

THE AMADORIAN

A Publication of the Amador County Historical Society

"Preserving the past and present for tomorrow"

Summer 2024 – Vol. 17, No. 2

President's Corner

Dear ACHS Members:

As I reflect on the Historical Society since our last newsletter, I realize it's the first day of summer. Your board has been busy all spring, and it does not look like summer is going to slow them down. Our annual Steak Sandwich Barbecue was a great hit this year. With music by the **Baby Backs** and attendance of around 100 people, the day was a success both monetarily and in having a pleasant day with friends. Our thanks, as always, go out to the **Giurlani Family**. We could not put on this event without the help of **Phil, Jenny and Alicia**. Between the donations of tables, food and especially their time, we would be lost without them. If you were there and had an enjoyable time, tell your friends so that next year it will be bigger and even better.



June picnickers enjoy steak and conversation at the annual ACHS barbecue.

What else is going on, you ask? Well, take a trip to the museum, and you'll see the livery building is **GONE**. **Leonard Williams** organized a crew to empty the building of relics, including a horse drawn hearse,

and within weeks took a crew over to raze the building. Now we need to start rebuilding! Since I make everyone nervous when I'm around tools, I will leave that to the professionals. **Wayne Garibaldi, Leonard Williams, Phil Giurlani** and **Keith Sweet** are irreplaceable.

Our volunteers are what make our organization so great. **Joe Giurlani** and **Wayne Garibaldi**, along with the **Consolo sons**, keep our grounds mowed and inviting. We could not have had the barbecue without our volunteers who staffed the food tables and the bar and, of course, the folks who moved tables and helped wherever they were needed. Want to get involved? We look forward to meeting you and finding just the right place for you.

Our remaining events this year include our **annual membership dinner** on **November 3rd** at **Teresa's Place**. Mark your calendar for **Saturday, September 21st** so you'll be able to join us for our annual Wine and Cheese evening with music by **Bruce Langston** and a guest speaker who will thrill and amaze you with stories from the history of **Preston Castle**. (See an article in this edition of *The Amadorian* about a Preston tragedy.) Tell your friends and make your reservations to attend this annual party. "The more the merrier," is what I always say.

That's it for me. Have a safe summer. Don't forget to come visit us at the museum and mark those calendars for the Wine and Cheese Tasting. We are eager to meet you!

Regards,

Susan Duncan
President, Amador Historical Society

Removal of the old ACHS livery barn involved the help of local, loyal volunteers.



On "moving day," Phil Giurlani and Keith Sweet wrestle to remove a wagon from the old livery barn.



John James, Leonard Williams and Dennis Thompson wrangle the removal of the remaining livery barn wagons.



The hardworking removal and demolition crew move wagons into temporary storage.



On "demolition day" Jerry Williams operates the crane to begin the removal of the old livery barn.



The old livery barn behind the Amador County Historical Society Museum is GONE!

The Museum Needs You!!!

The Historical Society could use some help on the grounds of the museum, sprucing it up. If you have time to volunteer a few hours now and then for this cause, please call **Wayne Garibaldi** at **209-765-5626**. (Phone # in last *Amadorian* was incorrect.

This is the correct #!!)

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 Past - Who Really Killed Anna Corbin? By J'aime Rubio

from a story published in her book, *More Stories of the Forgotten*. Follow her blog at

www.jaimerubiowriter.com

You can look near and far and search the internet until your heart is content, and you will not find as much research about this lady as I have dug up. There have been many sites that speak of Anna Corbin, yet no one has revealed anything about her life prior to her death. You see, when I learned about the untimely death of Mrs. Anna Corbin at Preston Castle, I noticed that no one could really say who she was or what her life was like. It was almost as if the ghost stories took on a life of their own.

For some apparent reason people seemed to be far more interested in what happened after Anna's death rather than what happened before her death. I was determined to find out the story behind Anna Corbin's life no matter what, and that is exactly what I did. (cont'd, page 3)

Anna's Earlier Years

Anna Corbin was born in Kansas on January 16, 1898, as Anna Laura Lawton. She was the daughter of Etta Edna Little (1865-1945) and Wilber Austin Lawton (1857-1936) of Americus, Kansas. Her parents were farmers, although Wilber had also been a banker, postmaster, politician, Justice of the Peace, Under-Sherriff and member of the school board during his lifetime.

