Life Beyond Gold: A New Look at the History of Julian, California

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In the mid-nineteenth century, mining towns appeared throughout California only to become ghost towns as miners hurried to new deposits elsewhere, leaving abandoned buildings in their wake. The town of Julian, founded during a gold strike in 1869, did not disappear but, instead, became a community. Men and women chose to stay in Julian because of the close relationships that developed among families and the viability of agriculture, particularly apples, in the region. This article describes the founding of Julian and examines the factors that allowed the town to survive beyond the Gold Rush years.¹

According to local folklore, Native Americans living in the Cuyamaca Mountains knew about gold deposits in the surrounding hills but kept it a secret until they could use it to their advantage. Eventually, they began trading gold dust for trinkets from padres at Santa Ysabel Mission and, later, showed them where gold could be mined.² A more credible tradition suggests that A. E. (Fred) Coleman, a former slave, first discovered gold near present day Julian in January 1869. Coleman, who previously mined in northern California, lived with an Indian family near Wynola, about four miles southwest of the Santa Ysabel ranch. While watering his horse in a creek, he noticed a reflective material in the creek bed. He panned through water, stone and soil, and exposed a few small nuggets of gold. He quickly formed the Coleman mining district and nearby Emily City mining town. Word quickly spread to the surrounding hills and San Diego.³

Later that year, four cousins, Drury and James Bailey and Mike and Webb Julian, arrived in Temecula from their home state of Georgia. On their way from Nevada to the Southern California coast, the men learned of proposed plans for a Pacific Railroad line from Yuma, Arizona, to San Diego. Short on supplies, they sent James to San Diego to obtain both rations and information about the railroad. On his return, James met Mr. Harrall, a resident of the Cuyamacas, who was headed to San Diego to trade bacon for supplies. Harrall told him that the land in the Cuyamacas had abundant wild hogs and unpanned streams. The cousins figured that there would not be work in San Diego until the railroad was completed so they headed back to Arizona. While crossing the Cuyamacas in November 1869, Drury Bailey decided to homestead there. The others also stayed and, the following spring, planted barley on land that would become the town of Julian.⁴

Kathryn Jordan, a candidate for the Master of Arts degree in history at the University of San Diego, plans to compare the histories of Julian, Big Bear and Calico to show why Julian and Big Bear survived after the mining declined. She thanks Dr. Iris Engstrand, the San Diego Historical Society, and the San Diego County Library, Julian branch, for their assistance.
In February 1870 two separate gold deposits were discovered near the Baileys’ camp. Drury Bailey uncovered a quartz ledge, “Warrior’s Rest,” a few days before H. C. Bickers discovered what would become the Washington Mine. Together the men formed the Julian Mining District on February 15, 1870, in order to protect the interests of the growing number of miners in the area. The district appointed Mike Julian as its first district recorder. Around this time, Drury Bailey titled the town “Julian” after his cousin, Mike, because he was the most handsome man in town, and it sounded better than “Bailey” for a town name. By March, twenty claims had been filed and the San Diego Union began running reports of gold, encouraging the migration of prospectors to Julian and the surrounding Cuyamaca towns like Branson City, Eastwood, and Coleman City (formerly Emily City).

Quickly, landowners moved to try to control the goldmines. Robert Allison, John Treat, Juan Manuel Luco and Isaac Hartman had bought land south of Julian from Don Agustin Olvera in 1869, intending to use it for lumber and grazing. News of gold caused them to reevaluate their plan. Two months after the formation of the Julian Mining District, Luco and the other men began legal proceedings to alter the boundaries of the Cuyamaca Grant in order to include the gold fields within their property lines. Sherman Day, U.S. Surveyor-General for California, directed Deputy Surveyor James Pascoe to conduct a government survey but it soon became apparent that Luco and Treat influenced Pascoe to alter the grant boundaries. On May 25, 1870, the grant owners met with the Julian miners and offered a compromise: mining could continue so long as royalties were paid to the grant owners for any gold extracted. The miners quickly rejected this idea, knowing some mines would be taxed up to fifty percent of their earnings. Within that week, Julian and San Diego residents met at Horton Hall in San Diego to discuss action against the grant owners.

