



# QUICKSILVER COUNTY PARK NEWS

Newsletter of the New Almaden Quicksilver County Park Association

WINTER 2003

ISSUE 70

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We have many projects underway this year.

- 1.) Our wildflower book is ready for publication, but we haven't found a printer, yet.
- 2.) Our archive collection needs help in cataloguing and arranging our modern day NAQCPA photos into acid free folders.
- 3.) By the end of this month, February, we should have the "adopt a trail" program worked out with the County Parks and we would be the first group to adopt. If you could help, our trail is the Deep Gulch trail in AQ.
- 4.) Pioneer Day will be at the Senador Mine this year, October 11, 2003. If you have any information on this mine, we will be working on the interpretive sign, beginning now.
- 5.) The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors will be discussing the Options for the Casa Grande improvements. We favor option 1 which preserves the building and its attachments. This is the #1 method of preservation according to the National Historic Landmarks. The Parks Department prefers option #2 which is the second way of improving an Historic structure, by removing any structures that appeared after 1920. We could use the Opry House for classes, meetings of the Parks Dept., lectures etc. The cost of tearing it down is the same as fixing it to code. Your Association could help in the refurbishing of the Opry House to its original look in 1927. If you have a chance to come to the Board Meeting, March 25, 9:30 am at 70 West Hedding, it would impress the Supervisors to vote for option #1.

Please contact me, (408) 268-6541 for further information on any of the above items for this 2003 year.

KITTY

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## Dr. Arthur Cecil Todd, Pioneering Scholar, Friend of New Almaden, Dies at 93

By Gage McKinney

Dr. Arthur Cecil Todd, author of one of the best accounts of New Almaden, died in Warwickshire, England on November 24. He was 93.

In about 1960 Dr. Todd first visited New Almaden in the company of Laurence Bulmore, son of the last manager of the Quicksilver Mining Company. At the time Dr. Todd was a Fulbright Fellow and visiting lecturer at the University of California, Berkeley, who had come to America to study the migration of miners from Cornwall.

Dr. Todd studied history with attention to individual lives, and thus shaped the way that others have looked at the great European migration of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His pioneering research into the Cornish migration helped to spark a movement that has led to the formation of about 20 Cornish organizations across America. He helped to establish the name of New Almaden in Cornwall and England as a place of great historical significance.

Dr. Todd was born in 1909 and was educated at the Loughborough Grammar School and the University of Nottingham. In 1958 he received a doctorate from the University of London. He attributed his early interest in scholarship to his father's encouragement.

Dr. Todd began his groundbreaking research about 1947 when he arrived in Cornwall to teach extension courses for Exeter University. "Although he was an academic," remembered Helen Derrington, who attended the courses, "he mixed very easily with his students." During these classes, Dr. Todd learned that most of adult students had relatives in America, or had been there themselves. As he became excited by the implications, his classes became more exchanges than lectures.

Research that began in the classroom continued outside. He established a vast correspondence with Cornish descendants across America, including a librarian in Oakland, a doctor in Madison, and the daughter of a Methodist bishop in Philadelphia. Even today scholars are gleaning information from his correspondence, now collected at the Courtney Library, Royal Institute of Cornwall, Truro.

In the 1950s Dr. Todd learned of the New Almaden mine, and wrote to the City of San Jose

for information. City Hall forwarded the letter to historian Clyde Arbuckle, and thus began an enduring friendship. Dr. Todd was a regular guest in Clyde and Helen Arbuckle's Willow Glen home during the rest of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



L to R: Gage McKinney, Moira Tangye, Ilka Weber, Dr. Cecil Todd, September, 1993

After twenty years of research, Dr. Todd's *The Cornish Miner in America* appeared in 1967. (A second edition, by Arthur Clark Company, Spokane, appeared in 1995; a third edition is planned). The book's description of life at the New Almaden mine combines lyricism with hard fact:

*In the eighteenth century, when the sick body of imperial Spain lay dying in Europe, its soul went marching on to the shores of the Pacific to preside over the religion and the culture of a new world. Almost a hundred years later yet another link was forged between the old and the new, but his time one of rare and precious metal. New Spain belonged to the era of seamen and conquistadors; New Almaden to the age of furnaces white hot in the service of man.*

During his academic career, Dr. Todd was a visiting professor in Arizona, South Africa and Hong Kong, as well as in California. He published several other books, including *The Search for Silver* (1977), an account of Cornish miners in Mexico, and *Ever Westward the Land* (1986), an account of a Cornish family's migration to Puget Sound. His books are available from the San Jose Public Library, through interlibrary loan, and from used book dealers. The New Almaden Museum has copies of most of them.

Dr. Todd's last teaching assignment was with international students at Coventry Cathedral. He was an honorary member of the Society of California Pioneers. He was made a Cornish bard in 1968, taking the name *Covathor Kernowyon Tramor* (Chronicler of Cornishmen Overseas). In 1993 he was keynote speaker at the Cornish American Heritage Society gathering in Sacramento.

