

ARTI-FACTS

The Newsletter of the Award-Winning Idyllwild Area Historical Society

Preserving the History of Idyllwild and Surrounding Communities
in the San Jacinto Mountains

SUMMER 2023

THAR WAS GOLD IN THEM THAR HILLS – OR WAS THERE?

By Ben Killingsworth

(We are republishing this 2008 article by our beloved member, past editor of Arti-facts, researcher and esteemed member of our Founders Circle, who we lost in 2019)

Everyone knows about the 1849 California gold rush. It brought tens of thousands of excited people out west, intent on making their fortunes the easy way— by picking up big nuggets of gold scattered here and there, just waiting to be turned into cold, hard cash. Some did make their fortunes, but many others did not.

In any case, after the main event in Northern California, in what we now refer to as “The Gold Country,” was about over, many of the more determined miners began to look elsewhere, including right here in our own San Jacinto Mountains. The exact time they appeared is unknown, but the best guess is around 1860, based in part on an article written by a San Bernardino-based reporter that appeared in the Los Angeles Star on August 4, 1860, which said, in part, “Rich diggings have been discovered in the San Jacinto mountains, twenty-five miles east of this place.”

Although one would think that any miner with an ounce of good sense would be the last one to tell anyone, least of all a newspaper reporter, about any rich diggings he had found, still another article appeared in the Los Angeles Star on July 6, 1870, about the discovery of an old abandoned gold mine, which said, in part, “The party at once proceeded to clear away rubbish and soon obtained quite a lot



*Searching for gold was no easy task for man nor beast.
PHOTO COURTESY OF HISTORICHWY49.COM*

of ore, which is rich enough to satisfy the heart of the most rapacious miner—assaying from \$600 to \$1000 per ton.”

Information like this was sure to attract a great deal of attention, to say the least, because an assay of only \$100 per ton was considered very promising. But one thing to keep in mind is something that most miners

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“Rich diggings” were where they found them.

*PHOTO COURTESY OF
HISTORICHWY49.COM*

IDYLLWILD AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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*Board meetings are open to the membership
and are held in the archive building on the
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<i>Editor:</i>	Edward Warner
<i>Feature Writer:</i>	Bob Greenamyner
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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Hello to all of our members!

If you have not had the opportunity to visit the museum lately, you must stop by and see our museum garden. The Idyllwild Garden Club has been working on it, and it is spectacular! The garden is open to visitors all week long and we also have lots of sitting areas under the trees and new umbrellas for shade on hot days!

We have two very special activities coming up in September! On Saturday, September 2nd, we will be holding our annual Ice Cream Social. This is free to all and is our way of thanking the community for their support. You make your own sundae with all the trimmings or have the best root beer float ever! Mayor Max III and staff will visit the garden that afternoon as well! We will also have a yard sale with some historical items for all you bargain hunters. Come and join us for a very special day in the Museum Garden!

The second activity is the 21st Annual Home Tour. Put Saturday, September 16 on your calendar! The Tour this year is very special because we have not 5 *but* 6 homes for you to explore! This is the tour you will be talking about for a long time! Learn more about the tour on our website and the article in this edition of Artifacts.

We have had a lot of fun working with students this year. Home schoolers and the Town Hall Summer program came to visit the museum. The younger kids spent time in the museum, while the older kids visited the archive building, working with our archivist, Bob Greenamyner. Bob brought out rubber stamps made by Earnie Maxwell and the kids were able to create their own newspaper while learning about the importance of archiving. Then, the kids came together to make whipped cream in a 100-year-old churner! Jayne Hamil, Bob Greenamyner, and myself enjoyed working with these wonderful kids.

Finally, we welcome our newest board member: Chris Perrault! She has boundless energy, wonderful ideas, and has lived in Idyllwild for many years.

Thank you, everyone, for your continued support.

Charlotte Groty
IAHS President.

