



# AMADOR COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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## FALL 2013 NEWSLETTER - AMADOR COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY P.O. BOX 761, JACKSON, CA 95642, (209) 257-1485

### Vineyards on the Foothills

*The richest placers will yet be found in our vineyards, which will afford homes for a greater and happier population than our richest mines.*

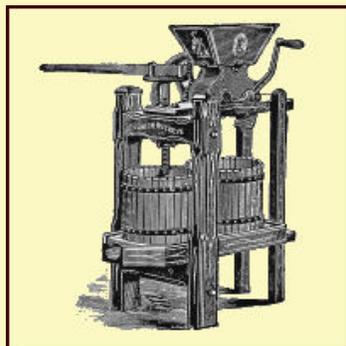
- - J.D. Mason, 1864.

Although Amador County's first grapes were planted during the 1850s, wine production throughout the decade was still extremely limited. The agricultural statistics associated with census of 1860, while undoubtedly low, report only 87 gallons. Most of the wine being manufactured was intended for personal use, with perhaps some of the surplus sold locally. As yet, vineyards were small, and they usually represented a portion of a fruit ranch or nursery that contained almost every type of fruit imaginable. Experimentation was still the order of the day, and the search was on to find those varieties of fruit best suited to the foothills.

In 1856, 9000 vines were planted in Amador County. Two years later an additional 20,000 were planted.' The state legislature, in 1859, did it's part when it exempted newly planted vines from taxation until they were four years old. This gave the early growers time to get their first crop in before they were required to come up with any additional capital. In addition, the California State Agricultural Society rallied support for the foothills as a grape growing region, stating that: ... *capital put into vineyards would bring greater returns than when outlaid in fluming rivers for golden treasure.* 2

The dramatic increase in the number of vines being planted in the county continued well into the 1860s, and by 1866 there were 757,773 bearing vines reported.

For the pioneer vineyardists of the 1850s, grape growing was still a sideline. Placer mines, ditch systems and hotels remained as the grape growers primary sources of income. The boom in commercial grape growing and wine making was yet to come, and would reach its zenith in the late 1860s. The vines planted by the early growers began bearing in commercial quantities around 1862; after which time Amador County produced a sizable vintage on a regular basis.



*1800's vintage wine press displayed in our office at 148 Main Street, Jackson*

### Amador's Earliest Vintners

These men represent Amador's earliest known vintners, and as such are deserving of special attention. Dr. Page, who we have already met, possessed a mere two gallons of his homemade wine when called upon by the census taker.

B. Murphy is probably one Benidet Murphy, a native of Italy who undoubtedly had changed his name upon arriving in America, a practice not uncommon at the time. Murphy was a creek-side gardener, with a quartz mill for a neighbor, on the outskirts of Sutter Creek. He had 60 gallons of wine on hand at census time. Unfortunately, little else is known about Murphy.



*Photo of George Woolsey's Q-Ranch produce display at the District Agricultural Fair held in Ione in 1887.*

Perhaps he had so, he may have been the county's first commercial vintner. Pioneer winemaker George Withington left Monroe, Michigan in the Spring of 1849. Heading overland to the California goldfields, he eventually arriving at what later became Shingle Springs, El Dorado County. Withington was among Shingle Springs earliest settlers, and reportedly operated the shingle mill that gave the town it's name.' In 1851 he migrated to the lone Valley, first settling along Dry Creek. but later moving to Ione City, where in 1857 he erected a brick residence and began farming. Withington had 50 improved acres, and 60 gallons of wine in his possession in 1860. In 1858, George's brother Richard purchased land from R.S. Pardee and located south of Ione City near "Swain Ranch" There he farmed and made small quantities of wine for home use. Richard left the lone Valley in 1862, and eventually settled in Sacramento.

