

James Lick Mill  
Guadalupe River, off of Montague Road  
Santa Clara Vicinity  
Santa Clara County  
California

HABS No. CA-2011

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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

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. CA-2011

## JAMES LICK MILL

- Location: Guadalupe River, off of Montague Road, Santa Clara vicinity, Santa Clara County, California.
- USGS Milipitas Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 10.593540.4139540
- Present Owner: ~~Kimball-Small Properties~~, Incorporated (1979).
- Present Use: Chemical production complex.
- Significance: The construction of the Lick Mill complex began ca. 1855 with a flour mill, and has continued intermittently to the present day, reflecting the changing uses of the site and the evolution of more sophisticated technologies. The round brick granary, the mill's oldest extant building, and the large Italianate frame residence, erected ca. 1860, date from James Lick's ownership. As a prosperous and well-known Bay area businessman, involved in a wide array of financial and real estate investments throughout the San Francisco and San Jose area, Lick was able to improve significantly the mill's physical facilities and consequently its productivity. The site was used as a paper mill during the late 19th century, and has been an alcohol-producing chemical plant since the turn of the century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Dates of erection:
  - a. Flour mill: ca. 1855.
  - b. Round brick granary: ca. 1855-57.
  - c. Main house: ca. 1860.
  - d. Office: ca. 1880-87.
  - e. Outbuildings: Late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
2. Architect: No information available.

3. Original and subsequent owners: The original property included two-hundred acres. In 1848 the legal description stated:

"Commencing at a sycamore tree standing on the west bank of the Guadalupe River marked 'S' about one hundred yards above the Mill of Oliver Magnant and James Lick, thence down the middle of said Guadalupe River the distance of two hundred yards on a direct line from the point of beginning. Thence on a westerly direction across the plain. Thence at right angles to said line in a northerly direction the distance of two hundred yards. Thence in an easterly direction to the point of beginning."

- 1847 Oliver Magnant and Manuel Diaz Miranda, co-owners.
- 1848 Deed, April 22, 1848, Manuel Diaz Miranda sold his half-interest in the property to James Lick. (Worrilow, 15).
- 1850 Deed, December 20, 1850, recorded in Book C, page 66. Oliver Magnant sold his half-interest in the property to James Lick; Lick thus became the sole owner.
- 1873 January 16, 1873, James Lick gave the mill property to the Thomas Paine Society of Boston on the condition that they sell it and use the proceeds to construct and maintain a Paine Memorial Hall in Boston (Lick, 45-46).
- 1873 Deed, September 10 1873, recorded in Book 30, page 367. The Thomas Paine Society of Boston sold the property to Adolph Pfister for \$18,000.
- 1878 Deed, March 22, 1879, recorded in Book 48, page 3. Adolph Pfister sold the property to Alfred Denison Remington of Watertown, New York
- ca. Alfred Denison Remington sold the property to John H. Dickinson;  
1878- John H. Dickinson sold the property to James  
1879 G. Scott.
- 1902 James G. Scott sold the property to the Union Distilling Company of San Francisco (Donnelly, 30).
- 1910 Union Distilling company of San Francisco sold the property to Western Grain & Sugar Products Company; Western Grain & Sugar Products leased the plant to Western Carbonic Gas until 1940 (Book of Mortgages 205, page 397).
- 1931 Deed, April 1931, recorded in Book 566, page 75. Western Grain & Sugar Products Company sold the property to American Solvents & Chemical Corporation.

- 1977 Deed, American Solvents & Chemical Corporation sold the property to I.M.C. Chemical Group, Incorporated.
- 1979 Deed, June 1979, I.M.C. Chemical Group, Inc., sold the property to Kimball-Small Properties, Incorporated.
4. Original plan and construction: The flour mill, built ca. 1855, was the first structure erected within the mill complex. Rosemary Lick, James Lick's granddaughter, wrote in Lick's biography, A Generous Miser (1967), of the building of the flour mill.

Every beam and plank of the flour mill had to be fitted with the greatest care. Often he fitted and polished the beams himself. For the interior, he had the finest mahogany from Central America and cedar from the forests of Northern California. The outside walls were of red brick. His original plans called for a three story structure. But before the walls were finished, a severe earthquake twisted them badly. He had the damaged walls cleared away to the level of the second floor and then proceeded to reconstruct the building with redwood timbers and covering." (38)

In 1859, the Visiting Committee of the California Agricultural Society inspected the Lick complex and reported their observations in an extensive report, published in the Appendix of the Journals of the California State Senate of 1859.