Editor's Note: On behalf of the IAHS board I would like to sincerely thank Carolyn Livitsky for her excellent work to produce this newsletter over the last 5 years. She has handed me the reins and I hope to live up to the standards she set for communicating with our membership and the community. I look forward to working with the IAHS board and its members to grow our organization by sharing our mission and purpose. I will rely heavily on Halie Wilson and Carolyn to provide me a roadmap to the unfamiliar path ahead and will remember what my dad always said: "When driving mountain roads, always keep your headlights on!"

Edward Warner – Contact me at edward54625@gmail.com

GOLD ...

(cont. from page 1)

were probably unaware of at the time: a few unscrupulous miners took advantage of others by making their mine appear much more valuable than it really was. The method was called “salting” the mine, and it was often very successful, as we shall see. What they did was very simple; they loaded a few shotgun shells with gold dust and fired them into the walls of their mine, giving the rocks lining the walls a decidedly attractive appearance, especially to someone with not a lot of experience but very eager to make their fortune. And while there is no conclusive evidence that any of the mines referred to in the rest of this story were “salted” in this manner, there is a distinct possibility that they were.

From time to time over the next twenty-plus years more newspaper articles appeared, most of them containing glowing reports about recently discovered gold mines, most of which were abandoned not long after the story was written. But not so in Garner Valley.

One of the main reasons Garner Valley seemed to promise such a golden future was the Hemet Belle mine, which was started in about 1887 by Richard Chilson and his son Eames Chilson. The operation was believed to be so successful that a May 25, 1893, article in the San Jacinto Register said, referring to Eames, who had by now taken over the mining operation from his father, “When he went to San Jacinto he lit his cigars with \$10 bills.”

The fact that the Hemet Belle was apparently doing so well was one reason other miners were attracted to the area, including one Lewis Hansen.

He and his two partners, Ira Harmon and William Vaughn, appeared on the scene in 1895, and the trio promptly filed a claim on a mine they named Little Lily, which just happened to be close to the Hemet Belle mine. Then a year later Hansen bought out Harmon and Vaughn, and became sole owner of the gold mine.

Hansen let it be known that Little Lily was worth \$100 a ton, while at the same time filing several new claims in the area, for which he paid very little.

And now begins a most interesting story.

On December 10, 1896, Hansen sold all of his



*Eames Chilson, second from left, owner of the Hemet Belle Mine, is shown leaning against his cabin in 1887. Photo taken from the book, *The San Jacintos*.
PHOTO BY LELA LOCKWOOD NOBLE*

claims, including Little Lily, to the newly formed Corona Mining and Milling Company for the incredible sum of \$120,000. Figuring an average annual inflation rate of 4% over 112 years, in today’s world that sum would amount to about \$9 million.

What made it possible for Hansen to sell his mining interests for such a high figure was the involvement of one Harold Kenworthy, a very wealthy Englishman who, for reasons known only to himself, decided to plunge headfirst into the gold mining business. He became the major shareholder in the mining company, but he also had four partners; George Coffin, Edwin Stearns, Robert Furlong, and now, as it turned out, Lewis Hansen. In fact, Hansen was named general manager of the company, which operated out of a mining camp called Kenworthy after the man with the most money invested, and, of course, the most money to lose.

As general manager Hansen apparently had free reign and began spending more and more of Kenworthy’s money, including \$45,000 for new equipment and pay for the 22 new workers Hansen hired.

It wasn’t long afterward that Coffin and Stearns decided it was all too rich for their blood and sold their shares to Hansen for \$20,000, who in turn sold half of the shares to Kenworthy for \$10,000. By this time Kenworthy had spent in the neighborhood of \$80,000, and although he didn’t know it, was just getting started.

Meanwhile, Hansen concentrated on completing what was no longer a mere mining camp, but was now considered the town of Kenworthy. It included a

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THE COMPANY WE KEEP - New and Renewing Members

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Charles & Jane Field
David & Laurie Fraser
Doris & Jim Ferguson
The Froehlich Family
Eileen & Jim Gates
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RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Please make your tax-deductible membership check to IAHS and mail to PO box 3320, Idyllwild, Ca, 92549
You can now also can renew membership online!

www.idyllwildhistory.org/membership-application-2/ and pay with a credit/debit card.
Please list your name(s) as you want it to read in our newsletter.

