

Master List Application • Tiny Mart, 350 High Street • A Landmark of Black History



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1. Summary of Eligibility

1926 Tiny Mart—one of San Luis Obispo’s few surviving pre-World War II corner groceries, first Black-owned grocery, first Black-owned business with Black-owned premises, and last surviving Black-owned business from the era of the Great Migration—is eligible for the Master List

under architectural criteria: embodying as a Western False Front corner store “the distinctive characteristics of a type ... of construction ... evaluated as a measure of ... current rarity [and] ... vernacular ... influences that represent a particular social milieu and period of the community” (14.01.070.A.1.b–c.)

under historic criteria: owned and operated from 1966 through the 1979 by Frank Willie Bell and Alberta Vera Bell, “significant to the community as ... person[s] who made early ... contributions to the community” (14.01.070.B.1.b.)

The huge popularity among a young and diverse clientele of the High Street Market and Deli—current and long-time occupant of the Tiny Mart building—serves as an

extraordinary opportunity for Tiny Mart to communicate part of the complex history of racism and the fight against racism in San Luis Obispo to a new and receptive audience.

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Submitted 12 March 2021
on behalf of Alex and Anne Gough and Anne Gaebe, property owners*



Alberta Vera Bell and Frank Willie Bell, circa 1960s. Farmers in Waco, Texas in the 1930s and '40s, dispossessed of their farm in 1951, they took part in the Great Migration of African Americans from the South to the North, Midwest, and West and became pioneering businesspeople in San Luis Obispo.

2. Tiny Mart Timeline

- 1866 George W. Skiles, contractor of the corner grocery at 420 (now 350) High Street and adjoining cottage at 428 (now 368), is born in West Virginia. His family later moves to Illinois (US Census, state birth and death records, *passim*).
- 1867 Herman Hinzy Page, original commissioner of the grocery building and adjoining cottage, is born in Iowa, the son of a grocer and dry goods merchant.
- 1891 Joaquin Mashado Craveiro, fourth owner of the grocery with his son, is born in the Azores (1917 Draft Registration).
- 1900, 1910 Skiles is working as a stonecutter and monument merchant in Illinois.
- 1903 Otto Burton, third owner of the grocery, is born in Missouri.
- 1904 Frank Willie Bell, who with his wife Alberta becomes the seventh owner of the grocery in 1966, is born in Texas.
- 1907 Alberta Vera London is born in Texas, second of five children of Abe London and Annie Lowe London, both laborers on a cotton farm in Falls County, Texas, in 1920 and general farmers there in 1930. Her Texas-born grandparents, George and Matilda Buyer London (1850–1914), and Texas-born Lowe grandparents, were born in Texas’s slavery era and presumably as slaves.
- 1908 George Skiles’ sister marries Charles Eserio Foxen of a prominent Anglo-Californio family, owners of a department store in San Luis Obispo. George moves to San Luis Obispo in the 1910s, initially carrying on his profession as a stone carver and then becoming a contractor in the early 1920s (San Luis Obispo Building Permits File, Cal Poly Special Collections, *passim*).
- 1917 Joaquin Joseph Craveiro, fourth owner of the grocery with his father, is born in California.
- 1926 Dec. 2 George W. and Edith Skiles transfer ownership of the corner lot at Carmel and High Streets (part lot 4, block 52) to Herman Hinzy and Lola Melvina Page (County Land Records, *passim*).
- Dec. 10 Herman Page applies for a permit to build a \$1,100 store building with “concrete floor, Pabco roof, and novelty siding” at the corner of Carmel and High Street and \$1,800 house next door with “concrete foundation, Pabco roof, and novelty siding.” George Skiles is the contractor.
- 1930 Frank Willie Bell, 25, is a farmer and renter in McLennan County, Texas, living with his younger brother Walter, farm laborer. Alberta London, 21, is living with her father, mother, and siblings, her father a farmer and renter in neighboring Falls County.
- 1931 Mabel A. Whitehouse purchases the Pages’ grocery and adjoining cottage.

- 1933 Mabel and William Whitehouse sell the grocery to Missouri-born Otto H. Burton but not (according to County Land Records) the cottage. However, the Burtons are living there in the 1938–42 city directories and list themselves as the owners in the 1940 US Census.
- 1938—42 Burton’s Cash Grocery is listed at 420 High Street in surviving city directories (*passim*).
- 1938–45 Frank and Alberta Bell’s children Annie Louise (1938), Frank Lofton (1939), Lillian Fay (1940), Ralph Long (1943), and Alvin Loznall Bell (1945) are born in McLennan and Falls Counties, Texas.
- 1940 Frank Bell is a farm operator and renter in McLennan County, Texas, living with Alberta and their two elder children, Annie Louise and Frank Lofton, in the same house as five years previous.
- 1943 Otto and Ada Burton divorce. Otto deeds the cottage to Ada in April, Mabel Whitehouse deeds the cottage to Ada in May, and Ada deeds the grocery to Otto in June.
- 1944 Ada Burton sells the cottage to Frank and Frankie Weddell.
- 1947 Otto Burton sells the grocery to the Joaquin Craveiros, Sr. and Jr. Joaquin, Jr., back from military service, and his wife Eleanor (Elnora) run the grocery and live next door.



Francisca and Joaquin Craveiro, Sr. flanking waitress Jackie and Evangeline Craveiro.



Eleanor and Joaquin Craveiro, Jr. Photos from War Comes to the Middle Kingdom.

- Circa 1950 The Sister’s Inn, Annabelle’s Cafe, and Wilbur’s Club on the 100 and 200 block of Higuera Street form a hub of Black-owned businesses in what was—till 1942 and Japanese American internment—San Luis Obispo’s Japantown.
- 1950–60 Joaquin’s Grocery is listed at 420 High Street in the city directory.
- 1951 Frank and Alberta Bell’s farm on the Brazos River is condemned to build a power plant.
- Circa 1952 The Eskimo Pie sign is painted on the west side of the grocery building ([?]).
- 1950 Joaquin, Jr. and Eleanor Craveiro are still living in the cottage next door to the grocery, apparently renting from the Weddells.

- 1951 Frank and Alberta Bell's farm in McLennan County becomes one of several Black-owned farms condemned by a White condemnation panel in order to build a Texas Light and Power plant. One of the joint owners of a neighboring farm, Viola Harrison Barrett, has already moved to San Luis Obispo.
- 1952 Frank and Frankie Weddell transfer the grocery cottage to Elizabeth Weddell.
- 1953– Other tenants than the Craveiros occupy the cottage.
- 1955 The Craveiros sell the grocery to Juvenal and Wilhelmina da Silva. Because of an extant Silva's Grocery on Broad Street, it continues to be listed as Joaquin's Grocery until circa 1961, when it becomes Silva's Market.
- 1964 Nov. 3 The Da Silvas sell the grocery to Cecil and Florence German.
- Mid 1960s The Sister's Inn becomes the last of the Black hub businesses in San Luis Obispo to close, Wilbur's Club having closed soon after it opened and Annabelle Warren having closed Annabelle' Café in the mid 1950s to open Club Morocco south of town.
- 1966 The Germans sell the grocery to Frank and Alberta Bell, who obtain loans for its purchase from the Bank of America and Security First National Bank. The Bells operate it as Tiny Mart.
- 1979 The Bells sell Tiny Mart to Alex and Anne Gough and Daniel Hall and Anne Gaebe, the first owners who do not operate it themselves. Soon after, the Goughs and Halls remove asbestos shingle from the building to discover the original "novelty" siding and 1940s Eskimo Pie sign intact.
- 1980s Byron and Luis Westbrook operate the premises as Westbrook Hi Street Market and Deli through the decade
- 1990s– Bruce Watson takes over High Street Market and Deli in the early 1990s. Later it is run by Brian and Abbey Lucas, subsequent legendary operators of Sebastian's in San Simeon and Café in Cambria. Mia Russi and later Randy "Doobie" Coates, children of the late Randy Coates of BlackHorse, have run it to the present.

3. Historic Context: The Corner Grocery

Suburbanization created the phenomenon of the corner grocery; food shopping had previously been concentrated in street markets, town centers, or urban business districts. The phrase appeared as early as 1809 in New York newspapers, as the city expanded northwards. It appeared in a letter complaining that the watchman was drinking at a corner grocery between 11 pm and midnight (so they seem always to have been operated as convenience stores) and thus was unable to assist someone being mugged on Chatham Street (so New York hasn't changed).¹

Roughly a century later, the corner grocery would begin to get a run for its money.

The Supermarket In 1917 the Lexington, Kentucky Piggly Wiggly allowed people to select their own groceries from open shelves and check them out at the front, two decades after Andrew Carnegie had introduced a similar concept for libraries. In groceries it reduced staffing costs and made impulse buying easier. Unlike Carnegie, Piggly Wiggly patented the concept—which didn't stop it from proliferating among other vendors or from being combined with equally economic concepts like cash and carry (replacing the expense of customer credit) and grocery carts and parking lots (encouraging shoppers to purchase more than they could carry).

America already had chain groceries: in 1863 a New York tea and coffee wholesaler added retail outlets as the Great American Tea Company—later the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company and then A&P—and by 1875 was in sixteen American cities. By the early 1920s the term “super-market” had entered popular usage, and technological economies joined economies of scale to create supermarket chains as we now know them. The rise of cars and explosion of corporate consumer products would spell the decline of the small, local, personal, and convenient corner grocery and of this means of rising from the working class.

Pre-World War II Groceries in San Luis Obispo Major grocers were concentrated downtown. The 1939 city directory includes the oldest local names: A. Sauer and Company (from the mid nineteenth century) and D. Muzio (from the early twentieth), both on the 800 block of Monterey, as well as J. J. Andre's San Luis Grocery and the White House (also from the early twentieth century) on the 700 and 800 blocks of Higuera. Their extant buildings are all in the Downtown Historic District; Sauer's and Muzio's are Master Listed, the San Luis Grocery and White House buildings unlisted.

The first Japanese grocery, Tom Kurokawa's, had opened in Chinatown during World War I (its building now demolished). By the 1920s and 1930s, Japanese grocery/produce stores were clustered in Japantown on the 100 block of Higuera between South Street and Madonna Road (then French) and had become destinations for the best produce citywide. (Their buildings have also all been demolished.)

