



THE AMADORIAN

VOLUME 7, NUMBER 2

Quarterly Publication of the Amador County Historical Society

Summer 2014



President's Corner

I am amazed at what this organization has accomplished over the last couple of years. I will not bore you with what those accomplishments have been only to tell you that our Society has gained notice from our community and has reached a level of respect and credibility with local organizations and government agencies as well.

Current projects that we are working on show the ability of our Society to interact and promote positive cooperation with whom we are involve with.

The Ione Depot Restoration Project is underway. The grounds have been graded, fences are being moved, and the Baldwin #10 has been moved up and will be fenced within The Depot in the next day or two. Ione has come through with the \$25,000 the City Council approved for the project and anonymous donors within the ACHS have created a pledge fund that will match dollar-for-dollar any moneys donated by the citizens of Ione up to \$3,000. I want to thank those who have gotten us to this stage in the project.

A couple of months ago, Judy Jebian came to me with the idea of having a handicap bathroom on the museum grounds so we could get rid of the port-a-potty that sits outside on the parking lot—really doesn't fit in with our historical theme. My first thought was that she was wasting her time — I was wrong. With Judy's persistence and the help of Jeana Hultquist, we presented an application to the City of Jackson requesting \$15,000 from the TOT funds. The TOT committee recommended to the City Council that we receive \$5,000 for our project, but that was increased to \$7,500 and approved at the City Council meeting. We competed with several projects totaling over \$100,000 from which only \$30,000 TOT funds available. Again, the City of Jackson has allocated money to be spent on County property for the benefit of our community. Additionally, I might add that Amador County has teamed up with the Amador County Water Agency to free our sewer line of debris and roots at no cost to the ACHS. We are working together to get this done.

I am also equally amazed with the people in our organization who have stepped up and gone beyond what should be expected of them. My only request as the President of ACHS is that with a membership as large as we have, that there is only a handful of people who really contribute. Please get involved — I promise you, you will be greatly rewarded!

Phillip Giurlani, President

Placer Mining in the Fiddletown Mining District

By Eric J. Costa

According to most accounts, placer mining began in the Fiddletown area in 1849, when a group of miners originally from Missouri found gold deposits in the local creeks¹. A year earlier, in May of 1848, placer gold had been discovered at Drytown, and undoubtedly within a very short time miners would have started working their way up the north fork of Dry Creek. The earliest discoveries, near what was to become Fiddletown were not extremely rich, but they were substantial enough for several groups of miners to establish crude camps in the area, probably first consisting of nothing more than rough-hewn log cabins, brush shelters and tents. These early miners, often using only a gold pan and a rocker, worked primarily in drainages containing enough water for prospecting. They would then move on as streams dried up during the summer months. During this period, mining was confined mainly to the beds of Dry Creek, Indian Creek, and Slate Creek. There was also apparently some activity in both Loafer and Sucker Gulches around the same time. It wasn't until an 1852 discovery of rich gold bearing gravel at American Flat, just south of Fiddletown, that the area began to boom. According to the early Amador historian, Mason¹, the gold discovery was made on the southwest side of American Hill by Jerry Ruth, George Schoemaker and Samuel Nase. Others with claims in the area were Charles McLain, Samuel Parker, J.W. Croft and William Dunn. At the same time, a party of Frenchmen, who were working on the east side of the hill at French Flat, made an additional rich discovery. Estimates at the

time suggest that the Frenchmen may have found around \$250,000 worth of gold, but Mason thought the estimate to be too high². At any rate, enough gold was discovered to attract many additional miners into the area. Within a very short time, nearly all of the ravines and hillsides in the area were being explored.

