



# ROCKHOUND RAMBLINGS

AUGUST 2019 • PASADENA LAPIDARY SOCIETY® • PASADENA, CA

Following up on Paolo Sanchez's talk at our July meeting (about gold mining in the Sierra Nevada), here is a look at the gold rushes of Los Angeles County.

## Gold Days in the San Gabriel Mountains

by Karl Stull

The first documented discovery of gold in California took place not in 1848 at Sutter's Mill but in 1842 at the west end of the San Gabriel Mountains. It was March 9, Francisco Lopez's 40th birthday, when he happened to pull up some wild onions in Placerita Canyon and noticed flecks of yellow metal in the roots.

Lopez took the glittering mineral to Los Angeles merchant Abel Stearns, who confirmed it was gold. Stearns sent a sample to the US Mint in Philadelphia, where it was found to be 92.6% pure. Lopez requested mining rights from the governor of Alta California, and the rush was on. Six years later, mining official Ygnacio Del Valle reported that 2,000 prospectors had come to the area since 1842 and extracted a total of 125 pounds of gold.



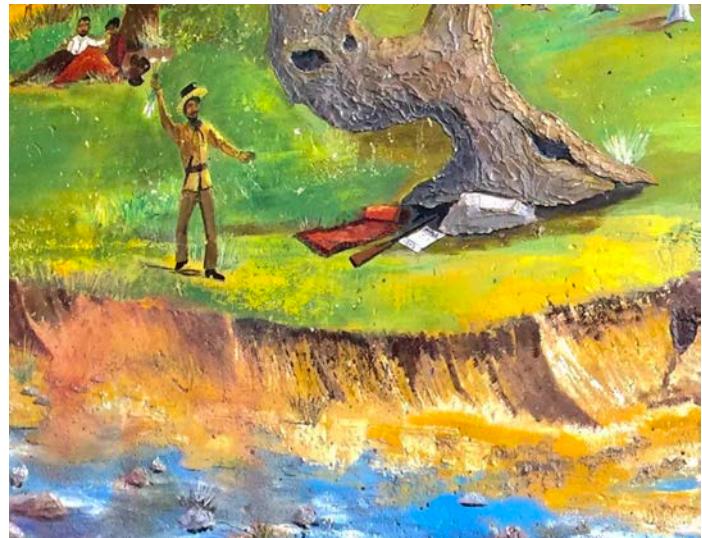
The 125 pound total (4.6 bars of bullion) seems like small potatoes when it is divided over six years and 2,000 miners. That is the nature of placer mining. A placer is a deposit of sand and gravel, and swirling out flakes of gold by panning takes time and water. There are only so many panfuls you can do in a day, and only a few months of water per year in the San Gabriels.

### East Fork: New Ways of Work

The San Gabriels went quiet after 1848, as prospectors flocked to the goldfields up north. California's population grew abruptly from 10,000 to 250,000, and then miners fanned out in search of promising new sites. In 1854, they came to the East Fork of the San Gabriel River. By this time, they had newly developed tools that made placer mining more productive. These tools changed the way their work was organized.

- Rocker
- Long tom
- Sluice

The rocker was a wooden box, more voluminous than a gold pan, using cross-strips (riffles) to catch gold flakes that sank from flowing water. The most efficient way to work a rocker was with a two-man team. The long tom was a longer and even more voluminous box. A half-dozen men could feed shovelfuls of gravel into a long tom at the same time. Typically, one of the



*Telling the story of his discovery, Francisco Lopez said he took a nap under an oak tree after a morning of rounding up cattle. While asleep, he dreamed he was floating on a pool of gold. Then he woke, crossed a stream, and saw the onions. But the discovery may have been the result of systematic searching. Lopez was university educated and had a knowledge of mining. In 1843, he discovered gold again at San Feliciano Canyon, 10 miles to the northwest. Mural at Placerita Canyon State Park.*

miners held the claim and paid the others in shares or wages. On the East Fork in 1859, Thomas Driver paid a crew of 38 miners \$10 a day. Some of these men filled sluices (a series of riffle boxes), while others dug channels to divert the river and expose the sandy streambed.

