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**Winter 2026 ISSUE 144**

## **President's Message - Michael Cox**

Hello, my name is Michael Cox and I am delighted to be the 2026 President of the New Almaden Quicksilver County Park Association (NAQCPA, pronounced “nah ka-pa”). I look forward to working with the NAQCPA Board of Directors in service to the public, the members of NAQCPA, the County of Santa Clara, and the many people that descend from New Almaden miners.

Your NAQCPA Directors were elected by the general membership at the annual holiday gathering on December 14, 2025. On January 17, 2026, the Directors elected the officers for NAQCPA. The current names and positions are as follows:

**Directors:** Mike Boulland, Charles Cox, Michael Cox, Ron Horii, Veronica Jordan, Scot Hayes, and Richard Williams

**President:** Michael Cox

**Vice President:** Scot Hayes

**Secretary:** Veronica Jordan, Pro Tem

**Treasurer:** Veronica Jordan, Pro Tem

**Sunshine:** Shari Sullivan

The foresight to form a park association came from Don Weden, a county master planner assigned to create Quicksilver County Park from the old mine property, and the late Kitty Monahan, a New Almaden enthusiast and unofficial Mayor of the village. On February 1, 1983, three-dozen park association supporters met at Forbes Mill Museum in Los Gatos and voted to establish NAQCPA. The seed organization included folks from all walks of life

and user groups such as hikers, runners, bikers, educators, historians, biologists, birders, mining history enthusiasts, and more. The partnership with county parks was immediate and worked to great effect.



*Don Weden 2022, Pioneer Day,  
Photo by Ron Horii*



*Kitty Monahan at the Wood  
Road Trail Dedication, 2004,  
Photo by Ron Horii*

NAQCPA began offering park tours and lectures to other organizations regarding the park and its mining history. With parks and county planning, we prepared a master plan for the park and designed a new interpretive center. We secured funding to purchase the collection of Constance Perham, who established the original New Almaden Mining Museum in 1949. We created an annual event called Pioneer Days to bring together remaining miners and descendants to share stories and celebrate the rich natural and social history of New Almaden.

The first NAQCPA newsletter was issued in April 1983. By December formal articles of incorporation and bylaws had been drawn up and were ratified by the board of directors on December 19, 1983. Ratified documents were submitted to the state. On June 19, 1984, the California Secretary of State endorsed and filed NAQCPA's charter documents. Looking back, it is amazing how much has been accomplished by dedicated volunteers and donors working in partnership with the county.

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*Sign-in Sheet for the Inaugural  
NAQCPA Meeting, February 1,  
1983, Mike Cox Photo*

Today we are blessed with a gorgeous park that includes world-class interpretive resources and opportunities. With the help of our generous volunteers and donors, I and our board of directors hope to continue the proud traditions of NACQPA. My immediate goals, in no order of priority, are to fill out a strong board of directors, increase membership, reestablish ties with park user groups and organizations, support park activities, and strengthen the association's relationship with county parks. Please join with us to help carry on the work.

## **NAQCPA and New Almaden Needs You!**

NAQCPA needs a robust board of directors and project committees to thrive. We appeal to our good members and general public to step forward if you might be able to serve the association, parks, and the public in some way. Currently, NAQCPA has critical needs for a secretary to record minutes, a treasurer to keep the books, and people willing to work on outreach to other park user groups to strengthen communications and mutual work. If you are interested please email [info@naqcpa.com](mailto:info@naqcpa.com)

New Almaden is home to what is likely the oldest continually operated mercury mining museum in the world. Although officially called a museum, I prefer interpretive center. The word museum suggests preserving materials

from the past, but an interpretive center suggests learning and understanding in the present for the future. Constance Perham, in 1949, founded the original and privately-owned New Almaden Mercury Mining Museum. This took a lot of work over the years. Financially, the private museum was always a precarious venture. None the less, with a constant stream of donors and students (like me) willing to volunteer their time, Connie persevered. Educating primary school students was always central to Connie's work.

