



THE AMADORIAN

A Publication of the Amador County Historical Society

"Preserving the past and present for tomorrow"

Spring 2024 – Vol. 17, No. 1

President's Corner

Dear ACHS Members:

Here we are, moving into 2024. The Amador County Historical Society partnered with the Kennedy Mine and Preston Castle to host Francois Gaillard on March 6th. This documentarian visited Amador County from his home in France and showed



his film about **Marie Suize Pantaloni**, a pioneer in Amador County who was the first woman to make and sell wine commercially in the area. She had lots of other attributes which were

uncommon in women of her time, making her a true trail blazer. The presentation was offered free of charge to a standing room only crowd! Thanks to our partners at the Mine and Castle for helping us get the word out and helping with the logistics.

Have you visited the museum at 225 Church Street in Jackson? The daffodils are up and beautiful. Thanks to our board member, Wayne Garibaldi, for his work on the grounds. If you love getting your hands in the dirt, call us so you can join the work parties to keep our grounds in tip top shape.

Plan a day to visit us and see the Mine Model (tours at noon and 1 PM Friday through Sunday) and follow that with a trip to the

Kennedy Mine. And, thinking about upcoming events, mark your calendar for our Steak Sandwich Barbeque at the Museum on Sunday, June 9th this year. There'll be lots of fun with music, games and, of course, the terrific steaks provided by Teresa's Restaurant. We are lucky that we can count on the Giurlanis to help us with our many projects.

There is so much more we can do, and we welcome all members to get involved. Here's hoping to meet you soon!

Warm regards,
Sue Duncan

The Museum Needs You!!!

The Historical Society could use some help sprucing up the grounds of the museum. If you have time to volunteer a few hours now and then for this cause, please call Wayne Garibaldi at 209-223-2320.

Also needed are docents at the museum. It's a fun job learning more about the history of the county and meeting people from all over. If you are interested in volunteering a few hours a week for this, please call Judy Jebian at 209-304-2396.

Blast from the Recent Past -

Jackson Native and our Past President of the Amador County Historical Society Receives National Award!! - From the Amador Ledger, November 7, 2023

Jeana Hultquist (nee Cova) Awarded National FFA Honorary American Degree

Four years ago, American AgCredit Vice President of Legislative Affairs Jeana Hultquist was first honored as a California FFA Honorary American Degree recipient. Last week at the FFA National Convention on Friday, Nov. 3, she was awarded the same honor at the national level.

This award is given to those who advance agricultural education and FFA through outstanding personal commitment. The Honorary American FFA Degree is an opportunity to recognize those who have gone beyond valuable daily contributions to make an extraordinary long-term difference in the lives of students, inspiring confidence in a new generation of agriculturists.

After over 40 years of advocating for producers on behalf of American AgCredit and the Farm Credit System, Jeana's influence is nothing short of that description. She is a graduate of the California Agricultural Leadership Program (Class 38) and 2015 recipient of the Common Threads North Award. She currently serves on the board of directors and served as past chair for the Center for Land-Based Learning and the Amador County Historical Society and is advisory board member for Innovate to Motivate. She recently served on the board of directors for the Agricultural Council of California and the California State FFA Foundation. For many years, Jeana served as a grant reviewer for the CDFA CalAgPlate program, and she participated in several projects and focus groups, including the California Farm Water Coalition.

"Agriculture Chose Me."



It all started in a small town east of Sacramento, where her family had a small ranch.

"You can't live in a small town without people talking and living ag," reflected Jeana. "At that time, women weren't as prevalent working on a ranch—it was predominantly my great uncles who ran the ranch."

Nonetheless, it was agriculture that chose her, according to Jeana. After finishing her general education at Chico State University, Jeana began working as a credit clerk for the Sacramento Bank for Cooperatives, now known as CoBank today, and continued to study at American River College to become a paralegal. She was finishing her education when an opportunity came to transfer over to the bank's legal department.