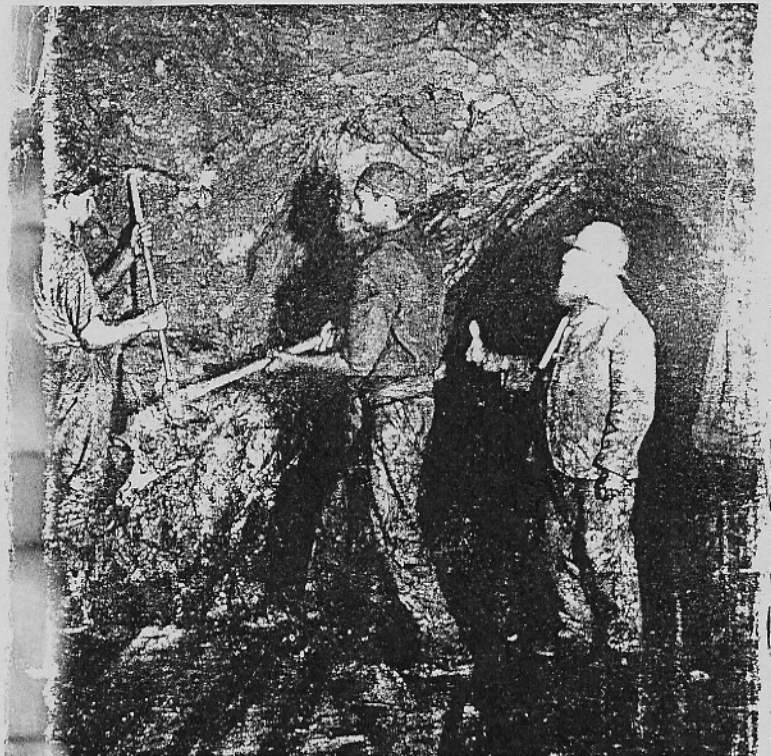
On his last visit to New Almaden, about 1996, NAQCPA held a potluck dinner in Dr. Todd's honor at the New Almaden Community Center. The attendees included Clyde and Helen Arbuckle and Connie Perham, all now deceased. After hearing himself praised, Dr. Todd spoke briefly, talking about his early visits to the area. He mentioned his friends Laurence Bulmore and Jimmy Schneider. He went on to say, "I have

always considered myself one of Clyde Arbuckle's students."

Even in his advanced years, Dr. Todd kept up with developments at New Almaden. An avid reader of the NAQCPA newsletter, he often responded with letters to president Kitty Monahan. He displayed a sample of New Almaden cinnabar in his home. Shortly before his death he learned that NAQCPA had placed a brick with his name inscribed at the entrance to the Community Club. He was pleased and joked, "I've always wanted to be 'a brick.'"

In recent years many scholars from Cornwall have followed Dr. Todd to New Almaden. They include Moira Tangye, director of the Cornish-American Connection, a research project sponsored by the County of Cornwall and Exeter University; Professor Philip Payton, director of the Institute of Cornish Studies; Sharron Schwartz, a scholar studying the Cornish migration to Latin America; Ann Trevenen Jenkin, former Grand Bard of Cornwall; and Alan Kent, a literary scholar and poet.

Late in life Todd often quoted a line from T. S. Eliot: "Old men ought to be explorers." He was a scholar and student to the end. He survived a brother who died in World War II, his wife, Edna, and his only daughter. He is survived by grandchildren, great grandchildren, and nieces and nephews in England and America.



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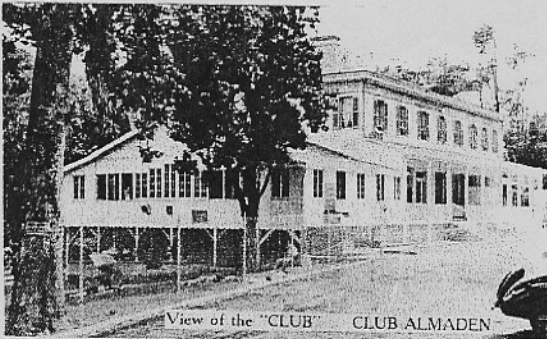
## OPRY HOUSE THREATENED

By Art Boudreault

Director of and Archivist for the NAQCPA

As printed in the *Almaden Times*, Feb 2003, VOL 17, NO. 2

The historic Opry House theater, attached to the most significant historical structure in Santa Clara County, the Casa Grande, is being threatened for destruction by the Santa Clara County Parks Department.



*Casa Grande with Club Almaden, the dance club, where the Opry played. About 1940.*

The Parks department presented two options for restoring the Casa Grande at the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting of October 22, 2002. As quoted from the Parks and Recreation Commission minutes, Option # 1, "proposes to leave the existing footprint and all appurtenant structures developed during the life of the building". Option # 2, favored by the Parks department "proposes to restore the building to the period of 'historical significance' which would restore the building to its configuration during the Mine Manager's residency (1890 - 1900), requiring the removal of the Opry House and bar."

The New Almaden Community Association and the New Almaden Quicksilver County Parks Association

are in favor of Option # 1 because that option preserves a significant part of New Almaden history. In hearings before the County Historic Commission and before the Parks and Recreation commission, members of the community offered their reasons to preserve the Opry house theater. Both commissions voted with a majority of those present to support Option # 1.

The Parks Department continues to favor Option #2. The County Board of Supervisors will consider this plan at their meeting at 9:00 AM on March 25<sup>th</sup> at their regular board meeting at the County Building, 70 West Hedding St. Kitty Monahan, President of the New Almaden Quicksilver Parks Association (NAQCPA) said, "We in the Almaden area need to let the supervisors know that Option # 1 is the right solution towards preserving this historic building."

