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Nearby History

Exploring the Past around You

Second Edition

David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty



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Walnut Creek • Lanham • New York • Oxford

variety of forces and the impact of timing. If these three fundamental objectives of historical explanation are applied to any topic, appropriate questions for research should suggest themselves.

Keep in mind also that the past is filled with subtle developments as well as obvious ones. Matters that were conspicuous at the moment—the opening of a factory, a local election—may be considered *manifest* events. Slight alterations in unspectacular aspects of life, many of which were largely unnoticed by contemporaries but that over the long term represent significant change—shifts in family size or structure, economic patterns, or assimilation of minorities into the dominant culture, for instance—may be called *latent* events. The relationship between manifest and latent events is a central consideration for historians. For as historian Bernard Bailyn has remarked, “The essence and drama of history lie precisely in the relationship between latent conditions, which set the boundaries of human existence, and the manifest problems with which people consciously struggle.” Sensitivity to both manifest and latent developments in pursuing the objectives of description, measurement of change, and analysis of cause and consequence is fundamental to any inquiry and essential to a strategy for devising the questions you wish to ask.

The following lists suggest focuses for inquiry and indicate some possible sorts of questions. A great many other questions can be raised about the nearby past in general or about any individual’s particular nearby world. These simply raise some important issues that are common to most communities, usually answerable, and often exciting to explore. Some are straightforward and relatively simple inquiries; others are quite complex and formidable. The list is intended to demonstrate the range of possibilities and to stir thought. It is not meant to suggest that everyone can or ought to tackle each question. You definitely can make additions, deletions, and improvements using your own experiences, imagination, and judgment.

Questions are grouped in institutional or functional categories so that various facets of a general topic can be considered together. This arrangement hints at related issues that may be of interest and divides a potentially enormous catalog into manageable sections. Furthermore, the ordering of various elements of the immediate environment in this fashion allow the dimensions and possibilities of nearby history to be seen more plainly.

THE FAMILY

The family is the most common and for many the most interesting element in the nearby world. Each one has its own definition, identity, and history, the details of which are significant to its members and often to others as well. The following questions suggest the wide range of possible family structures, functions, and experiences.

Research often begins with a summing up of what one knows, believes, or suspects about a topic. Thereafter it is possible to identify the question to be answered, the information to be verified, and the relationships to be examined. A student in East Chicago, Indiana, summing up her view of the ethnic community, touches on a number of issues that could be investigated to discover how conditions developed and changed over the course of time.

The Greek Community of East Chicago, despite its small size of 2,000 people, has made its presence felt in a city of 50,000 inhabitants. There are, for example, at least 8 Greek restaurants there. This business group represents the better established Greek families of East Chicago, the elite in a sense. However, since they are not educated, their style of life does not contrast sharply with that of the community. Yet quite paradoxically, from this pool of wealth springs the inevitable pursuit of the good life: the mod clothes, new cars, socializing with different types of people, in short, Americanizing. This seems to be less true of the parents than their children. Generally speaking, they are a conservative force and speak the language of those who have pulled themselves up by their own bootstraps. There is no such thing as good luck, they insist, one must work and work hard, for “God helps those who help themselves.” The Greek immigrants have done their best to demonstrate that God is favoring them. They are employed for the most part, and their incomes provide for a decent living. Exceptions to this generalization are the very recent newcomers from Greece and those who have been beset by costly setbacks. My father, for example, is a restaurant employee, who has been in a precarious economic state ever since his savings were drained by family illnesses for which he was not insured. Fortunately, the majority of Greek immigrants have not experienced such a catastrophe, being employed by the steel mills of Inland and Youngstown which provide them with a family insurance. In terms of work, they are less successful in obtaining good jobs due to the language barrier and their lack of specialized training. After several years in the mills, some manage to get promoted but not before being affected by the heavily polluted air. A substantial number of family acquaintances have been hospitalized, following one or two years of work. The common joke is that since they were never examined by a physician while in Greece, this is a good opportunity for them to receive some medical care.

It would seem from their modest annual wages that little could be put aside for future needs; but the Greek immigrants lead a life of austerity and are able to save. There are cases where the saving power is too unrealistic to be credible, were it not for the simple fact that it is true.