Julian residents initiated what would become a long legal battle for access to the goldmines. They formed a committee known as the Defense League and began fundraising for the payment of legal fees to attorney George Yale. Soon afterward, Judge Benjamin I. Hayes began working independently on the miners’ behalf. By January 1, 1871, Hayes assumed full legal responsibility for the case from Yale. Throughout the summer of 1870 he conducted a field survey of the area, visited and interviewed Indians and settlers in the region, and documented his findings. Around the same time, the Defense League hired engineer Charles J. Fox to conduct a survey of the Cuyamaca Grant. Fox discovered, as expected, the grant boundaries ended roughly six miles south of the Julian mines. In order to pay for legal fees accumulated by the efforts, miners contributed a dollar each month and held fundraisers like dances and cake sales for the cause. The entire town celebrated when the new U.S. Surveyor General for California, J. R. Hardenbergh, closed the case on April 5, 1871, without changing the boundaries of the grant. However, the grant owners managed to have the case reopened in November 1872 on a technicality. In the end, however, the miners prevailed and the matter was closed indefinitely on April 25, 1873. President Ulysses S. Grant approved the official land grant boundaries on December 19, 1874.

Julian survived beyond the mining boom due to the large number of women and families, not just single men, who migrated to the region. One local historian suggested that Julian did not become a “ghost town” like other California mining camps largely because “the women of the families, and the men not actively
engaged in mining, had found that the soil was miraculously productive. Many of the families chose to stay in the district." Several women in town managed their own hotels or boarding houses for miners. Jennie Garrett Lane, who was known as “Grandma Lane” throughout the town, ran a boarding house and worked as a midwife. Margaret Tull Robinson ran the Hotel Robinson with her husband, Albert. After Albert’s death, Margaret continued to run the hotel herself until the Jacobs family purchased it around 1919. As a teenager Helen Jacobs helped do “everything” around the hotel. She waited tables, cooked in the bakery and café, and washed dishes. When the hotel was busy, Annie Grosskopf, a Canadian Indian known in town as Cris Cross Annie, also helped do odd jobs around the hotel. While men worked predominantly in the mines, women kept stores and hotels open for business.

A school for the children lent an aura of permanence to the town. James Jasper noted “people always flock to a new gold camp; not men alone, but women as well, and where there are women there are children; schools must be provided, and you can trust the miners for that.” Julian’s first school opened its doors in 1870; a school in neighboring Banner followed in 1872. At the time, students used outhouses and a wood-burning stove. In a letter from Julian to northern California, one new resident noted “the place is assuming an apparent permanence, since the discovery of the mines. There is a large and commodious school-house and an organized school district, numbering over 100 children of school age, with school in operation, and every Sunday, as Mrs. Partington says, we hear the ‘gospel dispensed with.’” The first school year began May 15, 1870, and closed June 30, 1870. For seven weeks of teaching, the teacher earned $450, nearly as much as she would make in the following school year. An average of twenty-seven students attended in this month and a half.

Many men and women met their future partners in Julian. Teachers, often
young, unmarried women, were sought after by single miners. The first Banner teacher, Edith Shaw, married Isaac Ijams shortly after her tenure. Her successor, Elizabeth Kelly married Chester Gunn. Susan Stormes, Julian’s first teacher, married Charles Leonard Evans in 1874. According to Jasper, “the last wedding caused the trustees of both districts to declare a boycott of school marms,” but after the bachelor miners threatened the trustees, “the trustees realizing their danger, revoked the boycott and a feast and dancing followed putting an end to the rebellion.”

Many of the couples who met in Julian remained and raised their families in the area.

Julian’s melting pot of ethnicities contributed to a vital business community that included a cabinetmaker, painter, farmer, hatter, druggist, brick mason, cooper, blacksmith, and baker. Census records indicate that English, Polish, Welsh, Jewish, Italian, and African American residents called Julian home in the town’s earliest days. “Count” Dwarskowski, who claimed descent from Polish nobility, owned one of the town’s general stores. Joseph Swycaffer ran the town’s only butcher shop. America Newton, a former slave from Independence, Missouri, was also well known around town. She made her living washing clothes, and she was often seen riding in her buggy with clean laundry to be delivered. Albert and Margaret Robinson, an African American couple who met in Julian, owned and operated the Hotel Robinson. Employees remembered Mrs. Robinson as “very prim and energetic” but “quiet-spoken.” According to one local, they were considered to be “fine colored people.”

Native Americans and Chinese did not fare as well as other ethnic groups
in Julian. Indians sold fruits and vegetables to miners and worked as laborers on road building projects. White residents could be intolerant of their behavior, particularly when they violated social norms. In August 1890 James Jasper wrote the Sentinel that “the mob of drunken Indians of last Sunday…was a disgrace to the town.” There were few Chinese residents due to prejudice against them. The 1870 census reported only one “domestic servant” of Asian descent. Some restaurants and hotels, even twenty years after the discovery of gold, advertised that they did not employ Chinese cooks. The Chinese who lived in Julian in the late nineteenth century eventually moved to more tolerant communities in San Diego and Los Angeles.

