

“The only reason for time is so that everything doesn’t happen at once”<sup>1</sup> Time will never stand still; it can be captured and observed, but never stopped. Pictures not only capture moments, but help show the changes that occurred over time. The pictures of Madera from two different time periods showcase the changes in American history and how it affected the small town. They simultaneously tell a story, while representing the tides of change that ebbed and flowed in a fifty to sixty year gap.

The Gilded Age was a time of prosperity and growth in the United States. During this time, industry allowed for heavy movement into the cities from the rural areas of farming. In the first picture, there are five men dressed eloquently in the fashion of the time. The store looks dark since the advent of electricity in buildings is a nascent thought at this time. The bar in the background implies that the convenient store was a chance to take a break, and chat with other men of their status. While population through urbanization increased in the cities, smaller cities like Madera created a sense of camaraderie through local stores, reiterating the idea of community in a time where corporations are dominating with their monopolies.

The second image showcases a store, possibly the same one shown in the Gilded Age, from the 1930s. The 1930s were overshadowed by the Great Depression and although jobs, money, and happiness were hard to come by, this Madera store seemed to thrive. The clear difference between the two stores is that the 1930s had light, sheetrock, and wall advertisements and decorations. The United States transitioned out of the Gilded Age with the Progressive movement in which more government involvement led to industries having to follow guidelines and structural integrity. The picture of the Gilded Age store may have had electrical, structural, and other violations that the 1930s would have had to abide by before opening. The 1930s store also utilized advertisements and marketing decorations because the United States came out of

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Albert Einstein

World War I with a booming economy, paving the way for the roaring and prosperous 1920s. This era, also known as the Jazz Age, inundated the population with advertisements because there were “talkies,” new technologies, and other products that required consumer participation. While the Great Depression loomed over the nation, the 1930s Madera store remained opened and ready for customers.

The layout of the grocery stores are important for understanding the mentality of the owners of the times. The Gilded Age store shows a division within the store in regards to the placement of items. The 1930s store leaves the space open for a quicker “grab-and-go” mentality. This epitomizes the pacing of the United States. Before, during the Age of Industry, the idea was to take time in order to browse and to make grocery shopping a trip. As the United States’ pacing changed during the 1920s and the need for instant gratification filtered through, the 1930s store showcased that transition through the layout. The layout of the store also reflects the ever growing population of the United States as well as Madera. The Gilded Age store was in operation when Madera was still a part of Fresno County, which may have had visitors passing by, and needing a rest. The 1930s store was more open to accommodate the local population since Madera had been its own county for thirty-seven years. As the population increased, in and around Madera, the stores became more of a convenient necessity, and less about essentials for traveling through.

The attire of the people in the Gilded age looked more clean-cut. All the men in the grocery store have on a vest, jacket, and a pocket watch. As for the man in the 1930s store, he was dressed more casually with only a button up shirt and a tie. The fashion of the times showed growth and change, because as seen in the Gilded Age store, men had to wear an attire that

showed class. By the time the 1930s store came about, usually only the manager or store owner wore a shirt and tie, to show the separation between employer and employee.

Without knowing more of the context of each store, within their time period, the Gilded Age store showcased numerous goods, meaning they may have been more prosperous since the nation itself was prosperous. The 1930s store does not seem as prosperous and maybe that is showcasing the times of Depression Era stores. Understanding Madera's stores and the context of American history, creates a sense of identity in the community. Madera is a smaller city that endured through many aspects of American history starting with the Gilded Age, and further back with the Natives.

With time, Americans, and more specifically, Maderans, were able to understand how the United States shifted from the Gilded Age through the Depression Era. As more and more people flocked to Madera, the need for stores and goods within allowed for prosperity in a time of need. As the United States changed, so too did Madera, and just like the U.S., Madera thrived.