When Connie retired in 1983, the newly organized park association stepped in. NAQCPA refurbished and operated Connie's private museum until the Casa Grande was purchased by the county in 1997. To relocate and build up the new museum, NAQCPA worked with the county to raise funds, collect artifact donations, supply volunteers, and organize the Casa Grande space and displays.



*Original New Almaden Mercury  
Mining Museum, 1970s Postcard*

On July 3, 1998, the interpretive center was officially opened. Adjacent to the interpretive center was Almaden Quicksilver County Park, acquired in a series of transactions starting in 1972. The park is 4,163 acres of former mining lands with over 37 miles of hiking trails, 30 miles of equestrian trails, and 16 miles of biking trails. Together the park and Casa Grande are an incredible world-class public recreation and educational resource just a stone's throw from San Jose.



*Casa Grande Interpretive  
Center, Prior to Restoration,  
circa 1999*

Creating this resource required hundreds of people, hundreds of thousands of hours of cumulative work, and millions of dollars. Sustaining it is just as demanding, if not more so, and that is why NAQCPA needs you. The legacy of New Almaden has always hung in the balance between human labor and the unavoidable decay of physical things over time. Constance Perham would tell people to remember that humans come to the Earth with nothing and leave with nothing. We are just caretakers. Our responsibility is to pass on purpose and opportunity for a rich and productive life, a life of pride regarding what came before and what will be tomorrow.



*Casa Grande After Restoration, Nov. 11,  
2010, Ron Horii Photo*

As with any enterprise, continuing is not guaranteed unless people have a shared vision and pursue it with dedication and vigor. Even then, success is not guaranteed, but that is not a reason to not even try. NAQCPA is a fitting tribute to California's first mining community, among the world's most significant mines in terms of its place in world history. The association was created to support county parks efforts to develop and preserve Almaden

Quicksilver County Park, and to promote public awareness of and appreciation for the land, its people, the mine, and its past and future. In its time, NAQCPA has accomplished so much.

## Remembering Gillian Altieri

Ronald Horii



Long-time New Almaden and NAQCPA supporter and member, multi-talented artist and musician Gillian Altieri succumbed to metastatic cancer on January 30, 2026. Above Gillian is with a likeness of Kitty Monahan she painted for the outdoor mining display at the Hacienda park entrance (Ron Horii, photo, 2022). Gillian had kept the disease at bay for over twenty years with cheerful work and generous contributions. If you've been to the Casa Grande, you've seen her art hanging on the walls. She painted the portraits of the mine managers hanging in the sales room and the painting of the Casa Grande over the fireplace. She also led the San Jose Ukelele Club, which performed at past Pioneer Day events. Gillian will be greatly missed and fondly remembered. She was a good friend to NAQCPA's late founder, Kitty Monahan. Altieri's obituary can be read at this link: <https://www.mercurynews.com/obituaries/gillian-altieri-san-jose-ca/>. If any readers knew Gillian and have fond memories to relate, please email them to [info@naqcpa.org](mailto:info@naqcpa.org)

## Play Like a Miner

Ronald Horii

Over the years, one of the most popular interpretive events at the Almaden Quicksilver Mining Museum (Casa Grande) has been "Play Like a Miner" or PLAM for short. The earliest pictures I have of the event are from 2011. It was organized by Park Interpreter and long-time NAQCPA member John

Slenter. The idea was for kids to learn what it was like to be a miner, while having fun doing it.

The early PLAM's were held in the parking lot in front of the Casa Grande. There were only three outdoor activities. One was an ore-car maze, where the kids were challenged to see who could push an ore car around a track drawn with chalk in the parking lot and in the shortest amount of time. Another was an ore car mucking challenge, where the kids would compete to see who could fill an ore car the fastest (actually tanbark in place of ore). The most popular activity was gold panning. It was organized by the Santa Clara Valley Chapter of United Prospectors. They built wooden troughs, which they filled with sand, water, and "gold" for the kids to find by panning. The United Prospectors donated the troughs to County Parks, and they are still used today. There was also a scavenger hunt, where kids would look for items in the museum exhibits.