Julian hosted a small but stable number of downtown businesses. A San Diego Union article noted “Julian is what may be called a ‘rising town,’ not only with reference to its altitude, but as to its rapid settlement and building up.” Six hundred people populated the town soon after the discovery of gold and more arrived over the next few years. Between 1870 and 1880, Julian boasted two hotels, five stores, two cafes, two blacksmith shops, two livery stables and several saloons. The town did not, however, have a bank until September 1870. In their absence, general stores served as banks. Markets in San Diego and Los Angeles gave credit to the stores in Julian for the gold deliveries they received and the stores, in turn, gave credit to the miners to use for groceries or, the most widely purchased good, alcohol. Historian Helen Ellsberg noted, “Aside from the difficulty of bringing in such store-bought supplies as coffee, sugar, and flour, living was easy in the mountains.”

Boarding houses and hotels catered to Julian’s growing population. Before that, people slept in tents. Emily City, for example, was considered a “tent city” prior to the creation of boarding houses in the area. The Pioneer Hotel, run by Mrs. M. A. Clough, “could accommodate forty guests, who, the year before, would have been sleeping outdoors.” George and Katherine Hoskings built and ran the Julian Hotel (not to be confused with the Hotel Robinson). After George’s death in 1874,
Katherine remarried and continued running the hotel until her death in 1885. As a young teenager, Suzie Taylor McPherson waited tables for Mrs. Hoskings at her hotel. By the age of sixteen, she had taken management of the Pioneer Hotel, renamed it the Mountain View Hotel, and ran it for George Keener, the property owner.  

Restaurants served as working kitchens for everyday meals as well as places of entertainment. The Hotel Robinson had a number of “regulars” who relied on Mrs. Margaret Robinson’s cooking for their sustenance. Joe Marks, Dr. Hildreth, the stagecoach driver, a salesman named Drummers, and a number of teachers visited the restaurant on almost a daily basis. Similarly, “Mother Lane” ran a miners’ boarding house where “she…cooked for more miners and fed more hungry people free than any woman in California.” While she may not have profited from her generosity, word of her cooking spread and contributed to her reputation for good, hearty meals. Police Captain Francis Marion Hopkins served dual roles as saloon owner and policeman. He even held court in his bar and managed to “dispense justice and whiskey in the same room without mixing results.” A newspaper correspondent writing under a fictitious name, Nil Desperandum, described Julian in this way: “Though the town is not very extensive, when we come to think that it has been settled but little over two years, its size and the completeness of its amusement resources, is surprising.”

Transportation to and from San Diego also helped business in the mountain town. Joseph Yancey originally moved his family to Julian from Georgia in 1870, not for gold, but to raise horses. He used his horses to transport ore between the mines and stamp mills, and merchandise between Julian and San Diego. Before consistent mail delivery, Chester Gunn operated a pony express mail service from Julian to San Diego beginning in April 1871. Because he traveled alone, he could take trails and short cuts that wagons could not, thus cutting down delivery time. Gunn charged “ten cents a letter and carried letters and small packages,” and
received a fair amount of business because people wanted reliable mail service, even for a small fee. Demand for a pony express service eventually disappeared as stages began to make the trek from San Diego to Julian in a single day. Regardless of the method, speed of delivery improved, thus benefiting both personal and business communications.26

Eventually, news of new gold discoveries in Arizona and Nevada drew miners away from Julian and the population dropped to around one hundred by the mid- to late 1870s. Nevertheless, the town survived. In 1881, the Julian and Banner mining districts combined to form the new Julian district. The discovery of the Gold King and Gold Queen mines in 1888 gave new life to mining and a boost to the town’s businesses.27

Julian’s continued prosperity had a good deal to do with its apple, and later pear, orchards. James Madison migrated to San Diego from the east coast in 1867 looking for land suitable for raising horses. He recognized the soil and climate would be suitable for growing apples. Madison and Thomas Brady planted the first apple trees in Julian

Certificate awarding W. L. Detrick of Julian a gold medal for his apples at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, 1904. ©SDHS #91:18564-1230.
in the 1870s. The San Diego Union reported the news of Madison’s apple harvest on November 11, 1880. One former resident remembered, “everybody went to agriculture” after mining production halted in the late 1890s. The Baileys, Wellingtons, and Horace Wilcox all planted large orchards around that time. Productive harvests helped Julian apples win eight gold medals in 1907 at the Jamestown Virginia Exposition.28