It was the 1980s, a season of economic crisis in agriculture: sky high interest rates, dropping land values, foreclosures, and bankruptcy for many operations. And the Sacramento Bank for Cooperatives was in the middle of a merger with other System banks for cooperatives, too. *(cont'd, page 3)*

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Jeana took this opportunity to transfer to the newly formed Western Farm Credit Bank (successor to the Federal Intermediate Credit Bank and Federal Land Bank of Sacramento). As a paralegal at the time, she not only monitored state legislation, but also the frenzy of foreclosures and litigation taking place. “Our job in the legal department was to keep all the chaos organized,” reflected Jeana. It was in this early-on season of her career at the height of agriculture’s economic downturn around 1986, that Jeana took a trip with her girlfriends to New York and Washington, D. C. Freshly graduated as a paralegal, pregnant with her second child, and in the throes of the ag crisis, she found herself standing in front of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. “One of these days, someone else is going to be paying for my trips back to D. C.,” Jeana told her friends. Sure enough, Farm Credit has paid for her trips to D. C. many times since then.

From Paralegal to advocate for producers

So, Jeana passed hours and hours of combing through meeting minutes of banks’ individual committees, Farm Credit System committees, boards, presidents’ committees, and so on. The committee conducted numerous interviews with prior board members and management. She also traveled to New York to interview past representatives of the Federal Farm Credit Funding Corporation. She went on to D. C. to visit the Farm Credit Council, lobbying firms and members of Congress who were familiar with the issue. So, Farm Credit’s history and direction—and its implications for supporting America’s producers—came to life before her through the lens of legal documents and legislation.

But the experience didn’t only give Jeana an in-depth understanding of the history of the Farm Credit System—she had discovered her niche, where her paralegal skillset combined with her passion for history: a career in legislative affairs with the Farm Credit System.

Indeed, Jeana went on to demonstrate a record of steadily increasing responsibility, challenge, and positive influence in the ag industry. She was afforded several opportunities to serve on industry workgroups that were at the forefront of the local foods movement. In an effort to bring Farm Credit along, she contributed to a white paper, “*Financing Agriculture as We Find It: Farm Credit and the Changing Marketplace in US AgBank Associations.*” If she could relive a time during her career, however, it would be the inception of the American AgCredit’s local community impact and young, beginning, and small farmer (YBS) AgConnect programs.

“Some of my most rewarding work has been seeing American AgCredit take the lead acknowledging the importance of partnering with local nonprofits—such as FFA, Kitchen Table Advisors, and the Center for Land-Based Learning—to fight food insecurity and support the next generation of ag producers,” said Jeana.

Jeana played an integral role in standing up American AgCredit’s YBS AgConnect and local community impact programs. She collaborated with American AgCredit’s go-to-market teams to nail down a definition to help identify farmers with a direct-to-market business model, as well as small, boutique wineries, to qualify for financing under the Farm Credit Administration’s eligibility rules—all of which are critical to serving all segments of agriculture.

“As I near retirement, my one wish is that American AgCredit continues to expand upon its mission work to serve our communities and the future of agriculture,” said Jeana.

Her parting words of wisdom? Choose to build relationships with others and focus on influencing for the betterment of all of agriculture. (*cont’d, page 4*)

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“Valuing relationships with others is paramount to working in a collaborative, effective manner,” reflected Jeana, who’s seen no shortage of division after a career in legislative affairs. “It’s important to honor and respect views on all sides. At the end of the day, our role is to focus on influencing for the betterment of all of agriculture.”

Blast From the Past - Eliza’s Lonesome Grave - Amador County History by J’aime Rubio

Perched on top of the hillside of Jackson on Church Street rests the home of Armstead C. Brown. Constructed for one of Amador County’s oldest and important early pioneers, the home itself was built in 1859. It survived the great fire of 1862, which burned many of the buildings in Jackson, including the National Hotel and the old Hangman’s Tree on Main Street. But A. C. Brown’s home, being situated on top of the great hill near the cemetery, was saved. It has stood there now for over 190 years, and it is still just as beautiful as ever. I just didn’t realize until recently, that property has a history that is older than the home that sits on it.

I have been visiting this home off and on for many years, ever since I was a child, since it has been the Amador County Museum. I had always been drawn to it, but I didn’t realize until years later, as an adult, that there was a lonesome grave on the north side of the property. When I inquired about it inside the museum, the docent explained that the wife of a friend of A. C. Brown was staying there, and the young woman had died in childbirth, so the family buried her in their yard.