The New Almaden Quicksilver Mining Museum is currently housed at the Casa Grande at 21350 Almaden Road (408)-323-1107. The Parks Department intends to improve the structure itself and the community is excited that the building will be preserved in a meaningful way. This includes replacing the plaster over the deteriorating exterior bricks, placing original style windows on the third floor, adding an additional staircase to the third floor and many other structural and beautification efforts to show us how the mine managers lived in our community throughout the late 1800's and early

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1900's. These efforts are supported by hundreds of photographs, drawings and descriptions available today in the museum's archives.

The New Almaden Quicksilver Mining Museum is currently used by thousands of school children each year to learn about a significant part of California's mining history. When watching these children sit on the floor of the museum, the interpreters and docents often wish that the Opry House theater addition could be used for this purpose.

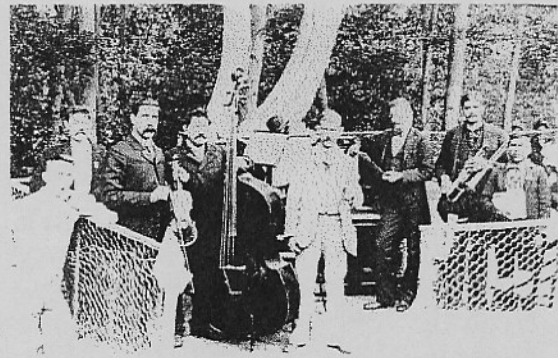
A few words about why the Casa Grande and Opry House theater are historically significant. Construction of the Casa Grande began in 1854 and was intended to be a hotel. As soon as Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton Halleck, (granddaughter of Alexander Hamilton, first U.S Secretary of the Treasury) arrived from New York, she prevailed on her husband to consider this magnificent structure as their own home. As President of the New Almaden Quicksilver Mining Company, Mr. Henry Halleck had the power to make this home "the Mine Manager's Home". Henry Halleck, a West Point graduate, was called into the War between the States. He soon became a Lieutenant General and Abraham Lincoln's Chief of Staff.



*A women's garden party at the Casa Grande in 1890*

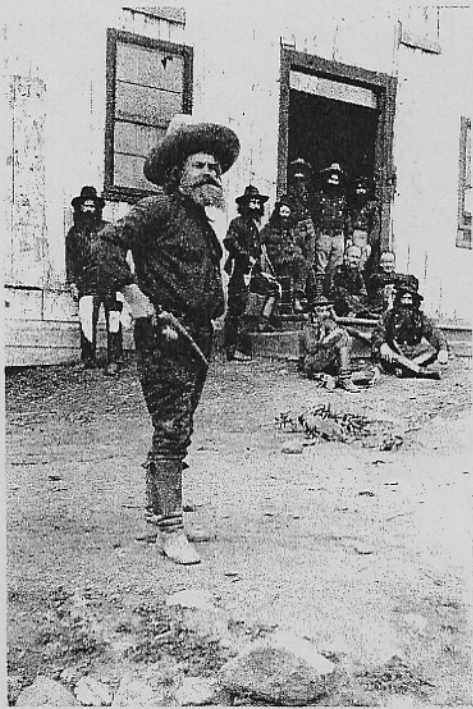
The Casa Grande was the center of high society in New Almaden, providing entertainment to many well-known dignitaries, including an emissary of the Emperor of China. Garden parties and musical entertainment continued at the Casa Grande throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Theater entertainment was also important to the New Almaden community since those earliest times.



*The Hacienda Orchestra at the Casa Grande outdoor stage. About 1895*

There are records that the Mexican workers set up a theater in 1854 on mine hill. Later, the Mining Company built two "Helping Hand" Clubs, one on mine hill and the other at the Hacienda. These were used to present plays by and for mine workers and their families. Both churches, the original St Anthony's Catholic church at Mexican Camp and the Methodist-Episcopalian church at English Camp were used for religious pageants, the most famous of them being the "Colgante de Judas" (Hanging of Judas). (All of these structures are now gone.)



*About 1890. A group of Englishtown miners in preparation for a 'Hard Time' party." Capt. James Harry, Mine Manager in foreground.*

When the Black brothers became owners of the Casa Grande, Ben Black wrote a famous song of the 1930's, "Moonlight and Roses", on the dance floor they had added to the side of the Casa Grande. Built around 1925, this dance floor was quickly enclosed and the large open room was used as a theater. Eventually, actors at the Opry house delivered old-time melodramas for many years. Only two years ago did their lease run out. The theater addition to the Casa Grande is almost 80 years old and is certainly historic in nature. This Opry House is the last theater structure in New Almaden to survive the ravages of time.

The Casa Grande and Opry House in New Almaden received public recognition as documented in the

Historic American Building Survey (HABS) conducted by the Federal Government in 1936. Our predecessors nominated New Almaden as part of the Historic Landmark District in 1958 and was the first Historic Landmark District awarded that status by the U. S. Department of the Interior in 1964. It became part of the Santa Clara County's New Almaden Historic District #1 in 1974, and added to the National Register of Historic Places.

How can a theater be used? At the Mining museum, there are many videos, slide shows and other audio-visual presentations that cannot be watched by large groups of visitors. The volunteers, many technologically advanced, are constantly presenting ideas on how to develop interactive displays that would take our visitors "back in time". There is no other place in the Casa Grande building that is available for these entertaining and educational activities. Currently the museum has several unopened roomsful and 20-foot-trailersful of artifacts and maps, some of which could be added to the theater itself to allow visitors a more complete museum experience.

