

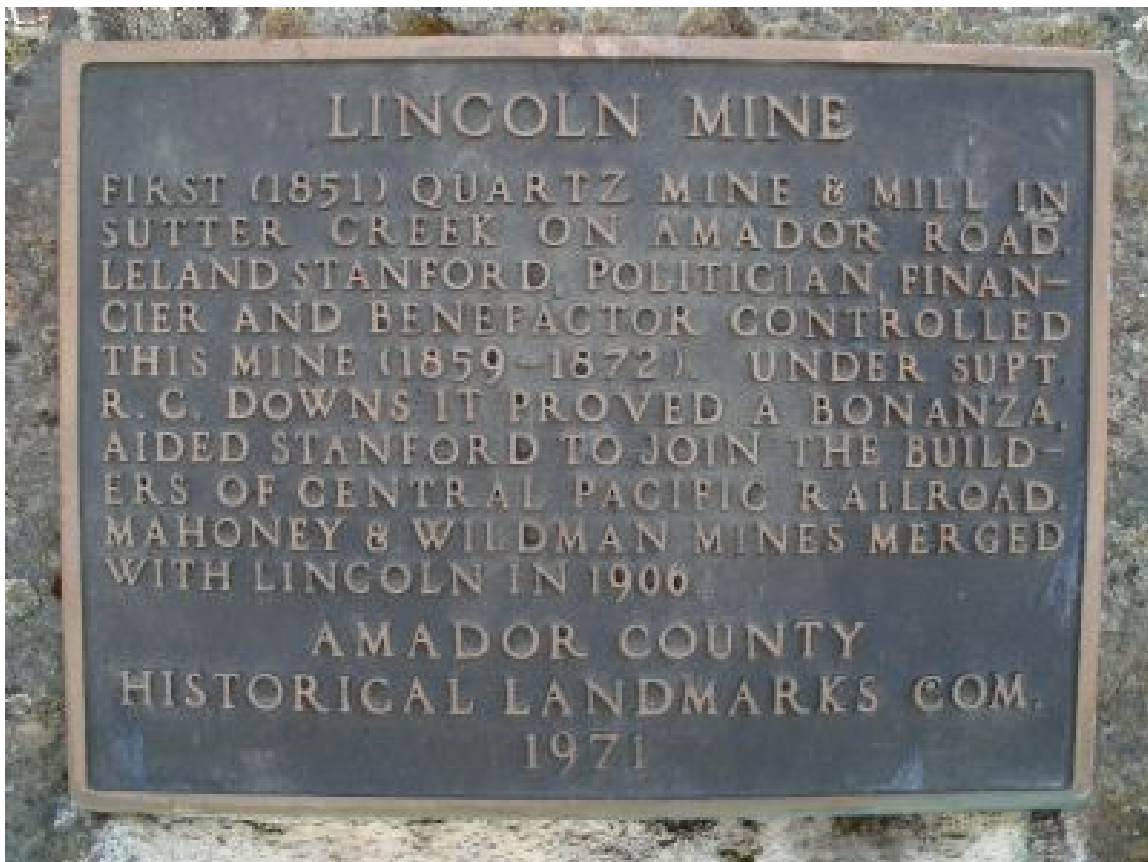


**Newsletter  
December  
2025**

## An Amador Mine Nobody Ever Heard of... (One of Many)

### Hard Luck at the Hardenbergh

Most are familiar with Amador County's most successful mines such as the Kennedy, Argonaut, Bunker Hill, and Lincoln, to name just a few.



These were successful mines run by smart businessmen, but not everything these folks touched turned to gold. In attempts to grow their fortunes, they invested in many other operations that

were anything but successful, which is why few know about them. The relatively obscure Hardenbergh Mine, located in the Middle Bar region along the Mokelumne River, stands as a great testimony to this fact.