I visited the grave with sad thoughts in my mind, imagining how her last moments must have been, in agony giving birth and then passing on along with her child at such a young age. Given the fact I hadn’t been told a lot about the circumstances of this young woman’s death, I simply assumed she had died in the house since the story told to me was vague.

Well, one weekend while I was visiting Jackson, while my husband was visiting Hein’s estate sale down the hill, I ventured up to the museum all by my lonesome to visit Eliza. While I was there, I took in the beautiful atmosphere all around me: the breeze, the cool shade of the trees, and the fragrance of the plants in the air. I felt safe, secure and at peace.

As I was walking back toward my car, I thought to myself, *“this is such a beautiful spot, like going back to a simpler place in time.”* Within moments my husband surprised me, walking up the cement staircase to the property, and we sat there at a picnic table under the shade of the tall trees. I told him that this property is *“one of my favorite places in Jackson.”* I also mentioned that if it were just a regular home, and if I was rich, I would want to buy it and live in it because I love the feeling I get on the property itself! (It’s funny that I said that, and I will get to that reason in a moment.)

(cont’d, page 5)

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So, I went home and uploaded my photos and got busy with researching Eliza's story further. Well, just as I had stated before, the house on that property was built in 1859. I didn't know that initially; it wasn't until digging deeper into my research. That was when it dawned on me, "*Eliza died in 1856!*"

That was three years before the home was built.

According to the *Amador Dispatch*, Eliza did in fact die during childbirth, but apparently, she didn't die on the property itself. It says she was buried on the Brown's property on a "small knoll."

Eliza was the wife of Leon Sompayrac, a native of France, who was not only a jeweler by trade, but also one of the original Trustees of Jackson when the town was first established, as well as a founding member of the Grand Jury. Not much is known about Eliza except that her maiden name was Hart, and she was born July 25, 1835. I could not find a marriage record, nor could I find any record of where Eliza was born or who her parents were.



Gravesite of Eliza Hart at the Amador County Historical Museum.

Eliza's grave itself was constructed of brick and covered with iron doors from her husband's jewelry shop. If you visit Eliza's grave (or above-ground crypt) now, you will see there are no iron doors, so either they were removed later or stolen. All that is left is the brick structure and an ornamental iron fencing around part of it, where wandering vines of ivy have crept through and grown quite beautifully around it.

Her marker is a little confusing because the top part reads: "*Eliza Hart, Born July 25, 1835.*"

While the bottom part reads: "*Eliza Sompayrac, Died May 31, 1856.*" Both of which are two separate pieces of stone attached to the above ground crypt.

I searched the only newspaper of the time, the *Volcano Weekly Ledger*, for an obituary or death notice, but I found no mention of Eliza's passing. Sadly, it appears that it didn't make the newspapers back then. In newer archived articles of the *Amador Ledger Dispatch*, there are mentions of Eliza's passing, and the "Friends of the Amador County Museum" sponsored an annual Memorial Day Celebration at Eliza's grave back in 1986. The ceremony took place at 11 a.m. on Sunday, May 25. The article also stated that the group decided to honor Eliza on the 130th anniversary of her death, and that Eliza died "*close to what would later become Memorial Day,*" and she "*was buried on a spot she had loved in life, which was near the site on which A. C. Brown would later build his house.*"

So, Eliza wasn't buried there because of dying on the property. In fact, there is no documentation that I am aware of which states where she died, although we know it was somewhere in Jackson. However, it was noted that A. C. Brown had her buried on the spot that she "*had loved in life.*" This obviously means she loved and appreciated that beautiful hillside, just as I do, and it must have been so apparent that she loved that spot so much, that her husband and his best friend, A. C. Bown, picked the very best spot that she would want to be buried, right there on that hillside. (*cont'd, page 6*)

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Unfortunately, there have been sheds and structures built around her grave over the years, so the view she once saw is not the view we see today. But if you visit the Amador County Museum and you walk that property, you will feel what Eliza felt, the same feeling that I get when I visit, too. It is a sort of soothing calmness that sets over you, and you feel at peace.

