

AN ABBREVIATED HISTORY OF JACKSON

BY LAWRENCE A. CENOTTO

JACKSON ~ a city which gold, girls, gambling, and government has enlivened for over 160 years ~ was born soon after the gold discovery at Coloma. Of course, untold generations of Miwok (Miwuk) Indians, and maybe unknown races, inhabited the environs, if not the place. A ford of a creek and adjacent spring accommodated them.

GOLD! The first non-Indians here, a few months after gold's discovery, were probably native Californios of Spanish-Mexican-Indian descent. Also arriving that summer were soldiers and sailors who deserted to flock to rich diggings along the Mokelumne River.

Who knows why some Spanish-speaking miner or party dubbed the place Botellas or "bottles" in 1848? We only know that H. H. Bancroft, the legendary state historian, identified the place as Botellas on his 1848 map of northern California's mining region.

Probably few if any of the camp's 1848 miners settled in Botellas but a trading post was established on high ground 100 yards or so north of the ford and spring, beneath a spreading live oak which would soon become infamous.

Sometime before the fall of 1849, when more Yankee Argonauts flooded in, Botellas (the creek and camp) became Jackson's Creek, either after some locally-celebrated or nationally-known "Jackson." Nearby, other miners named Sutter's Creek after John Sutter of Sutter's Fort, Amador Creek after Jose Maria Amador.

When middling placers stopped paying a day's wages, many miners drifted away. But in spring, 1851, prospecting miners discovered gold in quartz rock ledges near Amador village a few miles northerly. Another rush began for gold in hard rock and Jackson became a market and government center for the region.

INTRIGUE! In 1851, at least three events abetted the camp's permanency: it got a post office, U.S. mail stage delivery, and political spoils when the upstart won election as county seat of Calaveras.

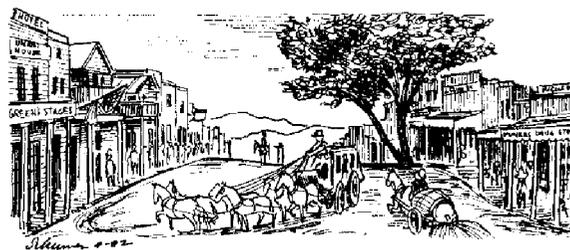
Maddened Mokelumne Hill politicians cozened the state legislature to wrest the seat from Jackson in 1852. In retaliation, politicians in Jackson tried to create a new county of Calaveras north of the river. When secession failed to form a county named Mokelumne in '52 and '53, Jackson incorporated as a town, and resolved to become county seat of a new county by whatever name.

Incidentally, that infamous above-mentioned live oak claimed its first lynchee in 1851 and other lynch mobs elevated nine more victims through 1855 ~ Jackson's live oak was the one of most lethal in the gold country.

Jackson and other northern Calaveras politicians continued to agitate for a new county and in May, 1854, the governor signed a bill giving male Calaverans the liberty to vote to divide Calaveras and create Amador County. That election on June 14, 1854, was so corrupt that no one then, or now, could determine the real outcome.

But northern Calaveras forces won the propaganda war and created the new county. At the first Amador County election that July when voters selected the county's first officers, they also gave little Jackson (the five-year old village was described as "having over 100 homes, some two-story") enough votes to become the county seat.

Main Street, c. 1858



FIRE! Now Jackson's founding merchants and organizations began building in stone and brick. In 1855, fire struck the westerly side of Main. After that fire, several stores were rebuilt in brick, some surviving today. But that fire was mere prelude to the awful conflagration of August 23, 1862, which consumed the court house and most of the stores on Main, Water, and Summit Streets. Within two years, mostly brick buildings rose on southerly Main and survive today.

It took time but Jackson finally reaped riches from three of its gold mines in the late 19th century, decades after other Amador mines made stockholders rich. The Kennedy, Zeile and the Argonaut hit pay rock and became, with government, gaming and girls, the economic foundation of Jackson.

At the century's turn, Jackson had about 3,000 residents, with three churches, three newspapers, four hotels, five boarding houses, two candy factories, cigar and macaroni factories, eight physicians and two dentists. In 1905, Jackson became the first incorporated city in the county.

DISASTER! In 1922 Jackson was in the world's headlines when the state's worst mining tragedy smothered the lives of 47 miners deep within the Argonaut Mine. The burial sites of the miners are featured in three Jackson cemeteries today.

World War II ended Jackson's gold mining industry in early 1942 though ample gold remained. For years after the war there was talk of reactivating the mines but gold's price did not justify the expense to re-work and de-water their miles of shafts and drifts.