My personal feeling is that the Greek people of East Chicago are not very secure despite their apparent economic progress. Among those who have prospered is my uncle, who did so when he was already past the age of 60. He worked long hours, and the best years of his life were consumed in his striving for success. The surplus money which he now has can do little to brighten his life, for he is old, conditioned, and unable to adapt to a new and better life. His story is that of the Greek immigrants in general, who defer a decent and comfortable present for some undefined future gratification which will never come to pass. . . .

The Greek people socialize among themselves, the women visiting their lady friends, and the men meeting in coffeehouses or other Greek-owned businesses where they play cards. There in some obscure corner they are brought together by a common background to discuss issues ranging from politics to personal problems. They’re not a bunch of naive peasants, as one might expect. They read Greek newspapers and are able to follow political developments around the world.

Among themselves they feel a sense of support and freedom derived from their adherences to common values. . . . They ask favors of one another much more readily than do Americans. Friendship is giving, and the Greek people understand that very well. . . . The Church gives identity and cohesion to the group who view themselves not only as Christians but Greek-Orthodox-Christians. The Church is not an organ for spiritual and social reform. . . . The Greek family is patriarchal—based with the husband making the important decisions and the wife running the household and raising children. There are cases where the wife works alongside her husband, and this is the trend among the younger couples. . . . Social mobility between the generations is apparently a reality for most Greeks. The climb upward isn't easy or startling. Some have found a handy formula for social advancement through mixed marriages. . . . This demonstrates that many Greek-Americans find the demand of an ethnic community difficult to accommodate. Some are very blunt about it and declare that they find the Greek Community confining, which it is, and want no part of it.

Source: Georgia Kollintzas, "The Greek Community of East Chicago," in *Steel Shavings*, edited by James B. Lane and Ronald D. Cohen (Gary: Indiana University Northwest, 1976), pp. 20–23.

Family Relationships

- Who was considered to be a member of the family?
- What considerations were involved in the formation of a family unit, whatever form it took?
- How did the people meet who eventually formed a couple?
- What was the relative social and economic status of each member of the couple? What was the effect of any differences?
- How did courtship and the decision to form a family occur?
- If a couple later separated, why and how? What subsequent life course did each one follow? How did the experience affect other family members and, if new relationships were later established, the resulting blended families?
- What were the respective roles of men and women in the family?
- What beliefs, values, customs, superstitions, folk wisdom, prejudices, and legal codes were held, and how did they shape the family?
- How and by whom were decisions made? What were the different areas of responsibility for males and females as well as older and younger family members in decision making?
- How do men and women of different generations within the family compare in age at marriage, age at birth of first child, number of pregnancies and live childbirths, and age at birth of last child?
- Was the birth of children evenly spaced, planned, or unexpected? Where were children born?
- What role, if any, did family members or outsiders—friends, neighbors, professionals—play in childbirth?
- How have child-rearing practices and the roles of mothers and fathers changed over the years?

- How were children regarded and treated before they were old enough to take care of themselves or to work?
- What expectations regarding work and other responsibilities did each generation have for persons of different sexes and ages?
- On what basis and at what age were persons considered to be adults?
- How long did fathers and mothers continue to have authority over their sons and daughters?
- Why and how did relationships between parents and children change as people aged?
- How have separation, divorce, or death affected the family?
- What family crises occurred and how were they handled?
- Has the family had any dominant figures, superstars, outcasts, or embarrassments? What has been the relative esteem for men and women?
- Who cared for sick, aged, disabled, or dependent family members?
- What were the family's customs in the event of a death?
- Where, if anyplace, were family members buried?
- Who inherited what?

Physical Characteristics

- What did family members look like?
- Were there any recurring physical characteristics (stature, complexion, or distinctive features, for example) that made family members similar in appearance?
- What was the general condition of their health?
- Did individuals or the family as a whole suffer from any chronic illnesses, mental problems, disabling injuries, or deformities?
- Did men and women in the family generally live long lives or die young?
- What relationship, if any, did the family maintain with a physician or other health services?
- Were "home remedies" commonly used or passed along through the generations?
- Did superstitions or old wives' tales play an important part in medical diagnosis and treatment?

Location and Movement

- Where has the family lived?
- How and by whom were places of residence determined?
- Who first migrated to the United States or to the community in which the family became more permanently located? Who followed?
- Did the family move from place to place within the community?
- Why were moves undertaken—to change jobs, for health reasons, to escape unsatisfactory conditions, or for other reasons?