After Eliza and her baby passed away, her husband eventually moved back to France. There are news advertisements for Leon Sompayrac's business, "Fixury & Company," which he co-owned with Mr. Fixury, closing by mutual consent and a notice in August of 1857, stating that he would be moving out of the country by August 20, 1857 and any debts owed to him that were not paid by that date would be cause for him to sue. It appears that Leon never came back to the states.

And so, Eliza and her baby rest peacefully in one of the most serene spots in all of Jackson while the world has continued to go on for the past 163 years, mostly forgetting that she is even there. With that, let's remember Eliza (and her unborn child) and their final resting place, so they will be forgotten no more.

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Saving the Kennedy Mine Tailing Wheels

By Frank Tortorich for the *Ledger Dispatch*

All who read the *Ledger Dispatch* know that work has begun to save and restore Kennedy Mine Tailing Wheel #1 and none too soon. The wheel is leaning severely and has been braced to keep it from falling. The rotting parts have been removed and are now ready to be reconstructed. The project is on hold until spring due to weather conditions.

Restorations will be a slow project, taking several years and thousands of dollars to complete. Seeing the citizens inside and outside Amador County stepping forward with their generous donations is heart-warming. This effort can be accomplished only through these donations and the dedicated volunteers who donate their time and talent.

This is the first of several articles that will be published to keep you, the readers and supporters, updated and informed as to the progress of these icons of Jackson and Amador County.

Background

When World War II broke out, the War Department declared that gold was not essential to the war effort. However, men and metal were. As a result, all gold mines in Amador County were shut down by order from the War Department, causing the Kennedy Mine's Tailing Wheels to cease operation.

In 1942, four large wooden wheels appeared seemingly overnight near Jackson Gate, where four enormous, corrugated iron buildings had stood previously. (*cont'd, page 7*)

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The corrugated iron siding had been stripped off and sold for scrap to be melted down and manufactured into products for the war, thus exposing those four imposing wheels. Even though everyone could now see the wheels, few knew how they worked or why they were there.

As kids growing up in Jackson, those wheels became our playground. We climbed on them and walked the flume from the wheels to the Kennedy Mine. We scaled the headframe and just had great fun.

Our parents would have had a fit had they known what we were doing. Amazingly, no one was injured, and no one ran us off. I can honestly say it was not my group of friends who caused the vandalism that occurred in subsequent years. We had no idea the wheels' purpose, nor did we care; we just had fun.

The four exposed wheels started attracting attention not only from locals but also from the tourists coming into Jackson. At that time the Tailing Wheels were likely the most photographed relics of gold mining. The wheels became an icon for the City of Jackson. A photo of one of the wheels became the logo for the City of Jackson and appeared on the city's letterhead along with St. Sava Church and the National Hotel.

The sad note is that everyone assumed that the wheels would be there forever, but the reality was that they began to decay as soon as they were exposed. Thankfully, a handful of people saw the wheels' historical value and that they needed to be saved and protected. Over the years, the wheels continued to decay, resulting in the collapse of wheels #3 in 1963 and #2 in 1970. In the mid-1970s, the champion for the cause was Evelyn Garbarini, assisted by my father, Frank Tortorich, Sr.

In 1975, Evelyn wrote a history of the wheels as told to her by her husband, Emmet. The book *THE KENNEDY WHEELS* aimed to educate people about the wheels, why they were there, and how they worked. The proceeds from the book went into an account held by the City of Jackson to preserve the four wheels.

On January 25, 1994, the City of Jackson established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) titled GARBARINI MEMORIAL TAILING WHEELS FUND.

This two-page MOU document stated that all the proceeds from the Tailing Wheels book were to be held in a special fund to be used only for the structural maintenance and repair of the four tailing wheels.

The three Trustees signed this: Evelyn Garbarini, Frank Tortorich, Sr., and Frank Tortorich, Jr., joined by City Manager James Buell and City Clerk Linda M. Smalldon.

A City of Jackson Treasurer's January 31, 1996, report showed \$15,707.86 in the Kennedy Wheels Account. (*cont'd, page 8*)

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A year later, under the leadership of city councilman Keith Sweet, work began to restore and protect Tailing Wheel #4 and develop the Kennedy Mine Tailing Wheels Park. Work began in 2012, and the park was dedicated on June 14, 2013.