"Four miles north of San Jose, we visited the farm and flour Mill of Mr. James Lick. The farm contains two hundred acres, one half of which is under cultivation. There is on the place a mill, propelled by water, sixty feet square, and two stories high above the basement, stone two feet thick, and ten feet high. The body of the building is of brick, twenty-two inch wall; first story, thirteen feet, and second eleven feet clear. In the garret is a pigeonry in which more than one thousand birds have a home every night. This he keeps for the manure it yields. There are in the mill four runs of French Buhrstones, capable of making two hundred barrels of flour per day. All departments of this mill are furnished with the latest and most approved patterns executed without reference to cost or time. No inconsiderable portion of the inside work is made of solid mahogany and other valuable foreign woods. The cost of this was about two hundred thousand dollars. Besides this, Mr. Lick has erected a circular store-house sixty two feet in diameter, twenty two feet walls, surmounted by a dome and observatory, entirely fire-proof and rat-proof.

Having finished these structures, Mr. Lick appears to have

become satisfied in this direction, giving the charge to Chief Miller, and is now bestowing all his thoughts and efforts upon his orchard. He brings every rod of his ground to a spirit-level, sets every tree just as high as every other tree, and prosecutes his work with a zeal worthy of any cause. He has now about five thousand apple-trees, beside many other varieties, all set with his own hands. His preparations for the future are equally interesting with his present operations. He has vast heaps scattered here and there of various composts and manures preparing for use. In one single pile, he has over one hundred wagon loads of old bones, horns, hoofs, etc. for placing (a barrowful of each) under trees yet to be planted. With his enthusiasm, abundant means, and untiring industry he will soon have one of the most valuable places in the state. (261-62, Tenth Session of the Legislature, 1859).

The only early plan of the main house known to exist is the 1887 Sanborn Map of the site. This map shows the house as being L-shaped in plan, including the three-bay main block with the rear (east-northeast) ell extension. Lick imported trees and shrubs for the gardens surrounding the main house, and between the mill and granary.

5. Alterations and additions:

- a. Flour mill: The flour mill, known in the 19th century as the "mahogany mill," was completely destroyed by fire on July 8, 1882. The San Francisco "Daily Examiner" reported on that date:

"Burning of the Lick Paper Mills. The Lick Mills, seven miles from San Jose on the Alviso Road, caught fire at about 2 o'clock Thursday afternoon and were destroyed. The round-house, originally built for a granary, which hard fighting had preserved intact up to 5 o'clock, was also burned. The buildings were erected some 25 or 30 years ago, at immense cost, by the late James Lick, who intended to make this the model grist mill of the world. The inside woodwork was of mahogany and other costly woods. . . . About \$100,000 was invested in the business, but the loss is not known. The round-house which was used as a warehouse, was full of finished stock, which was saved, except some \$4000 worth of paper bags. It is said that the fire originated in the packing-room, near the top of the building, and that some of the workmen barely escaped with their lives."

A new mill was erected upon the side of the old flour mill.

- b. Round brick granary: As noted in the "Daily Examiner" article of July 8, 1882, the original frame interior of the granary was destroyed also in the fire, which spread through the mill complex. A similar wooden structural system was subsequently built. As shown in an 1857 photograph of the granary, by James Clayton, the building was originally topped by a tall wooden cupola, which was probably destroyed in 1882. During the 1920s, low frame sections were added to the east, south and west sides of the granary; all additions have been removed.
- c. Main house: The two-story section at the west rear and the section to the east front block are later additions, dates unknown.

B. Historic Events and Persons Connected with the Structures:

James Lick (1796-1876) was born in Fredericksburg, Pennsylvania, on August 25, 1796, the son of a carpenter and cabinetmaker. Under his father's guidance, he too became a skilled woodworker, and at the age of seventeen, James was apprenticed to a Hanover, Pennsylvania organ builder. In 1819, at age twenty-three, he moved to Baltimore, Maryland to work for Joseph Hiskey, a prominent Eastern piano manufacturer. The following year, Lick went to New York to pursue his career. Again, after a year, he moved on - this time to Buenos Aires, Argentina, working as an independent piano maker for eleven years. Lick left Buenos Aires in 1832, traveling to Valparaiso, Chile where he lived for four years. In 1835, Lick moved again, to Callao, Peru. He remained in Callao for eleven years, principally involved in the manufacture of pianos, in addition to a variety of smaller business investments.

Lick came to San Francisco in January 1848, and was initially involved in real estate speculation. Later, in 1856, he moved south to Santa Clara County and purchased a 200-acre tract of land along the Guadalupe River, near the towns of Santa Clara and San Jose, the site upon which the Lick Mill was built. He lived on the mill property until 1870 when he moved into a house in downtown San Jose on South First Street. Returning to San Francisco in 1873, Lick remained there until his death in 1876. As a result of his prosperous business investments, including the Lick Mill, the Lick Hotel (1861) on Montgomery Street in San Francisco, and his land holdings, Lick left his heirs a very large estate. Of this, he donated \$25,000 to a San Jose orphanage, and \$700,000 was set aside to establish an observatory on his property atop Mt. Hamilton in the San Jose vicinity.