- What part did marriage or divorce play in relocation?
- How were moves made?
- What difficulties did moving cause for various members of the family?
- How was the place of origin remembered?
- If friends, boarders, or servants lived with the family, who were they, why were they there, what was expected of them, and how were they treated?
- If married sons or daughters continued to live in their parents' households, what were the circumstances?
- Did elderly persons live in their own homes, with their children, in retirement communities, or in old-age homes?
- If related families lived in the same neighborhood or community, what was the nature of their interaction with one another?
- Did family members who had departed return to the family home for visits or extended residence? What was the response of those to whom they returned or who were otherwise affected?

Family Economics

- How did members of the family earn a living?
- Specifically, what kinds of work did they do as, for example, machine operators, small-business proprietors, clerks, farmers, secretaries, professional people, or executives?
- How did their work change through the years, even though they held the same job?
- How were occupational choices made?
- What part did an individual's sex play in determining occupation, opportunity, family support, and success?
- What were the reasons they changed jobs?
- How did family members help one another obtain jobs or develop farms or businesses?
- What were family members' relations with employers? With unions? With other workers, farmers, or business people?
- If they participated in workforce organizing, informing, slowdowns, speedups, strikes, or strike-breaking, what were the circumstances and results?
- What was the family's general or evolving economic status?
- What expectations prevailed regarding family members sharing all or part of their earnings with the family? Why, if at all, were exceptions made?
- How and by whom were family finances decided and handled?
- To what age and extent were sons and daughters supported financially?
- What was the general outlook on material possessions?
- How did the family cope with hard times?
- If charity or public assistance (welfare) provided part or all of the family's income, how did the family feel about it?
- What did family members feel about their economic status, ambitions for advancement, and "keeping up with the Joneses"?

Daily Living

- What were the daily routines of family members?
- What were the roles and responsibilities of individual family members?
- How was failure to conform to family expectations or values treated?
- How did mothers and fathers decide upon and carry out discipline of sons and daughters?
- How has the family's diet and clothing changed over the years?
- How did changing technology affect the family; that is, when and how did such things as piped water and fuel, electricity, telephones, cars and trucks, radios, vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, televisions, microwave ovens, computers, and so forth come into use, and what impact did they have?
- What kind of family celebrations and reunions were held?
- What holidays and special occasions were observed, and how?
- Did family members use tobacco, alcoholic beverages, or drugs routinely, on festive occasions, seldom, or not at all? Did they cause problems?
- Who were family members' friends: relatives, neighbors, fellow workers, others of the same gender, ethnic group, or religion?
- How were friendships formed and maintained?
- In what kinds of social activities did the family engage?
- To what churches and voluntary organizations did family members belong? What was the extent of their involvement, and what effects did this have?
- How did they participate in the life of the community in which they lived?
- What were their attitudes toward people in the community of other faiths, different ethnic or racial backgrounds, or lower and higher economic status?

Education

- What sort of educational training took place within the family?
- What value did the family place upon formal education?
- How did expectations differ for boys and girls? For children judged unusual or abnormal?
- What level of schooling did family members achieve?
- What schools did they attend, and how did they get there?
- Did they serve apprenticeships, undergo special training in the military, or obtain other nonschool education? If they went to college, how did they finance it and what did they study?
- What do they remember about their teachers?
- What part did initial or subsequent education play in their later vocations and their avocations?
- When education was lacking, what was the effect?
- What unusual skills and abilities did they possess?
- What attitudes did they have about persons less or better educated than themselves?

- What encouragement did they offer to others in the family who sought schooling?
- By what criteria—financial, educational, occupational, or social—did the family measure success?

Military

- What was the nature and extent of military service by family members?
- What were their attitudes about it?
- What did they do during wartime?
- What were their experiences with defense plants, war information and propaganda, rationing and price controls, war bond drives, change in the community?
- How did wars alter their lives?
- What ties with military or service organizations were maintained once active duty ended?
- What use was made of veterans' benefits?
- How did attitudes toward wars and the military change through the years?