*Middle Bar area along the Mokelumne River dividing Amador and Calaveras Counties.*

**The original claim for this mine appears to have been one filed in Calaveras County by an Edward Pickett on May 31, 1854, before there even was an Amador County. Later records show it exchanged hands at least five times until 1867 through a milieu of deeded sales, lawsuits, countersuits and public auctions. Such was speculative mining in the early days.**



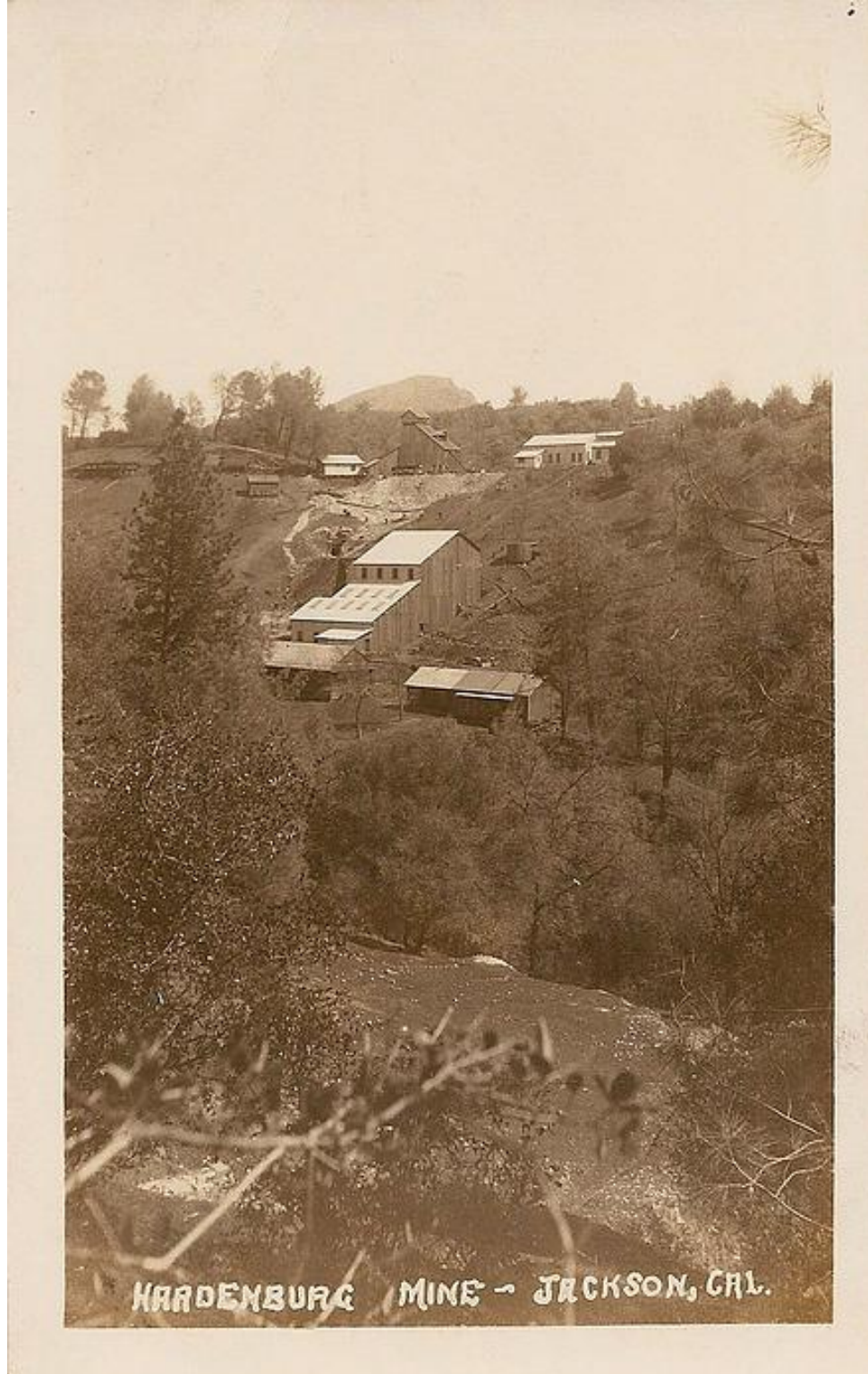
**The namesake of this mine is James Richmond (or “J.R.”) Hardenbergh. He immigrated to California in 1849 from New Jersey, and settled in Sacramento where he served as one of its earliest mayors: first in 1850, and then again in 1852.**

DEATH OF AN EX-MAYOR.—General James Hardenbergh died in Oakland Saturday of congestion of the lungs. He was born in New Brunswick, N. J., in January, 1814, and graduated at Rutgers' College. In 1849 he came to California and became a Sacramento merchant, and later kept the Orleans Hotel. In 1851 he was elected Mayor and served two terms. He was Postmaster of Sacramento for several years, United States Surveyor-General of California and Statistician of the Mint. He was proprietor of the Russ House in San Francisco for several years, but since 1874 has lived in Oakland. The remains will arrive here near noon tomorrow, and the funeral will be under the auspices of the Pioneers.

