing sheds in Vale and Nyssa, Oregon.

Farrington R. Carpenter, director of the fledgling United States Division of Grazing, announced in the fall of 1934 that Oregon would host the first federal grazing district. President Franklin Roosevelt endorsed the TGA as a hallmark of New Deal natural resource policy, and hoped the law would stabilize the economy of the livestock industry and rehabilitate the overgrazed range. In practice, the TGA deferred to local autonomy. The TGA and its amendments authorized the secretary of the interior to withdraw 142 million acres of vacant, unappropriated public domain from all forms of private entry and homesteading, and regulate grazing on these lands through the issuance of federal grazing permits. The TGA's principal architect, Representative Edward Taylor of Colorado, intentionally left the blueprints for readjudicating range rights unfinished as a practical recognition of regional environmental variations, and as a concession to western anti-federal ideology.

Touted as the "New Deal on the Range," this grand experiment in self-regulation fostered a bottom-up flow of policy formulation. The Interior Department allowed local advisory boards, elected by fellow users and dominated by landed cattle ranchers, to devise and enforce their own visions of public-land

grazing. Local advisors developed a set of criteria for prioritizing the allocation of the initial grazing licenses, which devalued priority use, and conversely emphasized the quantity of privately owned "base lands." Local advisors contended that licensees must own a "commensurate" amount of private land in comparison to the acreage of their accustomed ranges on the public domain. Director Carpenter approved and codified the supplementary rules crafted by the local advisors on May 31, 1935, in Interior Department Circular No. 2, titled, "Rules for the Guidance of District Advisors in Recommending the Issuance of Grazing Licenses." This circular stipulated three classes of licensees:

1. Qualified applicants with dependent commensurate property with prior use.
2. Qualified applicants who have prior use but not adequate commensurate property.
3. Qualified applicants with dependent commensurate property but without prior use.

Moreover, the supplementary rules warned: "if a class more than exhausts the capacity of the range, all junior classes will be eliminated."<sup>15</sup>

Officially, this "commensurability" yardstick simply required would-be licensees to demonstrate their ability to sustain their animals on adjacent private land of "commensurate" size and quality during the winter off-season when licenses expired. However, under the leadership of Carpenter and Regional Grazier Marvin Klemme, "commensurability" became an instrument for dismantling the accustomed range rights of Basque herders and other small producers. Invariably, the local advisors of Oregon's seven Taylor Grazing Districts assigned small producers to the secondary status of "prior use without adequate property," while concurrently declaring that Class A applicants had exhausted the available range. The local advisory-board policies, drafted by cattle ranchers like Vale District Chairman J. N. Jones, effectively repudiated the Basques' legal standing as priority users and subordinated their status as the first graziers of a particular range to those who owned the most contiguous private land. At a whistle stop in Vale during a promotional tour in December 1934, Carpenter informed the audience that the Division of Grazing would attach grazing privileges to commensurate land: "We do not care how many cattle or sheep you have or how much experience or lack of experience you have in the livestock business. We care only for your [commensurate] lands."<sup>16</sup>

#### BASQUE COMMUNITY RESISTANCE AND IDENTITY: THE CRIMINAL TRESPASSING CASES

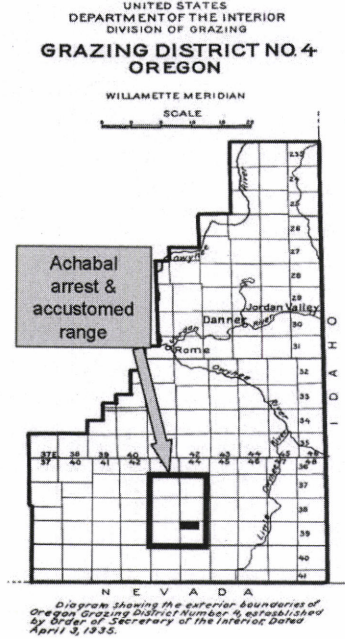
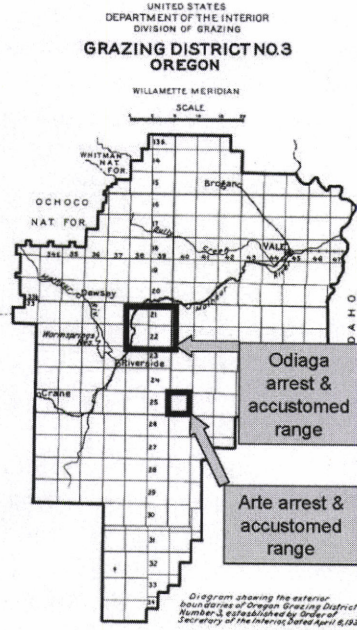
The Basque herders and their legal team organized rapidly in early 1935 to block this assault on their standing as priority users.<sup>17</sup> Through extensive testimony delivered at advisory-board meetings, appeal hearings, and civil

complaints, the Basques presented a narrative of land ownership, long-term leaseholds, business partnerships, tax-base support, civic responsibility, and residential permanence that contradicted anti-Basque popular misconceptions and government allegations. Basque leaders developed public voices for the first time, and addressed the non-Basque citizenry of greater Oregon in editorials, open letters, and public resolutions. After witnessing the impact of the new advisory-board rules on small producers, Cleto Achabal penned a scathing letter to Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, questioning the advisors' motives: "It is disappointing and discouraging to believe that the Taylor Bill and officials would permit regulations that are impracticable to one class of users. It was the understanding of stockmen in our district that the Taylor Bill was intended to work to the advantage of both sheep and cattle, and not to the detriment of one over the other."<sup>18</sup>