The new chain supermarkets had arrived downtown by 1939: People's Cash Store, A&P, CHB, and Safeway on the 600, 800, and 900 blocks of Higuera, the Pioneer Market on the 800 block of Marsh. There were also a few specialty stores, like a Natural Food Products on Chorro between Higuera and Marsh.

1. A Lover of Order, “Communication,” *American Citizen*, 26 Sep. 1809.



Safeway, 967 Higuera Street, during World War II, now a parking lot between Union Bank and Bluemercury. History Center of San Luis Obispo County.

This left, in the 1939 directory, the thirteen corner markets. Six of these have since been demolished: **Cook's Grocery** at Santa Rosa and Murray, **Santa Rosa Market** at Santa Rosa and Mill, **Mallory's Grocery** at Pismo and Beach, **A. R. Smith Grocery** at Broad and Mitchell, **Sun Grocery (Watanabe's)** at Higuera and South, and **Wilson's Grocery** at Broad and Sandercock.

Seven have survived in some form: the Spanish Revival **Cobb's Fremont Grocery** (now split into apartments) at Peach and Morro, false front **Del Monte Grocery** (now the Del Monte Café) at Santa Barbara and Upham, Streamline Moderne **Broad Street Market** (most recently Manuel's Liquor, now vacant) at Broad and Branch, false front **Cozy Corner Grocery** (now Sidewalk Market and Deli) at Osos and Pismo, false front **Ragsdale Grocery** (now Gus's Grocery) at Osos and Leff, the Pueblo Revival **Vic's Grocery** (now Giant Grinder Deli) at Broad and Upham, and false front Tiny Mart (in 1939 Burton's Cash Grocery) at Carmel and High. **The Ellsworth Market** (now Lincoln Market and Deli) was built later, in the mid to late 1940s. Despite their names, most of the shops now labeled "market and deli" function primarily as delis in their limited space (High Street Market and Deli with as many as eight cooks in its tiny kitchen).



Cobb's Fremont Grocery, 1927



Del Monte Grocery, 1922



Cozy Corner Grocery, 1921



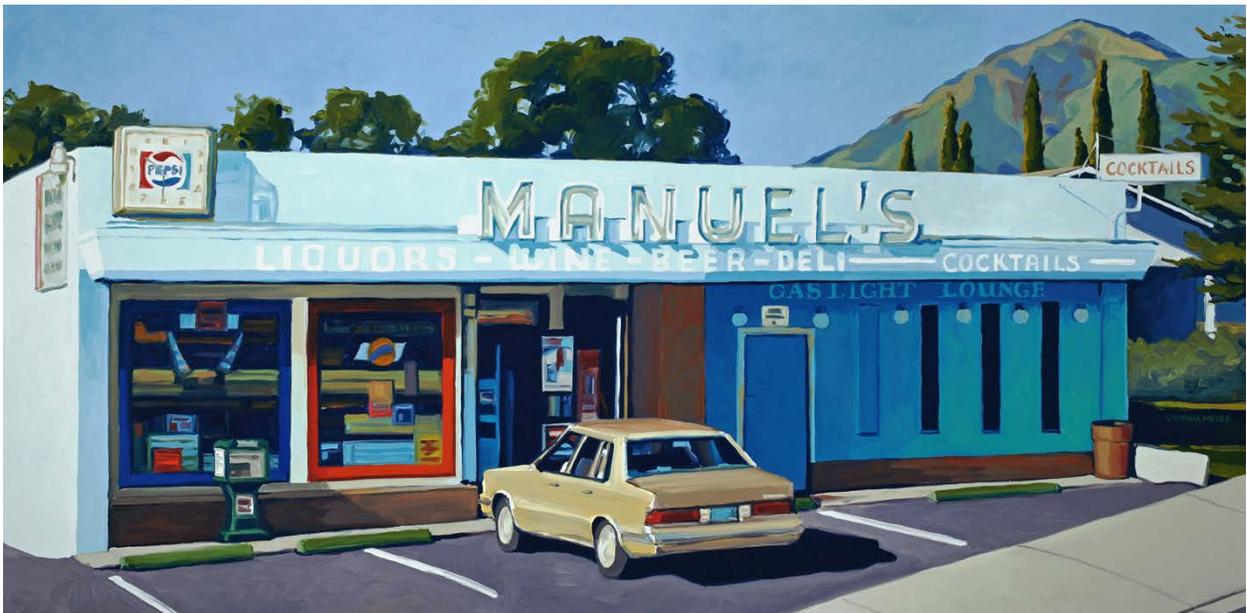
Ragsdale Grocery, ca. 1920s?



Vic's Grocery, 1927



Ellsworth's Market, ca. 1942-50



Manuel's (Broad Street Market) as painted by Cynthia Meyer.

Landmarking Status Of the corner groceries surviving from 1939, none has been Master Listed, and only one (Del Monte) Contributing Listed—despite architectural distinction, significance, integrity, rarity, and threatened status.

4. Architectural Significance of Tiny Mart

False Front Vernacular The Western False Front style exerts a fascination over devotees of the frontier but was merely an extension of standard urban architecture into unfamiliar settings, structural types, and materials. European and East Coast row buildings were constructed contiguously of brick or stone with squared off parapets and drained to the rear with flat roofs, rather than on their neighbors with peaked ones. The sparseness of Western towns, the common use of peaked roofs, and facades of wood create a dissonance for the modern viewer, but contemporaries seemed to have assumed that this is how town buildings were supposed to look, particularly within the prevailing Italianate and Eastlake styles of the era, and perceived nothing inherently “false” about the fronts.



“False front” in brick, German Village, Columbus, Ohio



San Luis Obispo’s Chinatown, circa 1900: the flat-roofed, Eastlake style Ah Louis Store in brick with its square-facaded, peaked-roof, and box frame (single-wall load-bearing) neighbors. History Center of San Luis Obispo County.

In San Luis Obispo in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the aesthetic stayed the same and the materials, structures, and density transitioned to actual masonry and brickwork with flat roofs and without gaps between. After the Great Chicago Fire and a number of devastating fires of its own, San Luis Obispo instituted a Fireproof Building

District, and wooden business buildings moved to more sparsely inhabit the outskirts of town, either literally (the Tribune-Republic and Call Buildings being transported to Santa Barbara Avenue near the new Southern Pacific depot) or figuratively (the old Call Building, when it was burnt to the ground two years after its move, was replaced by a new free-standing, peaked roof, wood frame building with a name—Chicago Hotel—and Italianate facade both suggestive of urban sophistication). The square facade was handy for signage but seems to have been rarely so used.

The Del Monte Grocery (1922) and Tiny Mart (1926), as corner buildings, could hardly have been accused of trying to create a false impression with their fronts. With wood walls, peaked roofs, and standing in isolation, they are splendid late exemplars of the style, telegraphing their urbanness.



The Chicago Hotel in 1904 as the Park View (Triangle Park, or El Triangulo, across the street having been San Luis Obispo’s sole park at the time) and as The Establishment today. The faux stonework in the wood siding presumably dates from the 1917 expansion. By 1953, when Jack Kerouac lived and wrote there, it was the Colonial Hotel and a railroad workers’ flop.

Tandem Buildings The Tiny Mart is unusual but not unique for having been commissioned with a next-door cottage for its first proprietors, Herman and Lola Page. Perhaps it served as an inspiration for Vic’s Grocery, built by A. J. Victorino in brick the following year, with a frame and stucco house next door.



The cottage’s original siding that matched the store (and neighboring Skiles cottages) persists only on the pediment.



Pueblo Revival: A. J. Victorino House in stucco and Vic's Grocery in brick. Neither building is currently listed.

Grocery proprietors continued to occupy Tiny Mart's next-door cottage into the early 1950s. Through that time, neighbors could (and did) interrupt the occupants for emergencies at all hours: the reason its young owners Joaquin and Eleanor Craveiro decided to become the first owners to live elsewhere. (The cottage, since the 1940s owned separately, now has new siding and fenestration and is not part of this application.)

Unique Footprint on a Spanish-American Corner High Street is the first street at the southern end of town to have been laid out on the American compass grid. It meets Carmel, which was laid out on the Spanish-era grid that pointed streets in the direction of the prevailing wind (from the ocean through the Chorro Valley). Hence Tiny Mart's footprint, running directly along the sidewalk, is unique among San Luis Obispo's surviving corner stores for its obtuse angle. The old Transfer and Stage Warehouse, a Western false front building of corrugated iron at Upham and High Streets, appears to be the only building to share a similar obtuse-angle footprint, with the old Simon Levi Co. grocery wholesaler flatiron building across the street.

Eskimo Pie Mural Another aspect that makes the Tiny Mart particularly rare, possibly unique, is its hand-painted mural advertisement for Eskimo Pies, a rare surviving form of Americana and the only one of its kind of this subject documented to exist. The mural was painted directly on the wall circa 1952, in the midst of a postwar advertising campaign that featured, for the first time for the company, an Eskimo boy with features, coloring, and folk clothing accurately depicted rather than caricatured or Europeanized. It was painted over two days by two artists hired by the Golden State Creamery and covered three layers of RC Cola advertisements.²

For roughly a quarter of a century, the painting was covered with asbestos siding. After the building was purchased by its current owners in 1979 and the asbestos siding removed, the mural was discovered and subsequently restored in 1989, 2002, and 2008 by prominent local artists Mark Landstrom, Gini Griffin (then Allen), and Robert Maja.

Tiny Mart As the Center of a Mini Development Finally, Tiny Mart is the centerpiece of something that contributes to the San Luis Obispo's character-defining eclecticism: the mini development or suburban cluster by one builder-architect. George W. Skiles, stone engraver turned builder, constructed not only the grocery and adjoining cottage for the

2. David Middlecamp, "The Story Behind the Eskimo Pie Sign at High Street Deli," *Tribune*, 16 Nov. 2017.

Pages, he built the next cottage to the east on his own property, the cottage next to that for his younger daughter, the next cottage but one on Carmel for a client, the next on his own property, and moved the two cottages next to that on Islay from other locations. The quality of the architecture and craftsmanship does not match W. J. Smith, John Chapek, or E. D. Bray buildings, but it embodies a local architectural phenomenon.