For demonstrations of the rocker, long tom, and sluice, see the *Prospecting for Placer Gold* video cited under References.

### Water Power

Harnessing water was another means of escalating production. The basic strategy was to dig a ditch uphill to a stream and fill a reservoir. A ready supply of water then made it possible to sift higher volumes of gravel. In Placerita Canyon, long after the easy pickings were gone, Chinese workers dug a 2.5 mile ditch and began sluice mining. These were laborers for the Southern Pacific railroad, which laid tracks to Ravenna in 1875. When word got out they were getting \$50 per day in gold, American miners raided the Chinese camp and drove them off.

The next step up in water strategy was hydraulic mining. Few prospectors could afford the up-front costs, so local merchants were the first hydraulic miners on the East Fork. Henry Roberts, who had a store in Eldoradoville that survived the flood of 1862, bought a claim in 1870 and filled a reservoir 6 miles up-canyon. Ditches and flumes, accelerating water by a 1,000 foot drop in elevation, delivered a high-pressure jet that tore away hillsides – thousands of shovelfuls with just one man aiming the cannon.

*Continued on page 4*

## President's Message



Dear Fellow Members,

August is usually the quietest month of the year. The desert is too hot for rockhounding, and many families are away on vacation this time of year. The Pasadena Lapidary Society is the exception, this year anyway. We have an update to our Bylaws coming up for a vote by the membership this month. But that's not all. PLS will be holding elections in November, so it's time to get a Nominating Committee organized. And one more thing: I'm happy to announce Michelle Vandenbroeck has agreed to become Co-Chair of the PLS Annual Show.

Michelle is a familiar face at the PLS workshop – quiet, friendly, and very focused on the stone she is cabbing. If you saw her Rock of the Month talk last October, on Tiffany Stone, you know that Michelle is also very knowledgeable and a very effective communicator. We're lucky to have her in the role of Show Co-Chair. Don't be surprised, when you hear from her in the coming months about volunteering for the PLS Show, that you are glad to be working with her on an excellent team.



Meanwhile, the next time you see Marcia Goetz, please take a moment to say thank you for her years of service to the PLS Annual Show. Marcia was first appointed Show Co-Chair, along with her husband Joe, way back in 2009. Marcia is increasingly busy with responsibilities at CFMS, as First Vice-President this year and President in 2020, but she will always be a resource and voice of experience for us.

I want to thank Chris Kyte also. He led the Bylaws Committee through a careful review of our basic governing document. This work will make reviews easier for future Boards. Please see the article on page 5. You can read there too about the Nominating Committee. If you're interested in helping PLS identify and recruit leaders for the next two-year term, please give me a call.

Try to find some quality time to relax this August. Labor Day is on its way.

– Ellen Ferrell, President

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## Officers, Trustees, and Committee Chairs

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<b>Trustees</b>	Marcia Goetz, Chris Kyte, Joe Goetz
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### Committee Chairs

<b>Annual Show</b>	Ellen Ferrell	Marcia Goetz (Co-Chair)
<b>Bulletin</b>	Karl Stull	<b>Display Table</b> Ferdie Sanchez
<b>Education</b>	Joan Harrison	<b>Field Trips</b> Karl Stull
<b>Historian</b>	Karl Stull	<b>Hospitality</b> Elizabeth Weston
<b>Librarian</b>	Jennifer Jang	<b>Membership</b> M Hutchins-Mejia
<b>Publicity</b>	Mona Ross	<b>Social Media</b> Elizabeth Weston
<b>Sunshine</b>	Ellen Ferrell	<b>Technology</b> Ben Shutman
<b>Ways &amp; Means</b>	Philip Lahr	<b>Webmaster</b> Eugene Kim
<b>Workshop</b>	Carolyn Duncan	

## Membership

Membership per calendar year is \$25; for additional adults at the same address, \$15. Junior members are \$10. There is an initiation fee of \$10 per person (non-refundable) to cover costs of name badges, etc.

Renewals are due in October and delinquent after December 31. Mail checks to PO Box 5025, Pasadena, CA 91117-0025.

