



UTILITAS • FIRMITAS • VENUSTAS

Northern California Chapter
Society of Architectural Historians

The Newsletter

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Tour the New Almaden Mine National Historic Landmark District June 26, 2011

Join the NCCSAH for a tour of the fascinating historic and architectural resources of the New Almaden Mine National Historic Landmark District on Sunday, June 26, 2011. The tour will include a slide lecture by noted authors and historians Art Boudreault and Mike Boulland in the 1854 Casa Grande, the mine superintendent's 27-room mansion. A picnic lunch on the Casa Grande grounds will follow the lecture.

After lunch we will tour the Casa Grande and the New Almaden company town known as "The Hacienda," stopping at St. Anthony's Church (1899) and several private homes, including an 1840s adobe and an 1850s miner's cabin, to view the interiors. Following the walking tour, we can accommodate 18 tour participants on a van tour of the surrounding Cinnabar Hills over a narrow, winding dirt road. We will view various mine sites and stop and enter the San Cristobal mine tunnel excavated in 1866.



Casa Grande from the lawn. (All photos in this article are courtesy of New Almaden Quicksilver Mine Museum)

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*Please indicate in your registration (see page 5) whether you want to go on the van tour. If you do, please register early to make sure you are included. **We can accommodate only 18 on the van tour.***

Turn to page 2 for a brief history of the New Almaden Mine

New Almaden: Mining California's Other Precious Metal

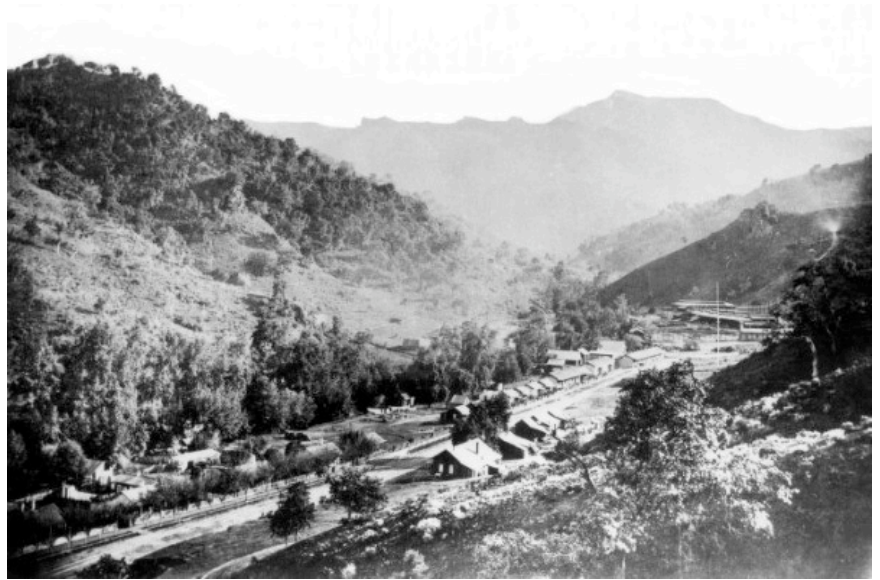
The New Almaden Mine has a long and significant history. The mine was named for the "original" Almaden mine in Spain, considered to be the largest quicksilver, or mercury, mine in the world. The New Almaden Mine was the first quicksilver deposit discovered in North America and one of only a few major sources of mercury in the world during the 19th century. The oldest mine of any kind in California, and the single most valuable mine in the state, it produced more than \$120,000,000 in quicksilver beginning in the mid-19th century, according to one estimate.

The New Almaden Mine played a significant role in the California Gold Rush and Nevada's Comstock Lode, since before the development of cyanide extraction in 1887, quicksilver was the reduction agent for gold and silver from the major mining operations. Whoever controlled mercury production also controlled gold and silver production.

As early as 1824, the Spanish discovered the red ore cinnabar, the ore from which quicksilver is extracted, in the mountains south of the Santa Clara Valley. Local Indians, who used the red ore for body paint, led Antonio Sunol to the deposits. Andreas Castillero, a Mexican army officer, took the first steps, though,



Casita de Adobe, 1996 photo by Mike Boulland



New Almaden Hacienda (c.1863), Carlton E. Walkins photographer

to undertake a commercial mining operation, in 1845. He developed the first furnace to heat the cinnabar for extracting mercury. Castillero eventually sold his shares in the mine to the English mining firm of Barron, Forbes & Company, which had a branch based in Mexico. Alexander Forbes brought miners and equipment to the New Almaden, and the first large scale mercury production began in 1847. The California Gold Rush of 1849 greatly increased the demand for quicksilver, which placer miners used to accumulate particles of gold in water. Later, gold bearing ore was mixed with mercury and water to extract the gold. Historians contend that the New Almaden Mine made possible the rapid development of California gold mines.