Though mining died, timber harvest and milling continued and intensified circa 1940 with the arrival of Amador Lumber. Can you imagine semi-trucks and trailers loaded with tree sections, bending their way through downtown Main and out Broadway, the state highway then? In 1948, after the war, the state division of highways finally by-passed downtown with Highways 49 and 88.

In the 1950s came the closure of Jackson's nickel-in-the-slot machines, other gaming, and its "girls dormitories" which name proper insurance maps used for its bawdy houses. To commemorate those wide-open days, certain ad hoc Clamper-types in 1968 implanted in Jackson's sidewalk a heart-shaped plaque on Valentine's Day. It, note well, was the first to recognize the utility and role of Jackson's prostitutes during its halcyon days. As you can imagine, that dedication was read and talked about 'round the world.

REVIVAL! With such a rich historical heritage and industrious people, Jackson, the county seat of Amador County since 1854, continues to thrive. In recent times, a renaissance of downtown has begun as businesses have been restoring historical facades.

We highly recommend visiting the Jackson Civic Center at 33 Broadway to view the unique murals and photo exhibit which tell the history of Jackson from camp, town, to city. At this writing, the murals and photos can be seen Monday - Friday, 8:30 - 5, with some closures on Fridays.

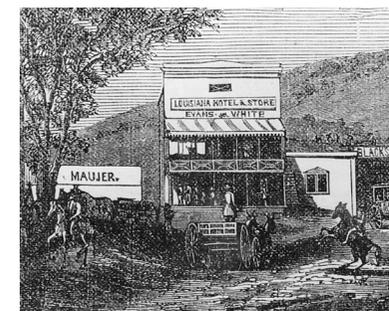
WALKING MAIN STREET J•A•C•K•S•O•N

The following numbered descriptions refer to 21 bronze plaques which mark many, but not all, of Jackson's historic Main Street buildings and features. We trust you'll enjoy these historical highlights and architectural curiosities, authored by Lawrence A. Cenotto, on your walking tour of Main Street. Begin at the southwest corner of Water Street and Broadway.

1. MASONIC HALL, 14 WATER ST. Though somewhat disguised by a classical Spanish revival style over a brick classical revival building, the Masonic Hall arose in spring, 1854. As the building survived the fire of 1862, new owners Amador Lodge No. 56, F&AM rented the building to the county for "a court and two jury rooms." When the new court house was ready in 1864, the Masons reclaimed the top floor, and later purchased the second floor of Rocca's Hall. **Plaque faces Broadway. Turn the corner and proceed west.**

2. ROCCA'S HALL, 12 WATER ST. While the lower story has a faux-Western front, the top facade hasn't changed since Epley and Elderkin laid it in 1863 after the fire. Previously, in late 1853 and '54, Amos Barrett and Daniel Maujer had a store here, and Barrett began his career as Wells, Fargo & Co. Express agent. Known as Rocca's Hall, it was the long-time venue for entertainments, theatricals and even pugilistic exhibitions and fights. **Walk one doorway west.**

3. NATIONAL HOTEL, 2 WATER ST. Probably the second inhabited site in Jackson. Ellis Evans had a butcher shop here in 1850. In 1852, with partners D.C. White and Armstrong Askey, he built the two-story wooden Louisiana House. It burned in the 1862 fire. By spring 1864, the same owners erected a new brick hostelry renamed the National Hotel, a more politically prudent choice during the Civil War. Over the years, owners extended it and added a story. Among many colorful events, the late John Wayne was a big loser in an epic poker game here in 1963. The Lucowicz family purchased the hotel in 2010 and have remodeled and rejuvenated this historic foot of Main. **On the hotel's west side is Vogan Alley, named after an early sheriff and toll road entrepreneur. It follows the native Miwuk trail to the ford of Jackson Creek and its adjacent spring. Across the footbridge is a monument to Jackson's first mayor, Virgilio S. Garbarini.**



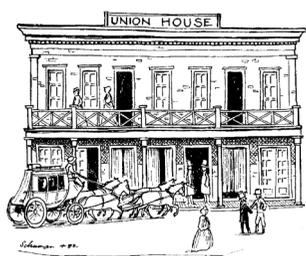
Louisiana House, mid-1850s

4. WEBB BUILDING, 15 - 19 MAIN. In the 1890s, Amador Ledger publisher Richard Webb purchased "air rights" over the existing brick Peek and Newman livery, thus three-fourths of the building dates from 1898. The livery portion? One wall from 1856, the rest from 1860. A bank leased the livery space in the 1970s. Architect Gordon Fisk redesigned its facade, echoing the traditional livery entrance. For about sixty years the Amador Ledger was housed in the southerly half of the building before moving to Martell. South of the Webb building is Wells Fargo Bank which purchased the old Bank of Amador County circa

1965, thus returning to the exact spot where the historic Wells, Fargo & Co. in the two-story, fancy Union House was located in late 1854-55!