## Meetings

### Board Meetings – 1st Thursday of the month

7 p.m. at Matt Denny's Ale House  
145 E Huntington Dr, Arcadia  
PLS members are welcome.

### Workshop – 2nd Sunday of the month

Fees are \$3 for half-day, \$5 for a full day. Equipment instruction is required; also liability waivers, eye protection, and closed-toe shoes. For directions, please call (909) 455-4360 (cell) or (909) 593-2781, or email [gemquest38@gmail.com](mailto:gemquest38@gmail.com). Bring lunch!

Junior members 9 and older are welcome with adult supervision.

### Program Meetings – 3rd Tuesday of the month

Doors open at 6 p.m. Meeting is 6:30–8:45 p.m.  
Pasadena Central Library, 285 E Walnut St.

## Contact Us

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Send articles by the 15th for publication in next month's issue. Very short items can get in as late as the 22nd but are not guaranteed to make the next issue.

## Program Meeting – August 20



## Very Fitting : Intarsia

Our program speaker in August is Stan McCall, an accomplished lapidary and jewelry artist. He is also proprietor of Custom Creative Gem Cutting (6029 Orange Ave. in Cypress). One of Stan's specialties is intarsia, a technique that involves cutting and fitting stones together to form beautiful and sometimes mesmerizing patterns. Stan's store has a Facebook page where you can see examples of his work.



Our Rock of the Month will be fire agate, presented by Jared Nishimura. – *Mona Ross*

## On the Display Table

Ferdie Sanchez coordinates the Display Table at monthly meetings. Share items of rockhound interest, workshop projects, or rocks from field trips. If you have a rock you'd like to have identified, put it on the Display Table with a "What Is This?" note. Knocking a corner off the specimen may provide clues.



Patty Morrison brought favorite fossils to the July meeting. The shells from Tujunga Canyon and trilobites from Utah were collected on college field trips.

## Congratulations, Jennifer!

Jennifer Nishimura has been active in the Pasadena Lapidary Society since she was 6 years old. Now she's about to start college – at California Baptist University, majoring in electrical engineering. Over the years, Jennifer has taken part in all kinds of PLS events and contributed in many ways to the club we have today.



Her custom jewelry, seen in display cases at PLS annual shows, has gone on to win at state and national levels – including Junior Division firsts for cabochons (2014), beading (2015), and wire wrapping (2017). Her newsletter article on "Collecting Nephrite Jade in Jade Cove" won first place in CFMS competition and second at AFMS.

You may know Jennifer best for rock talks at monthly meetings. She starts with an interesting rock, and by the time she's done you're just as excited as she is about Japanese chrysanthemum stones or Tonopah turquoise. She credits her experience with PLS for her commitment to conserving geological resources.

In recognition of her dedication and service, as one of our outstanding Junior members, the PLS Board will offer a special award to Jennifer Nishimura at the August general meeting. Be there as we wish her the best in the adventure to come.



Nathanial Rowe and daughter Zoey enjoyed the July program about gold mining in the Sierra Nevada (by Paolo Sanchez). Later, Zoey had a winning ticket in the raffle. On the right, we're proud to claim Renee Newman as a PLS member. She is the author of more than a dozen books on how to evaluate gems, including the Gemstone Buying Guide (now in a third edition). Find her at [reneenewman.com](http://reneenewman.com).

## Gold Days in the San Gabriel Mountains *Continued from page 1*

William G. Ferguson, a livery stable owner in Los Angeles, built a similar hydraulic operation on an adjacent claim. To sift gold from the lava-like flows of gravel and sand, Roberts and Gerguson each employed 100 Mexican and Chinese workers.

Roberts and Ferguson prospered, but others ran into resistance both upstream and downstream. The Hardpending Company at Lytle Creek had to contend with vandalism against its five-mile flume, which was shunting water away from other miners. In the lowlands, farmers and city dwellers from Castaic to Cucamonga took their cases to court, complaining of reddish clay silt that made their water unfit for use. The last hydraulic mines were shut down by the mid-1890s.