Docents tell "Their Idyllwild Story"

The Idyllwild Area Historical Society considers the Docents that operate our museum vital to our mission to preserve our history and make it available to our guests.

Dana Francis Albano and Anthony Albano	Ed & Sylvia Ham
Susie Avon	Jayne Hamil
Lynette Banks	Marilyn Kemple
Jeannine Charlees-Stigall	Nancy Killingsworth
Sherry Edwards	Diana Kurr
Charlotte Groty	Nancy and Dan Lauderbach
	Sheri McClain

Below are those volunteers who interpret our exhibits and more importantly, share their own "Idyllwild Story" with our visitors.

Jim McMahan	Gisela Sterns
Joyce Milller	Keith Teeuwen and Hanns Lee
Angela Murphy	Kay Wanner
Chris Perreault	Ed Warner
Marlene Pierce	Laura Zarecky
Mary Rider	
Robyn Smith	

MINING ...

(cont. from page 1)

2-story hotel with a capacity of more than 60 guests, cabins for the workers, a general store, an assay office, a sawmill, and 10,000 feet of 2 inch pipe used to carry water to the town. In 1897 a post office was added, and in 1899 the Kenworthy School was established. The school had eight students and an annual budget of \$400, which included the teacher's salary.

While all this was going on Kenworthy kept buying more and more mines, most of which turned out to be worthless. He also put up \$34,000 for an option to buy the 8,000 acre Thomas (later called Garner) Ranch.

The general store was owned by one of the more prominent citizens of Kenworthy, Charles W. Lockwood, whose parents, Thomas and Lorinda Lockwood, owned the Lockwood Hotel in San Jacinto and gave Charles the money to build his general store.

Meanwhile, all of the newspapers continued publishing glowing accounts of the supposed success stories of the dozens of mines still in operation, which is probably why Lorinda Lockwood, now a widow, decided to dive headfirst into the gold mining business. She bought several mines in and around Garner Valley, along with a share in the Corona Mining and Milling Company. The latter purchase came just in time to see the company begin to falter due to the lack of gold produced by its mines, and it wasn't long before the cost of operating the mines exceeded the income.

But before this became evident to everyone else, Lewis Hansen quietly sold his share of the company to the unsuspecting Lorinda Lockwood. And at the same time Robert Furlong, the lone remaining original partner besides Kenworthy, sold the balance of his interests in the company to an equally unsuspecting Kenworthy. As a result of these two transactions the sole owners of the Corona Mining and Milling were Lockwood and Kenworthy.

After a short time the fortunes of the Corona Mining and Milling Company went from bad to worse, and finally, for all intents and purposes, worthless.

The biggest loser, of course, was Harold Kenworthy who wound up selling all of his holdings, including all of the aforementioned buildings and improvements to a J. R. Newberry for an



The Kenworthy Schoolhouse, built in 1899, served the area until the early 1920's, standing longer than any other Kenworthy building.

PHOTO FOUND IN THE BOOK, THE SAN JACINTOS. PHOTO BY NELL EMERSON ZIEGLER

unbelievable ten dollars. He then sold his option to buy the Thomases' Ranch, for which he paid \$34,000, back to the Thomases for five dollars.

In the end it turned out that of all the people involved in the ownership and operation of the Corona Mining and Milling Company the only one who profited was Lewis Hansen. Hansen stuck around for a few years after the company's demise, filing a few claims here and there, and perhaps hoping another Kenworthy would come along, but as far as we know he never found another sucker, especially one so willing to be taken.

The town of Kenworthy lingered on for several years, serving as a home for several prominent families, and the school continued operating for another ten years. But today nothing remains of the once proud Kenworthy, although there is a ranger station by that name about a mile from where the town once stood.