The gold deposits lying beneath the hills and flats surrounding Fiddletown are erosional remnants, or isolated patches, of an ancient river system that flowed through the area prior to the development of the modern drainage patterns. The deposits are commonly known as "Tertiary river gravels" referring to the geologic time in which the rivers were active. Early descriptions indicate that the old river channel was between three and five hundred feet wide. The gold bearing portion of these deposits were quartz-rich and from 5 to 7 feet thick. In places where the gravels are capped by resistant volcanic mudflows or ash, they form erosion resistant hills, explaining why so many of the mining camps have the word "Hill" as part of their name. In the Fiddletown district, the channels are part of the ancestral Cosumnes River, with one branch coming in from the Coyoteville area in the northeast, and another branch coming from Volcano to the southeast³. Just about any place these ancient river deposits were exposed a small mining camp developed. In addition to American Flat and Hill, there was French Flat, Loafer Flat, Lone Hill, Sucker Hill, and Conita Hill, all having been established on gravel deposits of the old river system.

In order to work the otherwise dry hillsides and flats, incredible quantities of water were required. To meet this need, in 1852, Samuel Loree and twenty others began construction of a ditch that brought water into the area. By tapping the South Fork of the Cosumnes, and constructing some 22 miles of ditch and flume, they were able to bring

water to the local placers within one year. With larger amounts of water becoming more easily available, it became possible to use long toms and sluice boxes to work the gold deposits on a much larger scale.

October of 1853 was an especially active time in the placers. That month, extensive new gold discoveries were made in the vicinity of American Hill. One correspondent to the *Sacramento Daily Union* reported⁴:

“For a long time two different companies have been tunneling this hill, and have found dirt which pays from ten - cents to a dollar a bucket. The richness of these claims induced others to try the ground nearby, and the result has been that nearly all the holes now down are paying extremely well. That of Captain Stowers and son⁵, however, bids fair to be the richest. At a distance of twenty-five feet they found the dirt actually glittering with gold. The other claims, too, pay well, during the last two days, three Frenchmen have taken out between three and four thousand dollars from their claim on French Flat, one mile from the Hill”.

In a similar article a few days later, additional details of other nearby discovery were revealed:

“Some months since, a party of Frenchmen struck, in prospecting, this rich lead at the base of the hill, where it was found nearer the surface, and followed it into the hill. They have tunneled for some distance, and have dug themselves rooms in which they keep their stores. This company has taken out pans of cement, which paid as high as five hundred dollars. At present the dirt is panned or run through a cradle.”

The same article also reported that at Brown’s Flat, north of Fiddletown, two brothers were recovering as much as one

ounce to the pan on their claim. Regarding Loafer’s Flat: “anyone about town who happens to get strapped can take a pan and go out to the flat, and in a short time make enough to take another start.” In what is perhaps a slight exaggeration, gold was even being mined right in the streets of Fiddletown!

According to a correspondent to the *State Journal*:

“Fiddletown has been in a flourishing condition all summer, owing to the fact that miners have been able to make good wages with the rocker alone, on the creek and in the streets of the town. There is a bar on Dry Creek hitherto supposed to be worthless, which is now being successfully worked by Messrs. Kemp & Co. Loafer’s Gulch, Slate Creek and Arkansas Flat are also rich. In fact the excitement is so great that many of the traders have shut up their shops and gone out to try their luck.”

In order to work the hillside, or dry diggings, as they were sometimes called, several possible methods could be employed. In the earliest discoveries, the simplest, but most dangerous method was “coyoteing,” where a miner simply dug an unsupported hole, barely large enough for a man to fit into. He would then crawl in, and remove only the richest gravel, which he would later pan or run through a rocker. On a slightly larger scale, shafts were sunk to reach deep crevices in bedrock, or the richest portion of the pay streak. As larger deposits were discovered, tunneling or drift mining methods became more popular. Tunneling along the gravel-bedrock contact was employed where the topography was favorable. Where low-grade gravel deposits were exposed at the surface, as they were on some of the flats, they could be rapidly sluiced off to reach the deeper and often richer portion of the deposit. In some instances,

where the gravels were very tightly compacted, the “cement” of the early miners, some sort of crushing was required before the material could be run through a sluice box. To some extent, hydraulic mining was also used in the vicinity of Fiddletown, especially on claims that had access to a substantial amount of water, or where enough gravel was exposed at the surface to make that method of mining possible. Most of the hydraulic mines in the area, would be considered small by statewide standards, nowhere reaching the size of mines in the northern gold region, where the Tertiary gravel deposit were much more extensive.

