A HISTORIC EAGLE PROJECT

This trail’s markings and information were created as an Eagle project by the Boy Scouts of Troop 466. This guided tour is intended to provide an introduction to the history of the New Almaden Quicksilver mining operation for the scouts and public of the Santa Clara County. Thanks are due to the following individuals without whom this project could not have been completed:

Senior Ranger William Burr
Assistant Scoutmaster Michael S. Malone
Park Interpreter John Slenter
Park Interpreter Mary Berger
David H. Baker

Thanks are also due to the scout and adult volunteers who helped to install the posts now visible all along the trail.

Troop 466
Sunnyvale, California
Santa Clara County Council
Polaris District
Continue straight on the Yellow Kid Trail. Post 6 is to the right of the trail right before you reach the large structure.

3. ROBOTY FURNACE

This large rotary furnace formed an important part of the reduction process of mercury from its ore. The large pipe in the front rotated slowly while heating cinnabar, breaking down the mercury sulfide and turning mercury into its gaseous form. This highly toxic gas would then pass through the massive radiator-like condensers on the left. (You will see these as you continue up the path to the left of the furnace). The end product of this condensation would be liquid mercury, ready to be poured into flasks and shipped around the world.

Continue down the path you are on. Post 7 is located in front of the curved tree, to the left of the path.

7. HANGING TREE

Justice was quick at the Almaden Quicksilver mines. This rather ominous-looking tree was once, in the 19th century, the site of a hanging. Though the nature of the crime itself has been lost to history, descendants of those who witnessed the event still throw stones at the tree in symbolic contempt for the despicable crime.

Double back to the intersection and take a left. At the intersection at the top of this hill take another left, heading northwest on Castillero Trail. Post 8 is on the left of the path.

9. BULL RUN

Bull Run is the intersection of Mine Hill Trail and Castillero Trail. Although the thick brush makes it hard to visualize, this site was once a flat field, filled with wild flowers, and used by the miners on holidays for picnics, baseball games and celebrations.

Take a right onto Mine Hill Road, heading east and downhill. Take the first right, a small oar car that leads to San Cristobal mine.

10. SAN CRISTOBAL

San Cristobal is the only tunnel in the park which visitors can enter for an experience of the large cove of granite to the right of this mine entrance was brought, like so many others like it, to Mine Hill from the Sierra Nevada Mountains to be used in mining competitions. In these rivalries, a single miner or a team of two, would be timed drilling an inch deep into the rock. You can still see these works. The miners would compete in this way on special occasions both for bragging rights and prizes. Because of the consistent hardness of this kind of rock, it was possible to compare times and drill depths with miners at other locations throughout the state.

Enter the portal into San Cristobal then double back onto Mine Hill road. Take a right and continue heading East on Mine Hill. Post 11 is on the right of trail in a clearing.

11. VIEW OF SAN JOSE

If you are facing Post 11, turn around. Before you is a spectacular view of the skyscrapers and sprawling buildings that make up San Jose and Silicon Valley (The post was placed on this side of the trail because of potential erosion in this area). The view before you has changed dramatically since 1945. Then, San Jose was little more than a small pueblo, with a thriving Mission Santa Clara just up the road, surrounded by endless grass meadows and immense Live Oak trees. If you had returned to this viewpoint in 1925, you would have been in the Valley of Heart’s Delight, with a bustling downtown San Jose at the center of broken miles of fruit trees (Alam spectacular sight, especially when in blossom. Since then, San Jose has grown to become the 10th largest city in the United States, with a population approaching a million people and the capital city of the world famous heartland of the electronics revolution, Silicon Valley.

Continue hiking down Mine Hill Road. Soon you will take a sharp left onto the April Trail.

12. POWDER HOUSE

This brick building was a store house for the dynamite and other explosives that were used to dig the deep tunnels and shafts of the mines on the hill. Right behind the Powder House is the former location of the Victoria Shaft House. This powder house is a reconstruction of the original, which was destroyed by a flash fire in 1891 from the Loma Prieta earthquake. The building’s unusual design, preserved in this reconstruction, featured a安全管理 of several dual layers of brick. This was both to keep the dynamite cool so that it wouldn’t taint nitroglycerine and become more dangerous. Land this blast in case those measures failed.

Continue hiking down the April Trail. Post 13 is at the bottom of the April Tunnel entrance.

13. APRIL TUNNEL TRESTLE

Beneath this large structure, ore cars would dump quality ore into a wagon. The number of dump cars, to be taken to the Hacienda Reduction Works for processing. Worthless slag rocks, as you can see, were simply dumped off the far edge of the trestle.

Continue on and up the April Trail. Take a slight left at Mine Hill Road, and stay on it for the rest of the hike. Post 14 is to the left of the path.

14. CHIMNEY

This immense chimney is officially designated the Almaden Quicksilver Chimney. It was used to release dangerous sulfuric gases from the Hacienda reduction works high into the air, where (with luck) the wind would carry it away. An unfortunate repercussion of all of this sulfuric acid being released into the air was years of acid rain falling on this part of the South Bay.

Continue on Mine Hill Road. Post 15 is located to the right of the trail.

15. TRAMWAY

The tramway that brought ore down from mine hill to the Hacienda Reduction works passed through this area. Ore cars were brought down to the railway by the weight of the loaded ore cars traveling down the rails and continued their gardens. If you had returned to this viewpoint, just up the road, surrounded by endless grass meadows and immense Live Oak trees, you would have been in the Valley of Heart’s Delight, with a bustling downtown San Jose at the center of broken miles of fruit trees (Alam spectacular sight, especially when in blossom. Since then, San Jose has grown to become the 10th largest city in the United States, with a population approaching a million people and the capital city of the world famous heartland of the electronics revolution, Silicon Valley.

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NEW ALMADEN

The town of New Almaden was built to support the housing needs of the New Almaden Quicksilver mine. This area is now a historic district, with zoning regulations that allow and require residents to keep the historical character of their homes. Many interpretive signs are posted along this stretch of road, to educate visitors about the history of several of these homes.

CASA GRANDE

The Casa Grande was the largest house in the town of New Almaden. Built in 1851 and quickly became the de facto home for the mine manager. The Casa Grande has, over the past 150 years, served many different purposes, including acting as the home for an Opey House, and most recently as the home of the New Almaden Quicksilver Mining Museum.
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ALMADEN QUICKSILVER HISTORIC TRAIL

BSA

HISTORIC TRAIL IS APPROXIMATELY 5.1 MILES