Close-knit friendships and an active social life kept people from leaving Julian. With what appears to have been a light-hearted, pioneer spirit, residents seemed to genuinely enjoy one another’s company. According to one early historian, “Julian was never the ‘hell roarin’ town that is commonly associated with mining camps.” Horace Fenton Wilcox remembered “during the gold rush Julian and Banner was pretty tough places, but I reckon they wasn’t any tougher’n most minin’ camps of that time. Every other place of business was a saloon, a gamblin’ joint, or a dance hall; but on the whole things was pretty orderly…respectable women was perfectly safe.”29 One visitor from San Diego returned to the city and noted, “the mountain people understand life. When they have a ‘time,’ they have a good time.”30

Practical jokes occurred with regularity. Tom Daley, the town butcher, allowed a German couple, Waldemar and Maggie Wilson, to live in the back of his shop. Waldemar mined for a living and Maggie raised and sold chickens in town. Daley thought it funny to take Maggie’s chickens without her knowledge in an attempt to fluster her. Before Daley could have a good laugh, he noticed the eggs from his own chicken coops were gone. Maggie had gotten the best of him. Drury Bailey, notorious for his sense of humor, left a town dance early one evening and snuck back into the room where all the babies belonging to party goers slept. Thinking it funny to move the children from crib to crib, he switched them around and hopped on the last stage out of town to the county seat in San Diego. When the
dance ended, the mothers picked up their babies and headed home, not knowing that they had taken another woman’s child. It was not until Drury returned three days later to explain his mischief that they mothers were able to sort out the confusion. Engaged couples like Lucy Wilcox and George Dannals even tried to keep their romance a secret because they did not want to be victims of a prank.31

The most popular and frequent social gatherings in Julian revolved around dancing. The Wilcox family usually provided the music. Horace Fenton Wilcox played the bass viol, his father the fiddle, and the Wilcox daughters played the piano. Mr. Wilcox used this as a supplemental source of income when his mine was not producing. Some dances were thrown for the simple purpose of dancing. Other times, dances were held as fundraisers for a new town hall or road construction. James Jasper recalled, “In pioneer days everyone danced in Julian… there were more than the usual number of matrons with young babies. The dance hall was fully equipped with a ladies dressing room in which the babies were put to bed, while the mothers ‘tripped the light fantastic toe.’”32 Often, the Julian Sentinel announced the details of an upcoming dance, and followed up with a report on the dance’s success in fundraising along with details about what was served for dinner. The St. Patrick’s Day dance in 1891, for instance, began around 9:30 p.m., and continued until 12:00 midnight, at which time the thirty couples present ate supper at Mrs. Williamson’s restaurant. Following their fest, “dancing was again resumed and continued till 4:30 in the morning.” The dance, held as a fundraiser for a new floor, raised about $15.33

Church attendance provided another form of fellowship among townspeople.
The first group of miners to arrive in Julian included three Baptist ministers. Rev. Thomas Jackson Wood, a missionary from England, began services at the Julian Community Baptist Church in 1885. Services were originally held in the one-room Julian schoolhouse until Drury Bailey donated land to be used for a new church building. The new building held its first church service in December 1891 and, shortly thereafter, Rev. Frank L. Blanc was hired as the church’s full-time pastor. The Sentinel advertised for volunteers to assist in the organization of a church Sunday school and called on families to contribute to the effort. Aside from Sunday morning services, “song services” were held in the evenings to give “the young couples a chance to get together.”

Small town gatherings continued into the early twentieth century, long after the gold mines had ceased production. The first Apple Day celebration was held in 1909 to celebrate the year’s harvest and a new stage in the life of Julian. The day was overcome with windy conditions so men and boys held the tents in place for food serving while “the women and girls had to tote the food across the street to the Julian Hotel.” Julian and other rural towns like Escondido, Ramona and Poway, formed a town baseball league, which provided recreation for the men in town. Fourth of July celebrations were elaborate affairs. People from miles around gathered in Julian for a barbeque, horse racing, relay races, and dancing.

Today Julian is famous for apples and apple pie. Orchards produce several varieties, including Pippins, Arkansas Black, Lady, and Granny Smith. Tourists and locals enjoy Julian’s apples in pies, ciders, and jellies available throughout the county. Many of the town’s original buildings remain standing and are used for shops, restaurants, and other small businesses. While most California mining towns gained fame for their boom years, Julian boasts of a history beyond the Gold Rush.