Placer mining continued in and around Fiddletown through out most of the 1850s. In 1857 a new discovery was reported north of town, just beyond Indian Creek. Miners were recovering around fifty cents to the pan⁶. A year later a rich discovery was made in the vicinity of Conita Hill, and more gold was discovered in a cellar that was being dug beneath Sloat & Kaull’s store on Main Street⁷. Some other miners, Neff and Haraden, had sunk a shaft and were drifting under a house, making \$10 a day⁸. The commencement of mining directly under the town suggests that rich ground had become harder to find, and that perhaps some of the deposits that still remained, existed only because they had been built upon earlier. In April of 1858, the Ellett brothers were still getting “an ounce and a half to the man” on their claim east of town.

As the decade came to an end, reports of successful mining operations became fewer, but confidence remained high, and the placers had not yet been completely exhausted. In addition, the availability of water at lower rates, made mining some of the deposits that had previously been too low-grade into viable operations. In 1859, the following appeared in the *Sacramento Daily Union*:

“We have a variety of diggings-surface, ravine, hydraulic and drifting-and all remarkably remunerative. At the American Hill, although it has been drifted and almost (as was thought) exhausted, Wilson & Co. are taking out dirt that prospects three dollars to the pan. On Slate Creek ridge extensive diggings were struck last spring, and now something like a dozen companies have got out huge piles of dirt, and are waiting for water to wash out their piles. The Cosumnes Ditch having changed hands, the present proprietor has reduced the price of water from twenty cents to twelve and a half cents per inch.”

By 1860, it becomes apparent that the cream had already been skimmed off the local placers and that creek or gulch diggings were largely depleted. The creek beds were now being worked by Chinese miners, who mostly mined in areas that had been worked before, or were of too low a grade for the Anglo miners. In 1860, a visiting farmer from the State Agricultural Society passed through the area and reported that Chinese miners were working in Indian Creek, near James Wheeler’s mill, as well as in many other smaller gulches and ravines⁹.

Sporadic placer mining continued in and around Fiddletown well into the 20th century, mostly by residents who were also involved in a wide range of other activities, including growing fruit, logging and blacksmithing, among other occupations. The American Flat placer, owned by the Upton family, remained in operation until at least as late as 1914. Some of the last mining at the site included washing tailings from the old workings. Two miles south of Fiddletown at Suckertown, the Clark Mine was active around the same time. The mine contained 2 bedrock tunnels, some 800 feet in length, and drifted along a northeast to southwest trending Tertiary channel under some 100 feet of volcanic rock¹⁰.

In addition, the Pigeon Drift Mine that was located a mile and half north of town operated as late as 1942. The Pigeon Mine had originally been discovered during the 1850s, and consisted of a northeast trending Tertiary channel containing cemented sands and capped by volcanic rock. The cemented gravel was crushed and then run through a washing plant and sluice box.

Footnotes

¹Mason, Jesse D., *History of Amador County, California, with illustrations and Biographical Sketches of its Prominent Men and Pioneers*. Oakland: Thompson & West, 1881

²In 1852, gold was worth approximately \$19.00 per ounce, at that value, the Frenchmen would have had to have found some 13,000 ounces of gold, which seems highly unlikely.

³Clark, William B., *Gold Districts of California*, California Division of Mines and Geology, Bulletin 193. Sacramento, 1970.

⁴*Sacramento Daily Union*, 10/18/1853.

⁵For more information on the citizenry of Fiddletown, see Zorbas, Elaine. *Fiddletown From Gold Rush to Rediscovery*, Altadena, Mythos Press, 1997. This is the definitive work on the history of Fiddletown. According to Zorbas, this is Samuel Stowers from Virginia, who crossed the plains in 1849, and arrived in Fiddletown with his family in 1852. His son is Thomas Coleman Stowers.

⁶*Sacramento Daily Union*, 11/11/1857.

⁷*Volcano Weekly Ledger*, 1/9/1858. Conita Hill was located in the vicinity of Mugginsville also known as Suckertown, about two miles southeast of Fiddletown.