*Obituary for James R. Hardenbergh*

**He was appointed by President James Buchanan as Postmaster of Sacramento, and later by President Ulysses S. Grant as U.S. Surveyor General for California.**

**Hardenbergh formed the Casco Mining Company and invested \$20,000 to work this mine from May of 1867 until the end of 1869. He took it down to a depth of over five hundred feet, and then lost interest for a lack of payout. A later partner of Hardenbergh named James Morgan patented the land containing this mine under the name of Hardenbergh Quartz Mine in 1874.**



*Hardenbergh Mine Complex*

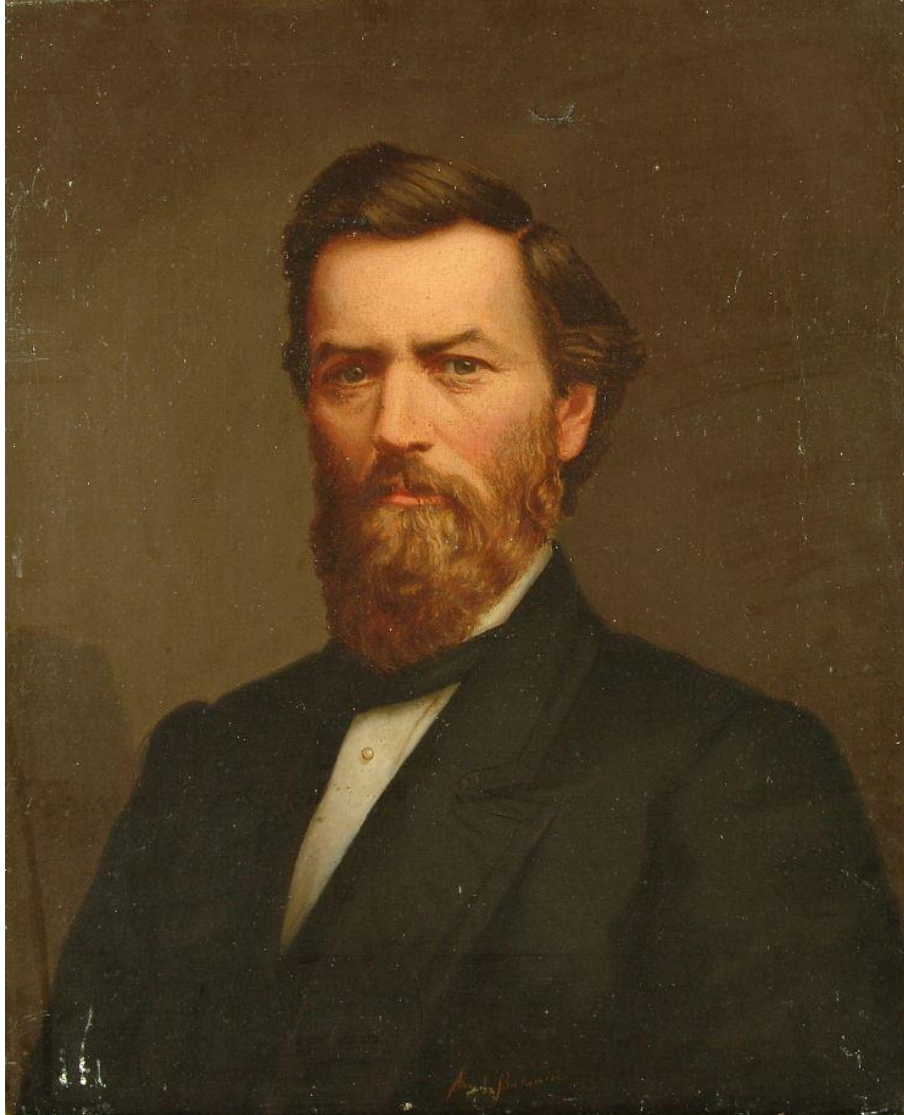
**Such a patent converted a public plot of land into private ownership. It also effectively locked in the Hardenbergh name for this mine going forward, rendered in a variety of different spellings in newspapers and mine reports.**