In January 1936, Carpenter had reassigned the Utah regional grazier, Marvin Klemme, to the Oregon post. Klemme's extensive experience combating the "transient" sheep industry, and his pro-rancher perspective, translated into a strong rapport with the Oregon advisory boards. Within his first weeks in Oregon, the regional grazier ordered the eviction of all non-licensed livestock from the public domain by June 1, 1936. In a keynote address to the annual convention of the Oregon State Cattle and Horse Raisers Association, Klemme alluded to his Basque adversaries, and celebrated the passing of the Wild West era when a transient "owning no property and frequently not having headquarters can roam at will over the country taking the cream of it as he moves along."<sup>19</sup> Klemme echoed these sentiments in his memoir, *Home Rule on the Range*, published in 1984. In a chapter titled "The Transient-Sheep Industry," the former regional grazier explained:

Many of these operations were run by aliens, chiefly Basques . . . on the whole, they did not tend to build up a stable community. . . Generally speaking, these people had no real base of operations. They owned little or no land. They leased or "mooched" summer range. . . Their aim was to make a lot of money and then return to the old country; whether or not they abused the pastures that their flocks were grazing never seemed to enter their consideration at all.<sup>20</sup>

The Basque community's resistance expanded with the acts of civil disobedience performed by Joe Odiaga, Cleto Achabal, and Joaquin Arte, who had suffered severe curtailments in their accustomed range rights at the hands of the Jordan and Vale district advisory boards in 1935. Whereas Achabal's license permitted him to run forty-nine hundred of his seventy-one hundred sheep on customary pasturage within the Jordan district for the nine-month season, the Vale advisory board wholly rejected the license applications of Odiaga and Arte for their respective eleven-hundred head flocks.



Oregon Grazing District No. 3 (Vale) and Oregon Grazing District No. 4 (Jordan) within Malheur and Harney Counties with locations of arrest and accustomed ranges of Odiaga, Achabal and Arte. (*The Grazing Bulletin*, U.S. Division of Grazing, Department of Interior)



Basque sheepman Felix Urizar (on horse) with Jess and Millie Ugalde in sheep camp near Andrews, Oregon, east side of Steens Mountain, 1938. Photographer unknown. (Courtesy of Gilbert Urizar, Burns, Oregon. "Amerikanuak!: Basques in the High Desert," *The High Desert Museum*, 1995)

To collect the evidence necessary for ensuring a conviction, Klemme stationed federal agents, armed with plat maps and survey records, to monitor the actions of Odiaga, Achabal, Arte, and other applicants denied licenses for their full head counts. The agents tailed the so-called Basque Three on horseback, documenting their movements and plotting their locations daily. Once Klemme had confirmed their violations, he personally delivered the trespassing notification to Odiaga on April 6, 1936. As part of his strategy of civil disobedience, Odiaga admonished the regional grazier that he intended to remain incarcerated indefinitely and foist the care of his sheep upon the state by releasing his apprentice. Despite this threat, Klemme served papers on Achabal and Arte within thirty days as well. The notices warned the recipients that their presence within a TGA grazing district violated the rules of supplemental TGA Circular No. 2, which allowed violators forty-eight hours to remove their unlicensed animals. After this grace period elapsed, Klemme and United States Marshals promptly swore out arrest warrants before the United States Commissioner in Baker, Oregon.<sup>21</sup>

Klemme had nursed a personal vendetta against the Basque graziers since arriving at the Oregon post, and interpreted their resistance to the TGA as flouting his authority. In his zeal to prosecute the immigrant graziers, he falsely accused Felix Urizar and Cleto Achabal of evading the draft for the Great War in 1918 and publicly questioned their patriotism.<sup>22</sup> Through correspondence with Interior Department officials and carefully manipulated public statements, Klemme attempted to inflame xenophobic fears about the supposed "Old World" political loyalties of these Basque immigrants. The regional grazier warned United States attorneys that "Achabal has made such remarks as 'To Hell with the Government' [and] 'The Taylor Grazing Act is not Constitutional' . . . . He is reported to have renounced his citizenship during the war and . . . the arrest of this party will have a wonderful moral effect on the rest of the Basques in that part of the country who are causing trouble."<sup>23</sup>

