"Cannery Workers, Cannery Lives"
California Humanities Quick Proposal June 2017

NARRATIVE STATEMENT

1.**Description & Activities**:

Funding would support a Cannery Worker Oral History/Photo Shoot Day Sunday September 10th, 2017, at the San Jose Public Library to retrieve cannery worker life stories and accompanying family photos on family, work life and community activities. At this event, 3 documentation teams will concurrently interview contributors and collect scanned photos from personal collections, resulting in the completion of 12 interviews. Each team will include a videographer, a photo scanner and a bilingual interviewer. Two processor/greeters will register the guests, collect the photos, and guide them through the process. The interviews collected will become the basis for two Cannery Worker Community Conversations during Hispanic Heritage Month on the topic of cannery workers and their contributions to the rich heritage of Santa Clara Valley. Programming for the Cannery Worker Community Conversations will include mini-documentaries created from the materials collected, company generated film clips of actual cannery work, a scholar facilitated panel of cannery workers presenting their experiences in the work place and in the community, 3 poster photo boards (2'x3'), and participatory story-sharing testimonials by members of the audience.

2. **Outreach & Engagement:**

Audience: The Cannery Worker Community Conversation programs will attract a diverse audience interested in labor, Latino, women's, cannery, or local history in the Santa Clara Valley and have been developed as a response to two previous very well received presentations on the history of Santa Clara County cannery workers. In Oct. 2016, we presented "Chicanas in the Cannery" to a primarily Latino family audience at the Eastside Public Library for Hispanic Heritage Month. In May 2017, we presented "Women Cannery Workers" to an ethnically diverse and multigenerational audience at the San Jose Women's Clubhouse. Altogether, 250 people attended and 30 people signed up to be interviewed.

Participants: Participants include the 11 people working in teams to staff the Cannery Work Oral History/Photo Shoot Day. Many of the staff, while students at San Jose State University, worked on the accumulation of 2007 interviews we collected for History San Jose's online exhibit "Cannery Life". Now these people have become teachers, libraries, social workers, videographers and even retirees and are coming together to pursue this cannery worker project. Interviews will be conducted at the Cannery Worker Oral History/Photo Shoot Day, with interviewees who signed up at the previous presentations. Some interviewees will join the cannery worker panels for the Cannery Worker Community Conversations, and all interviewees will be invited to attend the events. Glenna Matthews, a cannery worker historian, will provide comments following the cannery worker panel. Flyers will be distributed through the 24 branches of the San Jose Public Library, their newsletter, and social media accounts including the SJPL Facebook page, Twitter, and Yelp. Additional publicity includes local radio and TV stations, the San Jose State University activity calendar, and an article in the San Jose Mercury News.

Timeline and Schedule: During June and July, the staff will schedule interviews, one every 45 minutes, at the Oral History/Photo Shoot Days. The Cannery Worker Oral History/Photo Shoot Day will be held September 10th, at the main branch of the San Jose Public Library and will include: a 2 hour staff prep and practice period (11am-1 pm), and then 4 hours of actual interviewing (1-5 pm). The two 90 minute Cannery Worker Community Conversations will be held during Hispanic Heritage Month, at these branches of the San Jose Public Library: Main Branch Martin Luther King, Jr. on Sunday Oct. 15th 1:30-3 pm and The Hillview Branch (1600 Hopkins Dr., San Jose, CA 95122) Saturday Oct. 14th 1:30- 3 pm. Refreshments will be provided at the Conversation events.

3. **Objectives and Desired Outcomes**.

Canneries were a significant part of Santa Clara Valley history for more than 100 years. The Santa Clara Valley, initially called "The Garden City" and renamed in 1915 "The Valley of the Heart's

Delight," had an abundance of orchards specializing in peaches, apricots, pears, prune plums, and cherries. Faced with bumper crops, a short fresh fruit season, and distant markets, canning and drying fruit was the solution. By 1900, cannery food processing became the second largest industry in California, with Santa Clara Valley in the lead. By the 1930s Santa Clara Valley became the fruit processing capital of the world, with 38 canneries offering the largest source of employment for California women, while regular wages and a stable lifestyle facilitated the growth of settled worker communities. These canneries gave way to technological industries during the 1980s and 1990s. Seven years ago, History San Jose contracted us to conduct oral history interviews related to Del Monte Plant #3, the largest cannery in the U.S., for their online exhibit "Cannery Life". Few scholars have written on the local canneries, so this history is still largely unavailable to the average person and this online exhibit has been the only accessible resource. The large crowds at our two recent library presentations, and the personal testimonials offered by many former workers at these events, demonstrate that the community remains extremely interested in both learning and sharing.

These programs are of interest to a diverse audience since cannery workers, both men and women, came from a variety of ethnic and racial groups. The project will promote a greater awareness and understanding of the role of cannery workers in California history and culture. It will acknowledge Latino and other ethnically white workers' (Portuguese, Spanish and Italian) role in the development of Santa Clara Valley, and contribute to the documentation of this history in that the oral histories and photos will be donated to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library's Special Collections. Participants in both the Oral History/Photo Shoot Day and the Community Conversations will be provided with a simple Survey and Comment Form after each event.

3. **Capacity.**

The Project Co-Directors are Dr. Margo McBane (history lecturer, Public History consultant with 40 years experience in oral history) and Ms. Suzanne Guerra (Public History consultant, and former State Historian for California State Parks and Office of Historic Preservation). Both have extensive professional experience in developing and delivering humanities programming, including radio productions, film and lecture series, speakers, and exhibits in a variety of settings. Interviewee Outreach: Guadalupe Ortiz (retired Chicano History Community College Professor) and Margarita Garcia (bilingual-elementary teacher and Public History consultant). Cannery Worker Oral History/Photo Shoot Day Staff: Videographers: Rick Romero, Andrea Garcia-Villa, and Richard Scott (all independent videographers). Interviewers: Guadalupe Ortiz, Margarita Garcia, and Margo McBane. Scanners: Francisco De Vera (San Jose Public Library specialist), Rogelio Loredo (High School History teacher), and Armando Catalan (Public History consultant). Intake: Suzanne Guerra and volunteers from SJSU MOSAIC program. The Cannery Worker Community Conversation Staff: Library Liaison: Francisco De Vera. Event Coordinators: Margo McBane and Margarita Garcia. Media coordinators: Rick Romero and Suzanne Guerra. Humanities Scholar: Glenna Matthews Ph.D., independent historian, author, and expert on Santa Clara Valley cannery workers.

The applicant, San José State University, is the first joint university and city library partnership in the nation. It is a major, multipurpose university founded in 1857, and a center for higher education in high-technology Silicon Valley. It serves an ethnically, culturally, professionally, and economically diverse region, including the southern San Francisco Bay Area and through the Monterey Coast, with students from all fifty states and many foreign countries. Participating partners include: The Sourriseau Academy for State and Local History, an archive of the SJSU History Department; and two branches of the San Jose Public Library: The main Martin Luther King, Jr. Library and the The Hillview Branch.

Resources Needed: All media equipment for recording and scanning will be provided by the individual team members, San Jose State University, and Special Collections at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Library.