**The mine was left dormant until 1889 when S. H. Howland of the successful Gwin Mine in Calaveras County reopened the Hardenbergh but soon went bust.**



*Gwin Mine near Angels Camp, Calaveras County*

**While we know very little about Howland, we do know quite a bit about the men who took over after him. This would be the incredibly successful mining team of Alvinza Hayward and Charles Lane.**



**Hayward was born in 1822 in Vermont. He learned techniques for extracting gold from veins while living in Michigan and came to California in 1850 at the news of the gold strike. He founded the Old Eureka Mine in the early 1850's and was also the owner of the Badger and Wolverine Mines, all located around Sutter Creek.**



*Old Eureka Mine, Sutter Creek*

**Hayward was a director of the Bank of California and in 1870 was one of the original investors in the San Francisco City Gas**

**Company, the forerunner of Pacific Gas and Electric Company.**

**He was often referred to as California's first millionaire or the richest man in California.**



**Charles David (Charlie) Lane was most responsible for the successful development of the deep mines in Angels (now Angels Camp). He was born in 1840 in Palmyra, Missouri. At age twelve, his family migrated with him and his seven siblings by wagon train to California where his fascination for mining quickly took hold.**



He lived for a few years at Middle Bar during the time Hardenbergh was still working the mine. After trying his hand at a variety of mining ventures in places including Virginia City, Nevada, and Snake River, Idaho, Lane turned his focus to Angels.

Together, Hayward and Lane turned the Utica Mine in Angels from a decades-old failure into a monumental success in the latter half of the 1880's.

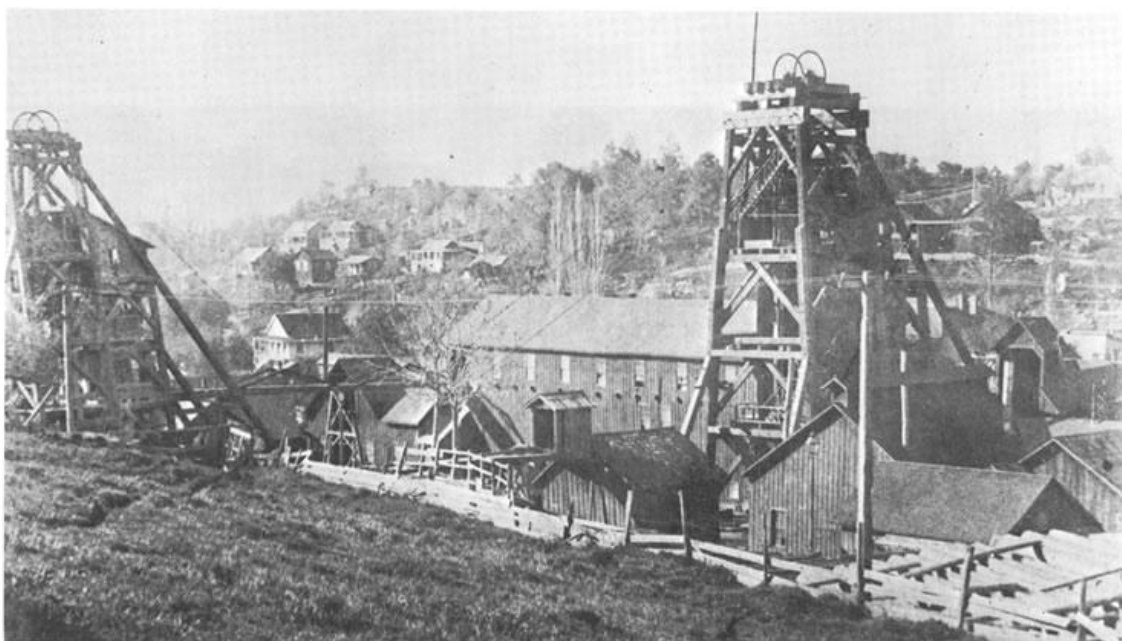


Photo 12. Utica Mine, Angels Camp District. This northeast view, in about 1900, shows the surface plant at the Calaveras County mine. The north shaft is at left and the south shaft, at right. The Utica was

the most productive mine at Angels Camp. Photo courtesy of Hillcrest Studio, Angels Camp.