*Panning for Treasure! PLAM  
2025. Ron Horii Photo.*

In 2012 and 2013, PLAM was essentially the same, except that different volunteers staged and ran it. I don't have pictures for 2014 and 2015. In 2016, PLAM had been moved from the parking lot to the picnic area behind the Casa Grande, where is roomier and tree-shaded, a welcome feature in an Almaden summer. This configuration has been used ever since; however, it was no longer possible to create the ore car maze.

Moving PLAM to the larger space in the picnic area and on the back lawn, made many more activities possible, including tin punching, letter making

crafts, wood toy making, as well as allowing for more display tables. On the lawn, former surveyor John Atwood demonstrated for kids on how to use a surveyor's transit to measure distance. The Northern California Geological Society had a booth showing rocks and minerals, including the California state rock, serpentinite. Collector Tobin Gillman showed historically significant antique bottles. In the following year, he had an elixir-making activity. Master woodworker Jim Beseau and his wife Kathy Kessler had a woodworking demo and handed out craft kits for kids. In later years, they had an ore-car-making craft activity.



*The late John Atwood Talking About Surveying at PLAM 2017. Ron Horii Photo.*

Inside the Casa Grande, there were demonstrations of lacemaking and cloth weaving with looms. Docents led tours and talked about museum exhibits. Docent Doug Bergtholdt sat at the mine manager's desk, portraying manager James B. Randol. "JB" passed out stock certificates for the Quicksilver Mining Company (which went bankrupt in 1912). Instead of a contest, kids were given a booklet for each of the stations and received a stamp when they visited it. When they got stamps for all the stations, they got a prize.



*Working At The Loom, PLAM 2025  
Ron Horii Photo*

The gold panning started by the United Prospectors continued as the most popular activity and is still featured today. It evolved into gem, mineral, and fossil panning, so now there are many things to find in the troughs besides faux gold [Editor's note: when United Prospectors came, they brought actual gold bearing sand, albeit the gold flakes were very tiny, so it was decided to switch to gem stones instead.] The treasures include quartz, amethyst, topaz, arrowheads, pyrite, and fossils, along with some gold-painted rocks. The troughs were at different heights, so young children, older children, and even teens and adults could participate. It became so popular that in later years, tickets were handed out to limit the amount of time that the kids could spend at the troughs. Otherwise, some wanted to spend all day there.



*Play Like A Miner Treasures, 2023*

*Ron Horii Photo.*

Initially at PLAM, there were two blacksmith demonstrations. One used an actual portable forge operated by real-life blacksmith Tom Laman. He used it to demonstrate metalworking. Fire safety restrictions have prevented the live forge from appearing in recent years. The other demonstration was in the re-created blacksmith shop next to the Casa Grande. Originally a carriage garage, it was converted into a blacksmith shop featuring an antique forge and other equipment. In front was a tool for applying steel tires to wooden wagon wheels. Volunteers built a small, simulated mine opening, with an ore car and tracks. They also built a working model of a Cornish water pump, like those used to pump water out of mines in the 1800s.

Chuck Ferrier, a New Almaden native, typically manned the blacksmith shop. He became a machinist and a blacksmith [Editor's note: a good choice given that a blacksmith that tends to horseshoeing is also known as a farrier]. He gave talks and showed historic pictures of blacksmithing and trains. Starting in 2018, NAQCPA volunteers built a temporary simulated mine tunnel around the outside of the blacksmith shop, using wood and plastic sheeting, with mining pictures taped to the walls. They led guided flashlight tours through the tunnel. For the past two years, park staff have built a temporary mine tunnel downstairs in the Casa Grande.



