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NOTICIAS de NUEVA ALMADÉN

NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW ALMADEN
QUICKSILVER COUNTY PARK ASSOCIATION

Winter 2023

ISSUE 138

President's Message



Anniversaries are fun to celebrate. Birthdays, wedding anniversaries, high school reunions, or anniversaries of something personally significant - all are important markers in our lives that make us reflect on our past and plan for the future.



In 1983 the Washington Redskins won the Superbowl, the Baltimore Orioles won the World Series, and more importantly, a new park association was launched to support Almaden Quicksilver County Park and the communities of New Almaden and Santa Clara County.

This year, **NAQCPA celebrates its 40th year**, making it the longest existing association within the Santa Clara County Parks system. Many thanks to all of you who have supported NAQCPA along the way! While we have accomplished much in 40 years, we are not done. We look forward to providing ongoing support and park project development that will continue to make Almaden Quicksilver County Park one of the finest and most visited parks in Santa Clara County.

Tere Johnson
NAQCPA President
408-406-3001
terenaqcpa@gmail.com



Mike's Adventures From Down Under by Mike Cox

Once upon a time, before County Parks purchased the old Quicksilver mining property, it was possible to explore the vast network of mining tunnels and caverns below what is now Almaden Quicksilver County Park. NAQCPA Vice President, **Mike Cox**, and his brother, **Charles Cox**, were fortunate to spend much time exploring "down under."

Mike at New World stope, 800-foot level

Back in the late-1970s, my brother Charles and I were methodically exploring the New Almaden underground mine workings from the surface down. Abandoned mines are very dangerous. They are not playgrounds. My brother and I always approached the workings with a great deal of caution. We carried safety gear, lots of backup lighting, plenty of food and water, and devices to detect mine gases.

We were not there to drink beer and horse around. We were there for a purpose, mainly to take photos of what to us was a sacred place. We also would clean up modern trash. During the mine closure, I posted keep-out warning signs for dangerous areas, due to caving ground or poor air flow. We resented the casual trespass, vandalism, graffiti, and trash. I would scrape off modern graffiti and carry trash out of the mine or bury it, so it was out of sight.

The underground mine to us was the embodiment of the miner's work; "a temple in stone" as Jimmie Schneider called it. Some miners gave their lives unwillingly to the mountain that sometimes could prove to be "in a terrible mood," to quote James B. Randol. The hazards are many, and it takes training and specific knowledge and purpose to enter these spaces as safely as possible.

Reaching the Day Tunnel level was a big deal to us. The Day Tunnel was caved at the portal, so my brother and I had to find a way to get down there through accessible workings above the 800-level. This was not easy. I made this shirt to commemorate finally reaching an extension of the 800-level Day Tunnel in February 1979.

The Day Tunnel Club had three members. My brother and I were first. Ed Lewis, a good friend, was added after he went down there with me sometime later. Ed shook his head in disbelief after the trip, but he got a shirt anyway.



The name for the club is a bit of a misnomer as the Day Tunnel was flooded. Our explorations took us to the 800-level Santa Clara drift, an extension of the Day Tunnel under the San Francisco mining area to the southwest. The Santa Clara drift accessed the New World stope on the 800-level. The Day Tunnel officially ended at the Junction Shaft, downslope from the New World and completely under water. This shaft was used by the New Almaden Corporation in WW-II, but it was not timbered. By the time my brother and I started exploring, the shaft had caved in where it connected to workings 200-feet above the Day Tunnel. There was a danger sign posted at the now-caved shaft dating to the post war period, a good segue to safety concerns.

The last trips I made to the 800-level were during and after the mine closure project, to check the water level. Happily, the water level began to drop dramatically. The mine closure project redirected surface rainwater drainage that was getting into the mine. When my brother and I first got to the 800-level, we had to wade in chest deep water. Tunnels are sloped down to the portal, so that water drains out.



We located the mule barn on the Santa Clara drift near the New World stopes. Note the collapse caused by flooding. Without airflow mine air can become depleted of oxygen and can fill with CO₂ gas. Wetting and drying can cause cave-ins due to swelling and shrinking of clayey rocks.