5. LORY / GALLO HOTEL & ASTOR HOUSE, 21-27 MAIN.

This is a rare two-story building with a wood story atop a brick one. One of the titans of the modern wine industry, the late Ernesto Gallo, was born in this building in 1909. Merchant Richard Lory built the first story in 1878, and added a second a year later. The town's historic Astor House once stood here in the early 1850s. First Methodist-Episcopal minister Isaac Fish preached sermons here before the first church was finished in 1853. Jackson's first major fire swept this side of Main in 1855, destroying a half dozen buildings, brick or frame. *Continue northerly.*



Union House



West side, Main Street, after the 1855 fire.

6. U.S. BAKERY & SALOON, 37 MAIN. This is the same one-story brick raised here after the 1855 fire. It survived the 1862 fire, and new Amador Dispatch publisher William Penry bought it for his paper, later adding a second floor to house his press. The Dispatch's fiery editorials championed the South and exulted over Lincoln's assassination, thus goading the U.S. Army to padlock the paper and arrest editors Penry and L. P. Hall. A cavalry unit marched the manacled duo to its bivouac, Camp Jackson, in Ione. Anon, they did hard time for six weeks at Alcatraz. Union-supporting townsmen got their revenge, too. They torched the building, forcing Penry on his return to remove the second story's rubble. It's been one story since. This was a drug store from the 1870s to modern times. *Continue north.* Next northerly is a site where, in 1851, Joseph and Julia Godfrey erected the Hotel de France. While Jackson was county seat of Calaveras (1851-52) "the court house" hosted that day's County Court of Sessions. After the '62 fire there arose a two-story brick armory built by the Jackson Guards, a Civil War-era militia unit. It later became the town civic center where social events and entertainments were held until well into the 20th century.

7. BRUMEL'S BUILDING, 45 MAIN. This one even looks like an old building! It boasts what seems to be the original iron fire shutters and brick facade which Moses Brumel had erected. A Brumel cornerstone or engraved stone is in the shop's cellar. It dates from 1854. Two frame buildings burned in 1855 and 1862 fires before this one rose by August, 1863. *Continue north.*

8. LEVY & CO. BUILDING, 105 MAIN. In late 2010, the owner of this historic store removed a plain false front to reveal much of the original architecture of 1857. When most of Jackson burned in 1862, county fathers commandeered the basement here for a county jail. It imprisoned many until about 1864 when a county court house and jail were completed. In the sidewalk here is an E Clampus Vitus plaque memorializing the county courthouse's nearby location in 1851-52. This 1968 bronze is not the infamous Jackson heart-shaped plaque, despite its shape.



Levy & Co., about 1857

9. WELLER HARDWARE, PIONEER HALL, 111-115 MAIN.

These brick stores date from the 1850s. Both survived the awful '62 fire. Ursula Parlor #1, Native Daughters of the Golden West, was organized in the basement of the northerly half in September, 1886. A padlock inventor, W. C. Bussey bought these lots in 1855 and '56 and built two brick stores. The 1862 fire gutted one and damaged the other. Hardware merchant Charles Weller bought out Bussey and unified the facade. *Continue northerly.*



Weller's Hardware, c. 1857

10. LEAM'S SALOON, 169 - 175 MAIN. It arose about 1898 in Jackson's Victorian architectural era.

At street level, a store; above, a dwelling. A historic Chinese Masonic building was erected nearby in 1875. In early days, both sides of Main down to near Court Street were the Chinese mercantile and residential section. *Cross the street to the four-story building.*

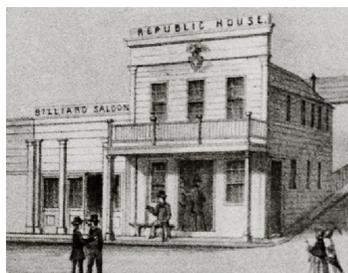
11. KRABBENHOFT BUILDING, 204 MAIN. At Main and California stands this four-story concrete building erected in 1931. No one has measured whether it or the Oddfellows Hall is actually taller. For a decade or longer, old Jackson High School played its basketball games on an upper story court. It now houses several enterprises. The first Catholic Church site is north of the Krabbenhoft at the southeasterly corner of North and North Main, where the parking lot is. The rude, dirt-floored church was built by 1852. Its cemetery was nearby. *Continue on the easterly Main sidewalk, cross California, and continue.*

12. SANGUINETTI BUILDING, 136-140 MAIN. Benjamin Sanguinetti erected the first story in 1869 after fires in 1862 and '69 destroyed wooden stores. Its second story went up in 1882 but only on the northerly part of the building. The rest is a false-front facade. A candy store was here for nigh 100 years. The Sanguinetti Building is bound northerly by a pedestrian walkway, historically known as Fletcher Alley, after Hugh Fletcher whose dwelling stood there in the 1850s.

