

Casa Grande (Almaden Club House)  
21350 Almaden Road  
New Almaden  
Santa Clara County  
California

HABS No. CA-1116

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Architectural and Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D C. 20243

CASA GRANDE  
(Almaden Club House)

- Location: 21350 Almaden Road, New Almaden, Santa Clara County, California.
- USGS Santa Teresa Hills Quadrangle; Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 10.604195.4114100.
- Present Owner: Harry and June Fromm.
- Present Use: Commercial and entertainment center, first floor; apartment, second floor.
- Significance: Casa Grande was built in 1854 as the residence of the general manager of the New Almaden Mining Company, the richest and most productive mining enterprise in North America. Designed by San Francisco architect Gordon Parker Cummings and Henry W. Halleck, then manager of the company, the large two-story brick building was originally covered with stucco, scored to simulate ashlar masonry. Now only the first-floor stucco veneer remains. A low veranda with slender wooden balusters and supporting posts extends across the front and around the side elevations. The grounds were landscaped in 1854, and ca. 1865 a lake between the house and Alamitos Creek was constructed. To formalize the area surrounding the lake, extensive improvements were completed in 1882 under the direction of the company's manager, James Butterworth Randol. Until the early 20th century Casa Grande served as the manager's residence and the entertainment hall of the company. It has subsequently been used as a club, restaurant, bar and prostitution hall, and most recently, for commercial businesses on the lower levels and an apartment on the second floor.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1854.

2. Architects: Gordon Parker Cummings (1827-1904), San Francisco architect, and Henry W. Halleck, manager of the New Almaden Mining Company, are believed to have had the supervising positions in the design of the structure. Cummings, one of San Francisco's most prominent architects in the 1850s and 60s, was known as the designer of "most of the large edifices in the city." The second City Hall, built 1856, is attributed to him, and he supervised the last phase of construction of the State Capitol building in Sacramento in 1886. His most recent commission prior to the construction of Casa Grande was Montgomery Block in San Francisco. This work was also commissioned by Halleck, who completed some of the drawings for the Block in addition to suggesting various detail patterns on the design. Because of its grandiose appearance, Montgomery Block became known as "Halleck's Folly." The two buildings have similar characteristics: thick stone foundations, two-foot deep plain brick walls, and a low veranda supported by slender wooden columns.

3. Original and subsequent owners: The property includes 5.175 acres of land and was originally part of San Vincente Rancho. It is located on Assessor's plot 583-18-44 at 21350 New Almaden Road, New Almaden. The following chain of title to the property is found in the Office of the Recorder, Santa Clara County Courthouse, Santa Clara, and in supplemental sources.

- 1850 The site was owned by Barron, Forbes Company, New Almaden Mining Company.
- 1863 Barron, Forbes Company sold the property to the Quicksilver Mining Company.
- 1915 The Quicksilver Mining Company sold the property to George Sexton, and the name was changed to the New Idria Company.
- 1925 The property was transferred through mortgage foreclosure to Lake Almaden Properties Company. Thomas Coch acted as agent for the California Title Company.
- 1927 Lake Almaden Properties Company sold the property to David Black.
- 1944 David Black sold the property to Christiani Wineries.
- 1949 Christiani Brothers sold the property to Robert Gray.  
(The site was leased to the New Almaden Corporation during 1940-46.)

- 1951 Deed, February 24, 1951, recorded in Book 3437, page 455. Robert G. and Florence L. Gray sold the property to Norman J. Pope and Arthur Cooper.
- 1968 Assignments of Rent, November 21, 1968. Norman J. and Love Brown Pope granted lease to Citizens Federal Savings and Loan Association.

4. Original plan and construction: The custodian of the mine properties during the 1940s, P.V. Schneider, states that Casa Grande was originally conceived as a modest one-story hotel.

[The construction] was supervised by Francis Meyer, a carpenter of unusual skill who spent all his life at the mine. [Casa Grande] was constructed of bricks and adobe and heavy timbers. As it developed [the mine managers] Young and Halleck began to eye it with other thoughts and before the ground floor was up, they had permission to add a second floor and to convert it into a residence.

Early photographs show that the entire house was originally covered with stucco, scored to simulate ashlar. The dozen fireplaces in the interior were adorned with inlaid mother of pearl, imported from Spain.