The cost to remove the Opry house theater is reported to be about the same as the cost of renovating it. It seems wasteful of our taxpayers and grant funds to remove an obviously historic building when it could be placed into service so easily and inexpensively. You can reach our county supervisors, Blanca Alvarado, Chairperson, Jim Beall, Don Gage, Liz Kniss and Pete McHugh at the County Building, 70 West Hedding St. San Jose, CA 95110.

**NEW RELEASE !**

29 pages

\$2.00 at the Museum

*California's Best Kept Secret*  
**NEW ALMADEN**

*Yesterday and Today - From Mining to Fun!*



**Craig MacDonald**

[left marginal note]

No.38.

[body]

New Almaden Febry. 27<sup>th</sup> 1865.

S.F. Butterworth Esq.

Dear Sir

Mr. Hawley returned from the City this day, and informed me you wished the gray horse sent in town. Edwin will take him to San José in the morning, and bring the bay horse back with him also the pony if he can lead it.

I have written Mr. Auzerais in reference to the ground rent on which stands two large buildings on the Hill. I have charged him \$20. per month for each house, and I think it quite small rent at that. They are doing a large business and can well afford to pay ground rent.

I meet but with little difficulty in arranging the rents, and hope to be able tomorrow to get the most important ones settled.

Mr. Brown our Policeman is out of danger from his wound. I sent the carriage to Enriqueta and brought him home today. I need some firearms in this Office very much, so that we could lay hands on them at any moment.

I shall pay the Hacienda Pay-Roll off on Saturday the 4<sup>th</sup> inst. and shall require \$5,000.

very respectfully

N.D. Arnot

Supt

[the above letter written in a hand other than Arnot's, but signed by him]

050-100



*In our summer issue, #68, Art Boudreault asked for typists to copy the letters from this wonderful book of letters to Sam Butterworth. The response was fantastic. These are now completed and in the computer archives. Thanks to all those who had a great time reading and copying the letters. Here is a sample.*



No 98.

New Almaden febr. 27<sup>th</sup> 185.

S. F. Butterworth Esq.

Dear Sir!

Mr. Howley returned from the City this day, and informed me you wished the Gray Horse sent in town. Edwin will take him to San Jose in the morning, and bring the Bay horse back with him also the Pony if he can lead it.

I have written Mr. Angerai in reference to the ground rent on which stands two large Buildings on the Hill. I have charged him \$20. per month for each house, and I think it quite small rent at that. They are doing a large business and can well afford to pay ground rent.

I meet but with little difficulty in arranging the rents, and hope to be able to morrow to get the most important ones settled.

Mr. Brown our Policeman is out of danger from his wound, I sent the Carriage to Chiqueta and brought him home to day. I need some fire arms in this Office very much, so that we could lay hands on them at any moment - I shall play the Stanisova Day - Roll off on Saturday the 4<sup>th</sup> inst. and shall require \$5,000.

very respectfully  
W. D. Smith  
Jr

050-100

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Elements of Military Art and Science  
(article by R.Lawrence Comstock)

Elements of Military Art and Science was first published by Henry Halleck in 1849, based on lectures he gave in 1846 to the Lowell Institute in Boston. The second edition was published in 1862 and the title page for this book is reproduced here. The Contents are also reproduced here and it is seen that all topics relevant to defensive and offensive war are discussed. The second edition included material on the Mexican American War and the Crimean War (Britain and France versus Russia fought on the Crimean Peninsula on the Black Sea). Henry Halleck was the first General Manager of the New Almaden Company (1850-1860). Halleck submitted the revised draft of the second edition in New York to his publisher D. Appleton and Company in 1859. It is reasonable to assume that he worked on this material during the time he was General Manager in New Almaden, perhaps writing part of the text in the Mine Manager's office at a desk not unlike the one we have in the museum today. This book was read by many professional and volunteer officers (on both sides of the Civil War) but also by Abraham Lincoln. The book established Halleck as an authority on all matters concerning the military and was a contributor to his selection by President Lincoln as General in Chief of the Army during the Civil War. One interesting sidelight to this edition is Halleck's discussion of a report on the Crimean War by an American officer he identified as "Captain McClelland". This officer was misidentified and was George McClellan, who was Halleck's first superior during the first year of the Civil War. Halleck replaced McClellan as General in Chief. The book is rare and I recently discovered that the library at the Command and General Staff School (CGSS) had scanned the book and it can be seen on the following web site: [www-cgsc.army.mil/carl/resources/books.asp](http://www-cgsc.army.mil/carl/resources/books.asp). It is very probable that Dwight Eisenhower also read this book since he was very familiar with Halleck and attended the CGSS.

I also reproduce here the obituary of Henry Halleck published in the New York Times. No information was given of his family, but after his death his wife Elizabeth married Halleck's chief staff officer George Washington Cullum in 1876. Elizabeth was the granddaughter of Alexander Hamilton and the sister of Schuyler Hamilton, who had been Halleck's roommate at West Point. Elizabeth died in 1884 in Newport, Rhode Island.

ELEMENTS  
OF  
MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE:  
OR,  
COURSE OF INSTRUCTION  
IN  
STRATEGY, FORTIFICATION, TACTICS OF BATTLES, &c

EMBRACING  
THE DUTIES OF STAFF, INFANTRY, CAVALRY,  
ARTILLERY, AND ENGINEERS.  
ADAPTED TO THE USE OF  
VOLUNTEERS AND MILITIA.  
THIRD EDITION.  
WITH CRITICAL NOTES ON THE MEXICAN AND CRIMEAN WARS.  
BY  
H. WAGER HALLECK, A. M.,  
MAJOR GENERAL, U. S. A.