In spite of all this, gold mining continued in Garner Valley for many more years. The most prominent mine was the Hemet Belle, the same one started by the Chilsons in 1887. By this time, however, the newspapers were singing a different tune. The Hemet News, for example, ran an article on January 16, 1914, saying, "There are a number of gold mines in the mountains, but very few have ore which will justify development." But old dreams die hard sometimes, as witnessed by reports that one D.C. Wayne tried working the Hemet Belle during the 1960's.

And who knows? There may still be gold in them thar hills, enough to make someone rich beyond their dreams, but don't bet on it. Just ask Kenworthy.

The information used as a basis for this story was found in the wonderful book, The San Jacintos, by John Robinson and Bruce Risher. 📖

2023 IAHS HOME TOUR, A TIMELINE OF TREASURES

Once a year we strive to present unique and special private residences to share with our community. The owners open their doors to our privileged guests for one day only, a day filled with discoveries, inspiration, and a few secrets. IAHS Board member Nanci Killingsworth works each year with our homeowners to present these treasures. Nanci believes there are a few true things about our Idyllwild homes and cabins; each one is unique, unlike the house next door, unlike homes down the hill, and many of them are storied landmarks. For 2023, a Timeline of Treasures awaits you.

It's rare to see the inside of an original 1910 Strawberry Valley cabin, especially one that was built by hand 113 years ago. This little gem was purchased by this family in the late '20s and maintained carefully ever since. It features an original stone icehouse, a unique find in our village. This is your chance to dive back into the past and imagine what it was like to live on this mountain before running water, electrical power, telephones, and even automobiles.

Your next stop will also bring you back in time to old Idyllwild but now it's 1928. This cabin is 500 square feet of living history. It features very clever built-ins which were quite necessary as you will see as you walk through. It remains unchanged today with its original doors, windows, hardware, and a very special wood burning stove - which the family still uses to cook Thanksgiving dinner.

We move forward to the 1930s and find what started life as a quaint fishing cabin. Gradually over the years it was enlarged and in the 1950's the house was a lodge and still has the original sign out front. The original pocket kitchen which served the lodge guests is still intact. The current owners are artists and have lovingly renovated this home and added a wooden bridge through nearby trees leading to their breathtaking artist's studio.

Many homes are an evolution, with a modest start but visions of what might be possible. We now approach one that began life as a 1920's bungalow. The owner in partnership with a very skilled local contractor possessing an artistic vision, has undertaken a complete and grand transformation inside and out. They literally "raised the roof" and added new windows, a skylight, and a new loft. The stonework, by one of our local craftsmen, is stunning and the spaces feature unique local artwork.

For those of us who crave Mid Century Modern, we present a later work by architect E. Stewart Williams. Mr. Williams was a highly respected architect throughout the Coachella Valley, with works that include the Palm Springs Art Museum, Frank Sinatra's "Twin Palms" residence and many others. This 1982 home features a towering 35-foot ceiling with a 30-foot glass wall that makes the forest outside seem like a part of the home.

Now it's back to the future with a 1960s vision evoking Jetsons-like space travel. It is a registered California Historical Landmark. Built in a factory with structural reinforced fiberglass, it features just 520 square feet of living area. It's now the owners' historically restored private hideaway perched on rock high above the street. With that, access will be limited due to the 39 rock steps to reach this futuristic gem.

This is just a glimpse of the treasures that await you as you walk through these six beautifully unique homes when you join us for our 2023 Home Tour. Saturday, September 16th from 10:00am to 4:00pm. Tickets can be purchased online (<https://www.idyllwildhistory.org/product/idyllwild-home-tour/>) or at Town Center and at the museum on the day of the tour for \$25 per person. Refreshments will be served at the museum. 🍷

What's New?

The **Idyllwild Area Historical Museum** now accepts Credit Cards for purchases from our gift shop, memberships, donation, and events such as our 2023 Home Tour!