*Blacksmith's Shop, PLAM 2025*

*Ron Horii Photo.*

PLAM has continued over the years, including this year, with minor variations. Live music has been added. There are old-time kids' games, like pin the tail on the burro, beanbag throw, yoyo, pick-up sticks, and ring toss. The lawn has been used for playing croquet. Different vendors have provided food and desserts. Before the Covid outbreak, there was face-painting. PLAM was suspended in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic but resumed in 2022. Other exhibitors have included the Santa Clara County Library, History San Jose, the San Jose Dukes vintage baseball team, the La Raza Historical Society, and the San Francisco Bay Wildlife Society. PLAM grew in popularity over the years and is now the largest interpretive event at the Casa Grande. In 2025, the event attracted about 400 visitors.

## **New Almaden Vignette by Dick Barrett**



Richard "Dick" Barrett was a writer for the San Jose News from 1928 until retirement in 1977. Dick passed away February 20, 2005. He is best known for his column that ran from 1954 until his retirement in 1977. He wrote about politics, local history, people and events. Dick took a particular interest in New Almaden and with contributions of source material from former miners, he published lots of anecdotal stories about life at the mines up on the Hill. Here is a great story he related.

Arthur Fisk, editor of the Pioneer Society's "Trailblazer," has been kind enough to send along a letter he received from Mrs. Emma Mitchell Cougle of Woodland with additional color on New Almaden:

"I was born at New Almaden, Oct. 2, 1878," Mrs. Cougle writes. I remember my childhood there although my parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Mitchell, left there early in 1888. I have an album of pictures from 1886-87 of all the main mines and places there which I prize very highly. We lived in English camp and a mile away on the hillside was Spanish camp with its own burying ground. The English people brought their dead to Oak Hill Cemetery. It took a whole day to make the trip - 15 miles - and they usually stayed overnight at the Russ House at First and San Antonio streets. Across First Street from the hotel was the post office (where the Baghdad store is now).

How well I remember the tinkle bells on the teams that carried the ore to the smelter at Hacienda. The stage was our means of conveyance and burros were used for hauling wood, etc., strapped on each side of the burro in a chair-like holder. Across from the company store was the town water tank. We were obliged to buy at the store, otherwise the eye of Ralph Lowe spotted us and a pink slip appeared in the paycheck if it continued. Pay was in 'belettas' [boletas] and good only at the store. Should you wish money you paid 10 per cent for it.



*Boleta from the  
company store.*

A large company boarding house was right in town and widowed women with families were 'given' boarders from the hotel. Homes could be built on

company land for \$1.00 a year rental. Houses were built on both sides of the store for personnel, the doctor and some bosses. Our home was the last one on one side of the store. My father was boss of the Mexicans who filled the wagons with ore as it came out of the tunnel. My grandfather, Nicholas Grey, had the job before he passed away.

Dr. Miller was there before Dr. Hall and each man had \$1.00 taken out of his pay for the Fourth of July barbecue and party, and \$1.00 for the Christmas tree and gift for each child. The party was held in Helping Hand Hall. The company took the credit, but the men paid for it. A bag of candy and nuts, a red apple and an orange. My last gift was a book of poems which I still own.

The pastor of the Methodist Church was F. B. Hopkins, father of Dr. Mark Hopkins. He baptized my sister Lillie and me, also married me in 1899 to George W. Cogle. We were friends to his last day. Before Dr. Hopkins was Dr. Trefren. I still have a lock of her blonde hair in a locket with the first grey hair I found in my father's curly hair.

I well remember when Polly Jacka was married to Johnny Edwards and at the dancing party Polly fell and never fully recovered. And when Susie (Mrs. Gilman) was born, Polly passed away soon after.

My teachers were Lillie Miller, Maude Crichton (Dr. Curnow's wife), and Miss Overfelt and the principal was Judge Lighthall.

