



THE AMADORIAN

A Publication of the Amador County Historical Society

"Preserving the past and present for tomorrow"

Winter/Spring 2021 – Vol. 14, No. 1

President's Corner

Dear Fellow ACHS Members:

Since our last newsletter, we had a successful November general membership meeting and dinner at Teresa's Place with approximately 35 members present. Our guest speaker was Frank Tortorich with an informative topic about how California got its borders. Many thanks again to the whole Giurlani family for sponsoring this event.

On Giving Tuesday, December 1, 2020, we netted almost \$5,000. We want to thank all our generous supporters for their donations!

I am very optimistic about our future for events and the re-opening (again) of the museum and mine model. The museum and mine model will be open again starting **Friday, April 9th**.

Regular museum hours are Friday through Sunday, 11 AM to 3 PM.

Also in the works is the planning of our wine and cheese event at the museum in September. More details will follow as we plan.

We're hoping for a more normal year and more activities as this year progresses.

Best regards,

Cathy McGowen,
President, Amador County Historical Society



Teamwork in action...Art Long (right) hands Alan Roberts a chalk line as the two Rotarian volunteers complete the remodel of the ACHS mine model.

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Mine Model Roof Repair by Ed Arata and Keith Sweet

The Mine Model Building and the Robert Post mine models are one of the highlights at the Amador County Museum. The Mine Models were purchased by the County of Amador in the 1970s, and the barn where they are housed was developed for the display.

When the ACHS took over the operation of the Museum site in 2015, the south wall of the Mine Model Building was badly in need of repair. **Keith Sweet** organized a project with the Jackson Rotary Club to take on the work. Rotary Club members under the direction of **Phil Giurlani** purchased the building materials with monies donated by the **Charles Spinnetta Foundation**. The volunteer crew removed the old siding and replaced it with new material. Keith Sweet then arranged for the Mine Model Building to be painted.



Phil Giurlani tackles the task of replacing siding on the Mine Model Building.

In 2016, the Mine Model displays needed a face-lift, so Ed and Mimi Arata, along with ACHS, added new photographs, interpretive posters and displays, including the original water colors done for the history book *Gold Mines of California* by **Jack Wagner**, 1970, and a map and prints done by local artist **Robert Richards** of Sutter Creek. The project was aided by Larry Angier, Image West Photography, with his graphics and interpretive skills. At the same time, **Leonard Williams** and crew took on the repair and replacement of the shed roof on the east side of the building to prevent further water leakage in that area. The new Mine Model building was presented to the public at an ACHS event in Spring 2017.



Rotarian crew members, (left to right) **Keith Sweet**, **Alan Roberts**, **Phil Giurlani**, and **Art Long** confer on installation of new siding on the Mine Model housing.

The **Charles Spinnetta Foundation** paid for additional materials to install a new and highly efficient heater/air conditioner combination. **L&M Heating** installed it free of charge. **Klonowski Roofing of Martell and Construction** donated labor to remove the old heater vent on the west side of the roof. This vent was no longer needed, and it leaked water onto the south display wall during rainy periods.

The Mine Model Building offers a compact, informative history of gold mining in Amador County from one-and two-man operations to the giant mines of our area. Visitors can spend half an hour or half a day exploring the history. The Mine Models and the Museum can easily be linked to the Kennedy Mine, Knight Foundry, the Kennedy Tailing Wheels Park and a driving tour of historic mining sites from Jackson to Plymouth to give visitors who are interested in a complete package of Amador Mining and Industrial History.

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A Blast from the Past by Cathy McGowan

Daffodil Hill, Gone but Not Forgotten

With spring upon us, I thought we could take a stroll down memory lane to revisit one of our most beloved sites, Daffodil Hill.

The McLaughlin twins, Ohio born Jesse and Arthur, migrated to Amador County in 1876. In 1877 Arthur wooed and wed Elizabeth (Lizzie) van Vorst. Their daughter, Mary McLaughlin, was born in 1881. In 1887 Arthur and Lizzie McLaughlin purchased the Daffodil Hill property from Pete Denzer who had planted a few daffodils around the house to remind him of his home country of Holland. Arthur and Lizzie continued to plant daffodils to beautify the property.

