

# THE AMADORIAN

A Publication of the Amador County Historical Society

*"Preserving the past and present for tomorrow"*

Fall 2024 – Vol. 17, No. 3

## President's Corner

Dear ACHS Members:

We have had a great summer and start of fall in Amador County. The September Wine and Cheese evening at the museum was terrific with music by **Bruce Langston** and the dynamic duo of **Karl and Patty Knoblauch** giving a presentation on Preston Castle. The weather was perfect and the food and wine spectacular.



Karl and Patty Knoblauch provide information about Lone's Preston Castle at the ACHS September 21<sup>st</sup> event. Karl and Patty serve on the Preston School Foundation Board of Directors.



Our next dinner will be our annual membership dinner on November 3<sup>rd</sup> at Teresa's Place. Don't miss the presentation by **Carolyn Fregulia** who will enlighten us on the bootlegging history of Clinton Road! Be sure to reserve your seat!

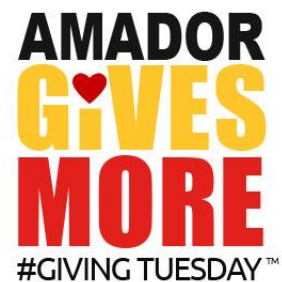
The museum grounds have never looked better thanks to **Wayne Garibaldi, Joe Giurlani and George Consolo**. Aided by a group of men from the CYA camp, we have managed to clean up and freshen the grounds. Come by for a picnic while the weather holds and be sure to visit the Mine Model and the Museum on Fridays, Saturdays, or Sundays. It's close to home, and there's room for the family to explore.

Remember Giving Tuesday is coming faster than we think. The Tuesday after Thanksgiving is December 3, and the event, put on by the Amador Community Foundation, is held at Saint Katharine Drexel Parish. Any funds we receive on the day of Giving Tuesday will be enhanced by local contributions, so try your best to join the party. This is a great way to learn about the non-profit organizations in the county and a great time to help the Historical Society raise funds for the livery project.

Thanks go out to **Charlie Spinetta** for his ongoing support of the livery building. We really need help like his, and we are truly appreciative. As always, we are looking for volunteers for a clean-up day at the museum. We need strong bodies to help us give the buildings a little sprucing up. Volunteers are the backbone of our organization, and if you have time, we would love to welcome you to our family. From grant writers to someone who has computer skills, to someone who just wants to spend a few hours in the garden, we appreciate any assistance we can get! The clean-up day has not yet been scheduled, but there's always something that can use some attention. Call us at the museum and leave a message at 209-223-6386. Hope to meet you soon.

Regards,

Sue Duncan  
President, Amador  
Historical Society



[www.amadorhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.amadorhistoricalsociety.com)

## **Blast From the Past – Clinton and the South Fork of Jackson Creek**

Editor's note: We recently had our Wine and Cheese event at the museum and will be having **Carolyn Fregulia** speak about bootlegging in Clinton at our annual dinner on November 3<sup>rd</sup>. In anticipation, here is information about the beginnings of wine making in the Clinton area from the book *Old Vines* by Eric Costa.

**F**rom Jackson and up along the South Fork of Jackson Creek as far as the old mining village of Clinton, is a hilly and somewhat secluded region known best to the county's early French and Italian settlers. Names such as Marchal, Douet, Suize, Cuneo, Podesta, Quirillo and Fregulia can be found among the earliest residents of the area. It seems only natural that these Europeans, to whom wine is an essential part of life, would be among the first to cultivate the grape. The census of 1860 found many miner-gardeners along the South Fork, proving the importance of agriculture, even while gold was still being mined from the creeks.

In August of 1857, a roving correspondent to the *Weekly Ledger* known as the *Traveler*, wrote of his visit to Clinton and the South Fork of Jackson Creek. A mile southwest of Clinton the *Traveler* began his narrative:

*...one Italian company was at work under large canvas awnings, endeavoring to find the bottom of a jump-off in the bedrock. Just below them is a small ranch principally set out with peach trees, which were growing finely, to the number of about two hundred. These premises at present belong to some Italians. Adjoining this and in a little valley that comes into the creek, is a perfect beauty of a place; it belongs to some Frenchmen and is called Frenchman's Ranch. It is in a high state of cultivation, and many of the fruit trees are loaded with fruit. A new building is being erected here, and work seems to be going on vigorously. How does it happen that most of the farming land has fallen into the hands of Italians and Frenchmen? Are they more shrewd than Americans?*

The *Traveler* had unwittingly described the early development of two properties that would form the heart of the South Fork's winegrowing community. The small ranch owned by the Italians was the property of Quirillo and Co., and later became known as the "Italian Garden." By 1870, the "Italian Garden" would also contain a small winery. The Quirillo's French neighbor was one Constantine Marchal, whose property was known as the "French Garden and Ranch." In 1863, Andre Douet, another Frenchman, purchased the property from Marchal and soon began developing one of Amador County's largest wineries. During the 1850's, this area had been occupied by a group of Chilean miners whose small cluster of tents along the South Fork was known as Secreta. Later, at different times, both the Quirillo and Douet properties were referred to as the Secreta Ranch.