The criminal trespassing cases raised awareness of the Basque herders' struggle to preserve their livelihoods. Upon learning of the arrests, the Nampa Triangle Basque community rallied to secure the release of the Basque Three from jail. Felix and Cecilia Urizar owned and operated the Star Hotel in Burns, as well as running sheep camps on Steens Mountain. They pledged the furniture and fixtures of their boarding house along with cash in their savings account as collateral for Odiaga's primary bond. Marcelino Osa, another prominent Basque hotel and mercantile proprietor in Burns, accompanied the Urizar family to the commissioner's office to consign his real estate, fixtures, merchandise, and perishable stock to secure the secondary surety bond. Cleto Achabal posted his own bond with the backing of family connections in Boise, and therefore, declined public offers of financial assistance from Basque families in McDermitt.<sup>24</sup>

Gradually, a broadening contingent of non-Basque retailers, shippers, creditors, and personal friends offered their support. Non-Basque merchants who



Sheepman Cleto Achabal (left) of McDermitt, Nevada on board ship for a visit to the Basque Country, 1929. Photographer unknown. (Courtesy of Urizar Family Collection, Burns, Oregon; "Amerikanuak!: Basques in the High Desert," *The High Desert Museum*, 1995)

had profited from the trade of Basque graziers openly deplored Klemme's biased actions, and drafted a statement condemning the policies of the advisory boards. Nestled at the base of Steens Mountain along its namesake river, the small town of Blitzen relied upon Basque shepherders like Pedro Garay and Jose Laucirica to support much of their retail and service sector. The neighboring hamlets of Andrews, Frenchglen, and Diamond felt a similar economic pinch as the TGA dislocated both Basque and Irish small producers such as Graciano Sabala, Daniel Subiaurre, John and Ben Madariaga, Joe Madarieta, Arthur Callaghan, the Cronin brothers, and Murphy and Sullivan.<sup>25</sup> Blitzen proprietors and spokesmen for the group, J. L. Bradeen and V. Taber, delivered their statement to the Burns Chamber of Commerce and local newspapers, lamenting, "as a result of the Taylor Act advisory board's ruling, the stock operators without sufficient commensurability liquidate their livestock and go out of business; many have complied and hundreds of acres of fine range in the Steens Mountain region have not been touched during the present season."<sup>26</sup>

Bradeen and his associates translated their words into action. They testified as appellant witnesses at the Vale grazing-district protest hearing that Klemme presided over on July 13, 1936. In March, the Grazing Advisory Board had assigned Class C permit status to the Madariaga brothers, Graciano Sabala, Daniel Subiaurre, and Madarieta and Zabala for the 1936 grazing season. The Basque herders objected to their classification and had finally received a rehearing at the Harney County courthouse in Burns. Felix and Alex Urizar, Ben Echanis, Ben Madariaga, and John Cascarosa testified that the range could accommodate all of the applicants and that Klemme had abused Section 3 of the TGA. Bradeen and fellow non-Basque businessmen confirmed this testimony. Perhaps more important, they contributed a pro-Basque, pro-small-producer voice to the dialogue, which Klemme could not easily rebuff as illegitimate. Bradeen represented the old-stock, grassroots Oregon settler. Klemme likely realized the risks associated with alienating such a mainstream constituency, also one capable of enlisting broader sympathies.<sup>27</sup>

During his sojourn in Burns, Bradeen conferred with other businessmen concerning the plight of the Basque herders, including the truck-line representative Ed Wells—whose wife had hosted Margarita Osa's baby shower. They had also as a couple attended the birthday celebrations of Joe Abasolo and Marcelino Osa. At the Burns Chamber of Commerce's weekly luncheon, which coincided with the protest hearing, Wells and Bradeen expressed their skepticism about how the advisory boards had implemented the TGA. As manager of the local branch of Consolidated Freight, Wells informed Chamber members that wool shipments had declined 30 percent in the last five years, and that cattle numbers showed similar trends. Wells and Bradeen drew a direct link between Klemme's administration and the shrinking economy of the eastern Oregon livestock industry and the related service sector. The two men concluded their remarks with an exhortation to the citizens of Burns to study the TGA and become active participants in its fair execution.

Following the arrest and arraignment of the Basque defendants, the grand jury swiftly returned indictments on May 28, 1936.<sup>28</sup> Pat Donegan, the WRSCA attorney representing the Basque Three, had prepared demurrers to the criminal indictments long before their issuance. The demurrers for Odiaga, Achabal, and Arte cited three constitutional grounds for overturning the TGA: the infringement of private property rights, the illegal delegation of legislative authority to an administrative officer, and the abridgement of equal protection and due process. Donegan argued that the TGA unlawfully delegated congressional authority to the local advisory boards, which served as self-interested gatekeepers to the federal range lands under the pretext of resource conservation. He presented the supplementary rules devised by the local advisory boards as evidence.<sup>29</sup>

While in the United States District Court Judge John McNary reviewed the demurrers in the criminal cases, the Basque Three continued to appeal their