Originally, given the genealogical records and notes I had uncovered, I believed Anna grew up with her sister Loverna in the same household. I have since found out, through Anna's great-granddaughter who has provided me with Anna's own personal family records (written in Anna's own handwriting), there's a different story. Anna was adopted by her Aunt Hattie and Uncle Christie McColm, while Loverna was raised with another set of relatives still nearby in Emporia. They still grew up together, just in separate households.

After graduating from Emporia High School, Anna met and married Robert Travis Corbin in 1918. A year later in 1919, a son, Harold Jay Corbin, was born. Since Robert T. Corbin was a truck driver, it seemed the family moved around quite a bit. They moved to Colorado where their daughter Avis M. Corbin was born in 1924.

The U.S. Census Records for 1930 show that by that time they had moved to Whittier, California (southeast of Los Angeles). The records show Robert as being 34 years old, Anna 32, Harold 11, and Avis 6. Sometime around 1935, they relocated to Lone, California. Shortly thereafter, Robert was hired at Preston School as a group supervisor while Anna was later hired as a housekeeper.

In 1941, both Robert T. Corbin and his son Harold Jay Corbin were listed on draft registers during WWII. In 1943, Harold Jay Corbin, only 24 years old, was killed in action during the war when his plane was shot down over France.

Harold's name is featured on the recently made War Veterans Memorial in Lone as one of the first Amador County residents killed in action while serving in the military. He was stationed out of the Presidio of Monterey, Army Air Force (2LT#0-666635). He was buried March 14, 1950, at Golden Gate National Cemetery in San Bruno, California.

Social Security Death Index records indicate Robert died on May 29, 1947, in Napa, California. He is buried at East Lawn Cemetery in Sacramento.



Anna Corbin worked as head housekeeper at Preston School of Industry.

Let's try to step into Anna's shoes for a moment, shall we? Now imagine you are a middle-aged woman, a wife and mother. Imagine that both your son and husband had recently died. (Anna's parents had died in years prior as well.) Now how would you feel inside? Think about it. There she was, the only parent left for her newly married daughter Avis. How do you think she felt? Now imagine, it is 1950, and here she was not only grieving for two of the most important men in her life, but she also had to work full time as a head housekeeper, her only means of support.

Think about this also: Her son Harold died in 1943, and yet the US Air force had not brought his body back to be buried until 1950. His internment was March 14, 1950, a whole month after Anna's death. So, in her lifetime, to find closure, she was never able to visit her son's grave or know exactly what happened to his body. That must have been agonizing to say the least. I am a mother, and I know for a fact that losing a child at any age would be devastating. To make things even sadder, on the very day of Anna's murder, a telegram from the War Department was sent out to Anna, notifying her that her son Harold's body was being returned to the U.S. for burial. The telegram arrived too late. She didn't live long enough to ever learn what happened to her son's body. *(cont'd, page 4)*

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So here it was 1950, and Anna was by then the head housekeeper at Preston School of Industry. She had been working there for 18 years according to the school superintendent's statement. Anna's husband's draft enlistments state that he was working at Preston at the time the enlistment card was written, and that date was 1941. More than likely she and her husband were both hired at the same time in 1935.

Another tidbit to add: Anna did not live in an apartment in the building where she was murdered. She lived in a five-bedroom house in Lone. She did not live in the administration building as so many reports and television shows claim. The papers claimed she lived on Marquette Street; but in fact, Anna lived at 206 S. Amador Street, which is on the corner of Amador and Market Street.

The Day of the Murder

It was Thursday, February 23, 1950. Just before a staff meeting held by the Superintendent Robert B. Chandler, a ward, Robert Hall, along with housekeeper Lillian Lee McDowall, discovered the body of Anna Corbin and quickly notified the staff of the grisly finding.