Skiles-built buldings marked with red dots. Google Map aerial 3D.



Similar view in 1951 aerial. History Center of San Luis Obispo County.



Closer view of six Skiles buildings, Tiny Mart in center, and two buildings moved by Skiles, upper left.

Social Milieu and Period of the Community The little grocery at the corner of Carmel and High Streets represented a step into ownership and self-determination (sometimes only temporary) by a series of hardscrabble immigrants to California, a version of the American Dream that has largely disappeared to corporatization. Its owners were several former farmers, former oil field worker, former bellhop and trucker, future trucker, WPA laborer, and army sergeant; Easterners, Southerners, Midwesterners, Westerners, and immigrants from Portugal's islands. Only one, Herman Hinzy Page, who commissioned the building, appears to have been born into the business, as his father was a dry goods merchant and grocer, though US Censuses show Herman having done a number of jobs, none of them, before he commissioned the store, related to groceries.

In addition, the corner grocery served as a way for women to enter the workforce: not only wives but daughters. Otto Burton's daughter was listed in the city director as clerk at Burton's Cash Grocery from the age of sixteen.

The grocery's historic significance is based on its seventh set of owners and first African American ones, Frank and Alberta Bell, who owned it between 1966 and 1979 and operated it as Tiny Mart. But its architectural significance comes from reflecting its social milieu and period, and it's instructive to find out who its builder and owners were.

The Builder George W. Skiles was born in 1866 in Jackson County, West Virginia to Mary Skiles and her husband Joseph, a farmer. From what can be ascertained from the US Census, Joseph Skiles was from Ohio, and the family subsequently moved to Illinois, where George's younger sister Cynthia Mae was born in 1884.

George Skiles' first wife Cora May was born in Michigan, their elder daughter Faye born in 1889 in Nebraska and younger daughter Bernice in 1891 in Illinois. In 1900 George Skiles was working as a stonecutter in Mount Sterling, Illinois; in 1910 as a monument merchant in Monmouth in the same state. But George's parents and sister Cynthia had moved to California, where Cynthia met Charles Eserio Foxen in his family's department store in San Luis and married him in 1908.

Charles Foxen was the grandson of William Benjamin (later Guillermo Domino) Foxen, who acquired Rancho Tinaquaic—present-day Foxen Canyon in Santa Barbara County—in 1842 from its original grantee, Victor Linares, who then became majordomo of the Mission San Luis Obispo and acquired the Ranch Cañada de los Osos. Charles' father John married Leonora Villa, daughter of ranchero Francisco Villa.

In 1915 Charles Foxen commissioned an elegant \$1,400 John Chapek bungalow at 958 Pismo Street. In 1929 Charles and Cynthia commissioned an \$8,000 James Jepson Spanish Revival house at Johnson and Higuera that was so grand it later became a mortuary (it's now an office building). In 1918 Cynthia built the Foxen Apartments at Osos and Pismo (another Chapek commission). Her brother George moved to San Luis sometime in the teens, remarried, carried on his trade as a stone carver into the early 1920s, and then became a builder of modest projects.

George Skiles did a combination of jobs for himself, relatives, and others, with surviving permits issued 1921–1931. They were mostly simple frame buildings with minimal articulation, unlike the contemporary late Craftsman and early Minimal Traditional revival buildings of higher-end rivals like Maino, Smith, Chapek, Jepson, and Bray.

Nonetheless, Skiles left his mark on the city. According to the San Luis Obispo Building Permits File at Cal Poly Special Collections, he built the three cottages to the east of the Page Grocery, now 368, 374, and 378 High Street, in 1926 and 1927, for H. H. Page, himself, and his daughter Faye. 374 and 378 are narrow rectangular houses with passing references to American Craftsman (low-pitched roofs and somewhat skinny elephant leg columns holding up a minimum of porch).

Skiles also built the cottages one and two lots north of the grocery at 1610 Carmel (German Cottage style with Craftsman elements) and 431 Islay (no style in particular), in 1926 and 1931, for Mr. and Mrs. W. C. Martin and himself. The next two houses on Islay, 443 and 451, Skiles and his second wife Edith had moved to the location in 1925.

George Skiles died in 1935, four years after his last recorded permit.

The Pages Herman Hinzy Page was born in Iowa in 1867, the son of a dry goods merchant and grocer. By the 1900 census, he and wife Lola Melvina, nine years younger and also from Iowa, were farming in Kansas. By 1905, when their younger son was born, they were in California, and the 1910 census had Herman working as a plumber in Arroyo Grande. By 1920 he was a pumper at the Casmalia oil fields in Santa Barbara County.

Herman Page—apparently knowing the business well enough to know a neighborhood grocer had to be on call for emergencies—commissioned the store and next-door cottage from contractor George Skiles in 1926, when Page was almost sixty, at \$1,800 for the residence and \$1,100 for the store. There is no indication in county land records of a mortgage, so they seem to have had cash in hand for almost \$3,000 of construction, as well as outfitting and stocking the store and purchasing the land from their contractor.

The Whitehouses After five years, and at the beginning of the Great Depression, the Pages sold the grocery and cottage to Mabel A. Whitehouse and her husband George A. Whitehouse. They owned the business for two years and don't appear to have lived in the area previously or stayed subsequently. Indeed it is not definitively clear who they were or where they were from.

The Burtons In 1933 Otto and Ada Burton bought the grocery from the Whitehouses and possibly the cottage next door; they certainly lived in the cottage, and when they divorced in 1943, Otto took the grocery and Ada the cottage, which she sold in 1944.

Otto Burton was born in Missouri to parents from Indiana, his father farming a rented farm in a township, Austin, that no longer exists. By age seventeen, according to the 1920 census, Otto was living with his parents, elder brother, and younger sister in the America Hotel in Visalia, working as a bellhop while his mother worked as a chambermaid, his father as a farmer, and his brother as a laborer for a transfer business. The two brothers stayed in California, while the rest of the family appears to have returned to Missouri, where Otto's younger sister married. By 1930 both brothers were married, Jesse working as a railroad fireman and living in San Jose, Otto as a trucker in Visalia, married to Ada Welks of a longtime Visalia ranching family.

Otto and Ada's business was Burton's Cash Grocery—a wise choice for the 1930s. When J. J. Andre, who owned a grocery store on the 700 block of Higuera, died in 1939, "there were

over \$35,000 owed to him on his books. ... Most of the money was never paid.”³ Japantown produce grocer Yoroku Watanabe declared bankruptcy in early 1933—with assets greatly exceeding debts but “mostly in bills collectible”—shortly before the Burtons went into the grocery business.⁴

Otto Burton stayed in the business till 1947; by 1942, his sixteen-year-old daughter, according to the city directory, was working as his clerk. By 1950, according to the city directory, none of the Burtons, at least under that name, was still in San Luis.

The Craveiros Azorean immigrant Joaquin Craveiro and his California-born son Joaquin, Jr. bought the store in 1947 and renamed it Joaquin’s Grocery. Sgt. Craveiro, back from 1941–45 Army service, and his wife Eleanor (Elnora) Ormonde Craveiro ran Joaquin’s Grocery and lived next door, renting from Frank and Frankie Weddell, who’d bought the cottage from Ada Burton.

Joaquin, Sr. had come from the Azores around the age of twenty, with experience in whaling, and settled in the San Joaquin Valley to learn dairy and farming.⁵ Eventually Francisca joined him, they married, purchased a dairy in Hanford, and raised a family. Subsequently they farmed near Visalia, but after a farming accident, they moved to San Luis Obispo, where they took over the Golden West Restaurant on the 600 block of Higuera from fellow Azorean Mary Serpa in the late 1930s.⁶

Joaquin, Jr. and Eleanor got tired of being disturbed at all hours and moved away from the grocery’s next-door cottage. They also commissioned the Eskimo Pie sign, based on the company’s contemporary advertising. After the Craveiros sold the market to the Da Silvas, they stayed in San Luis, and Joaquin worked the rest of his career for the school district.

The Da Silvas Juvenal and Wilhelmina da Silva were living in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1940, Juvenal sewing for the Works Progress Administration—having, according to immigration records, been a laborer in the textile mill town of Lowell, Massachusetts as early as 1920. Juvenal was from the Portuguese island of Madeira, Wilhelmina also from Portugal, and presumably they acquired the grocery from the Craveiros through the same ethnic network as the Craveiros used to take over the Golden West Restaurant from the Serpas. Juvenal would have been about fifty-six, Wilhelmina about forty-eight when they bought the grocery—not far off the ages of the Pages—and they lived three blocks away at 720 Upham Street.

The Da Silvas ran the grocery for nine years. For the first few of these they continued to call it Joaquin’s Grocery, since—there being so many Portuguese in town, and dozens of them Silvas—a Manuel Silva happened to be running the old Smith Grocery at Mitchell and Broad as Silva’s Grocery. Once the Vieiras took over Silva’s Grocery and renamed it the South

3. Peter Andre, *Memoirs of a Small Town Boy*, p. 10.

4. “Bankruptcy List Is Augmented by 17 New Petitions,” *Los Angeles Illustrated Daily News*, 16 Feb. 1933.

5. Evangeline Kirk, “‘Sit Down Over There,’ He Would Say Sternly,” in *War Comes to the Middle Kingdom*, Stan Harth, Liz Krieger, and Dan Krieger, eds. (San Luis Obispo: EZ Nature Books, 1991), p. 65.

6. “Joaquin Joseph Craveiro,” obituary, *Tribune*, 1 Oct. 2011.

Broad Street Market, Joaquin's Grocery became Silva's. In 1964 the Da Silvas sold their grocery to the Germans and retired to their house in San Luis.

The Germans Cecil and Florence German owned the grocery for only two years before selling to the Bells and, like the Whitehouses, did not come from San Luis Obispo or remain here, moving to Yucaipa, where Cecil worked as a truck driver until retirement.

