Oak

Almaden Quicksilver

OVER 130 YEARS OF MINING HISTORY

Recognized by the U.S. Federal Government as a National Historic District in 1963, Almaden Quicksilver County Park and the surrounding community of New Almaden are treasures of local, state and national history. Discovered by Mexican Calvary Captain Andres Castillero in 1845 and originally named Mina de Santa Clara, the site is known as the first workable and richest mercury mine in North America, and as the most productive mine in California history.

Named after Spain's famed "Almaden Mine", the New Almaden Mine produced 83,974,076 pounds of mercury until the last operations ceased in 1976. During the late 1870s, New Almaden produced more mercury than any other mine in the world. In 1972 the County of Santa Clara began acquiring the mining property and adjoining lands, opening them as a public park in 1975.

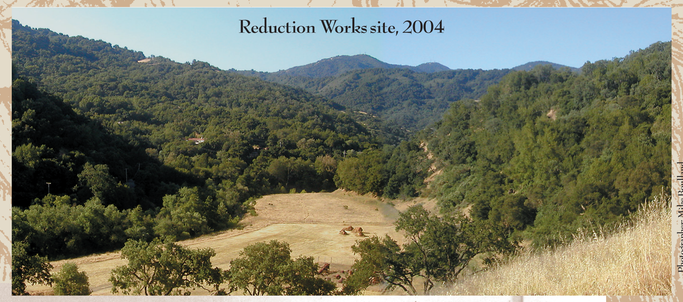
Photo courtesy of National Geographic, photographer Robert W Madden

Mercury, also called quicksilver, is liquid at room temperature and is 13 times heavier than water. Prior to and during the Gold Rush period, mercury was an essential ingredient in processing gold and silver.

It is still used in bomb fuses, levels, thermometers, lamps, barometers, batteries, electronics, medicine and agriculture.

Cinnabar (below) is a dense, reddish mineral composed of mercury and sulphur. When heated, mercury vapor and sulphur gas are released. Called zinjifrab (dragon's blood) by the Persians, Cinnabaris by the Greeks, and Mohetka by the local Ohlone Indians, cinnabar has been valued since ancient times. Most of the cinnabar in Santa Clara County was found along the Los Capitancillos Ridge within the park boundaries.

Photographer John Slenter



Reduction Works site, 2004

Photographer Mike Boulland

Hacienda Reduction Works, 1880

The Hacienda reduction works contained mine offices, sorting sheds (planillas) and Scott furnaces, where most of New Almaden's mercury recovery took place for about 60 years.

Bobcat

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