Of final note is Thomas P. Barbour, also known as Major Barbour. Barbour's property was located, where today, Highway 124 crosses Dry Creek in the lone Valley, the former site of Q-Ranch. The 70 year old orchardist from Virginia had purchased land from Andres Pico in October of 1859. The ground originally having been part of the vast Arroyo Seco land grant. In May of that same year, the following item appeared in the Amador Sentinel:

*Major T. Barbour who owns the large orchard, iniottns us that he will have peaches sufficient to supply the whole county.*

Barbour had apparently been on the property several years prior to 1859, when in order to retain title, he was required to legally purchase the land after it was determined to lie within Pico's grant. At one time, Q-Ranch was in competition with lone City for the valley's center of commerce, and could boast of a post office, blacksmith shop and racetrack. As early

The agricultural section of the census of 1860 lists just five individuals in Amador County who had wine on hand on June 1, 1860. They were Dr. Samuel Page, B. Murphy, the Withington brothers; George and Richard, and Thomas P. Barbour.

as 1853, a line of stages traveling between Sacramento and the Southern Mines passed directly through Q-Ranch.

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### Amador's Earliest Vintners Continued from Page 1

In 1860, a visiting committee from the California State Agricultural Society toured Barbour's property, and reported their findings in the Society's Transactions:

*Major Barbour's orchard on the Q-Ranch consists of 1500 bearing trees of assorted fruits. .. California grapes badly mildewed, Black Hamburg and Catawba perfectly healthy, and loaded with fruit. Major Barbour is of the opinion that the best wine will be produced on the hillsides where the soil is dryer, so the vines do not run so much to wood.*

At census time in 1860, Barbour had 22 gallons of wine on hand. In 1864, the Major sold out to John Edwards, another pioneer winemaker in the lone Valley.

The meager wine production of 1860 is consistent with the style of wine making that had been common up to that time; the limited production of the home wine maker. The situation was changing very rapidly however, and during the next decade the amount of wine produced in Amador County would soar. Vine planting continued unchecked well into the 1860s, and by 1868, Amador was producing 250,000 gallons per year. As those vines planted during the late 1850s and early 1860s came into bearing, wine making became the primary business of a number of the county's residents. During the 1860s grape growing was viewed by some as an easy way to make a quick dollar, and many speculators entered into the business with little to forethought. In addition, the easily won surface placers were becoming exhausted, and many men who had grown tired of mining were looking for a new occupation.

*More can be read from the book "Old Vines", by Eric J. Costa*

### All Aboard, Historic Ione Train Depot Rides the Rails

Starting on Thursday, August 8, 2013, the City of Ione moved history. After living at the end of Depot Road for just over 135-years, the historic Ione Depot departed from its old home to start a new life. Preservation of the historic icon started May 2010 with the exchange of \$1 between Union Pacific Railroad and the City of Ione. It continues with the relocation of the depot adjacent to the historic Ione rail yard.

A Historic Resource Evaluation completed by San Francisco-Based Garavaglia Architecture, Inc. (30 August 2012) brings to life the historicity and value of the Amador Branch RR Depot,

### Ione Depot Project

The interior retains many of its original or early finishes and features including wood trims, original interior doors, built-in furniture, and wood wall finishes. All of the original six-over-six wood windows are intact with the eastern portion of the building housing rooms related to the ticketing and passenger functions of the building, and the western portion of the building function as a large open warehouse that was used for freight and storage purposes.



*Ione Depot, Ione California*

The approximately 150-foot long, 30-foot wide wooden building started its 2,000 feet move to its new home on Mill Street, still on the right side of the tracks. Originally used as a passenger and freight depot, this building will become a local railroad museum and community event center. The goal is to preserve the unique rail road history invaluable to the Mother Lode and California.

A Historic Resource Evaluation completed by San Francisco-Based Garavaglia Architecture, Inc. (30 August 2012) brings to life the historicity and value of the Amador Branch RR Depot, Ione, CA. In the well-documented report that can be found on the City of Ione's web page, Garavaglia concludes "the building appears to retain a relatively high degree of integrity both interior and exterior." The interior retains many of its original or early finishes and features including wood trims, original interior doors, built-in furniture, and wood wall finishes. All of the original six-over-six wood windows are intact with the eastern portion of the building housing rooms related to the ticketing and passenger functions of the building, and the western portion of the building function as a large open warehouse that was used for freight and storage purposes.

Support from the Jackson Rancheria, a grant from the National Trust of Historic Preservation, Lowes in Jackson, CA, and generous contributions of time, materials, and funds from many people have made this possible. With the relocation marking the beginning of a large renovation effort, continued investments in preserving the rail history of the Amador Railroad and the history of the gold country must continue if this effort is to succeed. Please consider making a contribution to help preserve the valuable piece of California and Amador Rail history.