Underground mule barn on the Santa Clara drift

The rapid decay of the now collapsing San Cristobal tunnel portal is due to the closure of one San Francisco area vent in 2005 or so, and the second in 2015 or so. The first had to be closed when the San Francisco open cut was filled to encapsulate mine waste from the park cleanup. The second was accidentally partially filled during some additional waste cleanup around 2015. The mine is likely decaying rapidly due to the lack of air flow.



Underground WW-II Powder Magazine

The layer of rock over the mine workings is thin in several places, as little as 15 feet. Some noteworthy examples are the Upper Cora Blanca workings, San Pedro workings near the San Cristobal tunnel, Juan Vega workings uphill of the English Camp school house ruins, Harry and Yellow Kid workings in several places, and the top of the Paull stope. The latter is the site of a roof collapse that was closed in 1984 and is now under many feet of mining waste fill encapsulated in the open cut. Perhaps one day one of these places will collapse to the surface and once again folks will peer into the darkness and wonder about the miners who once labored there.



The New Almaden Ting by Art Boudreault

Almost 100 years ago, an octagon pagoda, also referred to in Chinese as a "Ting," was washed away when the Los Alamitos creek breached its banks at the Casa Grande.

Gathering at the Ting (c. 1862 Carleton Watkins photograph)

Due to the excellent trading relationship in providing Mercury to China by Barron and Forbes, as well as mine manager, Henry Halleck, the emperor of China shipped the Ting to California as a gift to New Almaden.

A group of 30 Chinese laborers, led by the emperor's son, installed the Ting around 1858 behind the Casa Grande, which itself had just been completed in 1854. The roof of the Ting was supported by eight large redwood columns. According to legend, Chinese school children carved elaborate figures into these poles but given that the artistry of the poles are so intricate, the legend is unlikely to be true.

The Ting was moved several times throughout its time at the Casa Grande. Its last location was next to a small man-made lake behind the Casa Grande. Ultimately, the Los Alamitos creek, which fed the lake, overflowed its banks and washed the Ting downstream.

View of Casa Grande and Ting from the east side of the creek around 1863 (Carleton Watkins photograph)





The original eight Ting poles, in storage at the Casa Grande, being examined in 2017 by Friends of New Almaden Ting

The debris from the Ting, including the eight poles, found their way to the shore next to Southern Lumber Company in downtown San Jose. The company contacted **Connie Perham**, who had begun the New Almaden Museum. Her son salvaged what he could, and the eight poles became part of the structure of her museum at the Bulmore house in New Almaden. The poles and other Ting artifacts became the property of the Santa Clara Parks Department when the Parks Department purchased the museum from Connie in the 1980s.

Recently, NAQCPA Board Member, **Mike Boulland**, began a group called Friends of New Almaden Ting (FONAT) to research and preserve the Ting poles. Anyone interested in learning more about the Ting poles preservation project or FONAT can contact Mike at boullandmike@gmail.com or visit the FONAT website at <https://newalmadenting.wixsite.com/main>.



Volunteer Restores Historic Marker by Veronica Jordan

On a small piece of land that runs along the bank of the Arroyo de Los Alamitos Creek in New Almaden lies a small graveyard called the Hacienda Cemetery. It is thought to have been in existence since the earliest days of a cinnabar mining venture begun by the Baron Forbes Company in 1847.

With the nearest cemetery to the mine being nearly a day trip by wagon, the mine manager designated the land near the creek as a closer, final resting place for employees and all too often, their wives and young children. On the east side of this cemetery lies the grave of **Refugio Morántes**, who was no doubt, a miner's daughter.

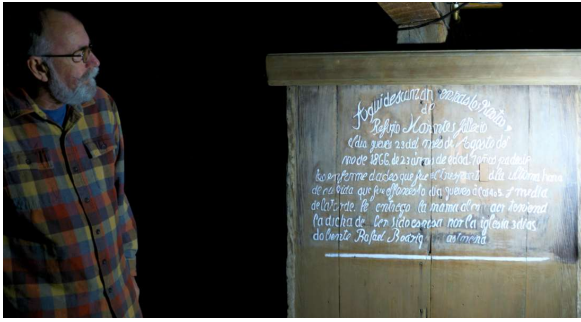
The Morántes marker is unusual; that it exists at all is significant. Almost all of the original headstones in Hacienda Cemetery are missing, lost to thieves and to the elements. What particularly draws the eye to Refugio's gravesite is the size of her marker. Standing four and a half feet, three feet wide, the wooden slab is three inches thick, and weighs 65 pounds. It is comprised of five pieces of lumber held together with square nails. The wood came from California old growth redwood, milled from trees that grew very slowly amongst others in a dense forest along the California coastline.