⁸*Sacramento Daily Union*, 9/28/1858. According to Zorba, J.M. Kaull first opened a store in 1856, probably at this same site, perhaps wooden. The store mention here was constructed in 1858 from brick. This is the location of the building known today as the Fiddletown General Store.

⁹*Transaction of the California State Agricultural Society for the Year 1860*.

¹⁰Zorbas, p. 55-56.



ACHS Receives TOT Funds

ACHS Directors Judy Jebian and Jeana Hultquist present Treasurer Wayne Garibaldi with the \$7,500 check awarded from the City of Jackson to help construct a new handicap facility at the Amador County Museum.

AMADOR COUNTY'S 160th BIRTHDAY BBQ

On June 21st, the Historical Society and the Museum Committee hosted the annual celebration of the County's birthday. The weather was beautiful, the food was delicious, and the speaker was outstanding.

Frank Tortorich related some of the experiences the first overland emigrants to the gold-rush territory had in coming over the Carson Pass and down the Emigrant Trail into Amador County in 1848-51. A small audience of 38 or so listened in rapt attention. Frank is the author of two books, *Gold Rush Trail, A Guide to the Carson River Route of the Emigrant Trail* and *Hiking The Gold Rush Trail*.



As part of the commemoration, the Museum Committee displayed two lovely quilts which were hand embroidered in 1976 to celebrate the country's bi-centennial by depicting numerous historic places in the County. Each square was designed and stitched showing a picture of a particular well-known Amador landmark, but it is now interesting to note how many of those places are no longer standing.

President, Phillip Giurlani and Board Member, Keith Sweet manned the BBQ and delivered a great lunch with a steak sandwich, pasta salad, potato salad, dessert and beverage and patrons enjoyed their food under the trees in the garden between the Brown house and the cottage while listening to the talk about California's pioneers.



ACHS Members celebrate Amador County's 160th Birthday and enjoy an afternoon at the Museum.



New Welcoming At Kennedy Mine

By Ed Arata

Most people don't know that the Kennedy Mine was originally located near Highway 49/88 near the entrance to the Kennedy Mine site. These were the North and South Shafts that were originally located in the 1850s by Andrew Kennedy. The Kennedy Mine was originally formed from a number of claims in 1860. During its early years the mine was worked on a small scale using a whim for hoisting. In 1871, the first powered hoist and a 20 stamp mill were erected. In 1872, the property was patented and by 1873 two promising ore shoots were being worked; the Kennedy on the north and the Pioneer at the south end of the mine. The mine had periods of good times and bad and after a long period of inactivity it was purchased in 1885 by a new group organized by F.F. Thomas and the mine began its long career as the Kennedy Mining and Milling Company. By 1898 the North and South Shafts were down over 2000 feet and paying well. It was at this time that the mine developed an expansion program and began work at the East Shaft that we see today. The East Shaft was sunk vertically to an ultimate depth of 4764 and intersected the veins of the North and South Shafts in the range of 3680 to 4000 feet. Over time the main focus of the Kennedy Mine was shifted to the East Shaft and the original mine works were dismantled except for the North Shaft which was kept operational as an air shaft and potential escape route.

Since the Kennedy Mine was taken over by the Kennedy Mine Foundations (KMF) in the late 1990's, the main focus of their work has been to repair, restore and present the East Shaft area of the site, and rightly so. This area has the most remaining structures and artifacts from 1942 when the mine was closed. I felt that the entrance area to the mine needed some attraction to entice visitors further onto the site once they came off the



highway, so I decided to develop some interpretive signage related to the North and South Shafts in this area. I worked with local graphic artist and photographer, Larry Angier, to layout the two new signs and the signs were printed by Fossil Industries in New York. The KMF had some sign holders that were donated by the US Forest Service and these are used to support the new signs. The signs are dedicated in memory of my grandfather, Elbridge Post, Master Mechanic at the Kennedy Mine for about 28 years.

Kennedy Mine (cont.)