Industrial Production: The flour mill was established around 1847 by Oliver Magnant, a French-Canadian, and Manuel Diaz Miranda. James Lick acquired Miranda's share in the property in 1848, and became the sole owner in 1850. He constructed the mahogany flour mill ca. 1855, which was destroyed in the 1882 fire, and the round brick granary ca. 1855-57.

According to the Pacific Coast Business Directory, by 1867 the Lick mill was producing 250 barrels of grain daily. In addition to his primary concern in the grist mill, Lick farmed the surrounding land, experimenting with the cultivation of a variety of fruits, including apples, peaches, quince, cherries, plums, pears and apricots. (Shea, 10)

In 1873, Lick gave the property to the Thomas Paine Society of Boston, which in turn sold it to Adolph Pfister, who joined forces with E. T. King, to form a joint stock company which included the Lick Mill, the Saratoga Paper Mill and Blake, Robbins & Company, a San Francisco paper manufacturing firm. The headquarters of the new company were located on the Lick estate. Alfred D. Remington of Watertown, New York bought the property in 1878, leasing it to E. T. King for a period of time. The mill was producing two-and-a-half tons of paper per day at this time. In 1880, the company was reorganized as the Lick Paper Company; the document of incorporation stated that the new firm was established "to manufacture, import, buy and sell paper and to carry on siad business in all its branches." (Donnally, 29)

The company sold newsprint to the San Jose Mercury and the San Francisco Examiner, as well as manufacturing paper bags, and paper wrapping for Santa Clara Valley's produce industry. In 1882, John S. Hit-tell wrote of the Lick works in his book The Commerce and Industries of the Pacific Coast:

"The Lick Paper Mill, production of which, comprising printing, manila, cartridges, and hardware paper, is about 2 tons per day, the raw material being procured from junk dealers in San Francisco. Special machinery has recently been introduced capable of manufacturing from 75 to 200 paper bags, of the satchel-bottom pattern, per minute, the number depending on the size of the bag. The working force consists of 20 men." (636-37)

By the turn of the century, the original 200-acre site had been reduced to thirty acres. Many employees lived on the site, residing in a boardinghouse north of the granary and additional free-standing dwellings located at various places around the grounds. The mill complex was bought by the Union Distilling Company of San Francisco in 1902, becoming an alcohol-producing plant. The refined alcohol was used in the processing of chemicals, smokeless powder and heating fuel. Between 1910 and 1931 Western Carbonic Gas, Inc. leased the property from the Western Grain & Sugar Products Company. The American Solvents & Chemical Corporation acquired the mill in April 1931, and in 1977 sold it to I.M.C. Chemical Group, Inc. Throughout the twentieth century, the plant has thus remained a producer of alcohol for industrial, commercial and medicinal uses. (Shea, 34)

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views:

Photograph showing round brick granary and flour mill, James A. Clayton, photographer, 1857. Reproduced for inclusion in HABS collection.

Photographs, n.d., five views including general view of main house, general view of office, general view of office from side, detail of a farm gable with "1886" inscribed, view of two boiler doors. Printed in San Jose "Mercury News," April 15, 1973.

Photographs, n.d., four views including interior view of paper mill, general view of frame buildings, view of main house from the southwest, general view of pond with two buildings in the background. Printed in Sunshine, Fruit and Flowers, San Jose Mercury Publishing Company (1895), page 75.

Site plan, 1887 to the present, Sanborn Map Company's Atlas Map of San Jose. In San Jose Historical Museum, San Jose.

Site plan, August 1, 1920. In possession of I.M.C. Chemical Group, Inc., Santa Clara.

2. Bibliography:

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b. Secondary and published sources:

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Prepared by Jan Cigliano  
Architectural Historian  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
Summer 1979

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The round brick granary constructed ca. 1855, is the mill's oldest extant building. Its interior circular frame structural system was notable in the state at the time it was erected. The large Italianate frame residence, built ca. 1860, is a good example of this Renaissance style adapted in wood to a domestic structure. Construction of the Lick Mill complex began ca. 1855 with a flour mill, and has continued intermittently to the present day, reflecting the changing uses of the site and the evolution of more sophisticated production technologies.
2. Condition of fabric: The main house and granary are in excellent repair; the office is in fair condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions:
  - a. Granary: The two-story building is round in shape and measures 62' across the diameter.
  - b. Main house: The square two-story main block measures three bays across the southwest front, and is symmetrical about the projecting two-story pedimented pavilion. The main block's northwest wing has been extended, and a two-story ell has been added at the rear.
  - c. Office: The one-and-a-half story main block is three bays across the symmetrical front, with a one-story, two-bay ell on the northwest side.
2. Foundations:
  - a. Granary: Beams laid in masonry.
  - b. Main house: Brick.
  - c. Office: Masonry.