Public Affairs

- To what extent were family members involved in community affairs, charitable activities, reform movements, or local government?
- How and why did they or did they not participate? Were some activities considered appropriate for only one sex? Why and to what effect?
- What were their attitudes toward politics, political parties, and prominent local, state, and national political figures?
- What was their political outlook (conservative, moderate, liberal, radical, erratic, indifferent), and how was it shown in their political actions? How did political views and actions differ within the family by age, sex, or other characteristics? What were the consequences of differences?
- How extensive was their participation in party activities? What party?
- How, if at all, did they benefit from being socially or politically active?
- How and why did the pattern of participation change from generation to generation?

PLACES OF RESIDENCE

A house or apartment building can be a part of a family's past, but it can also have a history of its own.

Physical Features

- When was the building built?
- Who designed and constructed the building?

- What was its architectural style?
- What were its dimensions?
- How many rooms (and of what size and nature) did it contain?
- Were bathrooms an original feature, a later addition, or missing? Why?
- Did the building have porches or balconies?
- Was it one of a kind, similar in style to others in the community, identical to others in the neighborhood constructed at the same time?
- Did it ever undergo substantial remodeling or expansion? How? Why?
- How was sleeping, living, and working space arranged?
- How has the use of various rooms, porches, and balconies changed over time?
- How was the building heated, cooled, and illuminated?
- Did the building have fireplaces, indoor plumbing, electricity, or other features?
- How was the house or apartment decorated and furnished?
- How was the kitchen equipped?
- How much property surrounded the building, and how was it used (farm, yard, garden, parking, business)?
- What is the history of other structures on the property?

Ownership and Use

- Who lived in the building?
- Was it owner occupied or rented? A commune, condominium, or co-op?
- Was it used for any purposes other than housing?
- When and how did ownership of the property change?
- Was it purchased outright, with mortgage loans, with government assistance?
- How did the owners maintain the property?
- Did owners and tenants have conflicts?
- Did local government agencies ever inspect or condemn the property?
- Was it ever seized for nonpayment of taxes or mortgages?

NEIGHBORHOOD

A neighborhood can be a cohesive social unit or merely a geographical district. In either case, its history can help explain the presence of particular persons, structures, institutions, and problems; patterns of development; and relationships among those who reside there. The history of each family and residence in the neighborhood can be examined and compared in terms of all the questions already posed. In addition, significant questions may be asked about the neighborhood itself.

Physical Features

- How is the neighborhood defined?
- What, if anything, is its central focus?
- What are its boundaries, and what distinguishes it from the surrounding urban or rural area?
- How and why has the size, shape, and image of the neighborhood changed over the years?
- What sorts of structures and open spaces could be found in the neighborhood at various stages in its history?
- Was it built up over a period of years or developed as one coherent project?
- How is the nature of its development evident?
- How and why have architectural styles varied or remained the same? Has the use to which various structures have been put changed significantly?
- Where did residents go to work, shop, obtain services, worship, and seek entertainment or recreation?
- How did they travel? How easy or difficult was it to move beyond the neighborhood?
- What have been the important institutions in the neighborhood (parks, Grange halls, churches, taverns, libraries, stores, shopping malls, schools, hospitals, others), and what has been their role in the neighborhood's history?

Social Features

- Who has lived in the neighborhood?
- What family or other ties linked various households?
- What ethnic, religious, occupational, social groups, and economic classes have been represented? In what proportions?
- How has this situation changed over time? Has one dominant group been replaced by another?
- Have various groups clashed?
- What caused people to move into and out of the neighborhood?
- How and why have events, activities, or problems brought residents of the neighborhood together, if at all?
- Have there been neighborhood parties, festivals, parades, or other celebrations? If so, what has been their nature?
- How have neighborhood news and rumors traveled?
- Have disapproved activities been conducted in the neighborhood (such as bootlegging, gambling, begging, unauthorized home businesses or room rentals, vandalism, drug dealing, prostitution, organized gangs, loud music and parties)?
- How has the neighborhood reacted?

- Who have been the neighborhood's leading figures (politicians, religious leaders, businesspeople, farmers, cops on the beat, school principals, or others)?
- Why did they acquire influence, and how did they use it?
- In what respects has the neighborhood thought of itself as different from the rest of the community? Why?