The Bells Frank and Alberta Bell took over Tiny Mart at about the same age that Juvenal and Wilhelmina Da Silva retired from it—and ran the grocery for thirteen more years, till Frank was in his mid and Alberta in her early seventies. The Bells were farmers in Central Texas till their farm and those of neighboring black farmers was condemned by an all-White condemnation panel for construction of a power plant in 1951. One member of a neighboring farming family had made it to San Luis Obispo; Frank Bell seems to have worked some years as a janitor in San Luis—for the county government, a hospital, and a bowling alley—before buying the grocery. The Bells purchased the grocery from a rural route address outside San Luis, continued to live there for the next five years, then lived on and retired to 498 Mitchell Drive.

The corner grocery business did not require too much education, expertise, capital, or risk. It required long hours but not the backbreaking labor and safety hazards of a farm or an oil field and could ease owners into retirement. Most important, it provided the combination of independence and status otherwise unavailable to the factory worker, trucker, or janitor.

Tiny Mart's Eskimo Pie Mural: Historic Popular Art and Current Sensibilities The Eskimo Pie sign was painted on the side of the building freehand by two artists hired by Golden State Creamery, the Northern California ice cream manufacturer licensed to produce and distribute Eskimo Pies in this region, in the early 1950s, while the Craveiros owned the grocery. Based on Eskimo Pie's contemporary advertising, it was claimed, after a 2007 restoration, to be one of only two such murals known to have survived, though I can find no evidence of another (Middlecamp, *op. cit.*). Covered by asbestos siding not long after it was painted, it was rediscovered in the early 1980s, when Alex and Annie Gough and Dan and Anne Gaebe Hall bought and restored the building.

The mural was restored by local artists Mark Landstrom and Gini Griffin in 1989 and again by Dominican artist Robert Maja in 2007. It was reproduced in the San Luis Obispo Children's Museum in 2004 by photographer and Cal Poly faculty member Brian Lawler and featured in the 2012 San Luis Obispo Public Art Master Plan (pp. 38–39), a 2012 *SLO Life* article on Maja, and a "Photos from the Vault" column in the *Tribune* in 2017, where artist Landstrom described it as "a neighborhood icon."

Eskimo Pie Controversies These controversies include the term *Eskimo* itself; the cultural appropriation of an indigenous people as a commercial brand name; the portrayal of such people in promotional material; and the destruction, defacement, or covering up of the resultant art that some people may find offensive.

The word *Eskimo* *Eskimo* is thought to derive through Spanish and French from *ayaškimew*—"person who laces a snowshoe"—an Innu/Montagnais word. The Innu are a neighboring non-Inuit Canadian First Nations people, and it is a not uncommon phenomenon for the European name for an indigenous group to be provided by the neighboring indigenous group arrived at first, for instance, *Comanche*, from the Ute

kimantshi, “enemy.” Such names are not necessarily considered offensive; Apaches publicly and officially refer to themselves as Apaches, from a Spanish word probably of Zuni origin. “Eskimo” was first applied to the Mi’kmaq (another non-Inuit First Nations people) and later to Russian Yupighyt; Alaskan Yupik, Cup’ig, and Iñupiat; Canadian Inuit; and Greenland Kalaallit.

Since 1977, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference in Canada has called for the use of Inuk/Inuit in place of Eskimo/Eskimos for circumpolar native peoples. This designation has been rejected, however, by non-Inuits, e.g., those in Greenland, who refer to themselves as Greenlanders or Kalaallit; in Alaska, Yupik or Yup’ik, Cup’ig, and Iñupiat; and in Russia, Yupighyt.

There is currently no word that encompasses all of these peoples other than Eskimo, which is considered offensive by some circumpolar native peoples (particularly in Canada), normal and inoffensive by others (particularly in Alaska), and of lesser preference by many to their self-designated terms (Inuit, “people”; Iñupiat, “original person”; Yupik, “real person”; Yupighyt “true people”). *Eskimo* remains widely used in technical and scholarly contexts, without a current substitute when referring to the totality of circumpolar native peoples.

Eskimo Pie In 2020, after ninety-nine years, the Eskimo Pie brand was retired, replaced by its owner, Dreyer’s Grand Ice Cream, with Edy’s Pie. It is hard to exaggerate the impact of the Eskimo Pie in American popular culture over that near-century.

Eskimo Pies were introduced under that name in the Midwest in November 1921 and by the end of December were claimed (possibly exaggeratedly) to be selling at the clip of a million a day (though 1922 figures do suggest half a million a day).

Eskimo Pies went into national distribution in January 1922, licensed to local and regional ice cream makers. An REO Speed Wagon rushed an Eskimo Pie through a blizzard from Chicago to the White House for President Harding’s Thanksgiving Dinner in 1922, making a record run of 801 miles in 27 hours and 48 minutes.⁷

Eskimo Pies were sold in Japanese American internment camps; their sales jumped to GIs in World War II.⁸ Bob Hope joked about Eskimo Pies, Walter Winchell dished on them, Dale Carnegie sermonized on them, and mobster Frank Costello claimed to have manufactured them (the company responding with “a frigid corporate statement”).⁹ S. J. Perelman wrote

7. “Wonderful Run of REO Speed Wagon,” *Patriot Ledger*, 5 Dec. 1922.

8. “Canteen Cowboy Sez,” *Manzanar Free Press*, 29 July 1942; “Briefly,” *Poston Chronicle*, 21 Nov. 1944; Maurtia Baldock, *Guide to the Eskimo Pie Corporation Records*, Smithsonian, National Museum of American History, Kenneth E. Behring Center, 1998, p. 2.

9. Bob Hope, “Bob Hope,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, 11 Mar. 1948; Walter Winchell, “Leslie Caron Works Alone,” *Boston Record-American*, 21 Dec. 1961; Dale Carnegie, “Dale Carnegie,” *Sadalia Democrat Sun*, 11 Feb. 1940; “Eskimo Pie Corp. Gives Costello Cold Shoulder,” *Daily Herald* 25 Mar. 1951; Don Dornbrook, “‘Westward Ha!’ with Perelman Wit Unfurled,” *Milwaukee Journal*, 8 August 1948; “Sharing an Eskimo Pie at a Paris theater ...,” *Boston Daily Record*, 13 May 1955; “MacMillan Plans to Carry Eskimo and Eskimo Pie,” *New Orleans States*, 26 June 1925.

about French patricians eating them, Grace Kelly was photographed sharing one with her latest love interest in Paris, and the American explorer Donald Baxter MacMillan carried them to the Inuit of Baffin and Ellesmere Islands. The Smithsonian's National Museum of American History holds the Eskimo Pie Corporation's records. Eskimo Pies' success became a byword for fads but also part of the myth of American ingenuity and the belief anyone could succeed with a good idea and determination.¹⁰

Various origin stories have circulated, but in a 1922 version purporting to be in the words of inventor Christian Kent Nelson and now generally accepted, in his late twenties he was teaching high school math during the day and running an ice cream shop at night in tiny Onawa, Iowa, looking for a product that would keep him going during the winter.¹¹ In late 1920 or early 1921, seeing a boy with only a nickel unable to choose between ice cream and a chocolate bar, he came up with the idea of a chocolate-covered ice cream bar. After asking a traveling candy salesman how chocolate was diluted for coatings at a low temperature, he experiment with covering ice cream blocks with cocoa butter-softened chocolate, tried the result out on Onawans with great success that summer (as I-Scream bars), and patented the result in October 1921. He partnered with a fellow Iowan, Russell Stover, manager of a chocolate factory, who suggested the name Eskimo Pie and who in early literature often got the credit for inventing them, their company being named after Stover.

The little boy with the nickel would have been out of luck, at any rate, since Eskimo Pies initially cost a dime. Stover sold out early (with legal fees for defending the patent and copyright eating away at the profits), and with his wife he started the candy company that still bears his name. Christian Nelson also sold out but soon got bored and came back to work for the Eskimo Pie Corporation under its new owners, US Foil (later Reynolds), who made its packaging, until his retirement in 1961—a retirement significant enough, four decades after the pie appeared on the scene, to be covered nationally, including by Walter Winchell. Winchell squeezed him between Leslie Caron and Alvin Ailey and posited, “Richer, it is suspected, than the gov’t.”

Cultural Appropriation in Branding An unsourced story of the Eskimo Pie's branding is that Stover's sister went to the Omaha Public Library to look up words evocative of cold.¹² There was certainly no early consistent effort to tie the product to actual Eskimos, and when images of Eskimos were used, they were unstable, reacting to contemporary aesthetics and such events as the release of the documentary *Nanook of the North*.

As well, both the technology and branding were licensed to local ice cream manufacturers, who seem to have paid for and designed many of their own advertisements, while other ads used nationally-available images and layouts with space for local manufacturer names. There were also some national ads without local manufacturers attached.

10. “Former Fads That Once We Followed,” *Riverside Daily Press*, 18 Jan. 1923; “Eskimo Pie Inventor, Deaf to Jeers, Makes Fortune,” *Wilkes-Barre Times-Leader*, 4 Feb. 1922.

11. “Eskimo Pie inventor Receives \$2,000 Daily,” *Stamford Advocate*, 21 July 1922.

12. The earliest mention I can find of this is on the Nebraska State Historical Society's Website, Apr. 2003 (“Made in Nebraska: Food and Beverages”).

1921 The original packaging featured a midnight sun, some version of which has been used almost to the present. The 1921 advertisements explained what the product was without any illustrations.

1922 At the nationwide launch at the beginning of 1922, there were a number of different national and nationally-branded local campaigns. One of these latter was a brief January campaign featuring a caricature of an Eskimo man with the legend, “‘Iggly Gook,’ Meaning, ‘I Ain’t Mad at Nobody’” and appearing in newspapers in Knoxville and Chattanooga, Tennessee; Duluth, Minnesota; and Los Angeles, California, with the LA one accompanied by caricatures of Dutch girls in the pointed and winged folk bonnets of Volendam, the branding for National Ice Cream (despite its name, a local firm). A different image of an Eskimo with the legend “‘Ugglee—Goo—Gee Meaning ‘Ain’t Eskimo Pie Grand?’” appeared in a Wilks-Barre, Pennsylvania paper also in January 1922.