Odiaga Sheep Camp, ca. 1939. Joe Odiaga (standing on ground, third from right) and Juana Odiaga (standing on ground, first on right). Photographer unknown. (*Courtesy of the grandchildren of Jose Luis Odiaga: John Jr, Janice, Tom, Mitch, and Linda*)

license applications before the Division of Grazing hearings held in the Jordan and Vale districts during late May and early June. Donegan exploited this opportunity to prove that the beneficial use of natural grasses by Achabal, Odiaga, and Arte predated the arrival of the elected Anglo-American advisors and chairmen of the boards. The hearing testimony of the Jordan advisory-board chairman Sam Ross reproached the Basque graziers who “irresponsibly run year round on the public domain and permit their sheep bands to shadow the snow melt from the canyon floors to the high meadows, trampling the young grass before it reaches maturity and despoiling the range for cattle [and] crowd cattlemen out of their homes.”<sup>30</sup> Ross managed a mixed livestock venture of thirty-seven hundred sheep, eleven hundred cattle, and two hundred horses in the Jordan district. The advisory-board rules awarded Ross a Class A permit for his entire headcount based on his ownership of four hundred acres with attached water rights to the Owyhee River in the Warm Springs Basin. Pressing Ross on this notion of “home,” Donegan asked, “You made the statement that the cattlemen were entitled, in substance, to preference because that was their home down there. Do these sheep have homes there, too?” An indignant Ross retorted that indeed the sheep did not have homes, and that he observed them watering on cattlemen’s deeded lands, including his own. When prodded to

substantiate his allegations with specific examples, Ross admitted that he remained uncertain whose sheep he observed. The distinction between owners and animals often blurred in the testimony of the Basques' Anglo-American adversaries, and the sheep functioned as a synecdoche for the entire Nampa Triangle Basque community. Donegan queried Ross as to whether the Basque applicants themselves represented a similarly parasitic relationship with their human neighbors, as their sheep allegedly did with adjacent cattle. After presenting abundant evidence of property ownership and tax payments, Donegan sharply asked the chairman, "You know that Mr. Achabal owns land, don't you? . . . He has a home there, the same as the cattlemen . . . and Mrs. Bengoa has her home there, too . . . Mr. Gavica also." Ross answered with a laconic "yes . . . yes . . . yes."<sup>31</sup>

#### THE McNARY RULING AND CONTINUED RESISTANCE

While Donegan and the officers of the WRSCA continued to defend their constituents' "priority use" grazing rights at appeal hearings throughout Oregon and western Idaho, the Basque community learned the outcome of the criminal test cases on June 22, 1936. District Court Judge McNary delivered his watershed opinion on public-land law in the criminal trespass case of *United States v. Odiaga*. Since this case represented the first legal challenge to the TGA, newspapers nationwide reprinted McNary's decision in its entirety. McNary rejected the defense demurrers and invoked the "public trust" doctrine of federal property.<sup>32</sup> He ruled the TGA constitutional because "all public lands of the nation are held in trust for the benefit of the whole country."<sup>33</sup> The verdict contended that "the provisions of the [Taylor Grazing] act authorizing the Secretary of Interior to establish grazing districts and make such rules and regulations as shall be necessary to accomplish the purposes of the law, does not constitute a delegation of legislative power, but creates administrative duties."<sup>34</sup> Judge McNary also validated the actions of the local advisory boards, specifically their classification of applicants and readjudication of grazing privileges. The ruling concluded that "the fixing of boundaries of grazing districts [and] rules regulating permits and preference . . . so as to prevent overgrazing and soil deterioration is a matter of detail, and a necessary subject of inquiry and determination by an administrative officer."<sup>35</sup>

Although the Oregon Basques failed to overturn the TGA in federal court, their coordinated legal campaign moderated the adjudication process locally and nationally. Emboldened by the growing sympathy from the broader community, Basque leaders such as Felix Urizar, the president of the WRSCA Oregon auxiliary, found their own public voices in this increasingly political debate, and they expanded resistance into the social arena. They were no longer content to speak through non-Basque intermediaries, such as the WRSCA attorney Pat Donegan, to legitimize their arguments.

The government-subsidized importation of cattle from the drought-stricken regions of Montana, Wyoming, and South Dakota to federal grazing districts in Malheur and Harney counties during the summer of 1936 catalyzed the Basques to address the broader community. The discounted purchase of drought cattle by local advisory-board members holding Class A licenses coincided with the Oregon grazing-license appeal hearings and exacerbated tensions. Urizar and fellow long time Harney County Basque graziers—the Madariaga brothers, Joe Madarieta, Domingo Sabala, and Daniel Subiaurre—had established accustomed ranges totaling eighteen thousand acres dating to the early 1910s around Burns, Andrews, and the Catlow Valley-Steens Mountain region. But the Great Basin advisory board approved only half of their 10,400 sheep for full-season grazing licenses.<sup>36</sup> Although the Basques complained about their curtailed grazing rights, the board dismissed the appeals on July 14, 1936 and asserted that the Class A licensees had exhausted the available rangeland.