Christmas season brought parties. Many dressed in costumes and visited all the homes singing carols. Each home had its table set with such goodies. All week this took place and how I remember the saffron cake, fruit cake, seed cake and raisin and currant cake, all frosted and covered with tiny candies."

Mrs. Cogle also has some reminiscences about San Jose which are of interest, including one about the flood of 1889. This was the winter when San Jose received an all-time record rainfall of 30.30 inches. How many of you have memories of that? Let's stick to that season for the present and leave out the boating on W. Santa Clara Street in 1911.

## **Lunar New Year Celebration at Casa Grande**

Ron Horii, long time NAQCPA board member and incredible volunteer photographic documentarian of parklands and park-related events took photos of the Lunar New Year celebration at the Casa Grande on February 15, 2026 from 11 am to 3:30 pm. You can find Ron's photos with captions on Facebook at this link: <https://www.facebook.com/media/set?vanity=ronald.horii&set=a.26180294174900757>



*SJSU Vietnamese Student Association's Lion Dance at the Casa Grande, 2026. Photo by Michael Cox*

It's the Year of the Horse, and the new year celebrations are a time for reflection and for socializing with friends and family. From Wikipedia: "Chinese New Year, also known as the Spring Festival, marks the beginning of a new year on the traditional lunisolar Chinese calendar. It is one of the most important holidays in Chinese culture and was placed on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list in 2024. Marking the end of winter and the beginning of spring, this festival takes place from Chinese New Year's Eve (the evening preceding the first day of the year) to the Lantern Festival, held on the 15th day of the year. The first day of the Chinese New Year falls on the new moon that appears between 21 January and 20 February."

## **Casa Grande and Park Happenings**

Colter Cook, Program Coordinator  
Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation

### **Volunteer Shout Out**

Huge thanks to all of the volunteers who helped with Casa Grande's Lunar New Year Event on February 15, 2026. With crafts, display tables, lion dancers, and an attendance of 88 people, we needed all the help we could get! NAQCPA showed up in full force and helped ensure fun for all!

### **New Exhibit at Casa Grande**

Have you ever visited the historic community of New Almaden or the Casa Grande in South San José? Do you have fond memories of the Opry House or Club Almaden back in the day? We want to hear from you! Please take a moment to fill out this survey: [Club Almaden- Opry House Survey](#).

We're developing a new exhibit for the Almaden Quicksilver Mining Museum and want to capture all the memories, stories, and photos you are willing to share. If you have any questions or feedback, contact the museum at (408) 918 - 7770 or email [interp@prk.sccgov.org](mailto:interp@prk.sccgov.org)

### **Park Resources**

To find out what's happening across parks, here are a few ways:

Visit [parkhere.org](http://parkhere.org) and explore the parks.

Visit the **Parks Calendar** for upcoming events. Or [sign up for the eNewsletter](#).

Visit the [Parks Volunteer website](#) to see how you can get involved!

### **Upcoming Programs:**

#### **Wildflower Walk**

*Calero County Park,*

***Sunday, March 15, 2026, 10 am – 11 am***

Come enjoy the wonderful world of wildflowers on a short, Park Interpreter led hike through Calero County Park. Enjoy the colorful landscapes while learning about the importance of flowers in our local habitats. Space is limited, so please [click here to sign up](#). Suitable for families and ages 7+.

#### **Sanborn History Hike**

*Sanborn County Park, Saturday,*

***March 28, 2026, 10 am – 12 pm***

How has the value of land evolved across generations? Join a Park Interpreter at Sanborn County Park to explore how different cultures shaped and valued the land that now makes the park. This strenuous 2-mile hike leaves from the Sequoia Peterson parking lot near the main entrance. Reservations open October 1st. [Click here to sign up](#).

