Happy New Year!

Ranchers must be pleased with Santa's gift of a wet Christmas and soggy New Year. I hope this New Year brings you wondrous reward, success and blessings. 2006 begins the newsletter's second year of publication. I think most readers agree that the first year contained an informative and enjoyable spread of articles. Hopefully, we'll do even better this year and more people will consider contributing stories to the newsletter.

Three Rocks Research is excited about the prospects of the New Year, which brings us several opportunities. Our research with the solstice site continues and we hope to complete surveys of several historic sites. We also expect to locate and record several previously lost gravesites and two small historic community sites. We're still searching for the source of the names for McCoy Canyon and Condon Peak. The ROKON fundraiser has already received two donations ($600.00) and a $500.00 promise.

We hope you will continue to support and participate in this adventure as we continue our journey into the past during the New Year.

Benitoite

Gem quality benitoite, one of the ten rarest gems on earth, is only found at the Gem Mine in southern San Benito County, California. The mine has been operated by several different ventures over the years and was recently purchased by Dave Schreiner, owner of the historic Murrieta Labor Camp on Los Creek Road. Dave hopes to attract more rock hounds to the area by opening the mine to the public. See his website at www.calstategem.com.

1.3 Ct. Benitoite Gem $2,200
Gemz Auction Store

Discovery of Benitoite

According to the popular story, Jim Couch, a prospector grubstaked by Rod Dallas to prospect the New Idria area for “whatever he might find”, discovered the Dallas Gem Mine in December 1906. Mr. Couch journeyed from Coalinga, over the pass at the head of Los Gatos Canyon and camped at Leroy Akers' ranch before heading up “the very rough horseback trail” toward the headwaters of the San Benito River the next morning. By evening, he had traveled eight miles and set camp at a place he describes as, “a beautiful pine-studded glade, as level as a floor, where there was a nice stream of water and an abundance of grass for my faithful horse.”

He began the next day by exploring the hillside north of the river and quickly discovered “a narrow cleft where thousands of sapphire-blue gems, weathered from the snow-white walls of their mother rock were poured-out before his feet.” Mr. Couch thought he had discovered
“blue diamonds.” But when some of the stones were given to a Los Angeles lapidist for cutting, word came back that the stone were “worthless volcanic glass.” However another set of stones reached a San Francisco lapidist who thought they were spinel and he sold one to George Eacret, a gemologist at Shreve & Company who immediately knew that it was neither volcanic glass, sapphire nor spinel, but couldn’t identify it further. Mr. Eacret took the gem to his friend, Dr. Louderback, at the University of California at Berkeley who identified the stone as a previously undiscovered gem, and named it “Benitoite” for its origin of discovery.

— References —

**The Story Behind that Name**

**Del Mexico Mine**

The Del Mexico Mine, located northwest of Wright Mountain is a cinnabar mine discovered in the late 1860s by a sheepherder working for Antonio Urrutia. In 1868 a group of Mexican miners employed at the New Idria Quicksilver Mine formed the “Union Mexicana” to raise the funds needed to work the mine. The union sold half of their interest to Bedal Castro, a most capable one-armed miner, who was willing to work the mine, trading his labor for half interest. However, the claim later proved to be on Lillis Ranch property; Lillis took over the mine and it was abandoned by 1903. The Pacific Quicksilver Company operated the claim between 1911 and 1914. The New Mercy Mining and Milling Company bought the claim in 1917 and closed the following year. Several other companies tried to produce ore but the mine finally closed in 1936. Several different people prospected the mine during the 1940s and 50s, but it eventually closed for good.
The mine is located on the south side of the gorge. The cabin and mill site were below the mine on the north side of the gorge. Miners ran the ore across the gorge on a cable tramway. Bedal Castro homesteaded “Joaquin’s Camp” in the Arroyo Leona just below the mine.

— References —
Latta, Frank. Copy of Latta’s note transcribed by Gail Darling.
Jack James interview
Virginia Birdwell interview

**Pioneers and People**

**Ishmael Williams**

Ishmael Williams was a club-footed ex-slave from Georgia who arrived in eastern Monterey County around 1858. He later moved to San Benito County where he established himself in the teamster business at San Juan. The 1860 census appraised his real and personal property at over $10,000. By 1873 Mr. Williams was the counties foremost teamster with several contracts hauling for the quicksilver mines including New Idria. He designed and had built, a special wagon, which he called “old Alabama,” that was capable of hauling more than 14,000 pounds of freight,

“[The] size, strength and exterior appearance surpasses anything we have ever seen of the kind. The floor of the wagon is completely enclosed by solid frame sides of about 6 feet high, with moveable roof, so as to completely shelter and protect goods from any vicissitude of weather.” *The Hollister Advance*, June 14, 1873

Mr. Williams married Mrs. Alice Harlan at San Juan in a grand 1874 New Years day wedding. During his life, Mr. Williams accumulated considerable wealth, but a bad marriage and riotous living left him penniless in old age. Mr. Williams, an industrious and highly trusted gentleman, known respectfully throughout all of San Benito County as “Bill,” died April 23, 1905 - age 78.

— References —
*The Hollister Advance*, June 14, 1873, transcription by Dee Sardoch.
*The Hollister Advance*, January 3, 1874, transcription by Dee Sardoch.
*The Hollister Advance*, April 11, 1874, transcription by Dee Sardoch.
*The Free Lance*, April 28, 1905, transcription by Dee Sardoch.
The Three Rocks Report

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Submissions
We welcome submissions to the newsletter, however articles may be edited for length and content, and all submitted materials become the property of Three Rocks Research.

Subscriptions
The newsletter is provided at no cost, but a $20.00/year donation helps with the cost of printing and mailing. To receive the newsletter or to submit items for publication please contact:

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The Three Rocks Report is a publication of Three Rocks Research.

Advertising
Limited and appropriate advertising space is available in this newsletter. Please contact Three Rocks Research if you would like information about advertising in this newsletter.
ROKON Fundraising

Don’t send donation yet! I jumped the gun with the previous announcement regarding the ROKON ATV. We’re planning to begin the fundraising drive in February and intend to auction several rare books as part of the campaign. There are also several issues that need resolution before obtaining these vehicles, the primary issue being where to store them when not being used. Details will be forthcoming in the February newsletter.

Your gifts and donations are tax-deductible.

Gift Amount (please circle)
$25  $50  $100  $250  $500  Other: ___________

Select your gift:
☐ (CD-$25) A Memorial and Biographical History of the Coast Counties of Central California
☐ (DVD-$25) The Benitoite Mine, Rod Dallas, and Coalinga
☐ ($20) The Three Rocks Report newsletter – 1 year subscription

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The Benitoite Mine, Rod Dallas, and Coalinga

Now Available on DVD Video.

This extremely rare video documentary commissioned by Helen Dallas-Reed and produced by world-famous film-maker Sy Wexler is now digitally reproduced on DVD.

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Benitoite is among the rarest gem in the world, as is also this video documentary about Rod Dallas and the discovery of the Benitoite Mine in 1907. Gem quality benitoite is found only at the Benitoite Gem Mine in San Benito County, California and this video documentary was thought completely lost until one of the few copies was recently discovered. Three Rocks Research masterfully reproduced it digitally in popular DVD format. You can obtain a copy of this extremely rare video by making a tax-deductible donation today.