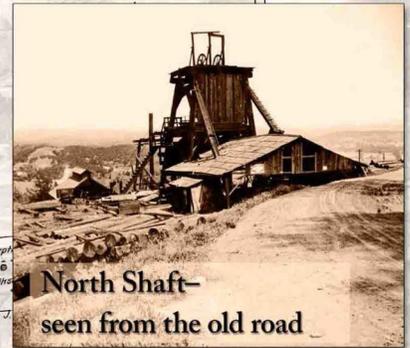
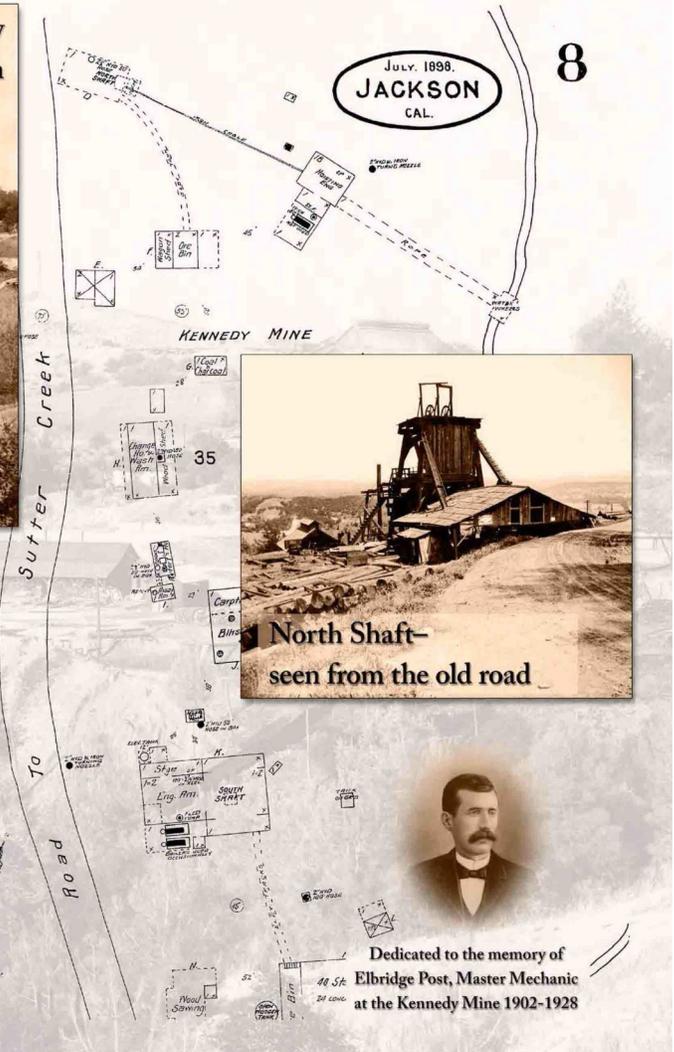
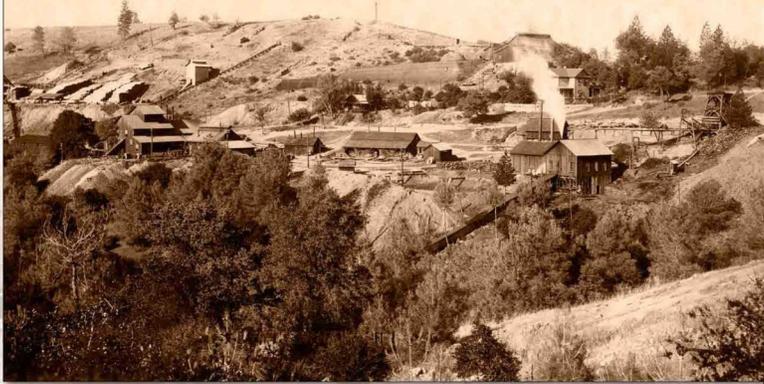
In addition to the signs, some artifacts were also placed in the area to add some additional attraction for visitors. A large flat belt pulley and ore skip with the larger sign, an air blower with the smaller sign and a large air compressor, as a stand alone display. Most of these artifacts are from the Argonaut Mine site and were donated by the Paul Crowley Family with the assistance of Bob Mistrion. These artifacts were moved from the Ar-