Prior to entering Anna Corbin's office, they noticed the door leading outside of the building was open. Hall claimed that he discovered blood stains on the door jamb leading out of Anna's office and a blood trail that led them to the supply room. Hall claimed, *"Something stopped the door from opening full swing. It was a large clothes hamper. I moved it and there was a large pool of blood on the floor underneath. There was a lot of blood on the door leading to the storage room. It was locked with a padlock."*

According to Hall's account, he kicked the door in and went into the room. The ward noticed that in the large 16' long by 35' wide room, a pile of carpeting in the corner was out of place. Hall quickly went over to the carpets and pulled them aside to discover the ghastly sight of poor Mrs. Corbin's body, dead, in a half-sitting position. The blood trails from the different rooms convinced investigators that it was possible that there were two killers. They believed she had been first attacked in her office and then dragged through the supply room into the adjoining storeroom. Someone had used an undershirt to attempt to wipe up the pool of blood on the floor, smearing it. The shirt was an old one, so it was more than likely used as a dust rag for cleaning. Anna's clothes were mangled, leading the authorities to assume she had either been raped prior or even possibly after being murdered. Another bit of information leaked to the press was that Anna's body was found with shoe polish on her undergarments. The autopsy report later revealed that she had not been sexually assaulted.

The Suspects

The last person who claimed to have seen Anna alive was head gardener Jeff Machado. He stated that he had brought Anna acacia branches and blossoms around 9-9:30 a.m. Another housekeeper, Elizabeth Goodman, stated that around 10:23 a.m. she came into Anna's office and left an apple on her desk. That apple was still there upon the discovery of Anna's body.

Lillian McDowall and her helper/ward Robert Hall were the ones to discover Anna's body a little after 1:30 p.m. The coroner stated that she had been dead for at least four hours when her body was discovered, leading many to believe that she died between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. that morning.

Initially the Superintendent, along with Sheriff Lucot and other investigators, singled out the 22 wards on "housekeeping detail" before questioning other wards who had been convicted of assault and sexual crimes. After those groups were questioned, they detained all wards to their rooms for further questioning and investigation of each one. Superintendent Chandler made it very clear that everyone was a suspect at that point. He even stated that the staff would be investigated thoroughly. Ultimately, there were three wards who were found to be actual "suspects". *(cont'd, page 5)*

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A handwritten letter addressed to Superintendent Chandler stated that Anna's killer was not a ward, but in fact a member of the staff who "wanted her job but didn't make the cut." The name of the sender was Mrs. Melissa Benn of West Sacramento. Although Mrs. Benn made these claims that she knew who Anna's murderer was, she offered no further information, nor did she give the name of the person.

Another question that arose was regarding Anna's keys being left on her desk. The superintendent went on to say that it was a "cardinal offense" to leave your keys lying around and that Anna would never, in all the years she had worked there, have left her keys out on the desk that way intentionally.

There were no clues that any blood had been left on the keys. This implied that the killer did not use Anna's keys to lock her in the storeroom that was adjacent to the supply room and then return the keys back to her desk. Of course, there is really no way to know.

The idea about the keys would make someone wonder about a staff member possibly being involved in her death. In my search, I could not find anything that said whether the wards on housekeeping detail may have been able to use keys under the supervision of a housekeeper.

Avis Barone, Anna's daughter, claimed that she had letters from her mother and excerpts found in Anna's diary that pointed to a few boys on her housekeeping detail that she felt were possible suspects in her mother's death. One boy was none other than Robert Hall, the very boy who discovered her body.

According to Avis, on August 1, 1949, Anna had written her a letter stating, "*We took a sharp-bladed knife from each of the two of our house squad boys. Just now one of the same boys asked me what I would do if a boy threatened me with a knife. I just said, 'I don't scare easy, Upton.' He said, 'Against a knife you wouldn't have a chance.' However, I didn't act scared, I guess, for he started talking about other things then.*"

The very same day that Anna had written her daughter that letter, she had also written this entry in her diary, "*August 16, 1949: I'm rather concerned about the threatening letter from my boy, Robert Hall.*"

Avis told the newspapers, "*Mother told me two boys had tried to make love to her and that Upton wanted to marry her. Mother told him she was old enough to be his mother.*"

It was obvious that both ward Upton and ward Robert Hall were a bit obsessed with Anna to the point that she was sincerely concerned about her safety. Anna was described by many as a beautiful lady. She had even modeled in a fashion show for the Community Methodist Church in Lone the night before she was killed. Her petite 5'2" frame, her dark hair, very neatly dressed appearance, and the fact she looked at least 10 years younger than she was, probably only added to the unwanted attention the wards gave her. The day of her death she was dressed in a brown dress with a beige sweater that buttoned up the front, she was not in some sort of housekeeper uniform as many may assume.