The nonsense words seem to have been tied to an effort to make Eskimo Pies mysterious again as they were being introduced nationally; such was the message being given to journalists. At any rate, this brief campaign was the extent of advertising related to Eskimos in the months surrounding the launch of the brand. Other ads from the early part of the year evoked iciness or showed pictures of the product itself, the midnight sun trademark, or White people enjoying Eskimo Pies.

Dominance of White images in Eskimo Pie advertising, 1920s–1960s



Wichita Beacon, 1922



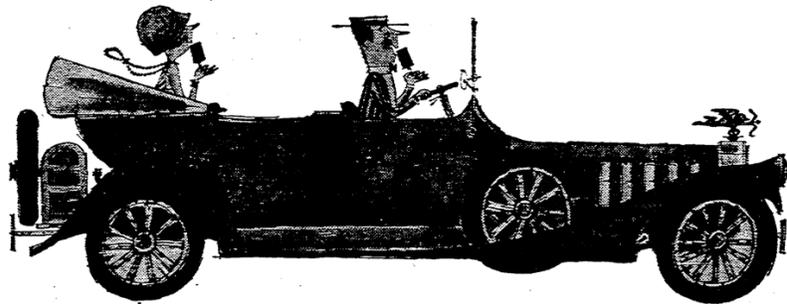
San Diego Union, 1927

Right: Dallas Morning News, 1956





Milwaukee Journal, 1962 and San Diego Union, 1956



REMEMBER?



Nothing is changed—
the same real ice cream
the same fine chocolate
the same aluminum wrap



FOREMOST ESKIMO PIE

Better than good, it's Foremost



Nanook of the North and the Eskimo Boy in Advertising Things changed in June of 1922, when Robert J. Flaherty's groundbreaking documentary *Nanook of the North* became a hit. In October and November, Abbotts, a Philadelphia ice cream chain, featured an Eskimo boy in its ads, though after an initial appearance he was Europeanized. Brown's Velvet Ice Cream of New Orleans portrayed somewhat Kewpie-like Eskimo toddlers in its ads, though the Eskimo Pie company's own ads focused on a White girl in a short skirt and Mary Janes in front of an igloo.



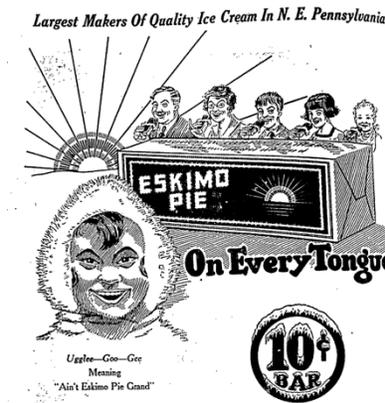
Decatur Herald, 1 Jan. 1922



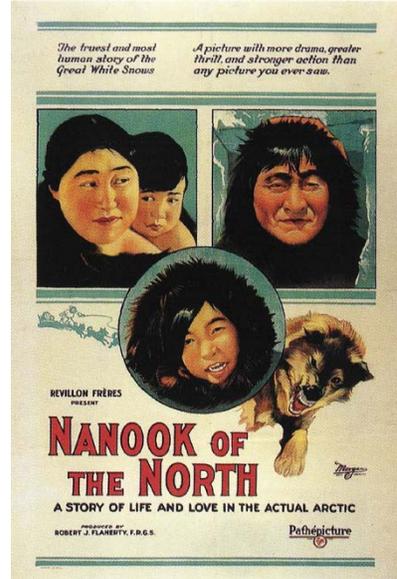
Constructivist-style ads (compare the work of László Moholy-Nagy) from the Fort Wayne News Sentinel and Evansville Courier and Press, 26 Jan. 1922



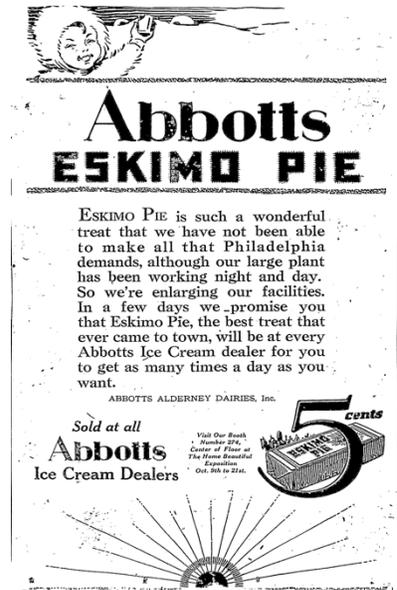
Part of the short-lived January 1922 campaign with a caricatured but not Europeanized Eskimo in a onesie with Dutch girls in Volendam bonnets below, Los Angeles Times, 10 Jan. 1922



Wilks-Barre Times-Leader, 27 Jan. 1921, with a language-eating pun. The White people enjoying Eskimo Pies are far more characteristic of contemporary ad illustrations for the product.



Theatrical poster, Nanook of the North, June 1922



First Eskimo Pie boy, Philadelphia Inquirer, 11 Oct. 1922

Tempting!

THE choicest bit of goodness you ever knew—amazingly so. It's rich, but wholesome, too. It's Abbotts Ice Cream and tempting chocolate—only five cents.

... You'll like 'em ...
Sold only at Abbotts Ice Cream Dealers
ABBOTTS ALDERNEY DAIRIES, INC.

Abbotts
ESKIMO PIE



The Abbotts Eskimo Pie boy Europeanized, Philadelphia Inquirer, 24 Nov. 1922. In contrast, the costume is rendered more accurately, with fur-outward outer parka and outer trousers, mitts, and outer boots



ESKIMO PIE

... Ain't it wonderful
... Ain't it nice
... It's bigger'n ever
... At the same old price!
—America's Sweetheart

Chicago Daily News, 22 Nov. 1922, with a mix of Eskimo and European iconography



Don't Forget We Are Still Here!

And here to stay—too! Why you people below the Arctic Circle are so much in love with Eskimo Pie that it takes Four Millions every twenty-four hours to satisfy you.

The secret of this popularity is found in the fact that Eskimo Pie is the most tasty morsel ever devised for a particular public.

This late 1923 ad copy could be mistaken as a clarion call for racial and cultural endurance, and the style is Soviet Realism. The ad copy is also, uniquely, in the first person of circumpolar native peoples, addressed to everyone else. Washington, DC Evening Star, 9 Nov. 1923.



Now!

A new and better Eskimo Pie²⁰¹² Fancy Centers

Here is another Eskimo Pie variety. But here is a better one! It is the Eskimo Pie that has won the approval of Columbus.

Here is health and refreshment in one. Here is goodness adapted to young ladies and old. Here is joy to every lover of sweets.

Only Eskimo Pie stands above the crowd. And, although it will be absent from some of the usual confection stores, the quality is guaranteed. Please the first confection store. Don't let it slip in the net! ... Don't let it slip! Get there in the crowd—take a hot line for your share of superior sweets.

THE ESKIMO PIE CORPORATION
Distributed Through
The Ferrus Ice Cream Co.
Minneapolis, Minn.
The Telling Belle Verano Co.

on sale today **10¢**
at all confectioners and drug stores

ESKIMO PIE

Glamorized Eskimo, with accurate clothing and non-European features, though looking suspiciously like Anna May Wong. (Wong was growing famous at the time but was not yet a breakout star). Columbus Dispatch, 19 Nov. 1923.



At Santa Claus Party, Saturday, Dec. 11,
Fifth and Broad—2 to 4 P. M.
10,000 ESKIMO PIES
Will Be Served Free

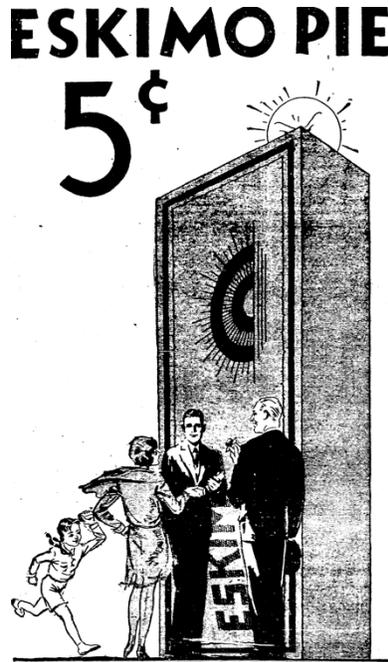
In 1926 two Eskimo boys, Enoch and Enitaksak, visited Ohio and gave talks and press interviews, including discussions of their clothes and language—full circle from the caricature and nonsense language of the January 1922 ads.



Last appearance of an Eskimo boy in an Eskimo Pie ad for, apparently, twenty years. Schenectady Daily Gazette, 3 Dec. 1927.



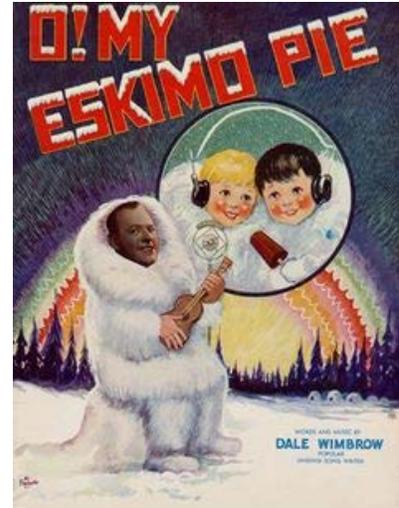
Although they disappeared from advertising in the 1930s, Eskimo caryatides held up Eskimo Pie's innovative dry ice coolers, which made the product available in corner stores without freezers, from the late 1920s to at least the 1950s



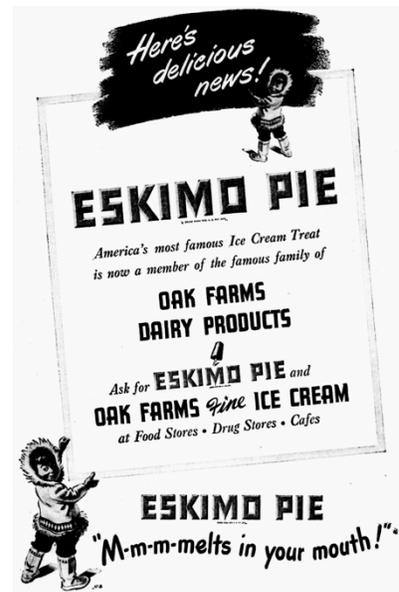
Eskimo Pie as urban sophistication, though with a somewhat Dadaist combination of images. It includes reference to the Eskimo Pie Time radio show. *Milwaukee Journal*, 1 Oct. 1929.