NEW YORK:  
D. APPLETON & COMPANY,  
443 & 445 BROADWAY.  
LONDON: 16 LITTLE BRITAIN.  
1862.

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OBITUARY

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Major-General Henry W. Halleck.

Gen. HALLECK died at his residence, in Louisville, at 8:25 o'clock last evening, of congestion of the brain, superinduced by disease of the liver, with which he had been afflicted for some time.

HENRY WAGER HALLECK was born at Westernville, near Utica, N.Y., in the year 1816. His early education was very slight, and it was by hard study for a brief term at Union College that he prepared himself for admittance to the United States Military Academy at West Point, which occurred in 1835. Young HALLECK soon distinguished himself at the Academy, and graduated third in 1839 in a class of thirty-one, being appointed Brevet Second Lieutenant of Engineers. So well grounded was he in this branch of the service that HALLECK held the position of Assistant Professor of Engineering at the Academy until June, 1840. From 1841 to 1844 he was employed by the Government on the fortifications in New-York Harbor, in repairing Fort Wood, Bedloe's Island, and works on Governor's Island. He visited Europe in 1845, by order of the War Department, for the purpose of examining the principal military establishments of the chief countries. On his return to the United States in the Winter of 1845 he delivered a series of lectures before the Lowell Institute of Boston, on the "Science of War." His success in this endeavor led HALLECK to publish a volume entitled "The Elements of Military Art and Science," with an introductory chapter on the "Justifiableness of War." On Jan. 1, 1845, he was commissioned a First Lieutenant of Engineers, and during the following Summer proceeded to California and the Pacific coast on active service. The outbreak of the Mexican war found him still on the Pacific coast, and he remained in active civil and military service during all the campaigns under SCOTT and TAYLOR. For gallant conduct at the affairs of Palas Prietas and Urias, Nov. 18 and 19, 1847, he was brevetted a Captain, having attained the grade of First Lieutenant in 1845; and he subsequently greatly distinguished himself at San Antonio and Todos Santos, having at the former place with a few mounted volunteers, with whom he made a forced march of 120 miles in twenty-eight hours, surprised a Mexican garrison of several hundred men, and nearly succeeded in capturing the Governor. He also acted on the

Henry Wager

Halleck

1816 - 1872



from the New York  
Times  
January 10, 1872  
page 1.

staff of Commodore SHUBRICK in the naval and military operations on the Pacific coast in 1847-48, and in that capacity participated in the capture of Mazatlan, of which place he was made Lieutenant-Governor. He was Secretary of State of the province of California, under the military Governments of Gens. MASON and RILEY, from 1847 to December, 1849 and during the same period acted as Auditor of the public revenue. He held a seat in the Convention which met in 1849 to adopt a state Constitution, and as a member of the Drafting Committee had a large share in the preparation of that instrument. Between 1850 and 1854 he discharged the duties of Judge Advocate and inspector of light-houses; and in the latter year, having then attained the rank of Captain of Engineers, he resigned his commission and commenced the practice of law in San Francisco. For many years he was the senior partner of one of the largest law firms in California, and was also Director-General of the New-Almaden quicksilver mines. Soon after the breaking out of the civil war he was appointed a Major-General in the United States Army, his commission bearing date Aug. 17, 1861; and in November he succeeded FREMONT in the command of the Western Department, fixing his head-quarters at St. Louis.

In April, 1862, having directed the campaign in the South-west from his permanent head-quarters since the preceeding February, he assumed command of the army before Corinth, the investment of which place he conducted to a successful issue. The disastrous ending of the campaign of the Chickahominy having suggested to the President the appointment of a person of large military experience to reside in Washington and there direct the movements of the various Generals in the field, he was on July 11 appointed General-in-Chief of all the land forces of the United States, and on the 15th of the month entered upon his new duties. He soon afterward visited MCCLELLAN's army at Harrison's Landing on the James River, and upon returning to Washington ordered the advance of Gen. POPE toward the Rapidan, under cover of which MCCLELLAN was enabled to retire down the Peninsula, unmolested, to Yorktown. In addition to the publication already mentioned, Gen. HALLECK has produced a *Practical Treatise on Bitumen and its Uses*, a *Report on Military Defenses*; translations of the *Mining Laws of Spain and Mexico*, and *De Fooz on the Laws of Mines*, and a treatise entitled *International Law and the Laws of War*, (1861.)

POSTMASTERS and POSTMISTRESSES [1]