While Hall remained a person of interest in the case, the authorities failed to charge him despite the information Anna's daughter provided. Avis and her aunt Loverna Morris made it known to the press how thoroughly disgusted they were with the school and how they ran things.

Loverna stated, "*I am not interested in revenge. Punishment of the guilty is not my concern either. But I think those in authority have a responsibility of providing more adequate facilities and personnel so this thing cannot happen again.*"

Avis went on to say, "*If nothing comes out of this investigation, if the administration doesn't do something to make it better or safer for those who work there, then her death will have been in vain.*"

Upon the discovery of Anna's body, the authorities started a 104-hour probe of suspects and evidence that failed to yield any progress in the case. Sheriff Lucot and the state investigators that were called out to work the case constantly butted heads throughout the entire ordeal. Eventually, out of the entire staff and the 657 wards questioned, in the end only one person was charged as a suspect. That person's name was Eugene Monroe.

(cont'd, page 6)

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Eugene Monroe

Monroe was a 19-year-old African American inmate from southern California. What some people did not know was that he had been a suspect in a murder of a 17-year-old female in Los Angeles just a few years prior to Anna's murder. At the time he was using the alias Eugene Jefferson, his stepfather's last name.

In 1947, the body of Vesta Belle Sapenter was found dead in her upstairs bedroom at her home. Detective Raleigh R. Copping of the LAPD reported that the girl's lifeless body was found with a piece of rope tightened around her neck, tied in a square knot. She had also been raped.

According to Vesta Sapenter's brother's statement to the police, he claimed that he had come home to find Monroe delivering furniture to their home. Monroe then asked the brother Carlisle if he could use the restroom. After he agreed, Monroe headed upstairs and then later came back down. Carlisle asked Monroe if he had seen his sister, to which Monroe replied, "She's upstairs." He also later replied he hadn't seen her at all. Monroe and Carlisle then headed upstairs and to Vesta's bedroom door, which happened to be locked. Carlisle broke the door down and discovered his sister's body. Apparently, she had been hanging curtains on the windows when she was attacked.

What is interesting to note is that the knot used to strangle Vesta was the same type of knot used in Anna's murder. In the Corbin case, the knot had been pulled up tight behind the left ear, which was the exact place they found the knot on Vesta. Although they interrogated Monroe, the police had no proof to hold him.

"I am certain this boy did the job, but we were just never able to prove it. He was the only one in the house at the time and had ample time to commit the act," Copping stated for the press. Although he was a suspect in that murder, he was released and later ended up in Preston School for a conviction of burglary charges.

Upon Monroe's arrival, the Preston School was aware of Monroe's mental issues and violent behavior. In fact, it was even admitted that Monroe should never have been sent to Preston in the first place. Superintendent Chandler was aware of the risk he was taking by allowing Monroe at Preston, let alone allowing him to be on "cleaning detail," a fact which was swept under the rug after Anna's death made headlines.

In fact, Monroe was assigned to a cleaning detail that was within 200 feet of Anna on the day of her murder. Most people aren't aware of this because it was covered up for years. Monroe should have been locked away in the Tamarack Lodge, a building which held the solitary confined inmates. He was constantly destroying the cells he was placed in. Some of the acts he had committed included ripping mattresses apart, tearing pipes off the walls, and literally destroying anything and everything including his skin. Yes, he even used self-mutilation as a form of violent behavior.

I spoke to a few old timers about this case. One had worked at Preston, and another knew Anna and her family. They had been around during the time of the trial. One also knew classified information regarding the case. Even after all this time, these men still don't want their names revealed because they believe the State of California had been involved in helping with the cover up. I have honored their wishes and kept their names anonymous.