The Amador County Historical Society recognizes the great effort the City of Ione is making to preserve this great piece of history. We have provided support to the preservation of the depot by assisting with funding, grants, press releases and labor. Please continue to help with contributions of time and money for this effort. Keeping this depot is a great compliment to our ownership of the Amador Central Railroad with the Recreational Railroad Coalition Historical Society. We hope the



*Ione Depot being moved to new location*

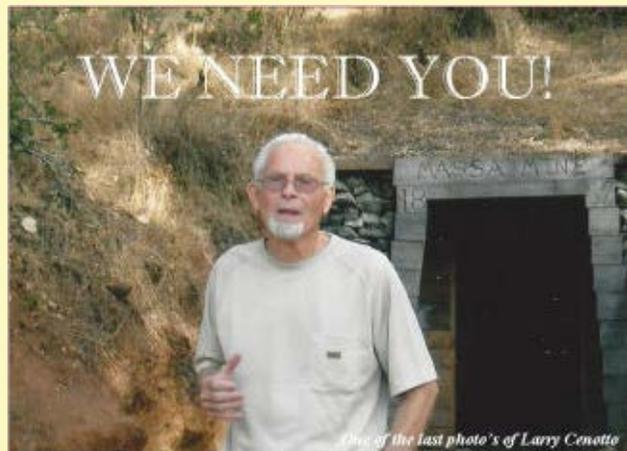
Ione, CA. In the well-documented report that can be found on the City of Ione's web page, Garavaglia concludes "the building appears to retain a relatively high degree of integrity both interior and exterior."

depot can function as our depot on the Amador Central. For additional information, see the City of Ione web page (<http://www.ione-ca.com/home/ione/>), contact the City of Ione at 209-274-2412, or contact our Ione Depot Preservation Committee chair, Thornton (Tom) Consolo at 209-223-2111.

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**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

The Amador County Historical Society is actively recruiting willing and able bodied individuals to volunteer at the Amador County Museum, Mine Model Exhibit, and the office on Main Street. Those wanting to serve their organization are asked to call Judy Jebian at 257-0332, or the ACHS Office 257-1485.



**AMADOR COUNTY MUSEUM OPEN  
Friday, Saturday, Sunday  
11am to 3pm**

**225 CHURCH STREET, JACKSON**

**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 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 the ACHS events.

We also welcome guest articles pertaining to Amador County for our publications. If you have any questions regarding AHCS please contact the office at (209) 257-1485.

***Board Meetings are at 148 Main St on the 3rd  
Wednesday of each month at 3:00 pm if anyone  
would like to attend.***

**Kennedy Mine Model Tours**

One of Amador County's incredible sights is the Kennedy Mine Model, housed in the building adjacent to the Amador County Museum. Created and built with meticulous detail, this scale model of what once was the world's most productive - and deepest - mine is sure to amaze and delight all who view it in operation.

Both the Museum and the Mine Model are now open. Bring your friends and out-of-town company for a great presentation of just how the "Hardrock Miners" brought the gold up from more than a mile under the earth. You will view mechanized models created and built by Robert Post and inspired by his father, Eldridge Post, engineer of the four Kennedy Tailing Wheels.

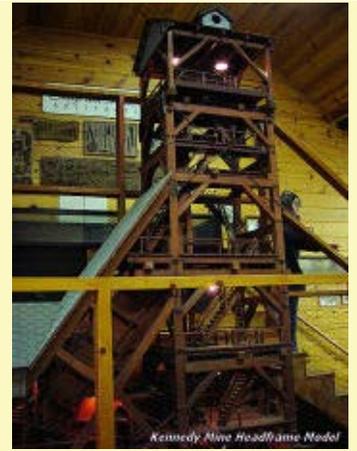
**ACHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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Mine Model tours are on *Kennedy Headframe Model*  
Friday, Saturday, and  
Sunday, at noon and 1 pm., or by appointment, any day or time,  
for groups, organizations, students, car clubs, senior clubs, or  
others.

*For more information, or to arrange a tour of the Mine Model,  
call the ACHS Office at 257-1485.*

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