To someone who often visits cemeteries, the most unusual feature on the century and a half old marker is its inclusion of Refugio's obituary. Written in Spanish and painted on in white cursive, the marker describes Refugio's last day.

She was 23 years old and had been ill the last seven years of her life. With her mother at her side, Refugio died in the late afternoon of August 23, 1866.

Apparently, with no priest available to administer the last rites, when Refugio passed it was her mother who commended her soul to the Creator. Despite her long suffering, Refugio had happiness in the final days of her short life. Three days prior to her death, the inscription tells us, "She experienced the joy of being married in the Church to the grieving Rafael Rodríguez y Estorena."

Being as old as it is, these last few years the memorial was showing heavy signs of age. The edges of the redwood showed rot and the lettering had flaked off to the point it was almost unreadable. The fencing around the grave, the "crib," was rotting too. That is, it was, until someone decided to do something about it. And therein lies the true subject of our story: **Eric Johns**, who lives next door to the cemetery and considers it to be his neighbor who sometimes needs help.



Eric has given many hours of his time, especially since he retired, to the cemetery's restoration. The Pioneer's involvement began in 1974 when a member bought it at a property taxes default sale.

Eric Johns reviewing restoration work

There had been no involved owners for many years, or a new burial since the early 1920s when the surrounding houses were mostly vacant, and the old boneyard began to be vandalized.

Eric, a transplant from Whittier, California, moved along with his wife, Beth, to the Bay Area to begin a new career working in the mental health field. In 1995, after renting for a few years, Eric and Beth bought an historic house on Bertram Road in Almaden, with siding made from 100-year-old redwood wrapped logs and flooring from old growth Douglas fir. It is still rural in that deepest part of Almaden, densely wooded, with no sidewalks and plenty of wildlife including deer and wild turkeys.

Over the next 20 years, Eric completely renovated his house and property. By himself. Because, fortunately for all, his father was a carpenter and Eric began to learn wood working as a child. His particular skill is with hand tools; he likes building things and he also likes old things. In junior high, Eric created a "side hustle" where he and his friends would dig up bottles from underneath old houses and sell them to antique stores. He is an expert at aging old glass and old wood.



While some people might have passed on buying a house next to a cemetery, Eric "embraced it," he tells me. Eric grew up in the Quaker faith, which emphasizes helping neighbors in need. For Eric, the cemetery is "my neighbor." Its needs "blended well with my skills and interests. It is comprised mostly of wood, and it is antique." Seeing things that needed doing, with the encouragement of the Pioneers and as he had time, Eric put his time and skills to work for his "neighbor." His first project was recreating a wood marker for Roberto Berryessa, a 10-year-old descendent

Before photo of the Refugio cemetery marker



of the original land grantee for the Almaden Valley and the site of the cinnabar mine. Eric is very meticulous about the work he does. His standard requires that anything he works on looks as it did on the day it was made, that his restoration efforts use no modern tools or devices. Eric made the “new” marker for Roberto from an old growth redwood piece he found in the cemetery using hand tools only and painting the inscription by hand. To the Pioneers, Eric’s arrival in Almaden is as if the universe sent the exact young neighbor to move in next to an older one who needed help.

After photo of the Refugio cemetery marker

Eric, with his multiple skills, a fully outfitted workshop, tools, and yes, kindness, to take up a cause that in no way is his own, but he does it anyway simply because he cares. He tells me he wanted to fix Refugio’s crib and marker because he looks out on it from his kitchen window every day and its decline saddened him.

“Eric is a master woodworker,” says past Pioneer President Paul Bernal, “but beyond that he has the right nuanced sensibility to create the perfect marker for each of the lost souls that he donates his efforts towards. Whether it is the choice of vintage wood or the lettering, the end results are wonderful. The California Pioneers of Santa Clara County and the New Almaden Community are so fortunate to have the benefit of Eric’s keen skills.”

Eric added motion lighting to the edges of his property, which has reduced vandalism, and he keeps the Pioneers informed when the trees need trimming. He also provides storage for a couple of headstones that will be reinstalled in the coming year after Eric creates new bases for them.