The women, more genteel, had their whisky highballs in the mercantile part of the building; liquor glass in one hand, an Eskimo pie in the other.

Description of the start of the winter trapping season, Violet, Louisiana, W. G. Wiegand, "Down the Spillway," *New Orleans Item*, 14 Nov. 1937



Sheet music for Dale Wimbrow's 1941 O! My, Eskimo Pie shows Whites in Eskimo Clothing.



The Eskimo boy introduced in 1947, the model for the Tiny Mart sign. His costume is more articulated, showing avitat (Inuit)/akurun (Yupik) mosaic trim of black and white caribou skin on parka and boots, though the laces on the chest (below) appear to be an invention.



He also has darker skin and more characteristically Eskimo hair and features than previous portrayals.

Now, the great new
ESKIMO PIE
protected by aluminum foil

M-m-m-melts in your mouth!

ESKIMO PIE
Pledge of Quality

As a franchise holder of the Eskimo Pie Corporation, we hereby publicly pledge that all products manufactured by us under our franchise agreement with the said corporation shall faithfully uphold the High National Standards of Quality established for Eskimo Pie products.

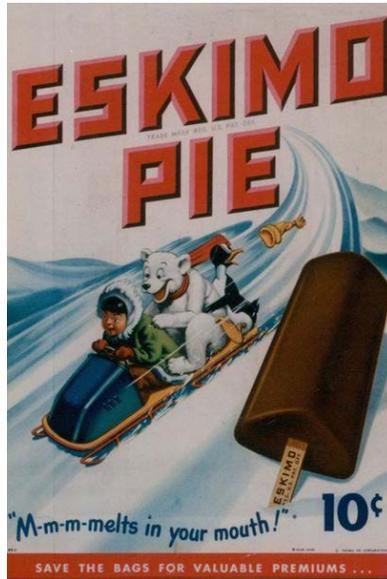
The ice cream treat of the year!
Here's your favorite...quality-made **ESKIMO PIE**...better than ever! Just taste it! Made of smooth, rich vanilla ice cream, royally robed in luscious chocolate.
Now protected by a gleaming aluminum foil bag!

You strike it rich in Golden State Ice Cream
BRAND
GOLDEN STATE COMPANY, LTD.

Golden State ad, San Francisco Chronicle, 18 Aug. 1947



"The star of our show": stills from theatrical commercial, circa 1950 (Youtube).



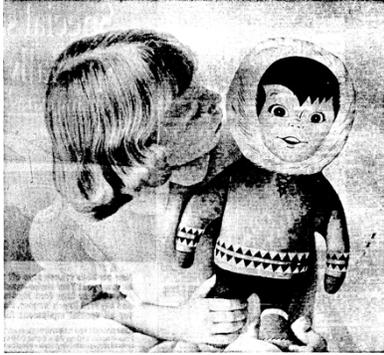
Eskimo boy with polar bear and penguin, unknown source, probably sign, circa 1950.



Look who's here—!
ESKIMO PIE.

The doll-like portrayal from 1958 on is reminiscent of Disney designer Mary Blair's designs for It's A Small World (below), although the ride postdated it, fabricated by Walt Disney for the 1964 New York World's Fair UNICEF Pavilion. Audio-animatronicist Blaine Gibson designed the shape of each face to be identical, with distinctions in skin, eye, and hair color.





IMAGINE! You can now get this big 15 in.
ESKIMO Boy Ragdoll

FOR ONLY **50¢** AND ONE END FLAP FROM ANY ESKIMO FAMILY PAK



By the mid 1960s the Eskimo Pie boy was indeed a doll for a White girl: Cleveland Plain Dealer, 13 May 1965. The Eskimo boy was retired shortly after, though he recurred in packaging as late as the 2010s (below) with doll-like face and white skin coloring.



GIRLS' HOODED "ESKIMO PIE" SUIT

12.95

White's Department Store ad, *Boston Herald*, 13 Nov. 1942

HOLD YOUR HATS DEPARTMENT . . . Here's hoping Thursday and Friday prove to be rather hot . . . the Canteen really has an extra special sale on . . . **ICE CREAM . . . sandwich, popsicle and eskimo pie . . . for just FOUR CENTS WHILE THEY LAST . . .** A real bargain . . . take home . . . other specials are:

Manzanar Relocation Camp: *Manzanar Free Press*, 29 July 1942

Briefly

WITH THESE...
...Dreary, cloudy, windy, rainy days, we are really remembering regretting the warmth in which we used to dwell. **IN ONE OFFICE...**

...I happened to overlook a very interesting scene, there were, I guess, five girls, all bundled up in their overcoats and what not, cuddled up by the stove. But to my surprise, I noticed each one was busily munching coldly at their Eskimo Pie. Egads, what these girls won't do'!

Poston Relocation Camp: *Poston Chronicle*, 21 Nov. 1944



The chevalier and the confection

Al Hirschfeld caricature of a French Legion of Honor recipient, S. J. Perelman's *Westward Ha!*, 1948

Eskimo images continued in 1923. One of the more interesting ones was of a dramatic Socialist Realist Eskimo boy leaping forward with the legend “We Are Still Here.” In contrast, in the same month of November (Eskimo pies in some markets were only sold during the winter) was a glamor Eskimo who looked like Anna May Wong. As *Nanook of the North* receded, interest seems to have dwindled, and after 1923 only one Eskimo appears in advertising, a boy in some advertising in the New York–New Jersey area.

1920s–1950s: Caryatides After selling out in 1924, Christian Nelson had returned to the company and among other innovations introduced Eskimo Pie dry ice coolers for stores without freezers. In a design that seems to have persisted from the late 1920s to at least the early 1950s, these were held up by adult male Eskimo caryatides. These presumably were the reference for the girls’ hooded “Eskimo Pie’ suit” advertised by a Boston department store in 1942, as otherwise Eskimo pie merchandizing in the 1930s had turned to radio (jingles [“Oh, My, Eskimo Pie”] and *Eskimo Pie Time*, a folk song show), as well as wrapper promotions—with no graphics. Except the sculptures holding up the coolers, images of Eskimos seem to have disappeared. There was also little if any advertising during World War II.

1947: The Return of the Eskimo Boy The postwar era introduced a new campaign around an Eskimo boy, and now he was a boy of Eskimo features and skin tone and largely authentic folk clothing: neither caricatured nor Europeanized. He also made it into film in color movie theater promotions. The campaign lasted in earnest about five or six years, though his image turned up as late as 1957. This is the image in Tiny Mart’s Eskimo Pie mural, painted by the artists from Golden State Creamery. His costume in the ads showed mosaic trim of black and white caribou skin on his parka and outer boots, though the laces on the chest (below) appear to be an invention

The Eskimo boy disappeared for a few years and then came back in a more stylized and doll-like form (proto-Disney) in 1958. By this time the company was trying to convince people to buy multi-packs from supermarkets to take home by their new cars to their new freezers for boom babies, rather than individual pies from corner groceries. Happy White families increasingly made their way into advertisements. But the Eskimo boy was still turning up as late as the 2010s.

Destruction, Defacement, or Covering Up Historic Art In cultural heritage preservation, there are ten recognized agents of deterioration:

1. Physical Force
2. Theft and Vandalism
3. Fire
4. Water
5. Pests
6. Pollutants
7. Light
8. Temperature
9. Humidity
10. Dissociation

To that could be added an eleventh: Censorship. Tiny Mart, which survived other agents of deterioration to suffer from dissociation from its Black history, also includes a period mural that a few people have suggested destroying or covering up.

The mural's branding is indeed racial advertising and an example of commercial cultural appropriation. The imagery of the 1947–1953 campaign was not, however, demeaningly racist. The Eskimo boy was not subservient but exotic. He even provided some cultural diversity to the overwhelmingly White dominance of advertising and some authenticity compared to the subsequent Disney-like homogenization and anodyne of world cultures (e.g., *It's a Small World*, which originally functioned as a World's Fair UNICEF pavilion). Eskimo Pie was a distorted lens through which to see circumpolar native peoples—but at least the lens existed as an alternative to invisibility. When a photograph of American servicemen playing softball with an Eskimo boy appeared in numerous papers during World War II, the somewhat irrelevant heading was “Eskimo Pie.” But without the brand and association, would the photograph have run at all?

There have been recent and unresolved controversies regarding the proposed destruction or covering up of public art that portrays earlier White views of non-Whites. At George Washington High School in San Francisco, a 1936 Works Progress Administration mural by Communist artist Victor Arnautoff, an anti-racist critic of government and history, was slated for destruction or concealment—for its depictions of African American slavery and violence against Native Americans—by a unanimous vote of San Francisco's school board.

This decision created a huge and unresolved local and national controversy, including being supported by some and opposed by others in the Black and American Indian communities, with locals and prominent cultural leaders on both sides. Among those who opposed destruction were Black Panthers who had organized and executed the painting of murals in response to Arnautoff's murals in the late 1960s and early 1970s.¹³

Tiny Mart's Eskimo Pie mural, as a historic artwork, has attracted great affection over the decades and some controversy of late, as San Luis Obispo address—or fail to address—more substantial issues of systemic racism and inequality. Clearly cultural appropriation in art and commerce is objectionable though probably will never be completely avoided unless all races and cultures descend into solipsism. Censorship, though, tends to smack of paternalism and virtue-signaling, and censorship of the past risks obliterating a detailed and accurate understanding of history and thus the ability to move substantially forward.

Master Listing Tiny Mart will preserve for multiple interpretations a complex landmark in San Luis Obispo's racial history and history of racism, and the Eskimo Pie mural is part of that full story. More important, Master Listing will foreground the struggle of Frank and Alberta Bell to find an independent and respected place as Black business owners in a postwar California that systemically shunted Blacks into inferior jobs and refused them the means to achieve better housing or economic success.