### Eldoradoville

Placer mining in the San Gabriel Mountains came to a climax in Eldoradoville, a mining camp at the angle where the East Fork turns north. The “town” had three stores, a livery stable, butcher shop, boardinghouse, and half a dozen places where a miner could buy a shot of whiskey. The whole town was washed away by a flood of the narrow canyon in November 1859, and rebuilt a month later. There were 500 miners on the East Fork.

By all accounts, it was a rowdy place – populated by young men who had firearms, high hopes, and not much chance of striking it rich. They made \$2 to \$10 in gold dust by day, and spent a lot of time drinking and gambling. Eldoradoville was not as lawless as remote camps in Gold Country, but crimes short of murder did not come to official notice. Miners settled their differences among themselves, with a gathering of local miners sometimes weighing in as jury. The ethos was one of rugged individualism with a dash of communitarian spirit.

New arrivals and others in need met with kindness, as numerous memoirs attest. There was an understanding among the pioneers that they were filling up a new country (their Manifest Destiny) and that good people had a duty to help others like themselves. There was a harsh side to the communitarian spirit, seen in the contempt many white Americans showed toward people not like themselves. A report from Eldoradoville in the *Los Angeles Star* gives an example of the double-standard in action:



*Before the steam-driven stamp mill, there was the arrastra, with a heavy stone dragged around the inside circle to crush ore.*

At one o'clock yesterday morning, one Mexican or Indian killed another, by stabbing him in the breast with a knife. The apathy with which the white men received this news was, to say the least, degrading... (March 2, 1861)

Mexican, Chinese, and French miners, all in separate groups, worked alongside “American” miners throughout California during the Gold Rush. At various times, Americans would form a posse to force the others out, as happened in the 1876 raid on the Chinese camp in Placerita Canyon. California’s first novel – *The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta* (1854) – begins with an assault by a mob of Americans on a Mexican miner.

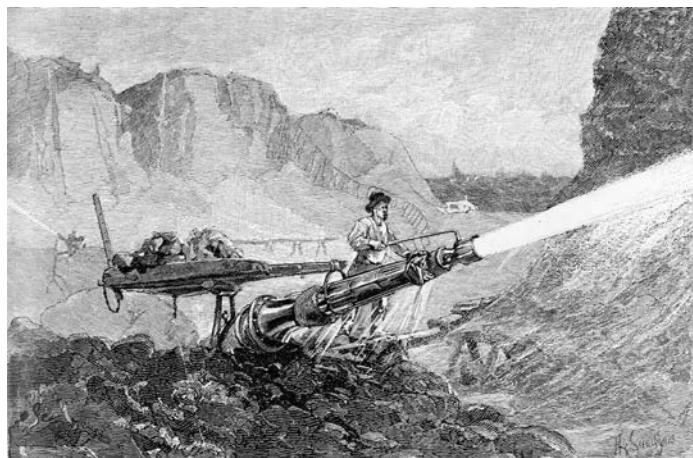
### Hard Rock Mines

Hard rock mining in the San Gabriel Mountains produced much more gold than placer mining, but these larger-scale operations involved much higher business costs. In the end, the little guys may have come out ahead.

A placer miner needs a pan to get started. Hard rock miners need a mill for crushing quartz, a road/rail system to transport ore, and a water system. Steep slopes and high elevations in the San Gabriels multiplied these start-up costs. Notably, the two most successful mines – the Red Rover and its neighbor the Governor – were in the low hills near Acton, right on a railroad line. The Governor produced \$1.5 million in gold (as of 1942), the Red Rover \$550,000. No one else came close.

The hard rock miners’ tales of woe began in 1861, when Los Angeles merchant Manuel Ravenna organized a company to mine copper in Soledad Canyon. They found gold, and in the frenzy of looking for more, with financing from San Francisco, they went bust. In 1868, renewed excitement centered on early finds at the nearby Eureka Mine, which sank a 200 foot shaft and went bust. The Saratoga and Eclipse mines: bust and bust.