ORGANIZATIONS

Institutions and organizations within the communities vary from place to place. They may be educational, religious, cultural, and of a business, voluntary, or other nature. Some are quite common and others quite unusual. Their histories can be worthwhile and interesting and can also form an important part of the past of a neighborhood or an entire community. Some historical questions apply to almost all such bodies, while others relate to particular types.

General Characteristics

- When, how, by whom, and why was this institution or organization formed?
- How and why did its structure, activities, leadership, support, location, funding, and purpose change over the years?
- What were the pivotal events and issues in its past?
- What role has gender played in its evolution, identity, and sense of obligation?
- What has been its influence in the community?
- What have been its relationships with other bodies within and outside the community?
- How have members, supporters, and employees of these bodies regarded themselves in relation to the rest of the community?
- How has the community regarded them?
- How and why have such attitudes changed over time?
- If the institution or organization is no longer part of the community, why, when, and how did it decline, disband, or depart?

Business

- In what sort of activities has this organization engaged throughout its history: agriculture, manufacturing, service, marketing, transportation, finance, or a combination of these?
- Who has owned and managed this business over the years? Were they local people or outsiders?
- How did the business advertise or promote its products or services?
- Were employees hired locally or brought in? If the latter, from where? How have business practices changed or remained constant?

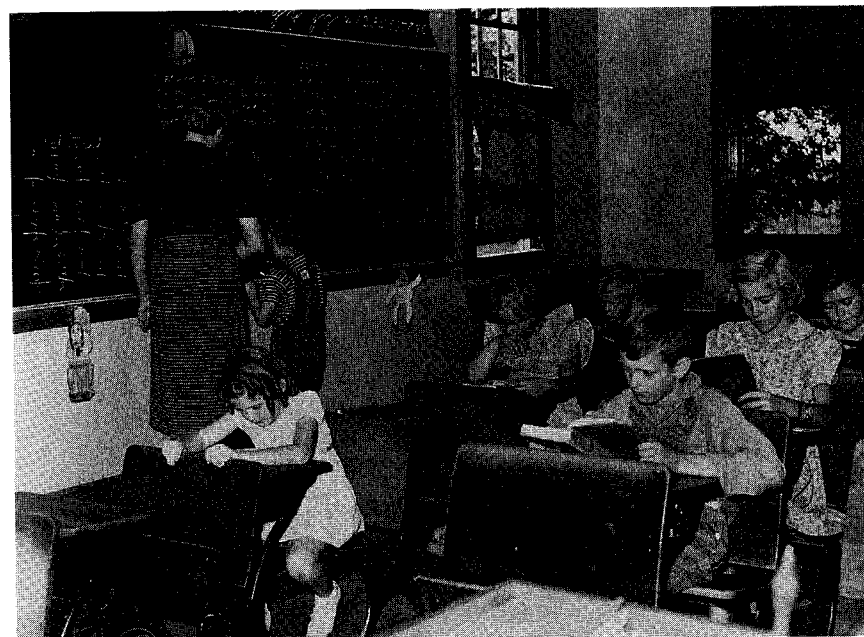
- What has been the business's history of relations with its employees? With unions? With competitors? With government?
- How has the business responded to changes in the economy (periods of prosperity, inflation, stagnation, or depression), technology, or markets?
- How did the business view and act toward the community, and vice versa?

Education

- What educational institutions (public, private, parochial, preschools, schools, colleges and universities, technical institutions, youth associations, and others) have existed in the community?
- Who have been the teachers; and what have been their backgrounds, qualifications, methods, and ideas?
- What has been the nature of the curriculum and extracurricular programs, buildings and other facilities, financial support, and special problems?
- If separate schools and school districts have consolidated, when, why, and to what effect did this occur?
- What special and separate programs and facilities have existed for non-English-speaking students; ethnic, racial, or religious minorities; migrant workers; disabled or gifted persons; the wealthy; and other groups?
- How has the pattern of school attendance varied?
- What has been the history of mandatory attendance requirements or dress codes?
- How have schools been supervised, controlled, and supported?
- What part have school board elections played in addressing educational policies, financing, or other issues?
- What have those elections revealed about community attitudes toward education and the school system?
- If institutions of higher education are located in the community, what have been the "town-gown" relationships?