13. Ben Davis, “This Artist Painted the Black Radical Response to the George Washington Slaveholder Murals. Here's Why He Stands Against Destroying Them,” *Artnet News*, 10 July 2019.

5. Historic Context: The Great Migration of African Americans

The borders of the Great Migration are the US Censuses of 1910 (after which the drop in the Southern Black population began) and 1970 (after which the Southern Black population stabilized, though there was still movement in the rest of the country, e.g., to California). The Great Migration was both a geographical movement (from the South to the North, Midwest, and West) and social movement (from rural to urban areas). At the beginning, more than 90% of African Americans lived in the South; by 1970, about half.

The Bell family would become part of that exodus from Southern agriculture to Western urban commerce, and Tiny Mart would become a significant landmark of Black business ownership in San Luis Obispo—ownership, in a small way, of the means of production and a symbol of the beginning of acceptance of Blacks into America’s financial system.

Black Demographics of California and San Luis Obispo County and City African Americans were a small proportion of the population of American California in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and did not trend upward till the Great Migration from the South. The Black proportion of the population of California was, in

1850	1.0% of 92,597 people
1860	1.0% of 379,994
1870	0.8% of 560,247
1880	0.7% of 864,694
1890	0.9% of 1,213,398
1900	0.7% of 1,485,053
1910	0.9% of 2,377,549

Compare the Chinese, who had risen to 9% of California’s population by 1860 (resulting in Congress passing Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882).

In remote San Luis Obispo, the figures were even lower. In the 1850 US Census, San Luis Obispo County listed one Black person (George Frisbie, a 22-year-old cook from New York State) of 336 people enumerated, or 0.3%. The 1860 census listed 7 out of 1,782, or 0.4%.¹⁴ (The 1860 census also had a category for Mulattoes, but at this time in San Luis Obispo County the category was used for Indians, not Blacks—except possibly for one Portuguese-born cook.)

Between 1880 and 1890 the number of Blacks in San Luis Obispo County increased from under 30 to over 450 and from 0.3% to 2.8%, presumably because of Southern Pacific construction; as a result of partial destruction of the 1890 census it is impossible to know.¹⁵

14. Transcription of 1850 census by Susan C. Parks, 2002; of 1860 census by Rhonda Jones, 1999.

15. Joshua Michael Harmon, *“But Not In Vain”: The Civil Rights Movement in San Luis Obispo, California, 1947–1969*, master’s thesis, Department of History, California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo, 2009, p. 13.

But by 1910, the 72 Blacks and 5 Mulattoes recorded by the census in San Luis Obispo County comprised, again, only 0.4% of the population.¹⁶

During the Great Migration of African Americans from the rural South—and federal suppression of Chinese and Japanese immigration and later internment or internal exile of Japanese—the Black proportion of California’s population grew gradually—then after World War II dramatically:

1920	1.1%
1930	1.4%
1940	1.8%
1950	4.4%
1960	5.6%
1970	7.0%
1980	7.7%

Its peak was 1980. Then the percentage of the Latino population doubled and of the Asian population tripled, leaving the Black population with still growing numbers but declining percentages:

1990	7.4%
2000	6.4%
2010	6.2%

San Luis Obispo County continued to lag behind statewide figures. The postwar influx brought the Black population up to only 0.7%—though that was from 0.1% in 1940 (Harmon, *op. cit.*, p. 14). By 1990 the Black population of the county was at 2.2%, by 2000 had declined to 1.9%, and by 2010 risen to 2.1%. The City of San Luis Obispo, in contrast, went from 1.9% to 1.3% to 1.2% for its Black population in 1990–2010. The county’s Black population has increasingly concentrated in unincorporated areas, Paso Robles, and Atascadero, which last was founded as a Whites only town¹⁷

Black Residents and Businesses in the City of San Luis Obispo Of the twenty-six African Americans living in San Luis Obispo County in 1940, three were residents of the Pacific Hotel in San Luis Obispo’s Japantown, on the 100 block of Higuera, as numerous other neighborhoods were covenanted against both Blacks and Asians (e.g., Fixlini, Mount Pleasanton Square, Anholm, and Monterey Heights). Those three were Joe Hubert Hall, a porter at the stage lines; Russell Massengale, a janitor at the nearby highway building; and Minnie Allen, a widow; born, respectively, in Oklahoma, California, and Indiana. Five years previously, Hall and Massengale were both living in San Luis, Allen in Los Angeles, but none of them are listed in the 1938, 1939, or 1942 city directories (those still surviving from the period), part of the difficulty of documenting minority communities.

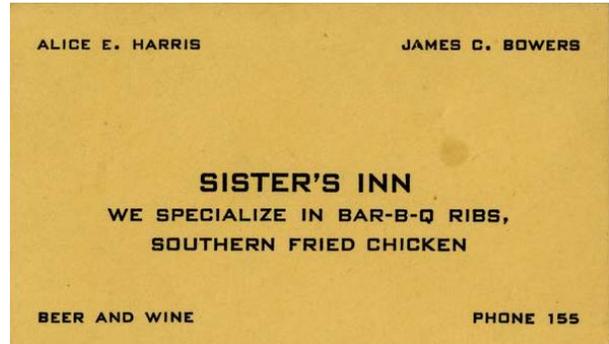
San Luis Obispo’s Japanese Americans were interned in 1942. By the 1950 directory (the next one surviving), the former Japantown had become largely Black and Mexican-born in

16. “Table 29. General Statistics of the Negro Population of the United States, by Counties: 1910,” *Bulletin 129: Negroes in the United States*, Twelfth Decennial US Census.

17. *City of San Luis Obispo Housing Element*, April 2010, Table A-5; *SLOCOG Regional Profile*, “Population,” 2004, Table 2-6.

its residents, Black in its businesses, and these new Black residents and business owners were predominantly from the South. Small business for Blacks as for Japanese Americans was way to move up despite persistent racial discrimination. Four documented Black-owned businesses circa 1950 were Wilbur's Club and Annabelle's Café on Higuera's 100 block, The Sister's Inn on the 200 block, and Club Morocco south of town.

The Sister's Inn, in the building previously occupied by Kingo Inao's OK Café at 208 Higuera, was co-owned by Annabelle Warren and Texan Alice Harris. In 1948 Warren sold her half share to Harris for \$300, and in the 1950 San Luis Obispo city directory, Warren was shown owning Annabelle's Café, at the site (190 Higuera) where Frank Urabe had opened a chop suey restaurant in 1931. Annabelle's Café later moved to a different site on the block.



Sister's Inn Collection, Cal Poly Special Collections and Archives.



The Sister's Inn, late 1950s, with Alice Harris's house at 195 Brook Street just visible rear left. Sister's Inn Collection, Cal Poly Special Collections and Archives.

Then by the mid 1950s Warren closed her cafe and opened the interracial Club Morocco on the Old Highway south of town, with a mixture of live and recorded music. According to a chattel mortgage for the Club Morocco's contents that Warren took out in 1957 from Cecil Evans, her former landlord at both of her Annabelle's Café sites, the club was the real property of Camden Hathway, the well respected but louche brother of the well respected and somewhat corrupt Sheriff Murray Hathway. Club Morocco—which had a countywide reputation for musical entertainment and fracas and shootings—looms large in local memory, and it operated into at least the late 1960s.

Wilbur Owens, who had moved with his family from Texas, ran the short-lived Wilbur's Club at the Pacific Hotel, which had reverted to its original name of the Clover Hotel. The 1950 city directory shows him running a restaurant in the hotel, and in June 1950 he purchased a beer and wine license for the club from Hope and Larry's Café in Templeton. But fourteen months later, in August 1951, he sold the license to Alice Harris and James Bowers for the Sister's Inn. After that Owens appears to have gone back to his day job as a janitor.

Alice Harris's Sister's Inn continued into the mid 1960s. Then the building was vacant until becoming the Fiesta Inn by 1967.

The period of Black-owned restaurants and entertainment establishments anchoring the former Japantown was over. Black residents stayed in the immediate neighborhood, but by the mid 1950s mainstream White businesses had moved in to replace Black-owned businesses that had carried the cultural capital of the community.

Alice Harris and Wilbur Owens both bought residential property in the former Japantown, behind where their businesses were or had been, respectively at 195 Brook Street (formerly Eto Street) in 1952 for \$4,000 and 183 Brook Street in 1954 for \$3,750. Neither purchase involved a bank loan: the money was paid over time to Harry J. Dubin, attorney for Tameji Eto, who had subdivided the Nippon Tract in 1931. There is no documentation that Harris, Owens, or Annabelle Warren ever owned their own business premises.

Both Owens and Warren took out periodic chattel mortgages from the Mercantile Acceptance Company on the furniture and equipment of their businesses and on their personal furniture, Warren on one occasion from Cecil Evans, who had been granted power of attorney and joint tenancy in the lot that contained most of Japantown’s businesses by Yoshiko Tsutsumi in the run-up to internment. He was generally regarded in the postwar period as owning the property, but he may have been still acting for his client.

The repetition of the same items in multiple 12- or 14-month mortgages suggests these were cases not of buying furnishings on the installment plan but of taking out small loans for business purposes at ruinous rates—from the Mercantile Acceptance Company—of 2% to 2.5% per month. (Evans charged Warren only 5% per year for his chattel mortgage to her.)

Prevention of African Americans from accessing real estate bank loans or reasonably priced credit has a long history, extending from early FHA refusal to insure mortgages in or near Black neighborhoods or underwrite integrated housing projects in the mid twentieth century to steering minorities to high-interest loans in the housing bubble of the early twenty-first. Reliance on non-bank lenders was also the case in San Luis and contributed to the cost and risk of being a Black business owner and the postwar struggle of Black businesses.



Higuera Street looking west toward the Wineman Hotel in the distance from the corner of Court Street, with the sign for the Mercantile Acceptance Company in the foreground. History Center of San Luis Obispo County.