When Anna's body was found, Chandler knew the repercussions that would come down on Preston swiftly and harshly. This was due to the fact he allowed such a violent and dangerous ward to work in the administration building with little to no supervision. He had to quickly cover it up. *(cont'd, page 7)*

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William J. Mercer, a fellow ward and self-claimed witness, stated that he knew Monroe murdered Anna. Mercer claimed that he saw Monroe argue with Anna, whereas he then struck her face twice with his fists. In a panic, Mercer fled the scene and returned to the hospital where he claimed he felt ill. Upon Mercer's request, he was moved to the Amador County jail out of fear for his life. A civil rights attorney involved with the NAACP and licensed in Sacramento, was then called in to represent Monroe. You see, if the school could keep Monroe from being convicted, then obviously it would leave a question in everyone's mind that someone other than Monroe could have committed the crime. If they could cast that shadow of doubt, the liability of having such a dangerous ward like Monroe wouldn't fall on their shoulders as harshly.

The prosecution's witness, Mercer, had insinuated that Eugene had wanted to have a secretive homosexual relationship with him, and that during a time when they were about to engage in a sex act, Anna had walked in and witnessed them. He claimed that it infuriated Eugene, and he said he was going to kill her for that.

After a short visit from Monroe's attorney at the Amador County Jail, Mercer recanted the statement. Later, during the actual trial, Mercer claimed that the statement he originally gave authorities about the murder was true, but that Monroe's defense attorney had threatened that if Mercer didn't change his story, that Eugene Monroe's friends would kill him when he was released. Because of his going back and forth with his statements, Mercer's testimony didn't seem to be taken as "credible," despite the fact he was probably telling the truth.

It was stated that the wards were shocked and infuriated that Anna had been killed. The wards themselves were even reported to have told the staff that if the assailant was found within Preston, that they better hire more guards because the inmates might "*take the law into their own hands*" to avenge the death of their beloved housekeeper and motherly friend, Anna Corbin.

Mercer had also implied that he witnessed Eugene burning his clothes in the incinerator. Other comments had been made that Monroe was seen trying to polish his shoes over and over to get the blood off them. Also, a belt that allegedly belonged to Eugene had been found with blood on it as well. Since Anna and Monroe had the same blood type, they could not conclusively tie the blood on his shoes or belt to the crime scene.

Monroe faced two trials in Amador County, both ending in a hung jury. In the second trial, the jury voted 11-1 for conviction. The one juror, Lynwood Miner, who caused the mistrial claimed he needed police protection because people were throwing rocks in the windows of his home after the trial was over. The D.A. was still adamant about holding a re-trial, but defense attorney Colley requested that the third trial be moved out of the county and instead take place in Sacramento. The outcome of the final trial ended in a full acquittal of Monroe. He was now a free man.

During the preliminary part of my investigation of Eugene Monroe, I didn't think he had killed Anna Corbin. Originally, I had suspicions that it must have been a staff member or even quite possibly a guard. This had been because there had been so many stories of the brutality that the guards inflicted upon the wards at Preston. It wasn't until I discovered so many more facts surrounding Vesta Sapenter's murder, along with information of another murder committed after Anna's death, that I was fully convinced of Eugene Monroe's guilt. I now believe that he did in fact kill Anna Corbin.

After Eugene was free, he traveled to Tulsa, OK in 1951. After being picked up on a lesser crime, Monroe was caught boasting and bragging in an intercepted note to another inmate that he was the "hottest thing in town," criminally speaking, of course. At the time there had been a highly publicized murder of a young pregnant woman by the name of Dorothy Waldrop. Waldrop was a young wife and former dance teacher at the Murray Dance Studio in St. Joseph, OK. She was home the day of her murder while her husband Robert was working as a taxi driver in Tulsa. (*cont'd, page 8*)

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Monroe's fingerprints were later found on the Venetian blinds that had been ripped off the window in Dorothy's apartment. They were found a short distance from her body on a grassy hillside near her home. She had been raped and choked to death.

An FBI check was done on Monroe while he was in jail under different charges. This was after he bragged to a cellmate that he was a "sought after criminal" in one of the biggest unsolved murder cases in the area at the time. Two younger boys who were outside near Dorothy's home at the time of her murder came forward and claimed they had seen a man driving near where Dorothy's body was later found. They stated that the man was in a car with California plates, and they also heard a woman screaming.