By the 1930's, the first visitors started to stop and admire the family's garden. The family began expanding the flower beds with over 300 varieties of daffodils.

Mary McLaughlin would go on to marry Sheriff George Lucot whose children, Mary Lucot and Art Lucot, carried on the tradition. Mary Lucot married Judge Martin Ryan and had three sons, Attorney George, Amador County Sheriff Martin, and Amador County Treasurer-Tax Collector Michael Ryan. I see a heritage here of generations of service and commitment to this county from this family.

During the last three decades the Ryan families have continued to plant and expand the garden with thousands of new bulbs with help from volunteers. For eighty years this property has been opened to the public by the Ryan family during the spring when the daffodils are in bloom. Unfortunately, they have had to close their beautiful hill to the public.

The following is an excerpt from the Ryan family concerning the closure of Daffodil Hill that was published in the Amador Ledger, July of 2019:

After the crush of visitors that descended upon our hill this year, we came to realize that the limitation on the size of our parking areas and the inability of the local road infrastructure to handle the volume created liability and safety concerns for everyone involved.

In 2019, Daffodil Hill was only open for one day because of constant rain. Because of the rainy season and the limited availability of the attraction, the roadway to Daffodil Hill became so congested, that it would sometimes take people as long as two hours just to get to the parking area. Due to the long wait time, the Ryan family said some drivers would choose to park their cars illegally along the narrow road and walk in. This caused problems for any emergency vehicles who would find it difficult to navigate around the illegally parked vehicles and the pedestrians.

There is simply not enough space for everyone to park.

The Ryan family said they looked at every available option from shuttles and reservations, but in the end, they reached the same conclusion, 'the narrow roads and the hill property infrastructure cannot be changed.' (cont'd, page 4)



White daffodils are just one of many varieties of the cheerful flowers planted at Daffodil Hill, Amador County.

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The Ryan family took the opportunity to thank every person who volunteered to help over the last 80 years at the Hill.

'Our entire family, all six generations, sends every one of you a heartfelt Thank You for all the kind words of support, your patronage, and appreciation of the hill over these many years.'

I'm quite sure that I'm not going out on a limb here to say that all of Amador County is very grateful to the Ryan family for sharing their beautiful Hill to the public for 80 years and are sad to see it go. It will be sorely missed.

Tragedy Spring by Frank Tortorich

The following is the third of several installments being published in *The Amadorian* from the article "*Tragedy Spring and the Opening of the Gold Rush Trail*" by Frank Tortorich. He continues questioning what might have happened to the three men buried at Tragedy Spring. (Diary accounts are as originally written.)

GOLD POUCH

Why was the Ezra Allen's gold pouch the only personal item left when all other personal items were taken from the murdered men?

It is a common understanding that anything worn around the neck to an Indian is considered a "medicine bundle." It would be "bad medicine" to take or even touch someone's "medicine bundle."¹ At that time, gold would be of no use or value to the Washoe.² (*cont'd, page 5*)



Photo of a replicated gold pouch at Coloma Museum by Frank Tortorich

ONE WASHOE ORAL TRADITION

¹ Keith Davis, a teacher of history and Native American Studies.

² David L. Bigler, ed., 129 fn 21. The gold pouch was delivered to Allen's wife by battalion member Wilford Hudson. From some of the nuggets she had fashioned a wedding ring that she wore the rest of her life. (It is said to be in the family's possession to this day.)

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David Snooks, the late archaeologist and Washoe Indian, said the traditional oral history of the Tragedy Spring event handed down through his father was some Mormon men kidnapped two Washoe children. In the attempt to get the children back, it was necessary to kill the three men. David went on to relate that the Tragedy Spring site was bad medicine for his family. One night, as his father was driving past Tragedy Spring,³ his car stopped running for no apparent reason. He was stranded there for a while before he could get the car restarted. Finally, the car started, and he was able to leave the area, vowing never again to drive past that site at night.

In further discussion with Snooks, we both agreed that the kidnapping story was unlikely. It would be out of character that the Mormon men would kidnap children and burden themselves with trying to take care of children as they struggled on their exploration of the Sierra Nevada and their arduous journey to the Salt Lake Valley.