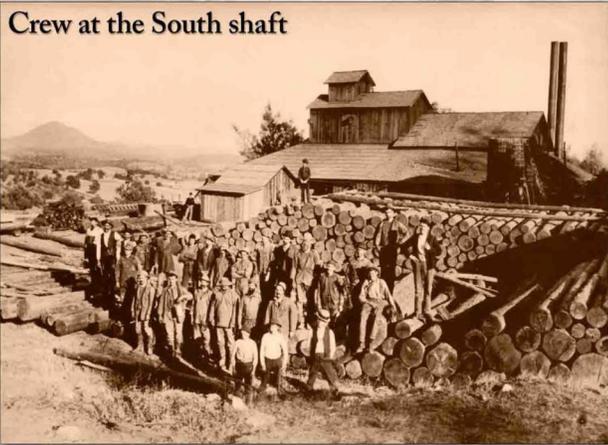
gonaut with great help from Bill Braun and then placed at the Kennedy Mine with his help as well. Much thanks to Bill Braun! Additional artifacts from the Argonaut Mine have been placed at the Kennedy Archives building, the Kennedy Tailing Wheels Park, the newly reworded Jackson Overlook and some have recently been shipped to Sutter Creek for future display there at several locations.

Ed Arata is a board member of the ACHS and representative to the Kennedy Mine Foundation Board. Both sides of his family have been in Amador County since the 1850's in Sutter Creek and the Launcha Plana/Camanche area. His grandfather, Elbridge Post, was the Master Mechanic at the Kennedy Mine for about 28 years and he supervised the construction of the Kennedy Tailing Wheels. Ed's mother, Esther Post, was born at Kennedy Flat.

The original Kennedy Mine site was located on the flat below the highway. The North and South shafts were the main workings until the East shaft was developed in the early 1900s.