On behalf of all of us who appreciate Santa Clara County history, thank you Eric for your contribution!

Many thanks to the California Pioneers of Santa Clara County for letting us borrow this wonderful article from their Trailblazer Journal. NAQCPA considers it a privilege to collaborate with fine historical organizations such as the Pioneers.

NAQCPA T-Shirts

NAQCPA T-Shirts that commemorate New Almaden and Pioneer Day are still available.

If you would like to order a shirt, send an email with your name and shirt size to naqcpa.newalmaden@gmail.com
Cost is \$20. We will follow up with you regarding payment and delivery/pickup arrangements.



Special Invitational Event – Dr. Weston J. Naef, The Photography of Carleton Watkins

NAQCPA Vice President, **Michael Cox** hosts an informal virtual **New Almaden History Discussion Group**, the second Tuesday of each month, from 7 pm until 8 pm via **Zoom**. The permanent link is: [Zoom Link](#); Meeting ID: 265 904 9681; Passcode: SCMGS2020.

Anyone interested in discussing New Almaden History is welcome to join. Email Michael at mercury.miner@gmail.com to be added to the discussion group email list.

Cox is delighted to announce that a VIP has agreed to make a presentation at the **March 14th meeting**, but the meeting will be at an earlier time, from **5:00 pm to 8:30 pm**, to accommodate this very special guest speaker. **Dr. Weston Naef** is a distinguished historical photography researcher, commentator, and the author of numerous books on historical fine art and landscape photography.



In his position as Curator at the Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles (1984-2008), Dr. Naef was one of the most important photography curators in the USA. Naef built the museum's photography department into a world-class facility. Dr. Naef will be providing a one-hour presentation regarding the photography of **Carleton Watkins**. Watkins was one of the most important U.S.

photographers of the second half of the 1800s. Watkins took many fine views of New Almaden and some of its people. Dr. Naef is a distinguished Watkins researcher and historian. It is very fortunate to have Dr. Naef's time and NAQCPA would like to see a good turnout for what will be a very interesting glimpse into 19th Century photography of western places and people.

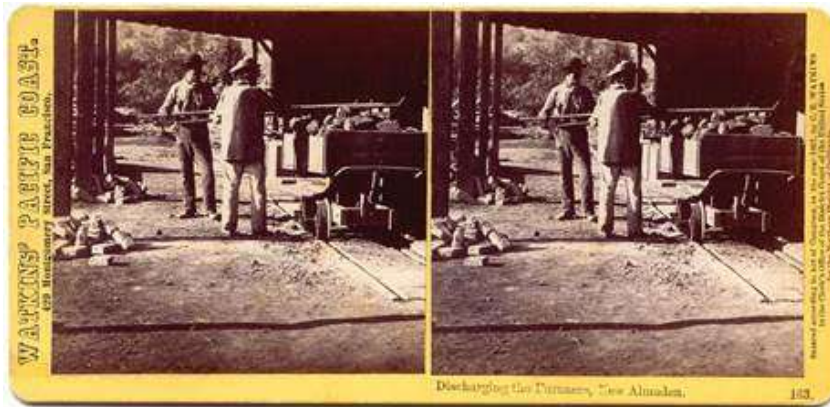


Photo credits:
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Discharging the
Furnaces at New
Almaden, stereograph
by Carleton Watkins,
1863



Past Newsletter Gems

As we celebrate our 40th anniversary, we will begin republishing interesting articles from the past. Look for more newsletter gems from our master archivist, **Ron Horii**.

Here are some excerpts from NAQCPA's first newsletter:



QUICKSILVER COUNTY PARK NEWS

Newsletter of the New Almaden Quicksilver County Park Association

ISSUE #1

April 1983

QUICKSILVER PARK - A VERY SPECIAL PLACE

Almaden Quicksilver County Park is a very special place. Within its boundaries are found a unique combination of historical, recreational, and natural resources.

The main purpose of the recently-formed New Almaden Quicksilver County Park Association is to work with the County Parks Department and other community organizations who share our concern for the Park and its resources to help the Park reach its full potential as one of the County's finest parks.