Exactly when the first vines were planted on the hills along the South Fork is apparently lost to history. What can be said is that vineyards had been planted no later than 1862, and most likely much earlier.

In October of 1866 the *Amador Ledger* reported on the amount of wine produced that season in the vicinity of Jackson. Among the winemakers listed can be found the names James Avis, J. B. Milligan and Simon Bartlett, whose vineyards were located near Slabtown, about halfway between Clinton and Jackson. Avis was credited with 700, Bartlett with 600, and Milligan with 400 gallons of wine. A year later Mr. Milligan delivered a six- pound bunch of grapes to the office of the *Amador Dispatch*. Assuming at least four years for the vines to mature, we must for now at least consider the early 1860's around the time when the majority of the vines were planted. A considerable amount of wine was being produced in the area when statistics were gathered for the 1870 census. (*cont'd, page 3*)

It's too bad, that when the *Traveler* passed through, he failed to mention the grape vines that had undoubtedly been planted by the French and Italian gardeners he encountered. Perhaps some of Amador's early French miners and gardeners had arrived in the foothills via the Santa Clara Valley, where they could have acquired almost any variety of grape imaginable from the large nurseries of their countrymen.

Those individuals with wine on hand at census time in 1870 were: J. B Cuneo (500 gal.); Martin Dotta (1,000 gal.); Podesta and Garibaldi (1000 gal.); Quirillo and Company (1,000 gal.); and Marie Suize (5,000 gal.).

## **Andre Douet and Marie Suize**

The "French Garden and Ranch" was, without equal, the premiere winery and vineyard between Clinton and Jackson. In February of 1863 Andre Douet, together with Marie Suize, began work on the property that became one of Amador's most successful early wineries. In addition to his vineyard, Douet operated a placer mine on the ranch that reportedly yielded a bonanza in a very short time. Douet and Suize were undoubtedly the most colorful characters among Amador County's pioneer viticulturists. Douet had come to the Mother Lode from France in 1849 and soon afterward operated the Wildcat and Montreal placer mines at Jackson Gate, where he took out a fortune.

Marie Suize, another native of France, came to the county in 1852, also in pursuit of the precious yellow metal. Donning men's apparel, she mined at both Humbug Hill and Tunnel Hill near Jackson. Wearing pantaloons, shirt and boots, she entered the tunnels where she supervised a crew of men, often wielding a pick herself.

Marie soon became Madame Pantaloon and was thereafter known to many by only that moniker. Her preference for men's clothing, while accepted in the foothill mining towns, was not viewed as favorably elsewhere. She was arrested in both Virginia City and San Francisco for masquerading in man's attire. Madame P. was very successful in the mines and soon amassed considerable wealth that she used to enter the wine business with Douet.

Douet and Suize were fascinated with mining stocks, each reportedly losing incredible sums gambling on the mines of the Comstock Lode. They apparently relied on the success of their wine business to supply the funds that they could then invest in the mines. Both were alternately rich and poor a number of times in their lives. In 1870, "Madame Pantaloons" ranch-winery was in possession of 5,000 gallons of wine. By 1877, Douet had for several seasons been making wine shipments as large as 3,000 gallons to the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada. His shipments were apparently some of the largest made from Amador County up to that time.

Meanwhile, Suize had opened up a liquor store and wholesale warehouse at 140 South C Street in Virginia City, where the products of their vineyard could be sold. Douet's nephew Francis helped Marie set up the shop and worked as a clerk in the Nevada boomtown. (*cont'd, page 4*)

With Suize handling marketing, and Douet in charge of the winery and vineyard, the business thrived, producing up to 10,000 gallons per year.

An 1881 deed reveals the contents of Douet's facility:

*...a certain lot of tanks, tubs and barrels of diverse sizes...all apparatus of a distillery with a still, and a lot of wines and liquors of diverse brands and qualities now in the cellars...*

Douet used the refuse from his wine grapes to produce brandy and was the largest distiller in the county.