When looking further into this, the press implied that the Oklahoma Police had beaten a confession out of him. They stated that his eyes had been tortured, and he had bruises and scratches on his face. One would assume that he had been coerced into giving a confession, just as Defense Attorney Colley claimed that the authorities had attempted to do in the Corbin case. Witness accounts in Amador County tell a different story, claiming that it was Monroe who was completely unstable during his interrogation prior to being sent to the Amador County Jail. If you recall, Monroe was one who became very violent and erratic, often hurting himself at times. This would explain why he came out of interrogation in Tulsa with scratches on his face and a tortured look. More than likely, they were self-inflicted.

After learning the facts surrounding Anna Corbin's murder, Vesta Sapenter's murder and Dorothy Waldrop's murder, they led me to conclude there could only be one person responsible, Eugene Monroe. In 1951, Eugene was convicted and confessed to the murder and rape of Dorothy Waldrop. No one is sure why Eugene decided to kill her, but he did admit that he forced her out of her apartment and killed her. Monroe claimed a friend named Eugene McDaniel also aided in the crime.

Although Monroe stood to face the death penalty, he was only sentenced to life imprisonment. Oklahoma Department of Corrections Inmate Number #53479 Eugene Monroe only spent 29 years in prison. He was received at the State Prison in 1952 and was later paroled on April 25, 1981.

According to Kevin Moore with the Department of Corrections in Oklahoma, Monroe went on to California and remained on "inactive parole" for many years. Eventually he was considered "missing" between 2002-2009. The officer who was assigned to track Monroe realized his date of birth being January 31, 1931, recognized he was quite elderly in age. He then decided to do a check in the Social Security death index and found that Eugene Monroe died in Los Angeles in October of 2007.

Final Goodbye To Anna

The day before Anna was killed, she appeared in the "Community Fashion Show" in Lone, as one of the models on the catwalk. She was a cheerful and happy person who tried to make the best of her situation. It was obvious from the way the community, the staff at Preston, and the inmates spoke of her, that she was well liked within and outside of Preston. This tragedy was not only a horrific story but also a sad tale for all who knew her and loved her, including many of the inmates. To this day, I have spoken to several people who once served time at Preston; nearly everyone states how sad they were to know that an innocent woman such as Anna died on those premises. Even after her death, her motherly reputation lived on through word of mouth over the generations of inmates coming in and out of that place.

I originally wrote my blog about Anna Corbin several years ago. My opinions were based on the information I had at the time. I had my assumptions in the beginning that it might have been a staff member who had murdered her or even possibly an unknown suspect that had not even been mentioned before. (*cont'd, page 9*)

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During my research I was given some leads by a few older citizens of Amador County. They stated that there was such a person who never should have stepped foot on those grounds. The school was aware of the danger he posed to anyone in his path, and yet school leaders turned a blind eye to that danger. The inmate was, in fact, Eugene Monroe.

After several years of thoroughly researching the life of Eugene Monroe and meticulously going over the facts surrounding all three murder cases, I am convinced Monroe was guilty of all three crimes; however, technically, the Corbin case is still considered “unsolved.”

Anna Corbin’s grave can be found at East Lawn Cemetery in Sacramento.

Saving the Kennedy Mine Tailing Wheels, Part 2

By Frank Tortorich for the *Ledger Dispatch*— continued from the Spring 2024 issue of *The Amadorian*

More Background on The Gold Rush

The Kennedy Mine owners did not say one day, “Let us stop putting the tailings down the creek because it seems like a good idea. So let us build four very large and extremely expensive tailing wheels.”

They had a reason, but not because it was the “right” thing to do.

Let me help the reader understand what happened to “encourage” the Kennedy Mine owners to build the four wheels to move tailings.

Mining is a highly destructive and invasive process. It took numerous years of research and experimentation with different mining techniques to determine what to do with the tailings. Finally, the Kennedy Mine owners took action to build the tailing wheels.

Let us go back to where it all started: the discovery of gold in Coloma.

When James Marshall discovered gold in California on January 24, 1848, the country would never be the same. What Marshall found was free gold, or “Placer Gold.” This loose gold can be found in the gravel of nearly every stream and river in northern California.