Through the early 1910s, miners and their hopeful backers cut tunnels through rock at dozens of named mines between Mt. Gleason and Mt. San Antonio (Mt. Baldy). The Monte Cristo, Big Horn, Allison, Eagle, and Stanley-Miller were some of the best-known of these high-altitude operations. A few did well enough to stay open more than a decade, but none took out more than \$100,000 in gold over the years. In those days of mule-powered transport, hauling the ore down steep slopes must have involved many a terrifying trek.



*With a load of rocks as counterweight, one miner could control the “prodigious” jet from a hydraulic mining nozzle. From Century Illustrated magazine (January 1883) via Wikipedia.*

People look back fondly on the days of the Old West, as a time of personal opportunity and personal responsibility. It brought out the best in people, their courage and decency toward others, though it also brought out a lot of greedy and hateful behavior. It was an exceptional time in history, when there was a whole continent available to gobble up – fortunes to be made. No wonder a few prospectors hung onto the Gold Rush way of life, looking for gold in the high canyons of the San Gabriels into the 1930s. The placer miner, pan in hand, enjoyed freedom that farm and factory workers could only dream of. ♦

*Thank you to Ben Shutman for lending two books that got me started learning about the Gold Rush, Mines of the San Gabriels (my source for most names, dates, etc.) and Death Valley in '49, an epic of determination to reach California.*

## References

*Prospecting for Placer Gold: 1849 California Gold Rush.*  
Youtube video, 9:29 minutes, PeriscopeFilm.com. Original title *Placer Gold*. Arthur Barr Production, 1968.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUDbxNNR7No>

Robinson, John W. *Mines of the San Gabriels*. Glendale, CA: La Siesta Press, 1990.

Starr, Kevin. *California: A History*. New York: The Modern Library, 2015.

Worden, Leon. "California's REAL First Gold." *COINage* (October 2005). Reprinted at <https://scvhistory.com/scvhistory/signal/coins/worden-coinage1005.htm>

## Memoirs of Mining Life

Lane, Lucy B. *Calico Memories: The History of Calico as Written by a Woman Who Was There Through It All*. Barstow, CA: Mojave River Valley Museum, 1993. Written late in life, this account is nostalgic, often tedious, but shot through with details of Southern California's version of mining life.

Manly, William Lewis. *Death Valley in '49: An Autobiography of a Pioneer Who Survived the California Desert*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2016. Detailed recollection of pioneer how-to's, from wagon maintenance to cross-country navigation. Diary style is tedious in stretches but repays patience (example: "hunger swallows all other feelings").

Marryat, Frank. *Mountains and Molehills: Or Recollections from a Burnt Journal*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2015. Jaunty travelogue by an Englishman who came to northern California for the hunting and got drawn into the mining. Detached but in sympathy with the energy, optimism, and racism of the era.

Miller, Joaquin. *Life Amongst the Modocs: Unwritten History*. San Jose, CA: Urion Press [1873]. Autobiographical novel of a lost boy, who champions Mt. Shasta tribes but also the miners who persecuted them. Shockingly clear account of adolescent vulnerability and observation of adults – 78 years ahead of *Catcher in the Rye*.

## PLS Members to Vote on Bylaws Update

The Pasadena Lapidary Society Board of Directors has reviewed a proposed update to PLS Bylaws and recommends approval by the general membership.

The update was carried out by the Bylaws Committee, which included: Chris Kyte (Chair), Ellen Ferrell, David Lacy, Philip Lahr, Marcia Goetz, Joe Goetz, Karl Stull, and Carolyn Duncan.

Their update made no substantial changes or deletions to the existing Bylaws. Instead the focus was on:

- Revising outdated language to modern usage
- Incorporating new technologies
- Clarifying processes
- Eliminating inconsistent terminology

Inconsistent terminology accumulated over the years in past revisions. For example, the Bylaws refer variously to both the "Society" and the "Club." The update now refers consistently to the "Society." Webmaster and Technology Specialist have been added to the list of Standing Committees. In the past, it was appropriate for Article III – Membership, Section 1A, to list the several types of discrimination that were prohibited. In the update, this provision reads simply: "There will be no unlawful discrimination in membership."