We hope to serve as a focal point for encouraging and facilitating community involvement in projects and activities that will benefit the Park, such as assisting the County Parks Department in the development and maintenance of recreational facilities, restoring and maintaining historical sites and facilities, and establishing and operating interpretive programs at the Park, to name just a few.

We sincerely welcome your suggestions and involvement in the activities of the Association.

Kitty Monahan, President
New Almaden Quicksilver County Park Association

GOALS OF THE ASSOCIATION

The goals of the New Almaden Quicksilver County Park Association are:

1. To increase public awareness, understanding, and enjoyment of the historical, recreational, biological, and geological resources of Almaden Quicksilver County Park.
2. To encourage and facilitate community involvement in:
 - a. The development, maintenance, and protection of recreational facilities within the Park,
 - b. The commemoration, restoration, interpretation, and protection of historical resources within the Park,
 - c. The interpretation, management, and protection of natural resources within the Park
 - d. The establishment and operation of interpretive programs and facilities within the Park.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS ELECTED

The first Board of Directors for the New Almaden Quicksilver County Park Association was elected at an Association organizing meeting held on February 22, 1983. The Board reflects the wide variety of resources and interests associated with the Park, including hiking, running, horseback riding, history, and natural resources.

The members of the Board are Kitty Monahan (President), Dick Forst (Vice-President), Nancy Mason (Recording Secretary), Bob Clement (Corresponding Secretary), Scott Denham (Treasurer), Fred Celsi, Mike Cox, Kay Carmody, Steve Lorenz, Dutch Mapes, and Peggy Melbourne.

The County Parks and Recreation Commission has appointed Karen Wilson as its representative on the Association Board of Directors, while the County Historic Heritage Commission has appointed Kendrea Justice-March as its representative. The County Parks Director will be designating a member of his staff to serve as liaison between the Association and the Parks Department.

In addition to the Board of Directors, the Association is establishing an Advisory Board composed of persons with special skills and expertise that will be needed for various projects and activities undertaken by the Association.

Join the NAQCPA Family

NAQCPA is the oldest park association in Santa Clara County. Established in 1983, NAQCPA exists to promote the protection and enhancement of the historical, recreational, and natural resources of Almaden Quicksilver County Park.



Membership fees and donations help subsidize our Quarterly Newsletter, annual Pioneer Day, and many special projects we undertake throughout the year to enhance Almaden Quicksilver County Park for generations to come.

The COVID pandemic impacted our ability to communicate with our members and track membership dues. For those who have not renewed their NAQCPA membership in the last year, we would greatly appreciate your renewal fee of \$15. Fees collected in the remainder of this year will go towards your membership through all of 2023.

You have the option to contribute online: [Online Giving](#) or click the button below to access a form you can print and mail with your contribution check:

Membership and Donations



Spanish Town Descendants Project

NAQCPA is collaborating with the [La Raza Historical Society](#) to locate and celebrate descendants of Spanish Town,

Spanish Town, New Almaden, c. 1880s

a former mining community at the New Almaden Mine. Similarly, we are interested in locating descendants of the Indigenous People's (the area's *first* miners). Please contact **Tere Johnson** at terenaqcpa@gmail.com or 408-406-3001 if you have Mexican/Spanish or Indigenous ancestral ties to New Almaden.

Historic Mural Looking for a Good Home

Many will recognize this iconic mural from the old Feed and Fuel restaurant (a former stage stop between San Jose and New Almaden). Sadly, Feed and Fuel is gone but the mural was saved by a gentleman who is looking for a good home for it, preferably in a local, public location where it can be appreciated again.

Contact **Tere Johnson** at terenaqcpa@gmail.com or 408-406-3001 if you have any ideas or suggestions.



Volunteers Wanted

Have you ever wanted to be part of something people will enjoy for generations to come? Consider joining our team of dedicated volunteers. Click link for additional information: [Volunteer Poster](#)



- Santa Clara County Parks Events: [Parks Upcoming Events](#)
- Carleton Watkins presentation by Dr. Weston Naef: Tuesday, March 14th at 5:00 pm (see details in above)

Contact Us:

New Almaden Quicksilver County Park Association

A California 501(c)3 Corporation

P.O. Box 124

New Almaden, CA 95042

Phone: (408) 406-3001

Email: naqcpa.newalmaden@gmail.com

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NAQCPA | PO Box 124, New Almaden, CA 95042-0124

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