



Happy New Year 2019

Board members at the recent board meeting brought forward some questions on how the association can be more relevant to the residents of the valley. Several thoughts were put forth:

- 1) New signage that would be more visible and have notices available to the residents
- 2) Look into recycling and trash options that would service the valley
- 3) Look into a Fire Wise audit for the valley – a way to evaluate our fire risks
- 4) Continuing the noxious weed pulls

The board would appreciate input from the residents on projects that they believe would benefit all residents of the valley. Please send comments via e-mail, face book comments, Nextdoor, or talk to a board member directly.

Upcoming Events

January 11, 2019 – MRHI Annual Meeting and Star Gazing

January 12, 2019 – PVHOA board meeting

February 2, 2019 Alma Foundation Mystery Dinner

February 16, 2019 – Thai One On

March 9, 2019 - MRHI Poker Glide

March 16, 2019 – PVHOA Winter Social – Alma Town Hall

March 16, 2019 – St Patrick Day Parade and Pot Luck

Some History of Placer Valley

Several folks have asked me to share some of the history of our valley, so I'll start this piece with the arrival of the early miners in the 1860s.

While nearby Buckskin Joe and its fabulously rich Phillips Mine has been chronicled in numerous history books, we'll focus on the immediate area of our Placer Valley homes with its mines, towns and people. (Maybe we'll take up the wider area in another issue.)

The first settlement of any size in the valley was Montgomery. One of the first mining districts in the northwestern part of the county, the Montgomery District roared with activity with around 2,000 people living in the town of Montgomery in 1860 whose site is now covered by Montgomery Reservoir. It boasted six gold stamp mills. In the first couple of years, Montgomery District produced about \$500,000 in gold from the surface ores, but soon the boom turned to bust. By fall of 1869, some seventy houses and mud-roofed cabins stood vacant, with only the Joseph H. Myers family along with a few miners in residence working the lone operating mill. The gold, while ever present in the area, needed different processing systems than the many expensive quartz mills erected across the district, leading to the disillusionment of most of the miners, who set off for other 'rich strikes' rumored to be over the next mountain.

But Joseph Myers and Daniel Plummer, the superintendent of Montgomery's Pioneer Mill had faith that the area still held promise. In 1868, their hopes were realized with the discovery of not gold, but silver at 13,600 feet up on Mt. Bross. Their first mine claim, the Dwight Mine, was a 50 by 3,000 foot patch stretching from their silver strike down the northeast side of Mt. Bross. They and their third partner, Richard B. Ware, had sent a sample of the ore for testing, but it wasn't until 1871, that they realized just how promising the Dwight and a newly claimed Moose Mine actually were, with a second assay showing as much as \$1,143.49 of silver per ton. Really Rich!! They added Judson H. Dudley, a affluent freight hauler and Andrew W. Gill, a New York City man to the partnership.

Mining at 13,000 feet above sea level was one problem, but hauling the ore to market was massively more complicated. Burros loaded with 200 pounds of ore had to wind their way down from the mines to wagons waiting at the foot of Mt. Bross (roughly what is now CR 6 – River Road.) The ore then went to Denver by wagon train, onto rail cars to New York and the by ship to Swansea, Wales, which had the best technology for processing the ore. Even with the shipping costs and fees to transport silver that distance, the partners still enjoyed a sizable profit, leading to nearly everyone in the vicinity to begin staking claims on Mts. Bross and Lincoln.

When working the mines became a serious operation, the town of Quartzville sprang up in 1871 with 50 or so log cabins and tents on the side of Mt. Lincoln at 11,300 feet - two miles below the Moose Mine. Miners hiked from the boarding house in Quartzville each morning, leaving them too fatigued to do much mining. (The townsite of Quartzville can be reached by going up Roberts Road to the rocky and challenging Crest Dr.) The mine built a boarding house and an adit at the mine to save the trip to town and proceeded to work the mine all winter. The rest of the mines stopped work, and Quartzville was abandoned to the twenty-two feet of snow that winter, but was quickly re-populated in the spring.