The New Almaden Mine greatly expanded operations in 1853 under West Point graduate Henry Halleck, the mine superintendent. By 1854, the mine was producing over one millions pounds of quicksilver annually, making it the second largest in the world after the Almaden Mine in Spain. In that year, Halleck built the 27-room Casa Grande – originally intended to be a hotel - as the superintendent's house. Gordon Cummings designed the house, and the builder was contractor Francis Meyers. John McLaren, who later designed San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, laid out the gardens in the 1880s near the Casa Grande with landscape designer Gustav Magnison.

The mining town built near the Casa Grande, which became known as "The Hacienda," included worker housing, a post office



Furnace yard, c. 1880 (Photographer unknown)

and a general store. Separate small towns serving specific ethnic groups—Spanish town and English town—developed in the hills near the mine shafts with their own housing, churches and schools for mine workers.

Halleck was called into military service in 1861, at the beginning of the Civil War, becoming the commanding general of the Union Army. Barron, Forbes sold the mine in 1863 to the Quicksilver Mining Company of New York, whose president, Samuel Butterworth, became the mine superintendent after the Civil War. By this time, the mine employed 1,200 men and, because of its size and output, had virtual control over quicksilver prices in the United States.

The ox-drawn carts that had originally moved ore from the mines to the processing area gave way to an incline railway built in 1860s, that greatly increased the efficiency and profitability of the operations. Shafts up to a half mile deep were dug by the 1870s as the readily available ore was exhausted. Reportedly over 100 miles of tunnels honeycombed the hills in search of cinnabar.

The glory years of the New Almaden were under Butterworth's nephew, James Randol, who became superintendent in 1870, upon his uncle's retirement, and greatly improved the mine's financial position. Randol added several more successful mine shafts in the 1870s and '80s, and he brought in skilled Cornish miners, who lived in the English Town, to increase productivity. Randol retired in 1892.

The New Almaden fell on hard times, after Charles Nones became president of the parent Quicksilver Mining Company, in 1909. According to mine historian Jimmie Schneider,

Nones "grossly mismanaged" the mine. He sold off valuable land holdings and spent mine profits on what many considered to be an unnecessary electric railway to the Hacienda. The mine's board of directors fired Nones in 1913, and elected Joseph Kaufman President. Nones reportedly spent time in state prison for mismanaging the mine's finances. The operation continued to lose money, and the stockholders demanded a full accounting of Quicksilver Mining Company's assets and eventually its dissolution, which occurred in 1918, as it went into bankruptcy.

George Sexton purchased the bankrupt company in 1918, renaming it the New Almaden Quicksilver Mining Corporation. Facing increased competition, the mine continued to operate at a loss, however, and Sexton developed a plan for a golf course and exclusive residential community near Casa Grande. Sexton, however, died in 1926, and the New Almaden Corporation filed for bankruptcy the following year. In 1928, Sexton's heirs sold the Hacienda, the Casa Grande and the furnace yard at Deep Gulch.

The new owner, David Black, took up Sexton's idea to put the site to a new, productive use and developed a summer resort – "Club Almaden" - with three large swimming pools near Casa Grande, the resort clubhouse, in



Sherman Day, at far right, became Almaden mine superintendent and designed incline railway. Carleton E. Watkins, photographer (1863).

1928. Club Almaden continued in operation until the late 1970s.

The Civilian Conservation Corps—formed to provide public works jobs during the Depression—demolished most of the many original abandoned and deteriorated mine buildings in the surrounding hills during the years 1933-37. Mining operations resumed during World War II, as mercury prices soared with increased demand to provide mercury for various defense applications and electrical apparatus manufacturing. Sexton's heirs unsuccessfully attempted to start new high volume mining activities after the war in the Spanish town area. Various individual prospectors purchased land or leased the mines from the Sexton family.

The surviving buildings at The Hacienda and the English Town school were designated a National Historic Landmark New Almaden Historic District in 1963. The New Idria Mining and Chemical Company developed plans to bring back some mining activity in 1968, but the price of mercury plummeted and they abandoned the project in 1971. When Santa Clara County purchased the New Almaden mines for a County Park in 1976, all mining activity ceased. In 1998, the Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department purchased the Casa Grande to house the New Almaden Quicksilver Mining Museum.

Please turn to page 5 for New Almaden Tour registration form



Casa Grande, 1894 view by Robert Bulmore

New Almaden Tour Itinerary

10:30 Meet at The New Almaden Quicksilver Mining Museum in the Casa Grande, 21350 Almaden Road, San Jose, for coffee, tea and treats.