FROM	TO	PERSON	COMMENTS
July 5, 1861	Dec 31, 1861	John C. Brodie	[2] at General Store
1862	1873		Post Office Discontinued
Dec 23, 1873		Ralph Lowe	
Jan 26, 1874		Ferdinand Fiedler	
Jan 9, 1878		Ralph Lowe	
Oct 6, 1885		George Carson	
Oct 29, 1903		Maynard H. Harms	
Dec 6, 1905		Jefferson F. Tatham	
Oct 10, 1911		John W. Dubois	
Jan 27, 1913		Charles H. Barross	
Aug 7, 1913		Susan J. Peters	
Jan 20, 1915		Charles P. Stewart	
Aug 3, 1916		Fred P. Hauck	
Apr 11, 1920	1921	Angus C. Breckenridge	
1921	1933		Post Office Discontinued
Dec 21, 1933		Mrs. Frank E. Thompson	At Hacienda Min'g Office
Jan 30, 1935		Frank Pfeiffer	Assumed Position
Mar 28, 1935			Acting; at General Store
Apr 29, 1935	Apr, 1937		Confirmed
Apr 9, 1937		Mrs. Florence Pfeiffer	Assumed Position
May 4, 1937			Acting
May 6, 1937	Oct, 1940		Confirmed
Oct 1, 1940		Mrs. Gladis Cannon	Assumed Position
Nov 19, 1940			Acting; Across street
May 24, 1941	Aug, 1956		Confirmed
Aug 10, 1956		Mrs. Gertrude Linehan	Assumed Position
Aug 15, 1956	May, 1960		Acting
May 27, 1960		Constance B. Perham	Assumed Position
June 9, 1960			Acting; Bulmore House
May 25, 1961	Dec, 1963		Confirmed
Jan 3, 1964		Norman Pope	Acting;
Oct 15, 1965			Confirmed At Casa Grande
1970	Feb 1973		General Store (Burned)
Feb 1973	1974	Norman Pope	Portable Unit
1974	1977	Agnes Yuseff	Interim
1977	Sep 1989	Agnes Yuseff	New Building next to Casa Grande
1989	1995	Beverly Adams	
1995		Mary Ball	

NOTES:

[1] Original list from Connie Perham labeled M 270 – New Almaden

[2] Source: Mine Letters

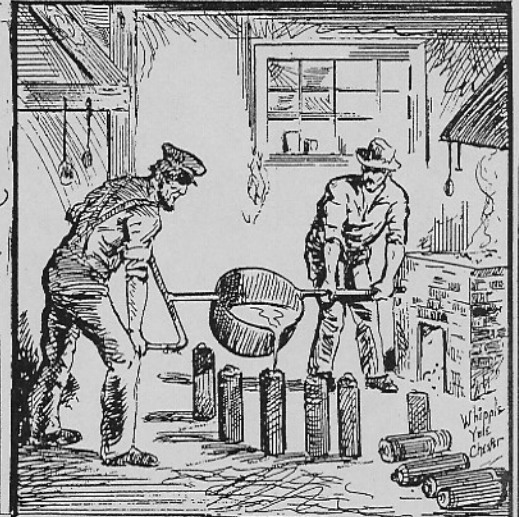
Printed on February 10, 2003



† Commemorating †  
 the  
 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
**U.S. POST OFFICE**  
**NEW ALMADEN, CALIF.**  
**JULY 5, 1961**

1861  
 1961

First Mining  
 Community  
 in North America  
*Constance Perham*  
 P.M.



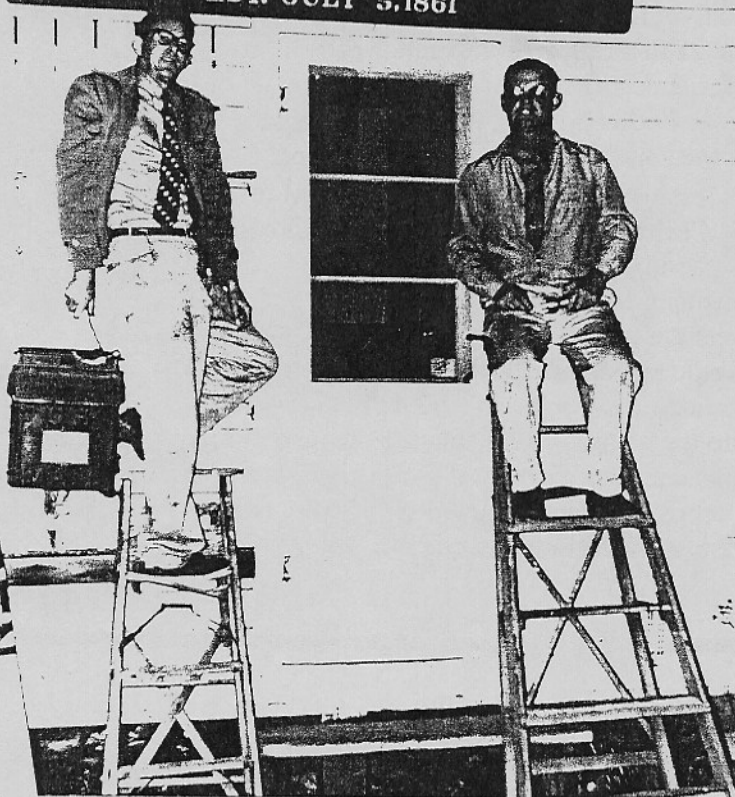
"Quicksilver"  
 Discovery, 1845  
 NEARLY  
 \$100,000,000.00  
 PRODUCTION and it  
 STILL CONTINUES

Sponsored by San Jose Stamp Club and  
 Greater San Jose, Calif.  
 Chamber of Commerce  
 ★ THE ALL-AMERICA CITY ★

APS  
 CHAPTER  
 264

"Jimmie" Schneider (left) and Don Fields  
 putting up the new Post Office sign in  
 New Almaden, December, 1953

**NEW ALMADEN POST OFFICE**  
 EST. JULY 5, 1861



POST  
 AT  
 NEW ALMADEN  
 OFFICE



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PIONEER DAY 2002  
KEYNOTE SPEAKER: RUSSELL PEARCE  
BUENA VISTA SHAFT HOUSE : NEW ALMADEN

We are here today at the site of the Buena Vista shaft to dedicate an interpretive sign, one of several that have been placed in and around this park in the last several years.