Culture

- What cultural institutions (museums, libraries, theaters, performance groups, broadcasting stations, publications, and festivals) and styles have attracted local interest and support at various times?
- What sorts of performances, parades, lectures, exhibitions, or other activities have these institutions held over the years?
- How have the efforts of local artists, performers, and writers been regarded in comparison with those outside the community?
- Have creative individuals who grew up in the community tended to stay or leave? Have outsiders been attracted to the place? What seem to have been the reasons?



2.6 What does the physical appearance of a school suggest about the nature of the educational experience? What does the nature of a posed photograph suggest about matters of importance to those creating the image? (Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.)

- How have cultural organizations or activities influenced the rest of the community's life?

Religion

- What religious groups and denominations have been present in the community?
- What have been their beliefs and practices?
- What has been the nature of their leadership, membership, facilities, and other characteristics over the years?
- What splits and mergers have occurred? Why?
- What activities have religious groups engaged in individually and collectively?
- How have they affected the life of the community?
- How have particular religious groups sought community support and endorsement on specific issues, such as charity or civil rights drives, liquor restriction, Sunday business or entertainment bans, abortion, school prayer, or censorship? With what results?
- How has the general community treated various religious groups? By discriminating against them, isolating them, according them leadership roles, or by some other response?



2.7 What does visual evidence suggest about this church and its members? What questions arise that will require other sorts of evidence to answer? (Photo courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.)

Voluntary Associations

- What fraternal, civic, patriotic, charitable, professional, recreational, social, political, or similar organizations have existed in the community?
- Who have been members, and how were they selected or admitted?
- Have the stated organizational purposes served primarily as excuses for the group to get together for social companionship, political cooperation, or other unofficial reasons?
- How has the organization felt and acted toward other groups and the community as a whole?
- How has the size, activity, and importance of the group changed over the years?

COMMUNITY

The community may, of course, include any and all of the individual elements already mentioned, but it also incorporates features that are shared by many if not all of its parts.

Physical Characteristics

- When and why was a community established in this location?
- How did it acquire its name?
- How has the location and landscape influenced the nature and direction of community growth?
- How have transportation systems caused or been shaped by patterns of growth?
- What factors have affected the location of commerce; industry; educational, social, and governmental facilities; parks and open space; differing types of neighborhoods; and other community features?
- If the location of various activities shifted, how and why did this occur?
- When did the community obtain electricity, telephones, surfaced roads, parking meters? What changes did this cause?
- What architectural styles have been predominant at various times and why?
- Have old buildings been regarded as treasures or as obstacles to progress?



2.8 The name chosen for a community may reflect the aspirations or identities of its founders, ties to another community, or other considerations. Discovering the reason for that name is a good way to begin an inquiry into the community's history. (Photo courtesy of the Summit County Historical Society.)

Social Characteristics

- What has been the pattern of the community's population growth or decline?
- How has the community regarded the more distant world: with disdain, amusement, fear, or enthusiasm? How have outsiders been treated?
- What have been the major sources of immigration and the destinations of departing residents?
- Has the population been stable or has there been rapid turnover? Has the community had significantly more or fewer children, elderly, singles, males, or females than the national average at the time? To what effect?
- What ethnic, racial, religious, and economic groups have made up the community, and how has the balance altered over the years?
- What conflicts have occurred between groups in the community, and how have these been decided?
- What events have produced displays of community pride or unity?
- Have community-wide patterns of social, religious, cultural, recreational activity existed at any or all times?
- Can community values and standards at various times be seen in low or high rates of out-of-wedlock childbirth, abortion, white-collar or street crime, prostitution, gambling, property neglect, littering, child abuse, or other characteristics?

Economic Characteristics

- What has been the basis of the local economy?
- How and why has this changed?
- If the community has risen (or fallen) as a regional or national economic center, what have been the causes and effects?
- How have individuals and groups, financial institutions, and local government influenced growth, stagnation, or decay?
- What has been the history of labor unions locally?
- How have business development associations, chambers of commerce, and consumer protection organizations arisen?
- What have been their activities and effect in the community?
- What has been the pattern of unemployment, and how has the community responded?

Maintenance of Order

- How has the community established and enforced its standards?
- What has been the nature and rate of prohibited activity?
- How have such illegal or disapproved activities compared with national norms?