Directions to the Casa Grande and the New Almaden Mine Quicksilver Museum:

From San Francisco or the East Bay, take Highway 101 or 280 to Highway 85, exit at The Almaden Expressway and continue south for about 4 miles until you reach Almaden Road; make a right turn on Almaden Road and continue south for about 3 miles; make a left turn into the parking lot for the Casa Grande, 21350 Almaden Road.

11:00 Slide lecture on the history of the New Almaden Quicksilver mine by mine historians and authors Mike Boulland and Art Boudreauld in the event room, followed by a question and answer period.

12:00 Gourmet Picnic Lunch on the grounds of Casa Grande

1:00 Tour of the exterior and interior of the Casa Grande and the New Almaden Quicksilver mine museum. Several books about the New Almaden Mine are available at the gift shop.

1:45 Walking tour of original New Almaden mining town known as 'The Hacienda'. We will stop at private homes along the way and tour their interiors, including a 1840s adobe and an original miner's cabin. Walk is about 1 mile. Walk to Mine Hill Road to view the smelter plaque and of view of the original furnace yard.

3:30- 5:30 John Slenter, Park Ranger and Chief of Interpretation for the Almaden Quicksilver County Park, will lead a van tour of mining sites in the Cinnabar Hills, stopping to enter the 1866 San Cristobal mine tunnel. *Please indicate in your registration whether you want to go on the van tour. Since we can only take 18 tour participants on the van tour, please register early to make sure you are included. We cannot accommodate more than 18 on the van tour.*

Other Events of Interest

Lecture Series - San Francisco Architectural Heritage

July 21 - John King, *Cityscapes*

August 18 - JC Miller

Thomas Church's Fay Park

September 15 - George Oates

The Future of Archiving

October 13 - Chris VerPlanck

40 Years of Heritage

November 17 - Alan Hess

San Francisco Modernism

For more information:

http://www.sfheritage.org/upcoming_event/s/lecture-series/

Tuesday, July 05, 2011, 12 Noon

Le Corbusier's Villa Stein-de Monzie: A New Standard for Modern Luxury. Carrie Pilto, project assistant curator, SFMOMA

Phyllis Wattis Theater

Carrie Pilto discusses how Sarah and Michael Stein's 1926 commission of a home by now-legendary architect Le Corbusier ushered in a new era of modern luxury. She addresses the villa's design as a purist work of art as well as how the Steins inhabited their home and played a significant role in advancing the cause of modern architecture.

For more information:

<http://www.sfmoma.org/events/1904#ixzz1NUUALyKO>
[San Francisco Museum of Modern Art](http://www.sfmoma.org/events/1904#ixzz1NUUALyKO)

Gustav Stickley and the American Arts and Crafts Movement

The San Diego Museum of Art

June 18-September 11, 2011

The Dallas Museum of Art organized this, the first nationally touring exhibition to focus on the career of Gustav Stickley. It examines his contributions to the history of American design and architecture during his most productive and creative period, from 1900 to 1913, and will provide new insights into the artistic, commercial and social context of his work.

Ranging from furniture to metalwork and embroidered textiles to architectural designs, the majority of the more than 100 objects in the exhibition are from private collections and have never been seen before by the public. For more information:

www.sdmart.org/art/exhibit/gustav-stickley

California Design, 1930-1965:

"Living in a Modern Way"

Resnick Pavilion, LACMA

October 1, 2011-March 25, 2012

Billed as the first major study of California mid-century modern design, this exhibition will feature more than three hundred objects, including examples of furniture, ceramics, metalwork, fashion and textiles, and industrial and graphic design that illustrate the state's role in shaping the material culture of the entire country. For more information:

www.lacma.org/art/ExhibCalDesign.aspx

Registration for New Almaden Mine Tour

[please print]

Name _____

Affiliation _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Email address _____

Registration: \$25 members/ \$35 nonmembers

Total Enclosed _____

Please make checks payable to NCCSAH and mail to:

Ward Hill
NCCSAH New Almaden Tour
3124 Octavia Street, #102
San Francisco, CA 94123

For more information please contact Ward Hill at whill@pacbell.net.

I would like to take the van tour of mine sites
from 3:30 to 5:30. Yes _____ No _____



UTILITAS • FIRMITAS • VENUSTAS

The mission of the NCCSAH is to further the objectives of the Society of Architectural Historians of which the Northern California Chapter is an official affiliate; promote the study and discussion of our region's architectural history and its related fields; visit significant works of architecture; and increase public awareness and appreciation of our architectural heritage. Membership is open to anyone interested in architectural history and its related fields who agrees to pay the annual dues and subscribe to the by-laws of the organization.

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NCCSAH Newsletter Editor
dandreini@sbcglobal.net

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