Six days later, the first fourteen boxcar-loads of drought cattle arrived. Urizar decried the licensing of additional cattle to graze on the former accustomed ranges of Basque graziers, who had just experienced license-application denials, as deliberate dispossession and displacement by the government. He condemned the hypocrisy of the departments of Interior and Agriculture, and drafted his own letter of grievance to the editor of the *Burns Times-Herald*. Urizar's published letter informed readers that:

[Director F. R.] Carpenter told me that the range was overstocked and that my sheep and the sheep of several other outfits would have to go off the range. And Mr. Carpenter made it plain to me that we were going out of business right away and without any further delays. Carpenter said he had millions even billions of dollars back in Washington to use to put us off the range and that it was no use to fight him. How about the NRA [National Recovery Administration], AAA [Agricultural Adjustment Act], and the many other acts that were put out by the Supreme Court? Why then this discrimination? Wouldn't it be better to let the people who are in business now use the range than to put them out of business so as to make room for the "speculators"? We are not going to let Carpenter or anyone else force us out and give our property away. We will spend the value of these outfits "fighting" before we let anyone "steal" from us. When we boys were giving our legal business to [Carpenter and Anglo-American attorneys supporting the TGA] we were not tramp sheepmen but were O.K.<sup>37</sup>

Urizar's parting statement reflected the Basque community's awareness that the federal government and local advisory boards had always understood the "priority use" rights and modest property holdings of the Basque graziers, and adopted the strategy of portraying them as landless tramps only after the small producers refused to accept their reduced status.



The Odiaga clan pose at Joe Odiaga's sheep camp, ca. 1942. Joe Odiaga (second from left) and Juana Odiaga (third from left). Photographer unknown. (Courtesy of the grandchildren of Jose Luis Odiaga: John Jr, Janice, Tom, Mitch, and Linda)

#### THE TAYLOR GRAZING ACT AND THE VANISHING BASQUES: DEBUNKING THE MYTH

A quantitative analysis comparing the profiles of the approximately sixteen hundred Oregon public-domain graziers in 1932 and 1938 (before and after adjudication) confirms that the TGA did not permanently expel or marginalize Basque graziers and other small producers from their accustomed ranges. Although the initial hardships imposed by the TGA's discriminatory enforcement bankrupted some Basque herders, a majority of Basque graziers endured and continued grazing on individual and community allotments into the 1950s. Basque sheep raisers declined by only 31 percent, from 48 to 33 operators, contrasted with the 32 percent decrease of non-Basque sheepmen, from 241 to 163. In terms of total public domain livestock numbers, the Basques also maintained their customary range rights in correlation to non-Basques. The collective head count of Basque sheep shrunk by 45 percent, from 188,870 to 103,705, whereas non-Basque sheep experienced a 40 percent drop, from 759,217 to 453,335.<sup>38</sup>

The Basque resistance ultimately contributed to the ouster of the Klemme-Carpenter regime in late 1938. The Basque litigation prodded Interior Secretary Ickes to reform the prevailing permittee classification system. In the early 1940s, Ickes assigned greater weight to "prior use" and redefined "commensurability" more favorably toward small producers. Ickes also collaborated with Klemme's

successor to enfranchise Basque sheepmen and other small producers, which secured the election of Basque advisors. The empowerment of small producers within the adjudication process allowed the Basque herders to foster a more equitable redistribution of local natural resources, and many Basque graziers reconsolidated their pre-TGA accustomed ranges.

The mixed success the Basques enjoyed in their legal contest was underpinned by a broader social victory that dispelled perceptions of the Black Basco tramp sheepmen, and redefined the individual and group identity of the Nampa Triangle Basques. The Basques contested lingering myths of "transiency" by demonstrating through action and evidence that they exemplified permanent residents and legitimate resource users. They soundly repudiated allegations of tax-evasion and landlessness, and, through the process of adjudication, documented their legal citizenship, extensive leaseholds, property ownership and business incorporations.<sup>39</sup>

The Basque political organizations helped cultivate inter-ethnic relationships with non-Basque supporters throughout the state. Eastern Oregon merchants, hay farmers, trucking companies, and fellow small producers coalesced with the Basque graziers in their struggle. Basque communities in Burns, Jordan Valley, and McDermitt hosted sheepmen's balls and holiday banquets at boarding houses like the Urizar's Star Hotel for the entire community, performing Spanish songs and Basque dances for the audience.<sup>40</sup> After surviving the crucible of readjudication, the Nampa Triangle Basques emerged—in image and reality—as a modern, active, integrated, and politically conscious community of *Amerikanuak*. The Basque herders had transformed their legal challenge of adjudication into a social triumph.