- Have changes in patterns of lawbreaking been related to changes in other community social or economic conditions or population shifts?
- When, how, and why was a police force established? How has the ratio of police to population changed?
- Who have been the police?
- What techniques have they employed?
- How well have they met community needs and demands, and in what public esteem have they been held?
- How have police treated juvenile delinquency, prohibition violations, strikes, civil rights and antiwar demonstrations, gambling, prostitution, white-collar crime, or spousal abuse?
- Who have been the criminals?
- How have the courts functioned?
- How have judges been chosen and regarded?
- How have punishment patterns varied depending on the offender and the offense, and how have they changed throughout the years?
- What changes have taken place in penalties and in the nature of penal institutions used by the community?

Health

- What has been the nature of health problems in the community?
- Have there been epidemics or unusual concentrations of particular afflictions?
- What have been the community's standards and institutions of health care?
- When and how were hospitals, nursing homes, hospices, abortion clinics, health maintenance organizations, and other facilities established?
- When did doctors and pharmacists appear to replace home remedies, specialists to replace general practitioners, group practices and HMOs to replace individuals?
- What public health programs developed?
- When and how were water, sewer, and waste treatment systems created?
- How have private groups and government agencies been involved with health issues, such as poor people's clinics, alcoholism and drug programs, birth control information and services, and disability therapies?
- When did psychologists and psychiatrists begin to practice locally?
- How have diagnosis, treatment, and community attitudes toward disabilities, mental illness, and sexually transmitted conditions evolved?

Leadership and Government

- Who have been the community's leaders?
- How have they gained and held their positions?

- In what fashion and to what extent do they exercise leadership?
- How has gender, race, wealth, education, occupation, or some other characteristic entitled individuals or groups to leadership roles or excluded them?
- Is effective community leadership exercised through government, business organizations, the media, ethnic, religious, or labor organizations, or some other device?
- Under what circumstances and to what extent has local government or an alternative become the instrument for meeting community need for public services (police and fire protection, utilities, street construction and cleaning, and so forth); parks and recreation facilities; care for the impoverished, troubled, disabled, aged, or otherwise dependent; and community land use planning and development?
- To what extent have local elections addressed and resolved conflict and reflected community concerns?

FUNCTIONAL CATEGORIES

By dividing the community into many of its component parts and then raising questions about each, we may usefully call attention to many features that have evolved and changed over time. Another way of approaching the study of the community's history involves thinking in terms of functional categories applicable to a wide variety of situations. Doing so will not only suggest additional significant questions but will also help link some of the elements already mentioned.

Environmental Setting

- How has the natural situation, the climate and the terrain, influenced the distribution of space and the design of buildings?
- How have each of these factors influenced family, neighborhood, and community life?
- How have various community elements regarded and shaped the environment?
- What has been the impact on the environment, land use, and architectural styles of technological change, alteration of economic activities and conditions, and shifts in values, knowledge, or political power?

Economic Activity

- At the personal, group, and community levels, what has been involved in the creation or acquisition of wealth?
- How have economic activities served to integrate and divide?

Sudden community growth has causes and consequences, both of which need to be investigated if the development process is to be understood. In William F. King's short history of California's San Gabriel Valley, the introduction of an adequate and dependable water system, the start of a profitable citrus fruit industry, and the completion of a second railroad into the area, turning a monopoly into an intensely competitive situation, were identified as the causes of population influx and land boom in the 1880s.

More than any other east valley city, Pomona embraced the boom spirit and thrived upon it. Of course, the town had a considerable head start on most of its neighbors in the struggle to become worthy of the name "city." Pomonans welcomed the prospect of being a large enough city to have "suburbs" like Lordsburg and Palomares.

Several promotional pamphlets attracted people to Pomona. . . . Attention centered on the climate, agriculture, homes, land prices and the citizenry's quality. The railroad poster exhibited the more outlandish side of boom publicity. It failed to mention that millions of acres of available government land were located in the desert or mountain regions, or that earthquakes had replaced cyclones as a natural hazard.