5. Alterations and additions: The property's high annual maintenance fee of \$6000 by 1869 led the company's manager, Samuel Butterworth, to lease the house to a Msgr. F.A. Pioche. (Butterworth Letters, 1868-69, Stanford University). At the time Pioche occupied Casa Grande an inventory of his possessions included:

Silver and glassware - \$100

Parlor -

1 étagère, 3 mahogany sofas, 15 mahogany chairs,  
7 chinese chairs, 2 chinese lounges

Small parlor 2nd bedroom

5 piece rosewood bedroom furniture  
7 piece set of Damask parlor furniture  
chandeliers, arm chairs some of dining room furniture  
with marble tops

16 bedrooms, large laundry and garden cottage; some bedroom sets painted, others mahogany, others black walnut; many of rooms with sofas

Pioche died early in 1872, and the house stood vacant for more than fifteen months. (Randol Letters, 5 August 1872, Stanford University) During this time the house and surrounding gardens began to deteriorate.

In 1872 James Randol became manager of the New Almaden Quicksilver Mine Company, and Casa Grande was restored as the manager's residence once again. A new roof was laid at this time, in addition to extensive repairs to the structure's interior. (Annual Report, February 26, 1873, page 23; Miscellaneous Letters, Correspondence, January 23, 1875, Stanford University). In 1888 Randol built a gymnasium for his two sons and enlarged his daughter's nursery. (Butler, 320). Randol resigned in 1892, and the new general manager and his wife occupied the house until the turn of the century.

A letter dated October 8, 1908 stated that Casa Grande was vacant and in such poor condition that it was uninhabitable. A second letter dated October 26, 1908 noted that repairs valued at \$1,450 were needed to bring the building up to living standards. The proposed improvements included new roofing and plumbing, new shingles and paint on the exterior, a more modern stove and bathtub and replastering all interior surfaces. By 1911 the renovation had been completed and totaled more than \$10,000. (Innis Papers, "Harry's Administration," page 13).

The house was used periodically between 1915 and 1925 as the residence of George Sexton, president of the new Idria Quicksilver Company. Sexton lost all his property holdings in 1925, and Casa Grande was acquired by the California Title Company and developed as a subdivision of the "Lake Almaden" Properties. After two years of general improvements, the property was sold for profit and converted to the "Club Almaden." The north side of the dance platform was extended at this time for use as a small stage or auditorium.

Casa Grande was sold again in the 1940s and converted to a restaurant. The restaurant was unprosperous and the owners subsequently turned the two-story building into a bar, featuring erotic Mexican dancers, and a prostitution hall on the second floor. When Norman Pope bought the property in 1951, both house and grounds were in poor condition, suffering from the disrepair wrought by time and neglect. In repairing the house, Pope retained the basic lay-out on the first floor, but extensively remodelled the second floor's north section for use as a single-family residence. He also installed a new kitchen, two furnaces, and completely rewired the house. Since that time, Casa Grande has housed club and commercial activities on the lower levels and an apartment on the second floor.

6. Landscape design: During the management of Samuel Butterworth, ca. 1865, the lake between the main house and Alamitos Creek was constructed. Fresh plantings were added to the original 1850s gardens at this time.

Little new work was done to the grounds until 1882 when James B. Randol, then general manager, completed extensive improvements, laying pathways, constructed green houses and trellises around the gardens, and greatly formalized the general appearance of the area surrounding the lake. A chronological list of the landscaping completed in 1882 was recorded in the "Surface Foreman's work order book."

- October 9      Waterbox in front of house put in order and grading done by Dwyer and Stiles. Water tank in garden to be raised by Reade and Kenneth; window sash on roof of hothouse in garden to be painted by Dwyer.
- October 14     Lattice work to be put up on walk from front of gate to front door and in continuation back of kitchen by McDoughall.
- October 23     Front gate removed and walks run diagonally as in diagram by Kenneth; steps to basement on left of front steps as one faces them to be boarded in and filled with earth.
- November 8     Lattice work continued around by Kenneth.
- November 10    Lattice work continued around laundry yard by Hutton.

In 1890, Randol hired an Austrian landscape gardener, paying his passage to this country, to maintain the grounds around Casa Grande. The new gardener, Gustav Magnison, was assisted by a young Scotsman, John McLaren, later to become San Francisco's most prominent landscape architect. The total cost of these improvements, together with the two caretakers' salaries came to more than \$25,000. (Schneider, 1949).

The lake was converted to a swimming pool ca. 1925, about the time the property was acquired by the California Title Company. In 1927, when Casa Grande became the Club Almaden, a parking lot was laid at the front to accommodate patrons.