#### COMMUNITY MEMORY: JOE ODIAGA, AN ARCHETYPE OF BASQUE RESISTANCE

Joe Odiaga died in 1962, but his defiance of the TGA lives on in the collective memory of the Oregon and Idaho Basque communities. As a young boy, John Odiaga, Jr., shared countless hours fishing and hunting with his taciturn grandfather, but during their excursions, Joe never mentioned his life on the range with his sheep or his experience fighting the Taylor Act. Ironically, John discovered the legend of Gavada only after Joe's passing, when John began drinking with the Old Country Basques in the Basque bars of Boise—the Bouquet and the Miramar—perhaps a few months shy of his twenty-first birthday. These octogenarian bachelor sheepherders regaled John with stories of how Gavada—an endearing nickname derived from Joe's Bizkaian ancestral house name in Amoroto—was the Basque Patrick Henry, and reminisced with pride about his grandfather's defiance of the federal government.<sup>41</sup> The events surrounding Odiaga's arrest and trial were passed down through oral tradition and became a folk history. His public testimony was compared to the mythologized "Give



Joe Odiaga (center) and sons, Joe Odiaga, Jr. (left) John Odiaga (right), July 1944. Juana never allowed Joe to take Joe Jr. or John to the range after their older brother Mitchell died of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever at age 14 after a tick bite on the range in 1929. Photographer unknown. (Courtesy of the grandchildren of Jose Luis Odiaga: John Jr, Janice, Tom, Mitch, and Linda)

Me Liberty, or Give Me Death!" speech of the American Revolutionary patriot, and his living contemporaries claimed the Basque herder had walked boldly off the range and into the courtroom. Without the aid of an attorney, the cagey Odiaga addressed the judge directly and ultimately persuaded him to render a favorable verdict for the Basque herders. Although court transcripts depict a less definitive and dramatic legal culmination, they do not contradict the cultural significance of this foundational episode for the Basque community. The story of Odiaga's act of civil disobedience has become an archetype of Basque resistance to outside forces. Third-generation *Amerikanuak* explain that the colorful family crests embellishing the Basque Block of downtown Boise represent emblems of nobility granted by the Spanish monarchy to their ancestors in gratitude for the Basques' expulsion of the Moors from *Euskal Herria* during the Reconquest of the Iberia.<sup>42</sup> To his peers and descendants, Joe Odiaga's tenacious resistance in his contest over range adjudication to ensure the survival of his family and community, echoed the ancient Bizkaian Basque traits of courage, perseverance, and independence.<sup>43</sup> The community memory of Joe Odiaga as the Basque Patrick Henry embodies the emergence of *Amerikanuak* (Basque American) identity, by conflating traditional Bizkaian heritage with the dominant cultural narrative of Anglo-American national history and civil rights.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Division of Grazing, "Notice of Trespass," 20 April 1936, National Archive and Records Administration [Hereafter cited as NARA-PAR], RG21, Box 559, Folder 20172.

<sup>2</sup>Marvin Klemme, *Home Rule on the Range: Early Days of the Grazing Service* (New York: Vantage Press, 1984), 95-100.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*; "Federal Grand Jury Next to Act in Taylor Act Test," *Burns Times-Herald* (11 May 1936), 3.

<sup>4</sup>District Court, *United States v. Massie Sheep Company, a Corporation and Joaquin Arte*, "Indictment," 29 May 1936, NARA-PAR, RG21, Box 594, Folder 20775; U.S. District Court, *United States v. Joe Odiaga*, "Indictment," 28 May 1936, NARA-PAR, RG21, Box 559, Folder 20172.

<sup>5</sup>"Donegan Represents Non-Land Owners at Klamath Meeting," *Burns Times-Herald* (27 September 1934); "New Association to Urge Protection of Small Range Users," *Burns Times-Herald* (21 January 1935).

<sup>6</sup>Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987), 27; Karen R. Merrill, "In Search of the 'Federal Presence' in the American West," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 30:4 (Winter 1999), 449-73; *idem*, *Public Lands and Political Meaning: Ranchers, the Government, and the Property between Them* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); William G. Robbins and James C. Foster, eds., *Land in the American West: Private Claims and the Common Good* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000).

<sup>7</sup>Frank Delaney Papers, University of Colorado, Western Historical Collections, Boulder Archives, Boulder, Box 194, Folder 13; U.S. Department of Interior, Division of Grazing, "The New Deal Goes West," circa 1934.

<sup>8</sup>"In the Matter of the Application of José Luis Odiaga, an Alien, to Become a Citizen of the United States of America," U.S. District Court, Ada County, Idaho, 26 September 1906, Odiaga Family Personal Papers; "Certificacion en Extracto de Acta de Nacimiento," Juez Municipal de Amoroto, provincia de Vizcaya, 24 de Agosto 1880, Odiaga Family Personal Papers; William A. Douglass and Jon Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1975); Beltran Paris and William A. Douglass, *Beltran: Sheepman of the American West* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1979); Richard W. Etulain, "Basque Beginnings in the Pacific Northwest," in *The Northwest Mosaic: Minority Conflicts in Pacific Northwest History*, James A. Haiseth and Bruce A. Glasrud, eds. (Boulder: Pruett, 1977).

<sup>9</sup>Orrie Cole also served as the witness for Odiaga's citizenship application.

<sup>10</sup>"Certificacion de Partida de Matrimonio," Parroquia San Miguel, Arcangel Ispáster, Diócesis Victoria, Provincia Vizcaya, Libro 5, Folio p94, Núm. 5, 28 Nombre 1914, Odiaga Family Personal Papers.