Funded mainly by grants, the total cost of the project, including ground modification, engineering fees, restroom restoration, and landscaping, came to \$655,048.

The efforts to restore Tailing Wheel #1 should be less expensive as the groundwork will be minimal. The City of Jackson has authorized TOT funds for the project, and grant requests have been submitted to potential sources. Still, donations and fundraisers will be primary sources for funding the restoration of Wheel #1. Donations can be made to the Amador County Historic Preservation Fund, which the Amador Community Foundation manages.



Kennedy Mine Tailing Wheels before and after: Left - Tailing Wheel #1 before restoration started shows the wheel with the rotten outermost circle. Right – Photo shows progress of Tailing Wheel # 1 restoration to date. It shows the wheel with the outermost circle missing. That outermost circle is under construction right now since restorers had to take off the outermost circle to totally rebuild it. Cables hold the wheel together while the outside is being restored. If the wheel photo on the right were a clock, the cable can be seen between the 11:00 o'clock and 12:00 o'clock positions.

Editor's Note: Watch for further articles about the Kennedy Wheels in part 2.

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We welcome new members: Amy Davis, Bonnie Davis, Daniel & Sherry Fields, Thomas & Margaret Vinson, Mavis Sare & Charles Waits, Cheri & Kelsey Walling



Our list of donors is growing, making the new Livery Building Project possible. Listed are donors of \$500 or more:

Amador Community Foundation ~ Joe and Iris Aparicio ~ Evan Bass ~ Paul & Claudine Burnett ~ D.E. Collins ~ Marshall Cova ~ Jean Louise Dahl ~ Barry & Sue Duncan ~ Wayne Garibaldi ~ Phillip & Jenny Giurlani ~ Linda & David Gonzales ~ Larry & Jeana Hultquist ~ John James ~ Don & Judy Jebian ~ Richard & Pat Jones ~ Ron & Kris Katzakian ~ JoAnn Levy ~ Marla Lowe ~ Stan Lukowicz ~ Richard and Kathleen Lynch ~ Kim & Cathy McGowen ~ Atul Patel ~ Jeffrey & Hazel Powell ~ Beverly Smallfield ~ Charles Spinetta ~ Anders Stenstedt ~ Karen Vaira & Steve Gallant ~ Russell Van Voorhis ~ Violich Farms ~ Leonard and Elaine Williams

Your generous donation will help build the New Livery Building which will replicate the California-style of rural agricultural buildings. Learn more at www.amadorcountyhistoricalsociety.org

**Amador County Historical Society Board
of Directors**

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Leonard Williams

*Board Meetings are held on the 3rd
Wednesday of each month at 3:00 p.m.
225 Church St., Jackson (Amador County
Museum).*

Members and friends are invited to attend.

ACHS Mission Statement

The society was formed for the purpose of identifying and preserving items of historical interest of Amador County for its residents and the general public and to educate and increase public awareness while at the same time enlisting public support for historical preservation in Amador County.

The Amador County Historical Society has also partnered with the Recreational Railroad Coalition Historical Society in owning and operating the Amador Central Railroad, a great part of the county's history.

The Amadorian Editors:
Cathy McGowen,
Hazel & Jeffrey Powell

About the Amador County Historical Society

The Amador County Historical Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to the research and preservation of Amador County heritage and history.

The organization brings together people from diverse backgrounds to work towards these goals. We invite all interested persons to attend our monthly meetings and encourage your suggestions and active participation in Society events and endeavors.

We also welcome guest articles for our newsletter. Unfortunately, due to limited space we can accept only those pertaining to local history. If you have any questions regarding ACHS please contact the office at (209) 257-1485.

If you would like to become a member of the Society, please fill in the membership form below and mail along with the appropriate dues to the Amador County Historical Society, P.O. Box 761, Jackson, CA 95642-0761

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Please check one of the following Memberships:

ANNUAL **Individual \$25.00** **Family (2 or more) \$40.00** **Students \$15.00**

LIFETIME **Family (2 or more) \$400.00** **SPONSOR** **Benefactor (\$1,000 up)**

- Patron (\$500 to \$999)**
- Associate (\$250 to \$499)**
- Other** _____

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