B. Historic Persons and Events Connected with the Structure:

The new Almaden mine is the site of the first mercury deposit discovered in North America, and has yielded metal of greater total value than that of any other mine in California, producing nearly one-third of the country's supply of mercury. It was originally a part of Jose Reyes Berryeyasa's Rancho San Vicente, one of the valleys' large ranchos settled after 1777. Until the innovation of the cyanide process in 1887, quicksilver was the chief reduction agent

used in processing gold and silver. Metal extracted from the New Almaden mine thus made possible the rapid development of gold and silver quartz mining in California and the Comstock Lode in Nevada during the 1850s and 60s.

The site was discovered as an ore deposit in 1824, but not confirmed as a mercury deposit until 1845, by Andres Castillero, a Mexican officer visiting the Mission Santa Clara. Under Mexican and Spanish laws Castillero filed discoverer's rights to the mine, establishing a stock company shortly thereafter. The controlling interest in the mine was acquired in 1846 by the Barron-Forbes Company, an English-held firm, who began immediately to build upon the property and install more efficient reduction facilities at the base of the mine hills. As increased production significantly raised the value of the property, a dispute over clear title and ownership of the New Almaden Mining Company developed between Castillero and Barron-Forbes, coming to a head in 1858. A government injunction was placed on the mine as a result, and by a decision of the Supreme Court in 1863, Barron-Forbes sold its holding in the 8600-acre site for \$1,750,000 to the Pennsylvania-based Quicksilver Mining Company.

Henry Wager Halleck, general manager of the New Almaden Mining Company, was born January 16, 1815, in Westerville, New York. He received his early education at New York's Hudson Academy, went on to Union College in Schenectady, from which he was graduated Phi Beta Kappa, and acquired his military training at West Point, graduating in 1839. While still an undergraduate at West Point, Halleck was appointed an assistant professor. During this time he worked on the design of the fortifications at New York Harbor, and traveled to France to inspect its harbor fortresses. Upon returning to the States, Halleck wrote a report of his findings, "The Means of National Defense," which was published by Congress and for which he received an invitation from the Lowell Institute in Boston to give a series of lectures. The lectures were later published under the title of "Elements of Military Art and Science," and were widely circulated among military personnel.

Halleck was transferred to California in 1850, serving as a captain in the Army Corps of Engineers, in addition to being employed by Barron-Forbes as general manager of the New Almaden Mining Company. During the early 50s, and years of the Mexican War, he held high positions within California's military government - secretary of state, chief of staff of lower California, and lieutenant governor of the Mexican city of Mazatlan. He resigned from the army in 1854 and returned to New York where, in 1855, he married Elizabeth Hamilton, granddaughter of Alexander Hamilton. The couple returned to San Francisco where Halleck established himself in a three-man law firm, Halleck, Peachy & Billings, one of the city's most prominent in the

mid-19th century. In his capacity as an attorney specializing in land title litigations, Halleck played a key role in the Superior Court claims case for the New Almaden Mining Company.

Halleck left California in 1861 to serve as a major general in the Civil War. After serving in the field for a year, President Lincoln brought him to Washington, D.C. early in 1862 to serve as General-in-Chief. He was apparently not a good commander in the field, inspiring one Grant biographer to remark of Halleck's promotion to General-in-Chief, "Unable to command successfully one army, he was ordered to Washington to command all the armies." In March 1864, he was demoted to Chief-of-Staff when Grant became General-in-Chief. At the end of the war, Halleck served briefly as commander of the Military Division of the James, then transferred to San Francisco in the fall of 1865 to command the Pacific division. He was subsequently appointed to head the Southern division at Louisville, where he died January 9, 1872. (Warner, 195-97; Butler, 157-60)

Samuel F. Butterworth was born in Newburgh, New York. He was a graduate of Union College in Schenectady, New York, afterwards moving to Mississippi to practice law. He was appointed U.S. district attorney in Mississippi during the Van Buren Administration and later declined a commission as Justice of the State Supreme Court. (Lanyon, 18-19). He subsequently returned to New York and became involved in the New Almaden Mining Company case concerning title to the property. Butterworth was president of the Mining Company since it was organized in 1850, and became general agent, manager and secretary of the New Almaden Quicksilver Mining Company when it was incorporated in 1863. He established a company store, improved living conditions at the mine camps, and increased the company's production. After retiring in April 1870, Butterworth was appointed to the Board of Regents of the newly-organized University of California. He died in 1875, leaving an estate valued at \$7,000,000. (Lanyon, 24)

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views:

Photograph 1965, view of rear (south) elevation showing the Chinese pavilion, published in an article by J. Ross Browne, "Down in the Cinnebar Mines," Harpers' New Monthly Magazine, No. 185 (October 1865), 545-560.

