



Three Rocks Research

So that others may know ...SM

The Three Rocks Report

A Message

September begins our public involvement campaign to increase support for the New Idria Historical Preservation Project. This campaign includes a letter writing project to encourage public official to support this important preservation effort. Please visit the project website at <http://www.new-idria.org> for copies of sample letters and more information about how you can become involved.

I extend a special thank you to Project Coalinga and the Coalinga Library for allowing me an opportunity to talk about the New Idria Preservation Project. I also thank Larry Todd for presenting Three Rocks Research with two very nice historic photographs: one of Alburtus and Katherine Akers taken about 1900 and the other of Dick Wright at the Archer Mine taken in 1936 by Vince Motte. These excellent photographs will be added to Three Rocks Research library and posted on the web.



Dick Wright at the Archer Mine in 1936

A Story

Small's Camp

Small's camp was a tiny village near the head of the San Benito River at the confluence of Sawmill Creek. The community began in the late 1800's by a fellow who contracted with New Idria mines to cut wood for their operation. The New Idria Mining Company had the timber rights to thousands of acres of forestland on San Benito Mountain. It is a unique forest of Jeffrey, Coulter and Foothill pines and the Incense Cedar. In fact it is one of the few places in the world where these four species grow together. Historical accounts indicate that many of the trees had 6 to 12 foot diameters. The pines were used in construction and the cedars provided mining timber.

According to Lorna Scazighini, the community consisted of about thirty families, a schoolhouse and blacksmith shop. Most of the people worked the sawmill, which was located at the head of Sawmill Creek, but others worked in nearby mines, such as the Florence Mack and Dallas Gem mines. Children from the area attended school in the tiny schoolhouse. The communities of Picacho, Hernandez, Cantua and New Idria were nearby.

We haven't figured out who Mr. Small was yet. To date we have found three people named Small living in the region. Rufus H. Small (born 1833) was living in Bitterwater in 1873 with his wife Temperance. Henry Small, a miner, was also living in the area with John Bray another miner and Fred Small was working at Idria. We suspect that the village was named for either Henry or Fred Small. According to Helen (Dallas) Read, Mr. Small attempted to assert claim on her father's mine, the Dallas Gem (Benitoite) Mine, but failed because he couldn't convince other local residents. Except for a few piles of debris, there is nothing left of the old village today. The area burned in the 1942 fire and was bulldozed clear in the 1950s and 60s to make way for other mining operations.

— References —

Lorna Scazighini, interview

Helen (Dallas) Read, interview

The Story Behind that Name

Archer Camp

According to Jack James, Archer Camp was originally located on the hill directly above the Archer Mine and consist of a small log cabin with a cedar shake roof, a furnace and other outbuilding. Joe Byles founded the Archer Mine in 1904 and his son, Benjamin (Benny), lived in the log cabin and managed the mine until it closed in 1918. The mine and the camp are named for Joe's youngest son Archie John Byles. The camp was later moved to its current location below the mine and consisted of a cookhouse, bunkhouse, a small retort and some other small buildings. The camp supported the Archer Mine, which is a cinnabar mine located west of Wright Mountain. Benny and Joe's other son "Sid" opened the mine again during the depression and again during WWII and continued operation until 1953. Joe Byles had an underground conveyer shaft dug from the mine to about half way down the hill toward Archer Camp where the mill site was located.



Archer Mine Adit, photograph taken July 2004.

The mine was never very productive according to Jack James, and during its latter years, it became primarily a promotional operation for attracting investors. A small rotary furnace was installed, which never actually worked and a portion of the exhaust stack can still be seen running up the hill. A fellow named Bob Pryer promoted the mine to Hollywood investors and attracted investment money from people like Bob Hope and John Wayne.

— References —

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- Jack James, interview
- Henry Carrillo, interview
- James Byles, interview

Pioneers and People

Anderson B. Akers

Anderson B. Akers was born April 15, 1828 in Estill County Kentucky to Henry Akers and Delilah Miller. The family moved to Texas in the mid 1800s where Anderson served with the Texas Rangers during the U.S.-Mexico War. The family moved to California with the Jefferson Hunt Wagon Train in 1852 and soon found their way to Centerville. Anderson served with the militia at Millerton and was probably involved in the Tule River War of 1856 when the Yokuts made their final courageous stand defending their land. He married his first cousin, Amanda Harlow (daughter of John R. Harlow & Elsie "Grandma Smoot" Miller) Dec. 1, 1858 and their first child Levy was born August 11, 1859; their second child Leroy was born April 3, 1862.

With the arrival of Union soldiers at Fort Miller, Anderson left Centerville and moved his young family to Hernandez Valley in 1863. They settle in McCoy Canyon, near where the Hernandez dam is today; and Nancy was born there in 1864. They remained at McCoy Canyon until after the close of the Civil War and he returned to Kings River in 1866. Their son, Stonewall was born in 1867, but he died a year later. Jesse was born May 10, 1870 and they moved back to Hernandez Valley that same year. Francis, their sixth child was born in Hernandez Valley April 6, 1873. They returned to Centerville in 1874 and Bert was born there April 16, 1875. The family made their final moves to Hernandez Valley August 1875. Their last child, Elsie was born in 1877.

Amanda and Nancy became very ill in December 1878 and Amanda died at their Hernandez Valley home of tuberculosis Jan. 1, 1879. She is buried at the Pine Hill Cemetery in Bitterwater beside her mother Elsie. Nancy recovered, but remained frail and died at age 15 in Centerville. Anderson died October 28, 1911, at the age of 83 and he is buried in Los Gatos Canyon at the Anderson Akers Cemetery.

— References —

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- Scazighini, Lorna, Hull, Donna M. "Anderson And Amanda Akers." *And Then There Were Three Thousand*. Fresno, Calif. 1975.
- Bill Howell, interview

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