A.C. Todd in his book 'The Cornish Miner in America' likened these remains "a granite fortress of Spanish origin with emplacements for guns to repel the ubiquitous Elizabethan seaman". They bare a strong similarity to the abandoned Coast Artillery emplacements that are on either side of the Golden Gate. Both illusions share one thing in common with this site –the danger of water.

A ship is said to flounder when in deep water it is overwhelmed by the sea. The maritime illusion is very similar to the situation that existed at New Almaden when a new shaft the Garfield, was projected on the Western side of Mine hill.

The original ore bodies had been followed along the course of two fissure systems. One was east of the Randol shaft, which was continuous from the 800 to the 1900 ft. level. The other was on the west side of the Randol shaft and was worked from the 1400 to the 2000 ft. level. The western fissure system extends from the summit of Mine hill toward the Santa Isabel shaft down to the 2000 ft. level. Explorations from the Buena Vista shaft would prove or disprove if the ore was below the 2000.

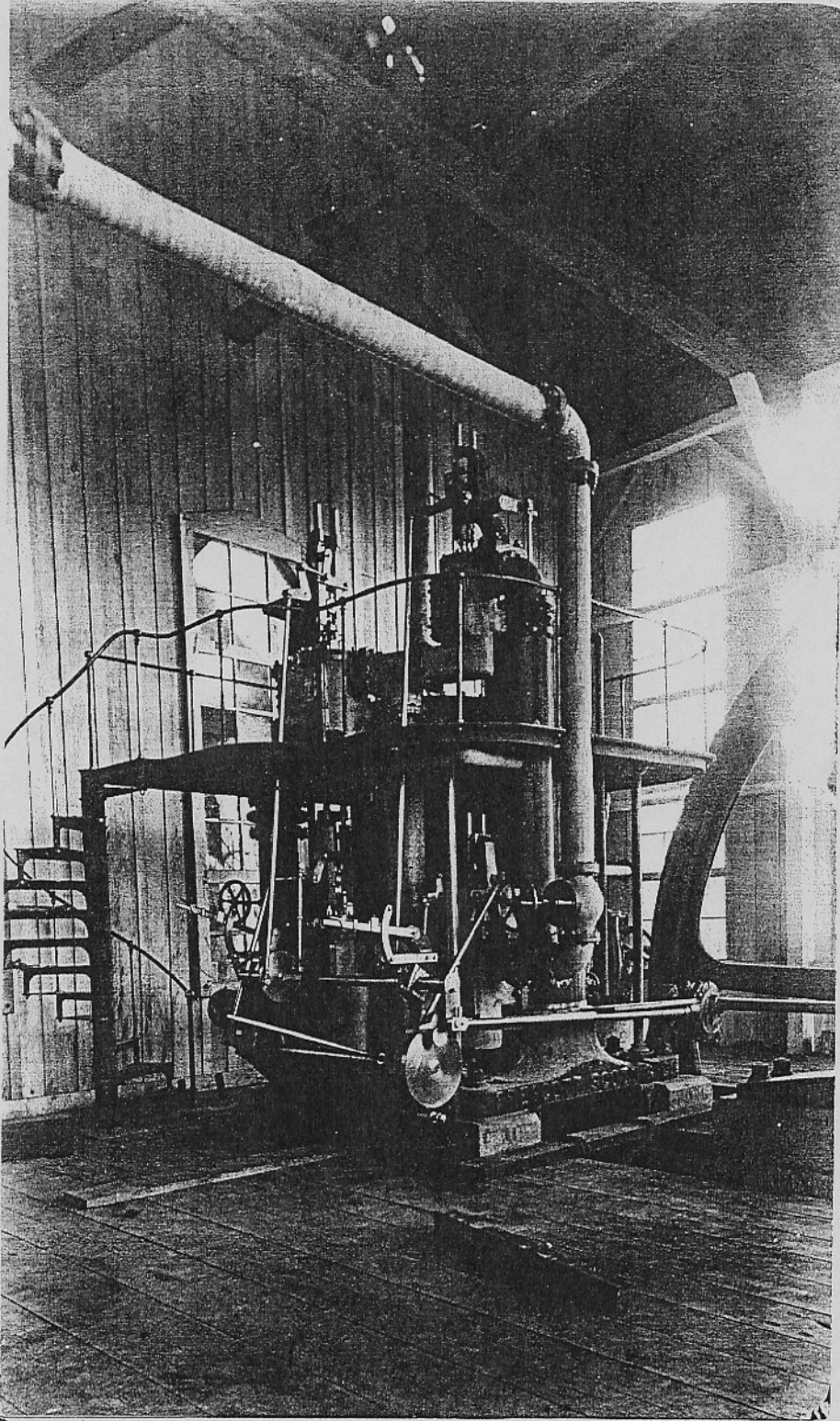
The fissure system just described was based on the work of George Becker in his 'Quicksilver Deposit of the Pacific Slope'. Becker's work done here in the 1880's reflected the beliefs of both the practical miners' experience and the mine's management.

These illustrations from Becker's Atlas, based on the mine's working maps, show the course of the worked ore bodies.

Before I leave the discussion of the fissure system I want to quote from Prof. Samuel B. Christy of the University of California.

