

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 represents over 130 years of mining history.

To your left, Mine Hill Road takes you past the Enriquita and Providencia Mine sites. To the right, the Senador Mine Trail leads to the Senador Mine.

In 1972 the County of Santa Clara began acquiring the mining property and adjoining lands, opening them as a public park in 1975. For safety reasons, mine tunnels, adits and shafts are now closed. There are, however, several reminders of the past located throughout the park.



MERCURY

At room temperature mercury 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, barometers, batteries, electronics, lamps, medicine and agriculture.



PROVIDENCIA MINE (photo above)

The Providencia Mine, located a few hundred feet from the Enriquita, was also opened around 1859 but proved less successful. The Providencia's tunnels extended only about 2,200 feet. Park Ranger Jim Suell is shown examining the decayed mine entrance in 1977.

TWO WORKERS AT THE SENADOR MINE ENTRANCE (photo right)

The last twenty-six years of activity at the Senador Mine produced 20,000 flasks (each containing 76 pounds) of quicksilver. As you hike up the Senador Mine Trail, look for remnants of the mine works.

Cinnabar (below) is a dense reddish mineral composed of mercury and sulphur. When heated, mercury vapor and sulphur gas are released. Mercury vapor can then be condensed into liquid mercury, or "quicksilver". 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.



Photographer: John Slator



THE ENRIQUITA MINE'S ELDRIDGE TUNNEL, 1932

Opened in 1859, the Enriquita Mine produced 10,000 flasks of mercury in its first four years.

Photographer: Jimmie Schaefer



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