

SACRED PLACES

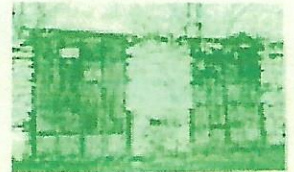
Historic Italian Buildings of the Gold Country

The early Italian settlers to the Gold Country of northern California left many historic buildings which dot the Mother Lode landscape. Many of these buildings, dating from the Gold Rush, are being lost to the ravages of time and neglect. Without efforts to preserve these unique and historic buildings, the Italian legacy in the Gold Country will also be lost. There is an urgent need for the Italian communities and historical societies of the Gold Country to safeguard and protect these sacred places and this distinctive legacy..



Giliardo Store, Douglas Flat - 1851: One of those buildings is the Giliardo Store in Douglas Flat dating from 1851 and located just off historic highway 49. Italian immigrant Antonio Galiardo was a merchant and banker to the miners. He secured their gold dust and jewels in the store safe. The Giliardo Store was equipped with iron shutter and a shotgun window beside the rear door where a guard could protect the safe. The stone and adobe building served as both a bank and Wells Fargo stage stop as well as the communities leading general store.

Cuneo Store, Vallecito - 1851: Another historic building dating from the Gold Rush sadly in need of repair is the Cuneo Store built in 1851 by an immigrant from Italy. The Cuneo Store was known as the "French Store" and was one of the leading stores on the main street of Vallecito. The buildings two iron doors are still in place guarding the entrance of this old store where miners once traded gold dust for tools and supplies. Vallecito is located only about a mile from Douglas Flat and the Giliardo Store.



Romaggi Store, Albany Flat - 1852: The Romaggi Adobe sits alone along highway 49 in an area once known as the mining camp of Albany Flat. James Romaggi arrived from Genoa in 1850 and settled in Albany Flat in 1851. He built this stone and adobe home for his wife Louisa and their five children in the 1850's. The house was surrounded by orchards and vineyards planted by Romaggi. The family lived in the upper story. Downstairs, the Romaggi's ran a small store and a bar. The building, with two stories and a basement, is a classic of Gold Country architecture. Today it sits abandoned only a few miles from its neighbors, the Giliardo and Cuneo Stores.



Costa Store, Calaveritas - 1852: One of the best examples of a Gold Rush Store that has been preserved is the Costa Store in Calaveritas. Luigi Costa emigrated from Genoa in 1850. In 1852, he constructed the Costa Store, which he operated for 50 years. He built the neighboring ranch house in which his descendants, the Cuneo family, still live. The Cuneo family has preserved the store as a historic Italian site and museum.



Ginocchio Store, Butte City - 1857: One of the most famous Italian stores in the region was the Ginocchio Store in Butte City. The Ginocchio Store, also known as the Butte Store, was built in the early 1850's and sits alone aside highway 49. The Ginocchio family operated the store until 1926. The store is now a State Historic Landmark



Chichizola Store, Jackson Gate - 1850: One of the early Italian communities in the Jackson area of Amador County was at Jackson Gate. Italian families still live on Jackson Gate Road, where the historic Catholic cemetery is located and where many of the early Italian pioneers are buried. One of the earliest Italian structures built in the Mother Lode is the Agostino Chichizola Store which was built in 1850 along historic Jackson Gate Road. The original store has been restored and is maintained by the Chichizola family.



Massa's Store, Jackson Gate - 1860: Another famous Italian store of the period, Massa's Store, sits on Jackson Gate Road just down the street from the Chichizola Store. Massa's Store was originally built by Italian immigrant Angelo Massa in the 1860's. Today the building now houses Teresa's Italian Restaurant.

until 1858, before moving to San Francisco where he established the Ghiradelli Chocolate Company at the site of present day Ghiradelli Square.

Ghiradelli Store, Hornitos - 1855: The Ghiradelli Store was built in Hornitos in Mariposa County in 1855 by Domenico Ghiradelli, who emigrated from Rapallo, Italy to California in 1849. He operated the store



These wonderful stone buildings represent part of the ancestral legacy of the Italian American people. These are symbols that we were here during the Gold Rush and beyond. They are also a part of the early history of California. The story of California would be incomplete without an understanding of the role played by the Italians in the creation of California. These historic buildings attest to that fact. Preserving these monuments to our past will help us recognize the contribution made by so many Italians to the development of the Gold Country - recognition that the Italians were a large and vibrant part of the Gold Rush and the Mother Lode region. There are many other historic Italian sites in the California Gold Country that are also in need of preservation. They represent an important part of our history and heritage. For the Italian American community in the State, there is no more pressing issue than the historic preservation of these buildings and our legacy. Italian Americans should consider establishing a Conservancy to purchase, preserve and protect this connection to their unique heritage.