Photograph ca. 1885, showing south elevation and gardens, in New Almaden Museum, 25170 Almaden Rd., New Almaden, CA.

Photograph ca. 1885, showing Chinese Pagoda to north of Casa Grande (now removed); in New Almaden Museum.



Photograph 1900, showing stucco on north elevation before addition, in New Almaden Museum.

Photograph 1902, showing gardens between Casa Grande and Alamitos Creek to east (now altered), in New Almaden Museum.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

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Located at New Almaden Museum, 21570 New Almaden Road, New Almaden, California; San Jose Historical Museum, 635 Phelan Avenue, San Jose, California; New Almaden Collection, Bender Room, Special Collections, Stanford University, Palo Alto, California.

Correspondence, New Almaden Collection, including Butterworth and Randol Letters, Special Collections, Stanford University, Palo Alto, California

Santa Clara County Deed Records, Office of the Recorder, Santa Clara County Courthouse, Santa Clara, California.

Surface Foreman's work book, 1882-83. Located at San Jose Historical Museum, San Jose.

b. Secondary and published sources:

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The Pony Express, Vol. XVI, No. 5, #185 (October 1949),  
3-10.

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Express, Vol XX, No. 1, #229 (June 1953), 3-13.

"Thomas Bell," The Pony Express, Vol XX, no. 5, #233  
(October 1953), 7.

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Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press,  
1964, 1965-97.

"William Sharon," The Pony Express, Vol. XX, No. 5, #233,  
(October 1953), 6-7.

c. Interviews:

Mrs. Constance B. Perham, resident of New Almaden since 1925,  
21570 New Almaden Road, New Almaden, California.

Prepared by Carolyn Hamm  
Project Historian  
Historic American  
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Summer 1977

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## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Casa Grande was built in 1854 as the residence for the general manager of the New Almaden Mining Company. Erected upon a sloping site, the large rectangular building appears to be two stories viewed from the front, but is a full three stories at the rear. It is constructed of brick, and the entire building was originally covered with stucco, scored to simulate ashlar masonry. Now only the first-floor stucco veneer remains. A shed-roofed veranda supported by slender posts and fronted by plain wooden balusters extends across the front and around the south side elevation. Most of the original interior has been altered.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The eight-bay (west front) rectangular main block is erected upon a sloping site; it is two stories at the front and three stories at the rear. A one-story section with exposed basement has been added at the north side; a two-story frame section has been added at the south side.
2. Foundation: Stone.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Brick, with stucco scored to simulate ashlar masonry on the first floor.
4. Structural system and framing: Brick bearing walls laid in Flemish bond with interior wooden framing.

5. Porches: A shed-roof porch supported by open wooden posts and lined on the outside perimeter by slender wooden balusters extends across the west (front) facade, continuing around the south (side) and across the front of the south addition.
6. Chimneys: Four large stuccoed brick corner chimneys topped by corbelled caps rise tall above the roof surface.
7. Openings: All doorways and windows on the original main block are framed by engaged stone lintels and slightly projecting sills. Windows are six-over-six double-hung sash.
8. Roof: The hip roof is covered with asphalt shingles and trimmed at the eave with a simply molded cornice and a plain, flat fascia trimmed midway by an attached cyma recta molding.

C. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The structure faces west facing Almaden Road, sited five miles south of downtown San Jose.
2. Historic landscape design: All the 19th century landscaping is gone. Surviving structures within the New Almaden Quick-silver Mine Company's property include Mine Hill School (1860s), two adobe house (ca. 1845), and a few board-and-batten miners' cottages, the toll house (1860s), and St. Anthony's Church (1900).

Prepared by Jack Schafer  
Project Supervisor  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
Summer 1977

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the County of Santa Clara. The 1977 summer project, the first year of a three-year recording project in Santa Clara County, was completed under the general direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS; Kenneth L. Anderson, Jr., Principal Architect; and Robert Bruegmann, Project Supervisor (University of Pennsylvania); with Jack Schaefer, Architectural foreman (University of Cincinnati); Carolyn Hamm, Historian (Duke University); and student architects Tim Allenbrook (Rhode Island

CASA GRANDE

(Almaden Club House)

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School of Design), Barbara Hendricks (University of Texas), and Jeff Lees (University of Oklahoma), at the HABS Field Office in Saratoga, California. The historical and architectural data was edited and in some cases further researched during the summer of 1979 by Jan Cigliano, an architectural historian on the HABS staff, at the 1979 HABS Field Office in Santa Clara, California. Photographs were taken by photographer Jane Lidz in the summer of 1980.