When thousands of people “rushed” to California in 1849, they were seeking placer gold.

I find the term “gold rush” to be rather humorous. Most of the gold seekers that came to California traveled with covered wagons “pushed” by oxen. These pioneers loaded all their worldly possessions and necessary food into those small 10-foot wagons and “rushed” to California at two miles an hour. Most of the pioneers walked the 2,000 miles to the gold fields. The reason was that they didn’t want to add more weight to the heavily loaded wagons, which added to the burden of the oxen to “push.” The “rush” could take five months from the Missouri River to the gold fields. There were also those who “rushed” to California by sea; some sailed around the Horn, others by crossing the Isthmus of Panama. Going by sea, their “Gold Rush” journey could take 3 to 6 months.

By the mid-1850s, so many people were digging for gold in the rivers and streams that the “placer gold” was running out. (*cont’d, page 10*)

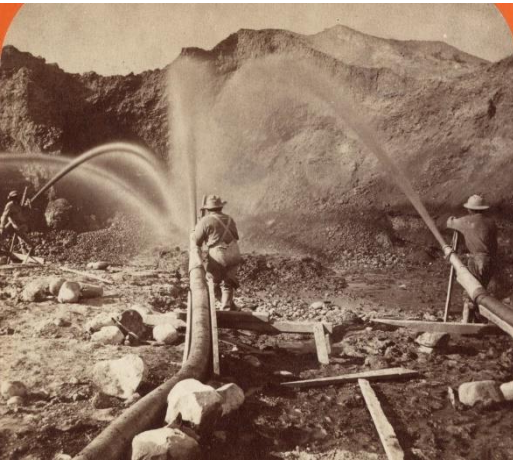
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Hydraulic Mining

That brought us into the hydraulic mining era. Some well-educated gold seekers knew something about geology. They knew that as the earth formed over millions and millions of years, it buckled, stretched, uplifted, eroded, and collapsed, leaving some ancient placer gold-bearing riverbeds dry and above present river levels. One way to retrieve the gold was to blast into the hill with giant water cannons called monitors. It was an extremely destructive process. The water cannons washed away entire hillsides to get at the precious metal.

Much heavier than anything else, the gold went to the bottom and collected in sluice boxes. The rest, called debris, flushed down the rivers and streams. In 1853, hydraulic mining began near Nevada City, CA. The process needed a large workforce, so now miners worked for a company instead of for themselves as they did before.

The massive amounts of sediment and debris flowed down the rivers and streams. It filled and clogged those waterways. The Sacramento River was rendered non-navigable. The farms, orchards, and grasslands downstream were covered with so much sediment, nothing would grow. The San Francisco Bay ran brown with mud during the hydraulic mining era. It even changed the water current patterns in the San Francisco Bay.



An example of hydraulic mining in Nevada County, California, circa 1870. westernmininghistory.com

This debris, which clogged the rivers and overlaid the surrounding land, led to an upsurge of anger due to hydraulic mining. These downstream angry folks forced the U. S. Congress to pass anti-debris legislation.

In 1884, a federal judge in San Francisco named Lorenzo Sawyer enacted anti-debris legislation. It stated that debris must be impounded to prevent it from entering the waterways. If that was not possible, hydraulic mining must cease to operate.

The Sawyer decision slowed down most hydraulic mining because preventing debris from entering the waterways was difficult or impossible.

A similar problem occurred with hard rock mining, where mines dumped tailings down the streams. Folks in Jackson Valley were upset that the mine tailings were wreaking havoc on their ranches and farmlands.

Where did the invasive tailings come from?

Read Part Three of “Save the Kennedy Mine Tailing Wheels” in a future issue of *The Amadorian*.

ACHS Life Members

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We welcome new members: Dr. Dan & Sherri Fields; Lucy Hackett & John Haedrich; James & Carole Marz



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

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of Directors**

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*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 _____

www.amadorcountyhistoricalsociety.org

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- *President's Corner*
- *Blast from the Past – “Who Really Killed Anna Corbin?” – by J'aime Rubio*
- *Saving the Kennedy Mine Tailing Wheels, Part 2 by Frank Tortorich*

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