When Wilbur's Club closed, Wilbur Owens had to fall back on working as a janitor. Had he been able to access White credit and banking, would Owens have been able to stay in business? It was in this historic context, not long after the closure of The Sister's Inn, that Frank and Alberta Bell purchased the grocery at the corner of Carmel and High Streets in 1966. And for that, in an apparent historic first, they received two bank loans.

6. Historic Significance of Tiny Mart: Frank W. and Alberta Bell

The overriding problem with historic preservation in minority histories is whether any physical legacy exists at all, given that minority neighborhoods often are (a) owned by other people and (b) targets for urban renewal. San Luis Obispo's first Black neighborhood was, earlier, its first Japanese neighborhood. The Japanese were initially legally prevented from owning the land. Shortly after they acquired it, they were interned. Other minorities moved in, but the new occupants were largely denied the mechanisms for ownership, such as bank mortgages.

Hence what was once Japantown and later a vibrant African American business hub is now a soulless strip mall, Jiffy Lube, and parking lot. The houses on the street behind it, where the business owners lived, has been targeted for demolition by the City Council and Community Development Department, this being White San Luis's notion of developing community. That any Black business has survived from the Great Migration period is somewhat astounding and in the case of Tiny Mart is due to the fact that it was in a White neighborhood and the owner of the business was given the means to buy the property.

Why this should have been so is unclear. Frank and Alberta Bell acquired the grocery store at the corner of Carmel and High Streets in 1966, two years before the Fair Housing Act, and at any rate, it wasn't a house but a business. But where Black businesswomen and businessmen fifteen and twenty years before could only access high-interest chattel mortgages for businesses whose premises they didn't own, the Bells, who had been sharecroppers in Texas, received a \$2,800 loan from Bank of America and another from Security First National. This is, in essence, the story of the dog that did not bark—or the banks that did not balk.

As a result, the Bells became the first Black grocery owners in San Luis Obispo, the first Black owners of a business whose premises they also owned, and the owners of the last Great Migration-era Black business whose premises have survived: distinctions that give the Bells and their property historic significance. As expressed by National Register criteria, they are not merely persons who are members of "an identifiable profession, class, or social or ethnic group" but persons who have "gained importance within his or her profession or group" through two firsts and one last. It would be good to remember the Great Migration era of San Luis Obispo's Black business community through the cluster of The Sister's Inn, Annabelle's Café, and Wilbur's Club, but the Tiny Mart is all that survives.

Frank and Alberta Bell took over Tiny Mart at about the same age that Juvenal and Wilhelmina Da Silva retired from running it—and the Bells ran the grocery for thirteen more years, till Frank was in his mid and Alberta in her early seventies. They were the first of its seven owners to run it well past retirement age, and this in itself suggests the disparity in White and Black economic circumstances.

From Waco to San Luis Obispo How did the Great Migration bring the Bells to San Luis Obispo, when they had lived and worked their whole lives on farms in rural McLennan and Falls Counties in Central Texas? In 1951 McLennan County condemned a tract of land along the Brazos River where Texas Light and Power Company wanted to build a steam electric plant. Among the 17 defendants were 13 members of the Harrison family (3 of whom had moved to Philadelphia, Evanston, and Kansas City) and 2 members of the

Barfield family—who from early censuses appear to have been among the rare Black families to have owned their farmland—and Frank and Alberta Bell, who appear to have bought their land since the 1940 census, when they were still renters.¹⁸

The all-White condemnation commission appointed by the White judge to appraise the tract presumably awarded the Bells enough to relocate. But the salient fact was one defendant, Viola Harrison Barrett, was listed as living in San Luis Obispo. Here was a contact in the Great Migration, just like the Azoreans who had ended up in San Luis and paved the way for others.

A Frank W. Bell was hired by the County Board of Supervisors in 1959 as a janitor in the Building Custodial Department.¹⁹ This is likely Frank Willie Bell. A Frank Bell is listed in city directories as working as a janitor at various locations in San Luis during the 1950s, living at a rural route box number. The Bells purchased Tiny Mart from a rural route address outside San Luis, continued to live there for the next five years, then lived on and retired to 498 Mitchell Drive. Once they purchased the Tiny Mart, both Frank and Alberta were listed in the directory, and he was scrupulous about using his middle initial.

The Bells owned Tiny Mart for a generation and then retired, having left their impression and memories on their contemporary Black and also White community for their personability and graciousness. Their sons Frank and Ralph became entrepreneurs in San Luis Obispo and Santa Maria. In the half century since the Bells owned Tiny Mart, the people who remember them have largely disappeared and may, if they were White, have had little notion of the Bells' struggle to get to San Luis Obispo and their groundbreaking achievement in buying Tiny Mart and moving, at last, up the social and economic ladder.

Since 1980, California in general and San Luis Obispo in particular have become decreasingly proportionately Black. It is crucial that we preserve the physical evidence of the era when the Great Migration was dramatically changing California, preserve the struggles and successes of those generations, so that future generations (which will certainly be decreasingly White) will have a means to know and understand. The rationale underlying historic preservation is that we tend to remember the stories of people by what we see and to forget the stories of people whose physical evidence has been obliterated. If one picture is worth a thousand words, one building, one site is worth ten thousand.

18. "Condemnation Panel Named," *Waco News-Tribune*, 5 May 1951.

19. "Supervisors' Proceedings, No. 46," *Arroyo Grande Valley Herald-Recorder*, 6 Feb. 1959.

7. Period of Significance and Integrity

Period of Significance The architectural period of significance for Tiny Mart stretches from its construction in 1926 through its use primarily as a corner grocery until 1979. The historical period for Tiny Mart covers its ownership by Frank and Alberta Bell, 1966–1979. During the Bells' period, it was covered with asbestos siding, which preserved the original novelty siding and the hand painted Eskimo Pie sign. The bulk of the exterior materials and workmanship represent the earlier period; the location, design, setting, feeling, and association, both periods.

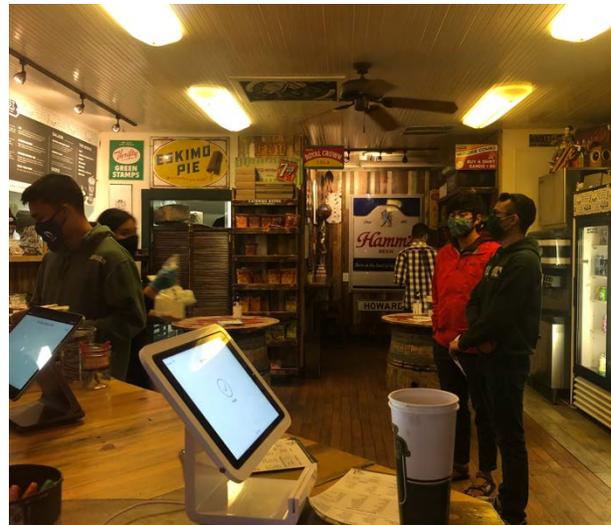
Integrity

Location Tiny Mart remains in its original location at the corner of Carmel and High Streets.

Design Tiny Mart retains its character-defining features of



Obtuse angle of footprint and false front



Interior with wood ceiling, walls, and floor

- a footprint comprising three right and two obtuse angles to fit the corner formed by Carmel Street, oriented to the wind-driven Spanish map, and High Street, oriented to the later American compass map
- Western False Front shop facade
- multi-paned plate glass shop front window, not floor to ceiling, shaded by a fabric awning
- small louvered ventilation windows flanking the shop window
- hand-painted advertising sign

Windows were added to Tiny Mart's short south-facing and southwest-facing walls between 1951 and 1979 to provide light and ventilation. These additions occurred during the period of significance.



Tiny Mart in 1951 from the air and today from the ground. Shop front window is the same length, windows were added to south and southwest facades but during period of significance. The Eskimo Pie mural has not yet been painted in 1951. Reversible signage has been painted on. Reversible ventilation equipment has been added to the roof.

Since the period of significance, COR-TEN steel accents have been added to exterior window frames and corner boards but are reversible and do not appear to detract from the structure's ability to communicate its significance.



Reversible CORE-TEN accents on frames and corner boards

Louvered ventilation windows

Setting The bungalow neighborhood surrounding Tiny Mart is little changed since the grocery's construction in 1926. Tiny Mart's neighboring grocery-operator's cottage still

stands, as do the next two cottages also built by Skiles. The houses that Skiles built on or moved to the block on Carmel and Islay are also standing and little altered, adding further context to the grocery. The predominantly Craftsman and occasional Minimal Traditional houses visible in all directions date from the grocery's earliest period, including the Foursquare Church complex on the triangle formed by High, Islay, and Carmel Streets as a result of the meeting of the Spanish and American grids. Streets retain the same configurations and width. Only a series of two-story apartments on Leff Street, replacing previous two-story apartments, are recent visible though not particularly near additions.

Materials Tiny Mart retains its original "novelty siding" from 1926 and apparently its original front windows, as well as window frames. Its Eskimo Pie sign has been restored on three occasions with flaking paint replaced. Tiny Mart also retains its period wood slat ceiling and other interior wood appointments, visible from the street.

Workmanship The workmanship, as the materials, are original.

Feeling Tiny Mart functions now as a deli but retains the combination of interior and exterior physical features that evoke its historic purpose as a corner grocery. Customers and passersby feel they are going back in time (an impression intensified by Doobie Coates' collection of period advertising ephemera).

Association Though Frank and Alberta Bell operated the store when its novelty siding and Eskimo Pie sign had been covered by asbestos, and though the name of the business has changed, its Western False Front design with plate glass view to the tiny and cozy interior, prominent and eccentrically-shaped Spanish-American corner configuration, and low-built bungalow setting retain the association with the first Black grocery owners in San Luis Obispo and era of the Great Migration.

8. Conclusion

Tiny Mart is eligible for the Master List for its architectural representation of a social milieu and period, association with historically significant pioneer African American business owners, and high degree of integrity that communicates its significance. Tiny Mart slightly rights the prejudice in historic preservation toward the substantial monuments of White history. It is also a rare opportunity in San Luis Obispo’s historic preservation to highlight local Black history to a new and receptive generation, where previous generations have demolished and continue to threaten the few physical landmarks of our minority histories by making them “non-conforming uses” to be “gradually phased out” in the name of profit and progress.