Christy first came to the mine in 1875 and was an advisor to the management. His testimony during the 1887 Contested Election sets the stage for today's events. " Quicksilver deposits as a general rule are very different from those of ore of other metals. Many other metals occur in well defined fissure systems, so there is no difficulty in following the ore, and in many cases calculating beforehand the amount of ore in sight, but with the exception of the deposit at the old Almaden in Spain, and to some extent the deposit at the Idria in Austria, the quicksilver





Pumping Engine  
Buena Vista Shaft  
New Almaden 1883

*Souvenir*

315 Santa Clara Street,  
SAN JOSE, CAL.

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deposits in California, are characterized by a great and persistent irregularity so that it makes the mining of these ores much more difficult than that of other metals. New Alamden is a striking example of this irregularity. ....very frequently large bodies of ore will almost completely run out, and there will be visible in the face of the works only a slight coloration in the vein matter, which indicates that there is any ore left in that particular place, and by following out this little string of ore very carefully it may lead into a large deposit. As a result of this the working of the mine are necessarily very irregular, and it requires the greatest skill of the engineer in charge of the works to keep up a regular and steady output of ore. Many times in the past history of the mine, the prospecting work has not been carried on on a sufficient scale, and this largely accounts for some of the irregularities of production of the mine in former times. I have noticed a steady improvement in the carrying out of prospecting work, which is necessarily very expensive and requires the greatest judgment on the part of the very person in charge of the work."

The person in charge of this work was James B. Randol, Manager of the mine.

Knowing that the future of the mine depended on the continued discovery of new ore bodies, he would complete a ring of shafts around the hill. Starting with the Garfield in November 1881, the Buena Vista in July 1882, the Santa Rita in December 1884, the America in October 1885 and the St. George in December 1886, the miners would drift, sink and prospect 86,180.04 ft., roughly 16 1/3 miles by 1889.

In addition to the payroll it would require an enormous amount of machinery and consumable materials. Unlike the great mines of the Comstock at Virginia City, who assessed the shareholders to pay these same expenses when there was no ore and consequently no money in the company's treasury, this mine was run on the principal that only profits could finance development. That this mine showed a profit during the 1880's is to J.B.Randol's credit.

We know that the heavy machinery that was erected at this shaft had been ordered for the Garfield Shaft. We know that the contract with Prescott, Scott & Co., W.W. Bailey, and the Quicksilver Mining Co. for the pumping engine is written for the Garfield shaft; why then are we here instead of on the other side of the hill at the Garfield site? If we could find the Garfield shaft site we would be lucky. Never was a shaft in a more unsuitable position than the Garfield. The ground is very unstable and after three major dislocations was finally abandoned. When it was operated it was done so with much lighter equipment.



DICK PEARCE IN FRONT OF KNIGHTOWN BARN  
CIRCA 1905

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## The Buena Vista Shaft.

Alec Innes who was here when this shaft was first started wrote 'there was nothing to indicate at the time, nor was there afterwards, the remotest warrant for locating the Buena Vista shaft on the spot where it was sunk. True, it presented a majestic appearance from the valley, which perhaps is one of the reasons for placing there. In that respect it resembled the Methodist Church on the hill, which occupied an exposed position at Mr. Randol's request; not that it was more convenient or conducive to better service, but solely that it might be seen. Unfortunately that comprised about all the credit the costly Buena Vista shaft could justly claim. It could be seen!'

To be fair, Judge Innes was writing about the Achilles heel of the mine at the time-the Randol shaft, and he was writing from hindsight.

It could be seen! The name Buena Vista; good view or grand view if you like had been used for early mine workings located between the Upper Velasco and the top of Mine hill. The Good Templar's Lodge which met in the basement of the Methodist Church on the Hill was organized April 2, 1883 was named 'Grand View'. If we look over the valley below today we know the name is appropriate.

### Shaft Construction

Asst. Supt. Frank Rice (later famed artilleryman Major Frank Rice) reported on Jan. 15 1883 that the following had been accomplished in 1882:

June 29<sup>th</sup> The first prospect holes for sinking were started.

July 5<sup>th</sup> Shaft sinking began and continued until Dec 24<sup>th</sup> when the shaft was 324 1/2 ft. deep.

July 27<sup>th</sup> Excavation for the foundation began.

June 14<sup>th</sup> Work at the quarry on Jacques Ridge, getting out stone for the foundation commenced.

November 11<sup>th</sup> Stone cutting terminated.

November 27<sup>th</sup> Rock hauling terminated.

December 15<sup>th</sup>. Stone masonry, brick laying and boiler setting terminated.

(cont. next issue Spring #71)



A new exhibit has been installed at the Museum depicting the Ohlone Indians, who lived in our hills. The exhibit features a copy of the mural that is on the underpass of the Los Gatos Creek Trail. In addition, other artifacts displayed include, cinnabar, abalone, a reed duck decoy and obsidian. John Slenter, park interpreter, designed this beautiful display.



NEW ALMADEN  
QUICKSILVER COUNTY  
PARK ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 124, New Almaden, CA 95042

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Membership: new \_\_\_\_\_ renewal \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (area code: \_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Dues: \$10 per year per household, tax deductible \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Additional tax deductible contribution \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Checks may be made payable to "Quicksilver Park Assn."



NEW ALMADEN  
QUICKSILVER COUNTY  
PARK ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 124, New Almaden, CA 95042

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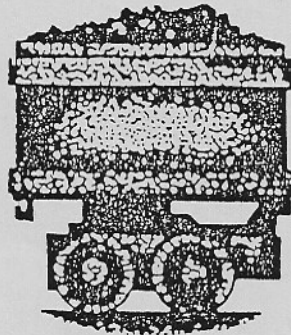
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NEW ALMADEN  
QUICKSILVER

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