In 1889, Douet was awarded a special premium at the California State Fair for his Angelica and port wines, which were considered by the judges to be the best on exhibition and would have been awarded first prize had it not been for the fact that they were merely part of the general county exhibit.

Unfortunately, little evidence remains concerning the grape varieties that Douet had in his vineyard. At least one variety, Mataro, is known to have been present (equivalent to the Rhone variety Mourvedre). In 1890, some of Douet's grapes were used in experiments conducted by the University of California. In the *Report of Viticultural Work During the Season of 1890*, his Mataro grapes and the wine they produced were briefly discussed:

*These grapes were taken from 6 -year- old vines grown nearly on a hilltop and well cultivated...After three years in the bottle, wine was tasted and found to be perfectly sound and in good order, clean tasting and agreeable, but with little character.*

Sometime after 1881, Suize returned from Virginia City, living on the ranch until her death in 1892. Douet continued making wine, concentrating on the local market. In 1893, his *FINE OLD CLARET, ANGELICA, PORT WINE AND BRANDY* were available at A. Piccardo's depot in Jackson. In 1902, at the age of 80, after 35 years of making wine in Amador County, Douet sold the ranch to Jean Lintilliac of San Francisco.

If in the early fall of 1869, one were to have made the trip from Clinton down to Jackson, via the South Fork, they would have encountered an almost continuous band of vineyards heavy with fruit. J. B. Cuneo, Podesta and Garibaldi, and Martin Dotta could probably have been found in their vineyards busily harvesting grapes. Continuing on toward Slabtown, and the ranch of James Avis, the scene would have remained the same.

The Clinton and South Fork wine district was well established by 1870 and would remain as one of the county's principal producers well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Saving the Kennedy Mine Tailing Wheels, Part 3**

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

In part #2 of this series, I wrote about placer gold mining. Placer gold is the loose gold found in the rivers and streams. By the mid-1850s most of the placer gold was gone from rivers and streams. However, some know that there was an abundance of gold locked up in quartz rock deep in the earth.

Hard rock mining was starting to ramp up. In our area gold imbedded in quartz rock called the Mother Lode, or District, is a specific gold-enriched quartz rock that runs from just south of Mariposa discontinuously to Georgetown to the north, for about 120 miles. The Mother Lode quartz vein angles into the ground at about 60 to 70 degrees, sloping from west to east. This sloping angle is called a dip. Other lodes have different angles of dip.

In Grass Valley at the Empire Mine, the dip is about 35 degrees and thus called the Grass Valley (lode) District.

The first hard rock mine in California may have been in Mariposa County. This is where John D. Fremont's workers discovered quartz rock rich with gold on his property. Fremont started to mine it, thus creating the first hard rock mine in 1849.

To get at the quartz rock required a high degree of technology, engineering, and specialized equipment, along with well-trained men to operate the equipment.

It also took a lot of unskilled laborers to do the backbreaking grunt work using picks and shovels.

To be successful in hard rock mining, upfront money was required. Large capital investments, along with men having the know-how, were necessary just to begin the project.

Mine shafts were blasted out of bedrock, and then they had to dig deep to get to the underground quartz rock. Headframes and hoisting equipment needed to hoist the rock out of the shaft needed to be constructed and installed.

When the gold-bearing quartz rock was brought to the surface, it was sent to an ore crusher called a stamp mill. There the quartz rock was pulverized to fine sand, releasing the gold. The gold was captured by using mercury which amalgamates with the gold. The mercury is claimed in the retort room to be used again.

All the quartz sand left over is called tailings. At that time, most mines just dumped the tailings into the creeks. For the mines in Jackson it was the Jackson Creek.

Well, the lone Valley ranchers and farmers that were downstream from the Kennedy, Argonaut and other Amador County mines were becoming more agitated for the same reasons that happened with hydraulic mining. *(cont'd, page 6)*

Many people are under the misconception that the quartz mine tailings are contaminated. This is just not true. Contamination was and is not an issue. The problem was that the tailings were flooding the creeks, rechanneling the water, and in some cases even rerouting the creek away from a bridge, rendering it useless.

The tailings were flooding land and therefore keeping the crops and grasses from growing.