From there they set out to acquire a number of new properties, one of which would be the Hardenberg, forever dropping the last “h” from its name.

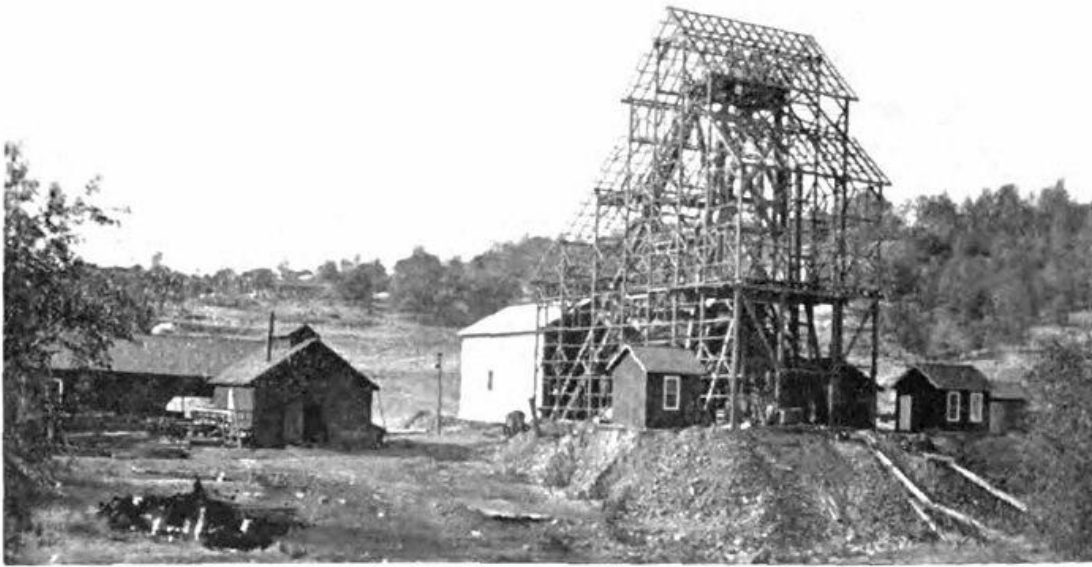
They started work there in early 1893 and continued through the end of 1895. During this time, they drilled down to the one-thousand-foot level and expanded the tunnels along the vein.



Argonaut Mine Drift (tunnel)

Eventually, the fact that the cost of operating the mine exceeded its output caused them to abandon the operation and sell off the equipment. It would take another fifteen years before new investors would come along.

Henry Mallock, then president of the South Eureka Mining Company near Sutter Creek, had just recently turned that mine from a disappointment into a respectable, paying venture. His success there helped fuel a renewal of mining investments in dormant mines in the region. It encouraged him to take on the challenge of the Hardenberg, as well as the Oneida, a mine to the north, near Jackson.