Melissa Coray, the only woman with the group at Tragedy Spring on July 19, 1848, related her story years later to her grandchildren. She said it was the worst night she spent on the entire trip from Missouri to California and back [on] to Utah. That night around the campfire the men discussed the sad fate of their comrades. They determined two of the men had been on one side of the fire and the third on the other side across from them when the attack occurred. Everything had been taken – pack animals, riding horses, supplies, and their guns. Because Browett and Cox had their gold in their packs, it probably was not found until later when the packs were opened. Allen's pouch, however, had fallen into the brush and lay unnoticed during the attack. Having earlier seen Indians with their friends' clothing and because of the arrows, the men felt the attack was made by Indians. Before the company went to bed, a prayer was given.

Bigler:

Thurs (July) 20th ... last night just before lieing down and before the guard was posted something or other gave our horses & cattle a dreadful affright supposed to be either Grizelys or indians the thundering of the runing stock fairly shook the ground and was like an earth quake Lieut. Thompson ordered to "limber up a Cannon and let her speak once", The guard was soon put out but nothing more occurred all was quiet til morning when we found more than one third of our stock missing we lay here all day, sent men in all directions hunting up the lost stock...⁴

Melissa's story continued:

Some men who remained in camp repaired wagons and others made a new grave for their fallen comrades. They dug a grave and then built a wall of rocks about three feet high and about eight feet (cont'd, page 6)

³ That is when old CA SR 88 ran closer to the site than present day CA SR 88.

⁴ Utah Quarterly, "Bigler," 154.

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square around it. They filled in the center with dirt up to the top of the wall. The grave was covered with more rocks and, finally, a rock rounded at the top was placed upright as a headstone. Nearby stood a stately fir about 3½ feet in diameter, over 10 feet in circumference. Wilford Hudson took his axe and chopped the bark away on one side. Then he sat down and crudely carved the names of the three men and an approximate death date.⁵



Photos by Frank Tortorich, September 2019

On September 2, 1967, the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers dedicated the plaque on the left, which was imbedded into the slanted granite headstone shown on the right. They also dedicated the plaque shown on page 4 in the Summer 2020 issue of *The Amadorian*.⁶

Old California State Route 88, now Tragedy Springs Road, is about 50 yards downhill from the grave [??in the direction of the photos were taken. The old Carson River Route is about 20 yards uphill behind where the grave photo was taken. (see map on p. 5, Summer 2020 issue of *The Amadorian*)

That tree fell in the late 1920s, and the inscription section was saved as seen in the photo at the beginning of article, page 4, *The Amadorian* Summer 2020. The tree's stump has long ago rotted away, leaving no evidence as to its original location.

TRAGEDY SPRING IN GOLD RUSH JOURNALS

Unless otherwise stated, the following journal entries are were selected from a USFS report with 212 trail journals, diaries, letters, recollections, and other primary sources compiled and edited by historian Dr. Kenneth N. Owens.⁷ Several emigrant journalists on the Carson River Route took the time to write (cont'd, page 7)

⁵ Ricketts, *Pouch of Gold*, 21.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁷ The Mormon-Carson Emigrant Trail Archaeological and Historical Investigation, Volume II: History, Appendix A, Mormon-Carson Emigrant Trail Documents. Dr. Kenneth N. Owens was the principal historian of this USFS report conducted in 1990 for the Eldorado and Toiyabe National Forests.

about Tragedy Spring in detail. Others merely mentioned something about it in passing. Some emigrants went past and never mentioned seeing the grave.⁸

Pritchard, James A. (p. 68):

Wednesday Aug. 8th (1849) ... At 11 am we halted for a few moments at a cold springs, this water is as cold as melted ice. At this spring last fall 3 Mormon Pioneers in looking out this road were killed by the Indians. Their Graves were near by the spring. ...