3. Wall construction, finish and color:
  - a. Granary: Twenty-two foot brick bearing walls laid in common bond with headers every fourth or fifth course.
  - b. Main house: Wooden shiplap siding painted white, punctuated at the corners and at irregular intervals around the building by square wooden pilasters, detailed with carved recessed panels.
  - c. Office: Wooden shiplap siding painted green with vertical corner end boards.
4. Structural system and framing:
  - a. Granary: Wooden (mahogany) interior framing.
  - b. Main house: Mortise-and-tenon woodframe construction in the original main block; balloon frame construction in the later additions.
  - c. Office: Woodframe construction.
5. Porches:
  - a. Granary: None.
  - b. Main house: A one-story veranda extends from the front southwest facade's extension, across the front and around the northwest side. The flat roof is supported by square wooden pillars, detailed with molded recessed panels at center, and defined by a square plinth base and Tuscan capitals. The veranda's roof creates a second-story balcony, edged with turned balusters and trimmed at the eaves by elaborate console brackets.
  - c. Office: None.
6. Chimneys:
  - a. Granary: None.
  - b. Main house: Three brick chimneys serve the main block, and one is on the two-story rear addition.
  - c. Office: An aluminum flue extends up from the northwest side.

7. Openings:

a. Granary:

1. Doorways and doors: Two plain doorway openings are on the side facing northwest.
2. Windows: None; the original window is now bricked up.

b. Main house:

1. Doorways and doors: The front doorway is set into a round-arched opening and framed by eared Italianate molding which is flared at the base. Mahogany double doors and a semi-circular moveable transom are set into the doorway.
2. Windows: Flanking the central doorway are three-quarter length window openings that have molded surrounds and are fitted with paired four-over-four-light double-hung sash windows. The central pavilion's second-story four-over-four-light double-hung sash window is set into a round-arched opening and framed overhead by a classical cornice, braced by two elaborately scrolled consoles. Paired narrow round-arched three-quarter length four-over-four-light double-hung sash windows are to either side of the central second-story pavilion window. The molding is the same as that defining the first-story window surrounds.

c. Office:

1. Doorways and doors: The main block has a central doorway in the southwest front and one at the rear. Both have eared Italianate facing, and flat, slightly pointed lintels. A doorway on the ell's southwest front facade has a plain wooden surround.
2. Windows: On the main block, two window openings flank the southwest central doorway, five punctuate the southeast side elevation, two are in the rear and two are on the northwest side. The ell has one window opening on the front, two on the northwest end, and two at the rear flanking a central doorway. All windows have four-over-four-light double-hung sash, wooden surrounds of Italianate design eared at the top and base, slightly pointed lintels, and projecting corbelled sills.

8. Roof:

- a. Granary: A round conical roof covered with composition tar paper covers the brick building. The wide brick cornice consists of denticulated coursing, with a wide fascia, sitting atop the roof's peak is a low square louvered cupola with a very low hip roof topped by a pointed wooden finial.
  - b. Main house: Low cross-gable roof covered with asphalt shingles and trimmed at the eaves by a deep molded cornice with decorative scrolled brackets.
  - c. Office: The main block is topped by a cross gable roof; the one-story addition has a gable roof, the ridge perpendicular to the main block. All roof surfaces extend beyond the wall surface, creating a deep eave, articulated by a simply molded cornice. The four principal end gables are trimmed with a wooden cross-tie brace that has a drop pendant at center.
- C. Site: The complex is set back approximately two-hundred yards from the Montague Expressway. The buildings stand on a thirty-acre site along the north-south running Guadalupe River, surrounded by two-and-three-story frame and corrugated metal industrial structures.

Prepared by Jan Cigliano  
Architectural Historian  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
Summer 1979

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the County of Santa Clara. The 1978 summer project, the second year of a three-year project in Santa Clara County, was completed under the general direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS; Kenneth L. Anderson, Principal Architect; and Robert Bruegmann, Project Supervisor (University of Illinois, Chicago Circle); with Jack Schafer, Architectural Foreman (University of Cincinnati); and student architects Robert E. Clarke (University of Notre Dame), Barbara M. Friedman (University of Pennsylvania), Julia H. Miner (Yale University), and John B. Murphy (Texas Tech University), at the HABS Field Office in Saratoga, California. The drawings were edited in the HABS Washington office during the summer of 1979 by architect David T. Marsh. The historical and architectural data was researched and written 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 Jane Lidz in the summer of 1980.