There are changes of this kind throughout the new document. The Bylaws Committee carried out its review line by line over the course of several all-day meetings. The result is probably not perfect but represents the best effort of a group dedicated to the benefit of PLS.

The proposed update was sent out by email on July 16. Printed copies are available on request. It will be submitted for approval at the general meeting on Tuesday, August 20, 2019.

## Nominating Committee Starts Up This Month

PLS holds elections in November every other year. As provided in the Bylaws, a Nominating Committee is established at the August meeting to recommend candidates. The goal is to find two candidates for each of the elected offices (President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Federation Director).

On the Nominating Committee are:

- 2 Board members, selected by the Board;
- 2 members selected by the general membership;
- 1 member selected by the President.

PLS thrives when members get involved. If there are candidates you would like to recommend (including yourself), or if you would like to be part of the Nominating Committee, please contact Ellen Ferrell: **(727) 512-0381**.

In addition to candidates named by the Nominating Committee, candidates for PLS offices can be nominated from the floor by any member at the October and November meetings.

## Workshop – August 11



## Want to Make a Sphere? Let's Get Started

Last month, we had high temperatures to deal with and a lot of activity on the different machines, so we postponed the presentation on "Introduction to Sphere Making." I'll give the presentation at the August Workshop, starting at 9:30.

If you have a rock you'd like to transform into a sphere, bring it in and get started sawing. The first step will be sawing the rough rock into a cube. In choosing a rock, make sure it is big enough to yield a 3-inch cube (that's the minimum size). A relatively soft material, such as onyx, will be faster and easier to work with. Also, choose a rock with some beauty in it. You want the finished piece to make you happy when you look at it.

As always, workshop hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Half day is \$3, all day \$5. We sometimes close early due to heat, storms, or low attendance. If you plan to come late, please call ahead.

For directions, call **(909) 455-4360** (cell) or **(909) 593-2781**, or email [gemquest38@gmail.com](mailto:gemquest38@gmail.com). Park on the street or in the lot on the east side of the building. Entrance is on the *west* side of the building. Do not enter by the ramp in the parking lot.

– Carolyn Duncan

## Coming in September 17 Things to Know About Opening Your Own Etsy Shop

Success stories, horror stories – PLS members want to know! To share your Etsy experience, contact Karl Stull: [karlestull@gmail.com](mailto:karlestull@gmail.com) or (818) 205-7135 (leave a message).



*Lucinda Ramirez was an ocean swimmer years ago, one of the first women candidates to apply for work as a beach lifeguard. She came on the field trip with her sister Wendy Moreno.*

## Photos from Palos Verdes



New member Jen Fung and her husband enjoy bicycling and camping. She visited Gem Hill with a friend, but there wasn't much to find. She looks forward to field trips with PLS.





*Who bored the holes that make the stone above look like brass knuckles? The mollusks on the stone below ain't sayin' nothin'.*

## Rock and Gem Shows

**August 2–4 NIPOMO** Orcutt Mineral Society, Nipomo High School, 525 Thompson Ave. Hours: Fri–Sat 10–5, Sun 10–4. [omsinc.org](http://omsinc.org)

**August 3–4 SAN FRANCISCO** San Francisco Gem & Mineral Society, San Francisco County Fair Building, 9th Ave & Lincoln Way, Golden Gate Park, Hours: Sat 10–6, Sun 10–5. [sfgms.org](http://sfgms.org)

A large number of people from various parts of the State are flocking up to Wilson's Peak, and if the discoveries continue, Pasadena will be converted into a mining camp.