#### **Crafternoons at Casa Grande**

*Almaden Quicksilver Mining Museum at Casa Grande,*

***Every Saturday and Sunday in March 12 – 4 pm***

Looking for free family-friendly crafts to do in the South Bay Area? Look no further than Almaden Quicksilver County Park's Mining Museum at Casa Grande! Every month we offer a new and exciting crafternoon from 12 pm-4 pm. This month create your very own standing wildflower!

#### **Quicksilver Mining Museum Group Tours**

*Almaden Quicksilver Mining Museum at Casa Grande,*

***Fridays, 10-11:30 am or 1-2:30 pm***

Have a group of 10-35 people? Look no further than the Quicksilver Mining Museum Group Tours. Tours are one hour long with 30 minutes to browse the exhibits. Best for ages 9 and up. Reserve a group tour at least 2 weeks in advance through the [group tour request form](#). Are you an individual or group smaller than ten people? Consider our public [First Friday Tours](#)

## Park User Group Events

**Quicksilver Running Club** <https://www.quicksilver-running.com/>

The Quicksilver Endurance Runs 100k and 50k will be on Saturday, May 9, 2026. The club also has regular trail workdays, see the schedule below.

### Trail Work Schedule:

**March 28, 2026** (Saturday) – Meet at 8:00AM, location: Webb Canyon trail head. ([map](#))

**April 25, 2026** (Saturday) – Meet at 8:00AM, location: Webb Canyon trail head. ([map](#))

For all dates, please contact Kate at [kate.j.metcalfe@gmail.com](mailto:kate.j.metcalfe@gmail.com) to let her know that you're coming. The Quicksilver Running Club has adopted the New Almaden Trail (NAT) since 2003. We meet several times a year to maintain the 6-mile long New Almaden Trail and adjacent trails. Join us for 4 hours of fun (and work), typically on a Saturday (8am-12pm), to keep this beautiful trail in good condition for the general public and for our runners. We have work for all levels and abilities, whether you are a veteran of trail maintenance or it's your first time and you want to learn while giving back to the community. Trail workdays are posted on the website homepage, and emails are sent to the membership. Non QRC members are welcome to join.

**Santa Clara County Horsemen's Association** <https://horsemens.org/>

No immediate events listed for Almaden Quicksilver, but for the equestrians, you can check out their events page at this link: <https://horsemens.org/events>.

## Others Events

**SIR, Branch 5, Southern Peninsula**, <https://sirinc2.org/branch5/>

Michael Cox gave an introductory lecture on the New Almaden mines on Wednesday, February 25, 2026. Branch 5 meets the 4th Wednesday each month at 11 am for a Luncheon and presentation at Michaels at Shoreline, 2960 No. Shoreline Blvd, Mountain View CA 94043. The lunch cost is \$45 per person.

## NAQCPA Membership Renewal

We are a little late sending it out this year, but please do not forget to renew your membership! As you read in our recounted history, NAQCPA relies on funding from our members to carry out our mission to preserve and enhance Almaden Quicksilver County Park.

Besides underwriting our own projects, NAQCPA, through the generosity of our donors, has been able to make small but significant donations to other projects.

We have recently pledged to provide paint that will cover the new, rebuilt fence that now surrounds the Hidalgo Cemetery on the hill. The old one had completely collapsed, and while it has now been replaced, it stills needs a few good coats of paint. We will be sure to include pictures and a story in our newsletter when the paint job is completed.

We will also contribute to a Santa Teresa High School Eagle Scout's project to elongate the fence at Webb Canyon Trail. Often, hikers take short cuts off the marked path, walking along "social trails" (narrow tracks created by decades of passing wildlife). Extending the fence will prevent erosion from trekkers not using the designated route. Expect a story on the Eagle Scout and her project in our next issue.

So please, send us your renewal. We continue to hold our membership donation to \$15 per year. Any extra you can spare is welcome but not expected!

Payment can be made online, click here: <https://naqcpa.square.site/> or mail your check with the membership form: [click here for form](#)

Thank you for your past generosity and support.  
NAQCPA President Michael Cox

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