

## Mrs. Carrie Striening

In the first half of the twentieth century, C.E. Striening was a familiar figure to many Salinas residents. Born in Mariposa, Caroline E. Miller came to Salinas when she was about eight or nine years old. Her father was George S. Miller, a Monterey County Auditor. At the age of twenty she married John M. Striening, a 29-year-old businessman from San Francisco in a ceremony held at the Salinas home of her parents. The *Salinas Weekly Index* reported the groom's brother, M.J. Striening, and the bride's intimate friend, Ollie Hamilton in attendance.

At this point we could ask if Ollie Hamilton was the Olive Hamilton from King City who moved to Salinas to attend secondary school and later became a teacher; the same Olive Hamilton who married John Ernst Steinbeck and became the mother of the author John Steinbeck, born in 1902? It seems a likely surmise.

After the wedding, and a honeymoon in Santa Cruz, the couple made their home in San Francisco. At least three daughters were born before John M. Striening died in 1902. Carrie Miller Striening then returned to Salinas, and the girl the *Index* called "accomplished" was again involved in Salinas town life as a member of such important groups as the Woman's Club and the Wanderers, of which Olive Hamilton Steinbeck was also a member.

It was, however, as the first librarian for the Salinas Public Library that Carrie Striening made an important contribution to the town's cultural history. Even before the imposing Carnegie Building was built on Main Street, she recorded in her June 3 report to Library Trustees that 400 people visited the public library room. And on a November afternoon in 1909, it was Carrie Striening who opened the doors of the new library building, where she would work until her retirement in 1936.

Following a short illness, she died at a local hospital on January 1, 1948, leaving three daughters, her brother, three grandchildren, and one great granddaughter. Her services were held at the Struve and Laporte funeral parlor before her burial in the Garden of Memories.

The *Salinas Californian* obituary for Carrie Striening acknowledges her familiarity to "hundreds of Salinas residents." Significantly, one of those early library patrons was Nobel Prize winning author John Steinbeck, who remained an inveterate reader and became an unforgettable writer.

### Sources:

[Salinas Public Library Commission Minutes]

*Salinas Weekly Index*, June 7, 1888

*Salinas Daily Index*, November 4, 1909

*Salinas Californian*, January 2, 1948