Tiffany, P.C. (p. 90):

Monday, August 20 (1849) ... A few miles from Rock Valley, on the side of a mountain of great height⁹ and nearly at its top, breaks out a bold clear spring of water, so cold as to make the teeth ache. A few rods below the spring is a large grave with a rough stone wall, and on a large pine tree that stands near its foot, is the following incscription : "In memory of Daniel Browett, Ezra H. Allen, and Henderson Cox, supposed to have been murdered by the Indians on the night of June 27, 1848." This spring, from this circumstance has received the name "Tragedy Spring."

Reid, Bernard (p. 125):

Monday (Wednesday), September 19 (1849) Started at daybreak, 3 or 4 miles came to a small lake (Mud Lake) in the woods with a steep cavernous bluff on one side. Stop here to get our breakfast. 4 miles further Tragedy Spring beside the trail. Here is a kind of cairn or large tomb walled up and roofed with stone. On a tree near by was this inscription - - "To the memory of Danial Brouett, Ezra H. Allen and Henderson Cox, who are supp[os]ed to have been murdered and buried by the indians on the night of 27th of June 1848." These men were mormons and were at that time of their massacre engaged in exploring and laying out the road on which we are now travelling.

Thomason, Jackson (p. 139):

Wednesday 3rd Oct. 1849. ...About two miles from the Valley we came to tragedy Springs.¹⁰ Those Springs took their name from the three men being murdered there suppose[ly] by the Indians in June [of] 1848 & burried by them.... (cont'd, page 8)

The information that we have indicates that a copy of this report may be located at CCIC, CSUS / Dept. of Anthropology, Turlock, CA 95382.

Further reading: Kenneth N. Owens, *Gold Rush Saints, California Mormons and The Great Gold Rush for Riches* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005). Originally published by Arthur H. Clark, 2004.

⁸ Each journal entry includes the page number from USFS Report

⁹ Tragedy Spring is just a few feet above 8000 feet elevation.

¹⁰ There is only one spring.

Pratt, Louisa Barnes (p. 161):

July 8th (1850) ... Today we passed "Tragedy Springs," where three men, on their way to Salt Lake, were murdered by Indians for their horses and clothes. They were found and buried by their comrades who in a few days overtook them. A bag of gold was found on the neck of one, which the Indians, in their fright, had not discovered.

Shepherd, Dr. J.S. (p. 239):

(August) 12th (1850). After a walk of five miles this morning, we found a grogshop on the road-side, kept by two brothers... They started on the 21st of March, had beat us a month, and had returned fifty-five miles three weeks ago, and since been trading where they now are, in provisions of all kinds, and liquors. They are out of most kinds of eatables, but had plenty of drink.¹¹ They are located within a half mile of Tragedy Springs, (so called from three emigrants being shot by the Indians, last year, whilst in their tent) ...

Frink, Mrs. Margaret (p. 274):

Saturday August 31 (1850) ... These springs were named from a tragical affair occurring in 1849, in which two men, intoxicated, got into a fight with each other, in which one of them was killed.

Edmundson, William (p. 332):

October 4th (1850) After Traveling 6 miles we came to a place called Tragedy-Springs from three men having been killed there by Indians; from an inscription on a tree close by they were killed on the night of the 27th of June 1848. Their names were Danial Browett, Ezra H. Allen and Henderson Cox. They are all buried in one Grave under a pile of Stones. After Traveling 2 miles further we came to a Trading Post about noon where we camped having come 8 miles today. A young man for Henry County, named Allen Melton died at this place during the night.

1852 Guidebook, P.L. Platt and N. Slater. *The Travelers Guide Across the Plains. Upon the Overland Route.* ... Only states the name they gave the designation/location and miles from previous location:

To Tragedy Springs (p. 356):

These springs are so called, from the fact that three of the first explorers of this route were killed here by the Indians. Their graves and the springs are both on the left of the road as we ascend the hill....

Turnbull, Thomas (p. 385):

Sunday (August) 15th (1852), [Monday 16th] ... Passed tragedy spring where 3 men were killed by some Indians. There are 3 graves covered with large stones & also a Station selling liquors & groceries. These men were 3 men that carried the mail to Salt Lake. It happened last winter 1851. ...