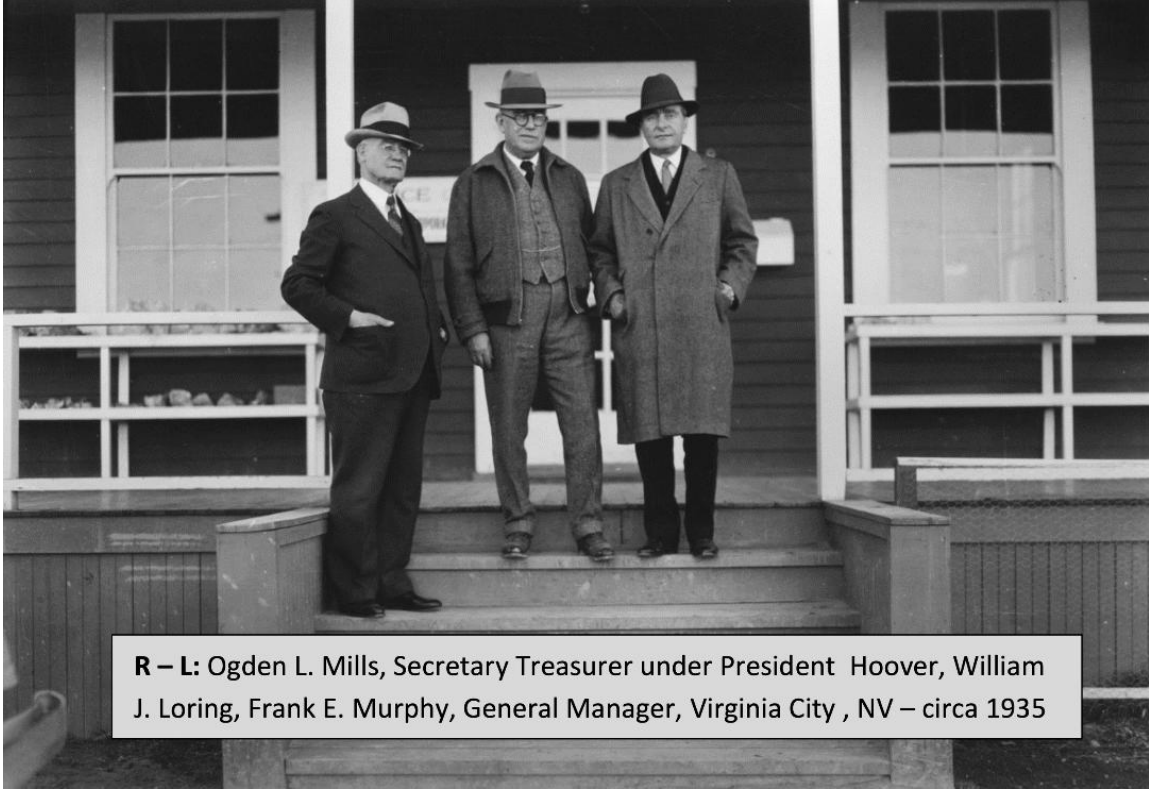
**GALLOWS FRAME AT THE ONEIDA MINE, IN PROCESS OF ENCLOSURE.**

**Together with his working partner John Martin, they took out a bond on the Hardenberg along with an adjoining property.**

**In November of 1910, they started work. They chose to sink an entirely new shaft on the opposite side of the vein, funded through \$300,000 worth of stock issued under the newly formed Hardenberg Mining Company. They invested \$45,000 capital in new equipment and drove this new shaft down to eleven-hundred-feet only to find the same problems and poor yields that everyone before them had. Deeply in debt, they halted all work in April of 1915.**

## **The Final Attempt**

**Six months later, the final attempt would come from two more Amador County mining magnates: William J. Loring and John F. Parks. Loring began his mining career at the Keystone Mine in 1880 at the age of twelve. At fourteen, he worked for Hayward at the Plymouth Mine. By 1908, Loring was one-third owner and head of sixteen mining operations on five continents, including the Plymouth Consolidated in Amador County.**



R – L: Ogden L. Mills, Secretary Treasurer under President Hoover, William J. Loring, Frank E. Murphy, General Manager, Virginia City , NV – circa 1935

**James F. Parks was the son of another successful miner (also named James F. Parks) who had previously been in charge of both the Keystone and Kennedy Mines. The younger Parks was born in Amador City and at age thirty-six, was named superintendent of the Plymouth Consolidated Mine.**





*Plymouth Consolidated Mine Complex*

**Together they formed the Hardenberg Mining Syndicate to fund these new efforts. Parks served as superintendent and Loring was in charge of day-to-day operations. They took the shaft down below the fifteen-hundred-foot level but after fourteen months and a \$62,000 investment they decided to pull the plug and turn the mine back over to the creditors of the Hardenberg Mining Company still trying to cover its debt. The mine never opened again.**





Hardenberg Remains

**This story leaves out considerable detail on the history of this mine, but it stands as a great example that not everything turned to gold in mining days, even when successful businessmen were involved. They were successful because they knew when to stay invested and when to cut bait. You can also see from this story that the successful mining community was quite small in those days, and that the next great successful mining magnate could come from just about anywhere.**

**SCCBF wishes to thank Mark Bowlby for his diligent research and authorship of this newsletter.**

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SCCBF's current renovation project is the Historic Sutter Creek Grammar School which is rich in Gold Rush history. This beautiful building is California's second oldest two-story brick schoolhouse. There are four rooms within the Historic Grammar School that can be rented. Contact the City of Sutter Creek for information on rates and availability - (209) 267-5647 ext. 230 or email [info@cityofsuttercreek.org](mailto:info@cityofsuttercreek.org) / website - [cityofsuttercreek.org](http://cityofsuttercreek.org)

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