<sup>11</sup>Iglesia Católica, Vizcaya, Ispáster, San Andrés, Registros Parroquiales, Bautismos, Confirmaciones, Defunciones, Matrimonios, Matriculas 1850-1950, Archivo Histórico Eclesiástico de Vizcaya.

<sup>12</sup>John Odiaga, Jr., interview by Kevin Hatfield, Jerome, Idaho, 25 February 2002.

<sup>13</sup>John Odiaga, Jr., interview by Mikel Chertudi, Boise, Idaho, 13 February 2002, Basque Oral History Project, Basque Museum and Cultural Center Archives [hereafter cited as BMCCA]; Juana Odiaga, interview by Dianne Tullis, Boise, Idaho, 24 November 1975, Basque Oral History Project, BMCCA.

<sup>14</sup>Harlow Zinser Head, "The Oregon Donation Acts: Background, Development and Application" (M.A. thesis, University of Oregon, 1969); Jerry A. O'Callaghan, *The Disposition of the Public Domain in Oregon* (New York: Arno Press, 1979); C. Albert White, *A Casebook of Oregon Donation Land Claims* (Oregon City: LLM Publications, 2001); Paul Wallace Gates and Robert W. Swenson, *A History of Public Land Law Development* (Washington, D.C.: Public Land Law Review Commission, 1968; reprint, Holmes Beach, Florida: Wm. W. Gaunt & Sons, 1987).

<sup>15</sup>U. S. Department of Interior, Division of Grazing, "Circular No. 2: Rules for the Guidance of District Advisors in Recommending the Issuance of Grazing Licenses," 31 May 1935, Frank Delaney Papers.

<sup>16</sup>"To Award Range Rights on Basis of Feed Production on Farms," *Ontario Argus* (20 December 1934).

<sup>17</sup>"Rangemen to Meet at Court House," *Burns Times-Herald* (19 March 1935), 1; "To Protest Taylor Rule," *Burns Times-Herald* (13 March 1935), 1, 4; "Non-Resident Men Protest," *Ontario Argus* (14 March 1935), 1; "Jordan Valley Sheep in Hills," *Ontario Argus* (28 March 1935), 1; "Ranchers Talk '36 Problems," *Burns Times-Herald* (1 January 1936), 1, 4.

<sup>18</sup>Cleto Achabal, McDermitt, to Division of Grazing, Boise, 8 January 1936, NARA-PAR, RG49, Box 47414.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup>Klemme, *Home Rule*, 82-84.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 95-100; "Federal Grand Jury Next to Act."

<sup>22</sup>U.S. Department of Interior, Division of Grazing, Jordan Valley Grazing Advisory Board, "Minutes," 23-24 March 1936, NARA-PAR, RG49, Box 47414.

<sup>23</sup>Marvin Klemme, Burns, to Carl Donaugh, Portland, 12 May 1936, NARA-PAR, RG49, Box 47277.

<sup>24</sup>*Burns Times-Herald* (31 July 1936); U.S. District Court, *United States v. Odiaga*, "Justification of Surety Bond," 7 May 1936; *United States v. Odiaga*, "Justification of Second Surety Bond," 7 May 1936, NARA-PAR, RG21, Box 559, Folder 20171; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Manuscript Census Returns, *Fifteenth Census, Population Schedule, Harney County*, 1930, University of Oregon Library, Eugene; U.S. District Court, *United States v. Achabal*, "Justification of Surety Bond," 23 May 1936, NARA-PAR, RG21, Box 594, Folder 20775.

<sup>25</sup>U. S. Bureau of the Census, Manuscript Census Returns, *Fifteenth Census, Population Schedule, Harney County*, 1930.

<sup>26</sup>"Frenchglen Man Says Sheepmen Forced from Area," *Burns Times-Herald* (13 July 1936), 1.

<sup>27</sup>"Range Cases under Way," *Burns Times-Herald* (13 July 1936), p. 1; "Taylor Act Hearings Near End," *Burns Times-Herald* (14 July 1936), 1. Other witnesses testifying at the hearing included Allen Marble, Thomas Pollock, C. L. Pollock, Thomas Seaweward, Riley Huff, George A. Smyth, M. M. Doan, Frank Kueny, J. B. Fine, William Strode, C. T. Fisher, Sid Stoner, and J. C. Cecil.

<sup>28</sup>Marvin Klemme, Portland, to J. H. Leech, Salt Lake City, 28 May 1936; J. H. Leech, Salt Lake City, to Depue Falck, Washington, D.C., 29 May 1936; Marvin Klemme, Portland, to J. H. Leech, Salt Lake City, 8 June 1936; J. H. Leech, Salt Lake City, to Farrington R. Carpenter, Washington, D.C., 9 June 1936, NARA-PAR, RG49, Box 47277; "Three Sheepmen Indicted for Range Trespass," *Burns Times-Herald* (3 June 1936), p. 1; U. S. Department of Interior, Division of Grazing, "Notice of Trespass" [Joe Odiaga], 20 April 1936; *idem*, "Notice of Trespass" [Cleto Achabal], 25 April 1936, NARA-PAR, RG21, Box 559, Folder 20171; *idem*, "Notice of Trespass" [Massie Sheep Co.], 6 May 1936; U. S. District Court, *United States v. Joe Odiaga* "Indictment"; U. S. District Court, *United States v. Cleto Achabal* "Indictment"; U. S. District Court, *United States v. Massie Sheep Company, a Corporation and Joaquin Arte* "Indictment"; "Arrest Made for Trespass under Taylor Act," *Burns Times-Herald* (27 April 1936), 1; "Ask Warrant for Odiaga," *Ontario Argus* (23 April 1936), 1; "Odiaga Held on Trespass," *Ontario Argus* (7 May 1935), 1; "Cleto Achabal Waives Hearing," *Ontario Argus* (28 May 1936), 1.