In the pre-boom days of 1885, Pomona had boasted a population of 2,000. During the peak of the boom, the figure approached 4,000. Some of this later melted away, but real growth in the late eighties topped 80%. Naturally, everything else enlarged to meet the needs of the people. Many years passed before other east valley towns had the capital necessary to form a bank. The Pomona Valley Bank, later the First National, opened in 1886 under the leadership of President Carlton Seaver. The bank erected a small, safe brick building at the corner of Main and Second Streets. One of the first equipment purchases was two sawed-off shotguns. Within a few years the Pomona bank listed deposits of \$200,000. There were few phones in the valley then, but Pomona had three of them located in the Palomares Hotel, the bank, and Armour's Drugstore. The company providing the service was the Sunset Telephone and Telegraph Company.

During the first stages of growth Pomona enlarged its two-story Central School and later built three new schools. By the end of the decade, ten churches served the people. The outstanding example of boom-year churches was the remodeled Pomona Methodist Church. Now operated by the Seventh Day Adventist denomination, this splendid building, the core of which was the 1877 building, offers a strong example of the building style of that era.

Along with the normal events accompanying growth, unusual happenings enlivened Pomona's growth. While the town seemingly welcomed all newcomers, certain exceptions existed. In March of 1886 a branch of the Nonpartisan Anti-Chinese League formed under the leadership of William T. (Tooch) Martin. This was a part of the statewide anti-Asian movement. While some spoke out against the movement, calling it anti-Christian, Martin and a large number of citizens persisted. A boycott on Chinese workers, shops, and goods brought the desired result. Finally the Chinese abandoned their homes and businesses and fled the city. A few relocated in nearby Lordsburg and San Dimas. A by-product of this exercise in prejudice was the incorporation of the Pomona Steam Laundry. In order to compete with the Chinese laundry shops in town, Charles I. Lorbeer and J. B. Clump opened the sizeable plant via an open stock sale.

The long term as well as the immediate effects of the 1880s boom were important.

Although the boom inevitably collapsed, the soundness of the agrarian sector of the local economy prevented a true disaster. In fact, the boom marked the birth pangs of southern California as a population center. A large number of towns trace their origin to this period and the growth momentum generated by this influx of residents, while slowing in the nineties, endured so long it became virtually permanent, a standard par of southern California's folklore in the twentieth century.

Source: William F. King, *The Vintage Years: Our Valley before 1945 (Walnut, CA: Mt. San Antonio College, Department of Community Services, 1975)*, 43, 52-53.

- What economic ideas have been held, and how have they influenced choices of activity, competition and cooperation, distribution of wealth, decisions on taxation and investment, and other matters?
- How has the economy shaped the social, political, and cultural environment?

Social Relations

- What has been the nature of social relationships among various elements in the community?
- What conditions of wealth, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, education, and occupation gave individuals and groups greater or lesser status and influence?
- Who have been viewed as outsiders, misfits, threats, annoyances, eccentrics, or amusements?
- What social factors have contributed to tension and conflict, harmony and cooperation?
- How stable has the social structure been?
- What has caused change?
- How are social distinctions important in community lifestyles (diet, dress, housing, associations, and activities); religion; values, beliefs, and practices; and political behavior?

Political Affairs

- What political issues and movements have arisen in the community?
- How and why have they aroused, divided, or united individuals, neighborhoods, or groups within the community?
- How and why have various elements in the community responded to reform proposals; local or national appeals from parties and individual candidates; and specific crises such as depressions, wars, communist scares, public school desegregation, revelations of political abuses?
- What have been the patterns of participation and preference in elections?
- How have defeated individuals and groups responded and been treated?

Ideals and Values

- What ideas and values have been highly regarded by individuals, families, neighborhoods, particular elements, and the community as a whole?
- How have beliefs conflicted—and changed—regarding conduct, property, power, and privilege?
- Have the dominant ideas come from local proponents or from outsiders?
- How have creative and unconventional persons been regarded?
- How have those holding various views promoted their ideas and beliefs?
- How have changes in technology, education, or other conditions altered values regarding work, play, religion, society, culture, courtship, sex roles, child rearing, sexual activity, privacy, conformity, or authority?

Armed with a well-chosen focus and specific questions, historians of the nearby world are ready to search for information regarding the past that they seek to understand.

NOTES AND FURTHER READING

Bernard Bailyn is quoted in Michael Kammen, "The Historian's Vocation and the State of the Discipline in the United States," in *The Past before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States*, edited by Michael Kammen (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 38.

More extensive and specific questions regarding any area of concern in this chapter can be found in the individual volumes of the *Nearby History and Exploring Community History* series.