NOTES

1. This paper draws on sources held at the San Diego County Public Library, Julian branch, and San Diego Historical Society. These archives provide adequate but limited evidence about life in early Julian. The Julian Historical Society, however, promises to make available previously unread letters, diaries, and other materials related to the history of the town. The Society’s archives, in storage for a number of years, are presently in the process of being archived, indexed, and preserved, in order to make them available to the public. They should be available at the Society’s new home, the old Witch Creek School, most recently used as the town library, in the not-too-distant future.

2. Dan Forest Taylor, “Julian Gold,” Federal Writer’s Project, February 8, 1939. 2. Mission Santa Ysabel was founded in 1818 as a branch, or “asistencia,” of the Mission San Diego. Thanks to Dr. Iris Engstrand for this information.


4. Myrtle Botts, History of Julian (Julian, CA: Julian Historical Society, 1969), 1-5. The Baileys and Julians made an agreement to meet in New York City on a given day in 1867 and travel together to San
Francisco by way of Panama. Frank Bailey, Drury and James Bailey’s brother, also traveled with them from New York to the West Coast. At some point in the travels around Nevada, Frank separated from the group but rejoined them in Julian in 1870. Drury (“Drue”) Bailey failed to arrive in New York by the chosen day, and as a result traveled west independently through Missouri. He stopped to prospect in Montana, Idaho, Utah and Arizona before arriving in Nevada where, by chance, he was reunited with his family.


10. Ray Redding, interview by Jeanette Washburn, KGB Radio transcript, October 19, [n.y.], SDHS Subject Files “Julian, CA.”

11. Sources are unclear as to the exact year that the Margaret Tull Robinson sold the Hotel Robinson to Martin Jacobs. They also are unclear about when the Jacobs family changed the hotel name to the Julian Hotel. Some sources, including Alice Barnes, recall that Martin Jacobs bought the hotel in 1919. See Barnes, “Alice Genevieve Barnes: Gold Mines and Apple Pie,” 70. Others believe it occurred earlier, in 1918. See LeMenager, Julian City and Cuyamaca Country, 149, 190. The Julian Gold Rush Hotel, which now occupies the original Hotel Robinson, states the transfer of ownership happened in 1921, and that the name change from Hotel Robinson to Julian Hotel took place sometime during the forty-seven years the Jacobs family ran the hotel. See http://www.julianhotel.com/history.html (accessed March 5, 2008).


18. Ellsberg, Mines of Julian, 65; James A. Jasper, ed., Julian Sentinel, August 29, 1890. After a man was killed in front of the newspaper office and the murder failed to make the headlines, James A. Jasper decided a change was necessary. He purchased the newspaper from A. J. Jenkins in 1887 and began “telling the news as it happened.” See Ellsberg, Mines of Julian, 25; LeMenager, Julian City and Cuyamaca Country, 124.

19. Cornelius, 1870 Census of San Diego County California, 100; Julian Sentinel, May 30, 1890, SDHS Subject Files “Julian, CA”; Ellsberg, 67.


29. Taylor, “Julian Gold,” 33; Horace Fenton Wilcox, “Memories of the Gold Stampede to Julian,” Touring Topics, February 1932, 17. The interesting thing about Wilcox’s recollection, is it is one of the few, albeit brief, mentions of gambling, dance halls, or the notion of non-respectable women in Julian. On the contrary, Dan Forest Taylor goes so far as to say gambling halls and dance hall girls were intolerable in Julian, especially compared to other gold mining regions like the Yukon and Klondike. See Taylor, 34. Helen Ellsberg alludes to the notion that Jasper’s manuscript has been tampered with over the years, by families who did not want their personal affairs aired to the public. As a result, “all reference to shady ladies and a red light district [are] missing.” Ellsberg, Mines of Julian, 25.


33. Residents also rallied around student performances held by the Julian school. Talent show performances included a number of songs, recitations, and readings. The money earned from the event was “used in procuring portraits of Washington, Grant, Longfellow and Beethoven for the new school house.” Julian Sentinel, August 8, 1890, SDHS Subject Files “Julian, CA.”

34. Taylor, “Julian Gold,” 4; LeMenager, Julian City and Cuyamaca Country, 148, 150; Julian Sentinel, July 11, 1890; Donald A. Moore, interview by San Diego Historical Society, ND, SDHS.