North Shaft— seen from the old road

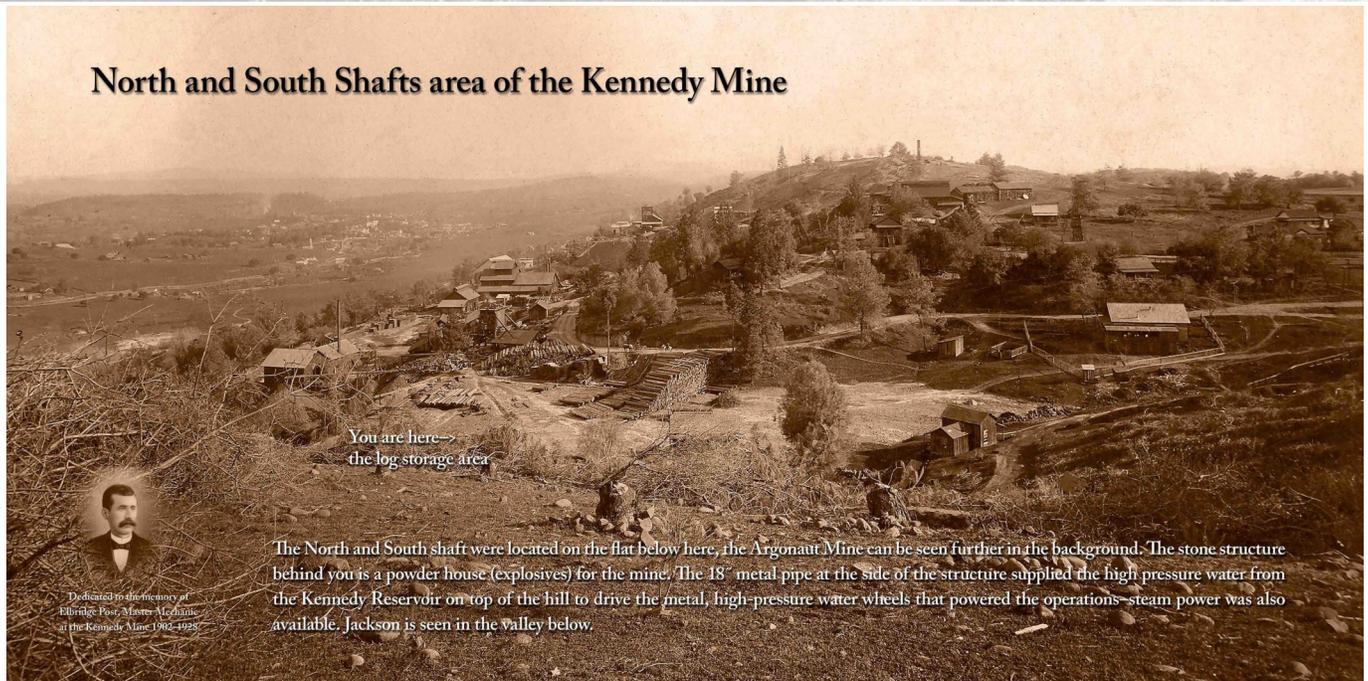


Crew at the South shaft



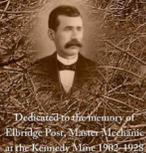
Dedicated to the memory of Elbridge Post, Master Mechanic at the Kennedy Mine 1902-1928

North and South Shafts area of the Kennedy Mine



You are here— the log storage area

The North and South shaft were located on the flat below here, the Argonaut Mine can be seen further in the background. The stone structure behind you is a powder house (explosives) for the mine. The 18" metal pipe at the side of the structure supplied the high pressure water from the Kennedy Reservoir on top of the hill to drive the metal, high-pressure water wheels that powered the operations— steam power was also available. Jackson is seen in the valley below.



Dedicated to the memory of Elbridge Post, Master Mechanic at the Kennedy Mine 1902-1928

ACHS Lifetime Members

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	Suzanne Erickson Story
	Ed & Margaret Swift

Sutter Creek Promotions Committee
Volcano Community Services District

*Benefactor

ACHS 2014

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Board Meetings are at 148 Main St. on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 3:00 p.m.—Members and friends invited to attend!

Volunteers Needed

The Amador County Historical Society is actively recruiting willing and capable individuals to volunteer at the Amador County Museum, the Mine Model Exhibit, and the office on Main Street. Those interested in spending one or two hours per month to help your organizations, please call Judy Jebian at (209) 257-0332 or the ACHS Office at (209) 257-1485.

Thank you!

UPCOMING SALE AT THE MUSEUM

Spring Has Sprung ~ It's Time to Clean Up Your ***ACT!***

Antiques
Collectibles
Treasures

Donate Now - Sale at the Museum in September

Bring - tax deductible items to the Amador County Museum at 225 Church St. in Jackson any Fri, Sat, or Sun. from 11am—3pm or call Judy Jebian at 209-257-0332 for pickup or for other arrangements.

Thank You!!!



Kennedy Mine Model Tours

Tours of the Kennedy Mine Model are on-going every Friday, Saturday and Sunday in the building adjacent to the museum... come on down, bring your friends, see how the “Hardrock Miners” brought the gold up from more than a mile from under the earth.

See the headframe, the Stamp Mill and the Wheel in action with mechanized motors...it is like a little show lasting about 45 minutes, with live narration and tape presentation.

Tours are at noon and 1:00 p.m. or by appointment any day or time (subject to docent availability). Group tours, schools and organizations welcome! Located at 225 Church Street, Jackson Mine Model building in parking lot next to museum.

For more information, call the Amador County Historical Society at 209-257-1485.

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 at right and mail along with the appropriate dues to the Amador County Historical Society, P.O. Box 761, Jackson, Calif.

Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____ **Email** _____

Please check one of the following:

Membership

ANNUAL

- Individual \$20.00
- Family (2 or more) \$30.00
- Students \$15.00

LIFETIME

- Family (2 or more) \$400.00
- Benefactor \$1,000.00 and up
- Patron \$500.00—\$999.00
- Associate \$250.00—\$499.00
- Other _____

For information on how to arrange an estate or trust gift to the Society please contact our office at (209) 257-1485

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