Museum Hours have been Extended since Covid, to again include Fridays. Museum hours are 10AM until 3 PM and include Monday holidays and every day between Christmas and New Years. This would not be possible without the wonderful volunteers on the IAHS Docent Team!

The **History Garden** is now open Tuesday through Sunday from 9 am to 4 pm.

The **IAHS Website** www.idyllwildhistory.org has undergone some enhancements to better serve our guests. We now offer a Debit/Credit card and PayPal portal for Donations, Membership, and Event tickets. Thanks go out to Bob Greenamyre, our Web facilitator Frazier-Drake, Chris Perrault and the IAHS board. 🍷

Historical Society Marches in Parade

The IHAS again participated in the Annual Kiwanis Idyllwild July Fourth Community Parade, this year with an entry of two historic vehicles and our group of enthusiastic members promoting our organization and the upcoming 2023 IAHS Home tour! Our group was led by Larry Turner and George Groty performing precision banner drills, Bob Greenamyre the “Sandwich Man”, Dana Francis Albano, Anthony Albano and Hedy Tyson handing out Home Tour bookmarks. Jim Tyson drove his beautiful 1955 Bel Air Wagon, and Ed Warner drove “Eleanor” his 1940 Chevy Truck. The rear guard on the tail of the truck were IAHS President and Vice President Charlotte Groty and Marlene Pierce performing synchronized flag waving! What a beautiful Morning in our Community! 📷



PHOTO BY DANA FRANCIS ALBANO



PHOTO BY ED WARNER

PHOTO BY DANA FRANCIS ALBANO

Idyllwild Garden Club Makes History Garden Smile!

Our partnership with the IGC continued this past spring with three volunteer workdays focused on the annual pruning, weeding, and fire abatement needs in the garden after our epic winter. All of us on the hill have seen the results of the precipitation, and our public garden is no exception. Keith Teeuwan led the Garden Club team and organized their efforts to dovetail with recommendations by the expert gardeners as well as the site goals from the IAHS board.

Those that participated from the IGC were Julie & Don Roy, Gary Parton, Bronwlyn Jones, Laurel Owen, Mary Rider, Helen Strahan, Keith Teeuwen, Haans Lee, Bryan Forward, Toni Berthelotte, Paul

Sokoloff, Kerry Abram, Ceila Bonney, and Arborist Deborah Geisinger

From the IAHS: Linda Hart, Charlotte Groty and Ed and Brenda Warner. This effort resulted in putting a smile on the face of our facility for all who pass by, enticing them to enter this important garden in our community. 📷

Answers to the “So you think you know the Hill” quiz in the last Arti-facts issue:

1. C, 2. A, 3. B, 4. D, 5. B, 6. A, 7. D, 8. A, 9. B, 10. C, 11. A, 12. D, 13. A, 14. B, 15. C, 16. B, 17. B, 18. A, 19. D, 20. C.

Museum Hours

10 am to 3 pm

**Friday, Saturday and Sunday
and Monday Holidays**

Also daily between Christmas and New Years

**History Gardens Open Tuesday Thru
Sunday 9 am to 4 pm**

Follow us on Facebook

www.facebook.com/IdyllwildAreaHistoricalSociety

Visit our website

www.idyllwildhistory.org

For special hours and other business, call
(951) 659-2717 or email info@idyllwildhistory.org

Admission Free

54470 North Circle Drive

Donations Welcome

Upcoming Events

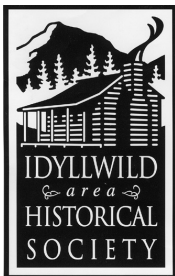
IAHS Labor Day Weekend Yard Sale, Saturday September 2nd, 2023,
IAHS Museum Garden, 9:00 am to 3:00 pm.

FREE Ice Cream Social, Saturday September 2nd, 2023, IAHS Museum Garden,
Noon to 2:00 pm. Hand scooped Ice Cream Sundaes and Root Beer Floats.

***Mayor Max III and staff will visit at approx. 1:30 pm.**

IAHS Home Tour Saturday September 16th, 2023.

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