It is obvious that as the years passed the Tragedy Spring story became altered from the actual event. By the mid-to-late-1850s those pioneers¹² coming to California via the Carson River Route were following a well-known, well-beaten route. (*cont'd, page 9*)

¹¹ From 1850 on, many journals stated there were trading posts every mile charging inflated prices.

¹² After California became a state September 9, 1850, they were no longer emigrants, but pioneers.

Some journalists that did mention Tragedy Spring used it only as a marker point on the trail. Here is good example of the typical journal for the late 1850s.

Crandall, Eliphalet (p. 455):

Thursday August 17 [18], 1859. ... From Rock Valley to Tragedy Springs on the main road leading to the mines. Roads Rough. Feed good. From Tragedy Springs to Leek Springs descending the ridge which is in some place very steep. ...

In the next issue of *The Amadorian*, the journey to Salt Lake continues.



Our list of donors is growing, making the new Livery Building Project possible.

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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

➔➔ Welcome to new members, Mary O'Neal and Ryan and Aimee Gillaspie

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.

ACHS Life Members

Eugene & Christina Ammann ~ Kathy Allen & Frank Axe ~ Richard & July Allen ~ Joseph and Iris Aparicio ~ Ed & Mary Lee Arata ~ Caryl Arnese ~ Dan and Pat Asvitt ~ Evan Bass ~ Michael Bell ~ Heidi Boitano ~ Mark, Lorie & Matthew Bowlby ~ Ray & Barb Brusatori ~ William Burger ~ Paul & Claudine Burnett ~ Jerry Cassesi ~ Robert J. & Susan L. Chandler ~ D.E. Collins ~ Thornton & Paula Jo Consolo ~ Robert M. & Lorraine M. Cooper ~ Mary Cowan ~ Jeannine & Patrick Crew* ~ Jean Louise Dahl ~ Robert Davis ~ Kathleen Du Bois ~ John Ellyson, MD ~ Carol Emerson ~ Katherine Evatt & Pete Bell ~ Robin Field & Carol Mischer ~ Wayne Garibaldi ~ Phillip & Jenny Giurlani ~ David & Linda Gonzales ~ Jim & Teresa Guidi ~ Ray & Cheryl Herndon & Bobby Keeling ~ Curtis & Denise Hollis ~ Patricia Huberty ~ Jeana (Cova) Hultquist & Marshall Cova ~ Ida Ruth Johnson ~ Marilyn Jones ~ Richard & Pat Jones ~ Gretchen Kingsbury ~ George & Joan La Ponsie ~ JoAnn Levy ~ Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Little ~ Gary & Jaimie Little ~ Stan Lukowicz ~ Doug & Susan McElwee ~ Allen & Karen Martin ~ Jeremy & Shirley McCarty ~ Doug & Susan McElwee ~ Frances Melusky ~ Marshal Merriam ~ Joe & Alicia Miller (Giurlani) ~ Jean Mueller ~ Ron Oliverro ~ Mary O'Neal ~ Katherine & William Orescan ~ Alan & Peggy Piccardo ~ Hazel, Jeffrey & Amy Powell ~ Marian & Leonard Randolph ~ Jeanne C. Russ ~ Martin Ryan ~ John H. & Patricia Scott ~ Norm Seid ~ Beverly Smallfield ~ George P. Smith ~ Rose Marie Smith ~ John Solaja* ~ Marie-Louise Solaja ~ Audrey Souza ~ Charles J. Spinetta ~ Ray Stacey* ~ Steve & Linda Stocking ~ Suzanne Erickson Stroy ~ Keith & Gail Sweet ~ Ed & Margaret Swift ~ Russell & Mary Beth VanVoorhis ~ Violich Farms ~ Grant Vogel & Pam Sharp ~ Fraser & Teddy West ~ Sutter Creek Promotions Committee ~ Volcano Community Services District

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Amador County Historical Society

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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.

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 _____

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Please check one of the following Memberships:

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The Amadorian
A Publication of the Amador County Historical Society
P.O. Box 761
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In This Issue:

- *President's Corner*
- *ACHS Museum Mine Model*
- *Blast from the Past: Daffodil Hill*
- *"Tragedy Spring and the Opening of the Gold Rush Trail" –Third installment from an account by Frank Tortorich*

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