This article from the *Amador Dispatch* dated February 10, 1911, describes it best:

*There are rumors of suits for damages against the three quartz mines which allow their tailings to run into the Jackson Creek. The recent high water took down thousands of tons of mill tailings, the accumulation of sands and slimes since last spring, to the valley and filling up the bed of Jackson Creek near Lancha Plana Road, caused the stream to overflow and be divided a short distance above the bridge, leaving the structure high and dry, and for the present useless.*

*A small stream cut a channel on the south side; of itself it was not much consequence. The greatest volume of water poured over the north bank. It practically cut a new channel and washed away the farmland to varying depths fully four hundred feet wide, so we are creditably informed. The water went tearing through the ranches of Clem Prouty, J. Diebold and Andy Barnham, covering the unwashed out portions with mill sand, rendering them practically worthless.*

*Other adjoining ranches were more or less affected by the overflow, but the three mentioned above received the most damage. These ranches have been covered with overflowing waters in times past, but nothing like the results of the past two weeks has occurred before. These valley lands are highly productive and some valued at \$200 an acre and upwards.*

*While no action has yet been filed with the clerk, it is generally believed that the rumors of suits are not wholly without foundation.*

Well, the farmers and ranchers in Jackson Valley decided to take action against the Jackson gold mines.

This is described best by a newspaper article from the *Amador Ledger* dated February 17, 1911:

*The debris question in Jackson valley is one that has assumed quite large proportions and the people over there have at last awakened up to the fact that something must be done to protect their farms and homes from total destruction...The farmers in the valley have organized an association and are making an effort to correct the evil. Last Wednesday they held a meeting in the sample room of the Commercial, which was quite well attended by those interested.*

The Kennedy Mine owners were aware of the 1883 anti-debris legislation favoring the farmers and agreed to impound the tailings. The Kennedy Mine's solution was to build an impound dam about ½ mile away to the south of the Kennedy Mine stamp mills. (*cont'd, page 7*)

The next problem was how to get the tailings over the two small hills as they were impacting the way to the impound dam. Several ideas were considered, including pumping. But there were no pumps available that could pump the thick slurry of water and sand.

Information came to the Kennedy Mining Company about a type of wheel that was being used in Montana for lifting similar material to a higher level.

The company sent their mechanical engineer, James Spears, to Montana to analyze their system. He returned with a favorable report and was directed to design and build the necessary wheels for the Kennedy Mine.

The first step was to determine the elevations of the two hills, which would determine the diameter of the wheels. Once these issues were addressed, a gravity flow system needed to be constructed using a flume.

The determination was that four wheels were needed. Each would need to be 58 feet in diameter. Each wheel would elevate the tailings 44 feet.

Coming next time will be Part #4 of Save Tailing Wheel #1.

Wheel #4 was enclosed at the Tailing Wheels Park on Jackson Gate Road. One side is clear so you can see the entire wheel. The goal is to do something similar for Wheel #1.

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# AMADOR GIVING TUESDAY

## GIVE WHERE YOU LIVE

Giving Tuesday is a nationally recognized day for giving back. We invite you to "give where you live" to support the local nonprofits that do such important work in Amador County!

Giving Tuesday is the best time of the year to donate to local non-profits because all donations receive matching/incentive funds. More than 60 non-profits to choose between. Countdown to the biggest celebration of generosity! Over \$645,000 raised last year!!

[giveamador.org](http://giveamador.org)

## Three Ways to Give on Giving Tuesday! 12/3/2024

### #1- Charity Showcase

- Charity Showcase 4:00pm-6:30pm @ Katharine Drexel Parish
- FREE Admission/Refreshments
- Meet & Greet 50+ amazing non-profits from Amador County

### #2- Give Online- all day!

- GiveAmador.org - Donate to one or multiple non-profits!

### #3- Drop-Off Giving!

- Join us for coffee & giving at our Jackson Office!
- 8am-4pm at 571 S. Hwy. 49.

### \*Why Donate on Giving Tuesday?

- Give to many charities at ONE time
- All Donations Receive Incentive/Matching Funds
- Maximize your annual and end of year giving!
- \$5 - \$5000 Every Dollar Matters!

571 S. Hwy 49 • PO Box 1154  
Jackson, CA 95642  
[GiveAmador.org](http://GiveAmador.org)  
Phone: 209-223-2148

Email: [jellamone@actgives.org](mailto:jellamone@actgives.org) • [smathis@actgives.org](mailto:smathis@actgives.org)  
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**Amador  
Community  
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For good. For ever.



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***We welcome new members:*** Scott Fritz and Jenny Fox Fritz; Ruth Linder; Louis and Caitlin Casey Ponick



### **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](http://www.amadorcountyhistoricalsociety.org)*

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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** \_\_\_\_\_

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Jackson, CA 95642

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