**- LOS ANGELES TIMES**  
**AUGUST 26, 1886**

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>August 2019</b>				<b>1</b> <b>Board mtg</b> PLS members always welcome	<b>2</b>  Gem show	<b>3</b>  Gem shows
<b>4</b>  Gem shows	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>11</b> <b>Workshop</b> Sphere Making	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> <b>Program mtg</b> "Intarsia" Stan McCall	<b>21</b>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Photos on page 6</b></p> <p><i>There was a sound like popcorn popping as every wave came in, pushing new rocks up the cobbled beach. David Lacy found a variety, as always. That's his armful in the second row, left; and that's Ellen Limeres's black rock on the right, with brushstrokes as on a Chinese screen. Serene rockmaster Chris Kyte shared his knowledge of the site with field trip guest Cheng Leong. Debbie Sanchez found a question mark in the form of a piece of driftwood and saw that it should be made into a planter for air ferns. To her right, an eagle strikes a USPS pose, with a fish in its left talon. Eagle photo by Ellen Limeres.</i></p> </div>		
<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>			

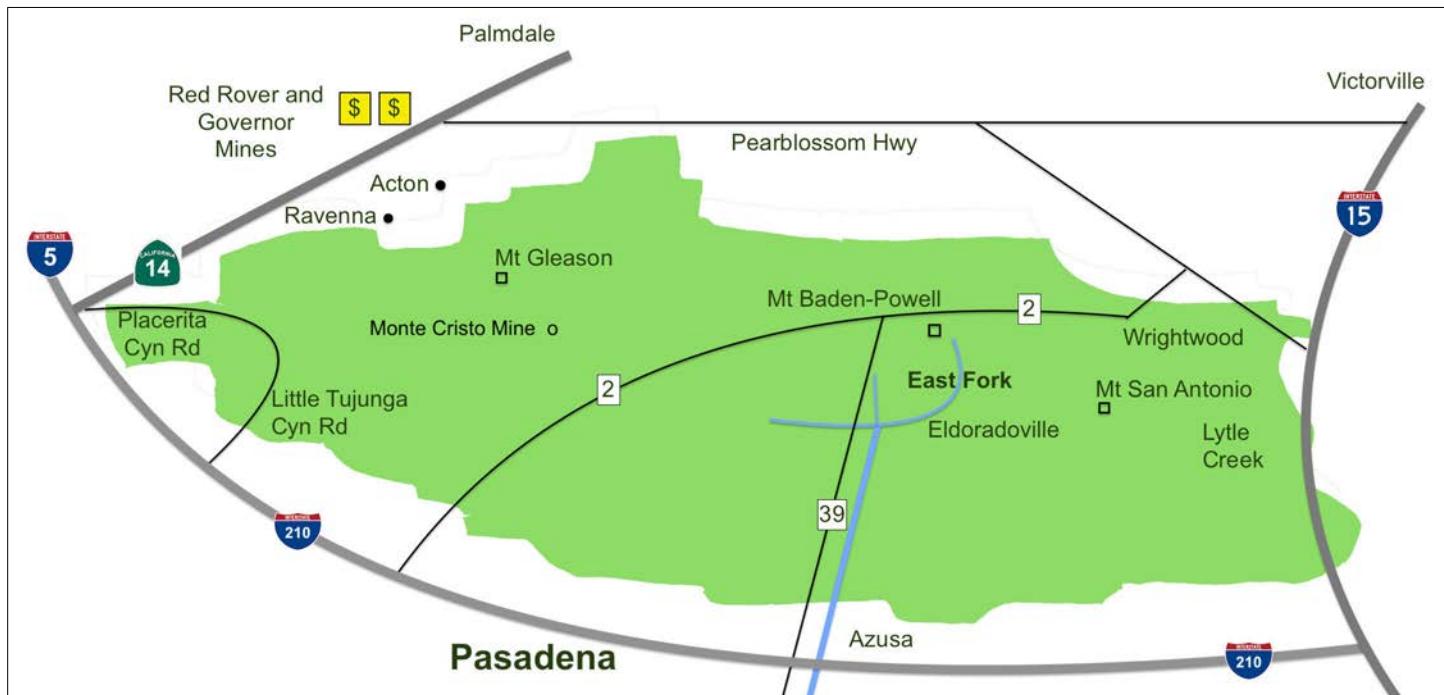


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Wire apron and malachite necklace  
bring out a figure in chrysocolla.  
By Carol Burton.

## Gold Mining in the San Gabriel Mountains



*This is a "back of the envelope" map, not intended for pilots, tour bus operators, or anyone attempting to go anywhere specific.*

AUGUST 2019