

People have been living in Madera for almost 150 years, and there is very little that hasn't changed. These photos were taken 50 years apart, and although they show the same principles, they also show how Madera adapted to the times they were living in. These photos display the dynamic history of Madera as a town, and Madera as a community.

The lumber industry created the foundation needed to succeed, as wood was flumed from the mountains to the railway. Soon the town of Madera popped up in a matter of months, the 1880's photo displaying the prosperity that it experienced. Center front in the photo are crates of fruits and vegetables, and while both are easily found in today's grocery stores, it shows that people could afford to buy fresh produce, and that stores could afford to supply it without economic loss. As odd as it is to think about an orange being a show of stability, the lack of variety in the later photo shows how impressive it truly was, being that corn, potatoes, and onions are most prominent.

The Great Depression struck the United States in the 1930's. It affected everyone from coast to coast, even Madera. By this point, Madera was well established, but the Sugar Pine Lumber Company was hit hard by the depression, as the market for lumber was destroyed. Looking at the stores in the photos, the changes that took place can be seen. The store in the 30's appears to be much bigger but looking at the shelves there is a bigger lack of variety, it appears stocked with mostly canned goods.

The layouts of the stores photographed also show the changes that took place over time. Looking at the counters in both images, the first not only had a clerk's counter, but also a deli/bakery counter, and a bar. It isn't uncommon for today's stores to have delis and bakeries incorporated, but the bar is something that isn't seen anymore. The 1880's photo heavily contrasts with the 30's photo in this sense, because the 30's photo only has one counter. The fact that the 1880's store incorporated three services that today would most likely be separate shows that Madera was a young town, with few industries, and general stores that doubled as bars was not only practical but sought after.

When looking at the pictures themselves, it is difficult to decipher what they are showing apart from the things that are also recognizable in modern time, but generally the elements of the 1880's photo

can be seen more easily. Due to the brightness of the photo in the 30's there is a lack of depth suggesting bright lights being present in the building. Especially in black and white photos, overexposure is common when light is reflected back towards the camera, resulting in spots of white in the reflected areas of the image. Lightbulbs can be seen in both images, but the 1880's store also has a window visible, allowing for more natural light. In addition, electricity was more available in the 30's despite the depression, suggesting that Madera had not only grown in population, but was also becoming more advanced.

Aside from the physical aspects of the stores, looking at the people can tell us a lot about how they lived, especially looking at how they are dressed. Although it may have just been a change in the popular styles of the time, the men in the 1880's photo are dressed more complexly. All are wearing 3-piece suits, and ties, and most of them have the metallic chains of watches visibly clipped to their waistcoats. There is only one figure present in the later image, and he is dressed more casually wearing a button-down shirt and tie, with slacks. These photos were taken 50 years apart, but the change in styles shows how drastically the world changed. Even when they were the most acceptable way to dress, suits were expensive for a regular middle class man, however all five men were wearing one. Even assuming that they were wearing their best outfit to take the photo, both the stylistic and economic differences between the people in both era's is shown. Especially considering that the casual dress of the man in the 30's photo suggests that photographs were more common and didn't inspire the need to dress up.

Overall, Madera has undergone both minor and major changes throughout its history, and these photos display some of those changes, not only in the stores themselves, but in the town, like electricity becoming more common, or the changes in dress. Over time Madera has seen ups and downs but it is home to almost 160,000 people, and thousands of businesses. Steadily growing, every change that is made, good or bad, adds to its dynamic history, and shapes its future.