13. MINER'S RESTAURANT & EXCHANGE, 126 - 28 MAIN. Wooden stores stood here in the early 1850s. Frenchmen had a bowling alley before 1857. It was Miner's Restaurant & Exchange when the 1862 fire roared through. Merchants named S. Brandt and Witte erected this two-story brick classical revival in 1863. Renovated and refitted in 1873, it housed a sausage factory in 1898 and a shoe store in the 1980s. The first story facade was remodeled, maybe around 1925.

14. STAMPFLY'S TENT, REPUBLIC HOUSE, 114 - 118 MAIN. No longer a hotel, the first two stories of this brick building date from 1858. Owner Pat Dwyer added the third story in 1896. A vintage photo (c. 1880) shows the two-story hotel with covered balconies on the front and southerly side walls. Perhaps the site's first use was for Stampfly's tent in 1851-1856. It was renamed Panama House, then Republic House by 1858 and the Globe by 1872. Though totally gutted, the two-story hotel survived the 1862 fire. *Continue southerly across Court St.*

15. STECKLER'S BLDG, 48 MAIN. This historic corner below the former courthouse was first a "county clerk's shanty" when Jackson's Creek



Globe/Republic House, mid-1850s



Steckler Bldg, c. 1857

became county seat in 1851. In the mid-1850s, Charles Steckler erected a two-story brick. It succumbed to the '62 fire, but was rebuilt. Upstairs from 1854 to 1862 was the Jackson's Masonic Lodge. The Oddfellows also used the hall until they bought their own building down the street.

Continue south on Main.

16. S. HARRIS CLOTHING STORE, 42 MAIN. A corral first, then Morris Harris came in '53 and opened a frame store. It was cindered by the town's epic fire. A newspaper tells us S. Harris was probably finishing a two-story brick in June, 1863, selling shoes and clothing. From 1882 on, it was Abramofsky's cigar factory. Note the second floor, balcony and brick façade atop it. Most likely those iron shutters are original. *Continue south on Main.*

17. M. HARRIS CLOTHING STORE, 38 MAIN. About 20 years ago, owners Trassare restored the facade closer to its 1854 style. With the Masonic Hall and part of the Fixary building at 29-33 Main, they are the only known stores built in the county's birth year, 1854. The brickwork for the store and its northerly neighbor (later destroyed) "was laid in 21 days in November" that year. *Continue south.*

18. ADAMS EXPRESS AGENCY, REICHLING ASSAYERS, 30 - 36 MAIN. Our history says 30 Main is where the 1862 Jackson fire started. Ere that, Francis and Paul Reichling moved in to buy and assay gold. Earlier, the site housed rivals of Wells, Fargo & Co.: Hunter & Co, Adams & Co., and Pacific Express. One-story bricks arose here and next door. Both stores acquired second floors early in the 20th century. *Continue to 28 Main.*

19. TELLIER'S SALOON & HANGING TREE, 22 - 28 MAIN. Town settler Louis Tellier set up his first tent saloon on this site. Tellier called his bistros St. Louis House, Empire Saloon or Tellier's. A nearby sidewalk plaque memorializes Jackson's notorious tree from which ten men were hanged between 1851 and '55. The tree itself was so severely damaged in the great fire that townspeople had to take it down. *Continue south.*

20. UNION HOTEL, I.O.O.F. HALL, 4 - 14 MAIN. Someone once deemed it the "tallest three-story building in creation," albeit inside it seems five stories or levels. The lodge in 1904 added a story atop the old Union House hotel. With such a name, wouldn't Union diehards opt to parade and celebrate amid torch-light here? Street-level from circa 1870 until 1919, Wells, Fargo & Co. was here. The prominent "1855" date stone only means the lodge was founded then.

Go to the corner.

21. DR. SHARP'S DRUGS, GINOCCHIO'S STORE, 2 MAIN. This elongated brick building fronting both Main and Water Streets is another survivor of the 1862 fire. Dr. Sharp built and opened a new brick drug store there in 1856. In 1857 Wells, Fargo & Co. briefly rented space – probably why it was called the Wells Fargo Club and Restaurant from about 1950 on. The next section or two of brickwork on the Water Street side marks the Italian market lot, from Courassi's store in 1851, to E. Bruno & Co. and eventually Ginocchio's. The latter firm occupied the whole building when it dissolved around 1950.

WALKING MAIN STREET JACKSON is a joint project of the City of Jackson Revitalization Committee, the Amador County Historical Society, and Jackson Business & Community Association.