<sup>29</sup>U.S. District Court, *United States v. Odiaga*, "Demurrer of Indictment," 5 June 1936, NARA-PAR, RG21, Box 559, Folder 20171; U.S. District Court, *United States v. Achabal*, "Demurrer of Indictment," 5 June 1936; *United States v. Massie Sheep Co.*, "Demurrer of Indictment," 5 June 1936, NARA-PAR, RG21, Box 594, Folder 20775.

<sup>30</sup>U.S. Department of Interior, Division of Grazing, "Hearing Transcript," 20 May 1936, 118.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup>Joseph Sax, "The Public Trust Doctrine in Natural Resource Law: Effective Judicial Intervention," *Michigan Law Review*, 68 (1970): 471-566; Joseph Sax, "Liberating the Public Trust Doctrine from Its Historical Shackles," *U.C. Davis Law Review*, 14 (1980): 185-94.

<sup>33</sup>U.S. Department of Interior, Division of Grazing, *The Grazing Bulletin* (September 1936), 9; "Grazing is Oked by Court," *Lake County Examiner* (25 June 1936), p. 1; U. S. District Court, *United States v. Odiaga*. "Order Overruling Demurrer," 22 June 1936; *United States v. Achabal*, "Order Overruling Demurrer," 22 June 1936, NARA-PAR, RG21, Box 559, Folder 20171; U. S. District Court, *United States v. Massie Sheep Co.*, "Order Overruling Demurrer," 22 June 1936, NARA-PAR, RG21, Box 594, Folder 20775.

<sup>34</sup>U. S. District Court, *United States v. Odiaga* "Order Overruling Demurrer," 22 June 1936; *United States v. Achabal* "Order Overruling Demurrer," 22 June 1936, NARA-PAR, RG 21, Box 559, Folder 20171; U. S. District Court, *United States v. Massie Sheep Co.* "Order Overruling Demurrer," 22 June 1936, NARA-PAR, RG 21, Box 594, Folder 20775.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup>U. S. Department of Interior, Division of Grazing, Great Basin Grazing Advisory Board, "Appeals Hearing Transcript," 13 July 1936, NARA-PAR, Box 47277, Folder 12.

<sup>37</sup>"Urizar Protests Drouth Cattle for 'Overstocked' Range," *Burns Times-Herald* (28 July 1936).

<sup>38</sup>U.S. Department of Interior, General Land Office, Serial Tract Books, The Dalles and Lakeview Offices; U.S. Department of Interior, Division of Investigation, "Hearing Transcript," 6 June 1938, National Archives and Records Administration-Washington D.C., hereafter cited as NARA-DC, RG49, Box 31; Harney County Clerk, Assessment Roll, 1890-1958, Harney County Courthouse, Clerk's Basement Storage, Burns; Malheur County Clerk, Deed Record, 1890-1945, Malheur County Courthouse, Clerk's Office, Vale; Charles Frederick Metsker, *Metsker's Atlas of Harney County, Oregon* (Portland: Metsker, 1935); *idem*, *Metsker's Atlas of Malheur County, Oregon* (Portland: Metsker, 1935).

<sup>39</sup>These empirical findings contribute to the growing body of scholarship critically re-evaluating the history of Basque graziers, most notably Richard Etulain and Jeronima Echeverria, *Portraits of Basques in the New World* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1999); Jeronima Echeverria, *Home Away from Home: A History of Basque Boardinghouses* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1999); John Bieter and Mark Bieter, *An Enduring Legacy: The Story of Basques in Idaho* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000).

<sup>40</sup>"Crane Provides for Entertainment of Stockmen Visitors," *Burns Times-Herald* (27 December 1935), 4; "Consolidated Truck Entertains 76 at Sheepmen's Banquet," *Burns Times-Herald* (19 March 1936), 4; "Abasolo Friends Are Entertained at Birthday Party," *Burns Times-Herald* (12 February 1936), 1.

<sup>41</sup>John Odiaga, Jr., interview by author, Jerome, Idaho, 18 December 2008.

<sup>42</sup>John Odiaga, Jr., interview by author, Eugene, Oregon, 14 March 2003.

<sup>43</sup>John Odiaga, Sr., interview by Mikel Chertudi, Boise, Idaho, 13 February 2002, Basque Oral History Project, BMCCA.

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