In 1872, it became evident that the money they had been spending on shipping could be profit if the partners built their own smelter to process the ore right in Park County. The Dudley Works (officially the Mount Lincoln Smelting Works) comprised of nine buildings and employed a dozen men. Evidence of the enterprise can still be found on parcels of land just outside Placer Valley boundaries near the intersection of River Road and CO 9. Soon the Boston and Colorado Smelting Company located in Black Hawk, built a smelter about a mile south of the Dudley Works, and increased the three buildings in the area in February of 1873 to forty-five by the end of May. The town of Alma was then incorporated in December of 1873. Over the same winter, the Dudley Works grew into a town of two hotels, two saloons, a store and housing for twenty-two men, but the Dudley Works closed in January of 1874 but after refitting equipment started back up in 1875.

While the burro trains on Bross and Lincoln continued to haul silver ore in abundance, the companies owning the mines managed to get themselves in financial trouble, largely from stock trading schemes in the New York

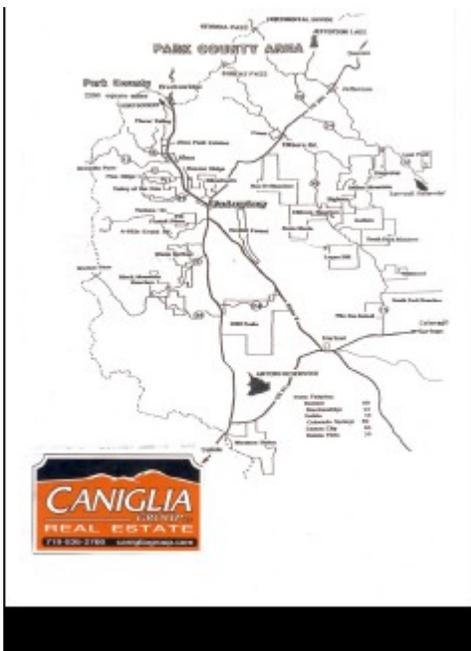
market. The silver crash of 1893 led to a massive hush taking over the former mine, hauling and smelting works in the area above and within what is now Placer Valley with only very small operations disturbing the wildlife for the next century.

With a period of wild fluctuation of the price of silver, there came a mini-flush of energy on the 14ers in 1980-81 when revived work at the Number 9 Tunnel of the Highland claim brought in 40,444 ounces of silver, but then ceased when the value of silver couldn't support the effort to remove the ore and ship it to be processed.

Much of the mining claims on these mountains are held by a handful of owners, some by families who pay the taxes, but have never seen the sites of such history, and most by the Reiber family, who have entered into an agreement with the town of Alma for a recreational easement to allow eager adventurers to scale the former burro trails to take in the views from this cluster of fourteeners and perhaps to relate their experiences over drinks at the local eateries and saloons, much as the early hopeful prospectors did 150 years ago.

Most of the information for this article was drawn from the excellent research of Harvey N. Gardinier in his fascinating book, "Mining Amount the Clouds." published in 2002 by the Colorado Historical Society. I recommend it for those interested in more details about living and mining here.

In the next issue of the newsletter, I hope to pick the brains of those who have a longer history here than I do about how the Placer Valley subdivision came about from the former mining claims in the valley. If you have information about the Bereford's and other associates of the developers, please contact me at: linda.balough@gmail.com and we'll share your knowledge with the rest of our readers.



Placer Valley Home Owners have merchandise for sale

Tie dye Short Sleeve T shirts (S -XL) \$ 11.00

Long Sleeve T-Shirts (L & XL) \$ 16.00

Choice of colors – brown, orange, blue

Re-useable Grocery Bags \$9.00

Baseball Caps \$13.00

Placer Valley Maps (24” x 36”)

contact Peter Kolts for purchases

