

WINTER 2022

Johnsville Historical Society

A nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the gold-mining history of Johnsville, California

The Last Gold Miner in Johnsville

by David Daun

The question is often asked: When did gold mining end in Johnsville?

It turns out that among the treasures in the Johnsville Historical Society's collection are the personal papers of Attilio Domenico Tacchella, who by all accounts is believed to be the last bonafide gold miner in the village of Johnsville. The story of Attilio is not only captured in the records he left behind, but also in the living memories of many of Johnsville's senior citizens.

Attilio was born on May 24, 1882, near the port city of Genoa in northern Italy. He immigrated to the United States in 1905 when he was 23 years old.

The earliest dated document with his name on it is a 1923 unsecured property tax bill for his property lot in Johnsville. He was only five feet, five inches tall and weighed 150 pounds, but his mining feats belied his small stature.

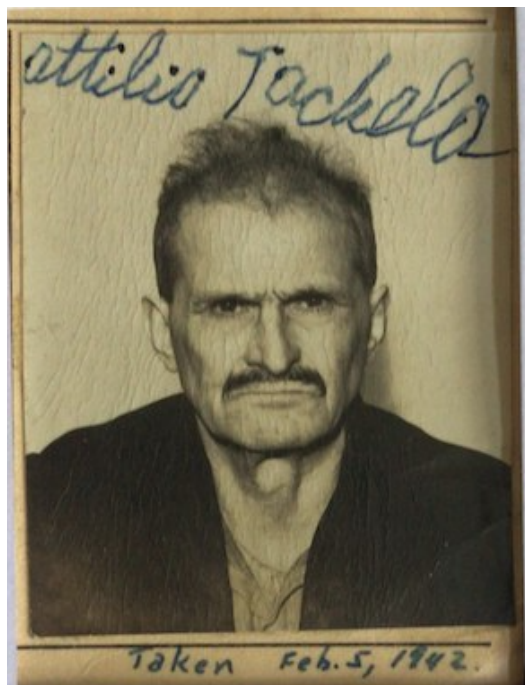
His first mining claim was the 80-acre Central Eureka Placer Claim, which he bought in September 1931 from Oswald Watts. For 23 years he worked and improved this mine until 1954, when he filed Proof of Labor documents with Plumas County stating he had made a total of \$8,600 in wages for that entire period of time. His labor was classified as general mining, sluicing, and making "cuts" for tunnels.

In his next mining endeavor, he acquired one-fourth of the undivided interest of the Poet Quartz Claim, which was discovered in 1911 by George Redstreak, Andy Swingle, and Josephine Pezzola. He filed Proof of Labor documents for this hard-rock mine with Plumas County for a total of four years and \$400 in earnings. This time the work included cutting a 27-foot-long tunnel and a 26-foot-long tunnel into the mine—no small feat for a small fellow.

When Attilio was 65 years old he applied for social security benefits. He reported he had

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worked for five mining companies and the Graeagle Box Factory from 1938 to 1946, earning a total of \$3,883.72.



Attilio Domenico Tacchella, 1942

Attilio is remembered by Johnsville residents as a quiet, unassuming man. They say he loved his Mogen David red wine—and many of his gallon and half-gallon glass wine jugs still litter the cliff behind his Johnsville cabin. He had shopped for his wine and groceries at the Blairsden Market and always paid with gold nuggets.

He was not a wealthy gold miner, but he managed to make a simple living, just like many of his fellow immigrants during California's gold rush days. With his passing in 1956, the final curtain fell on the great mining days of Johnsville, California.

Making Progress on the Digitization Project

by Katie Agnew

In the summer of 2020 the entire Johnsville Historical Society collection was sorted and cataloged for easier reference. Then the following summer the big job of scanning the hundreds of letters and other documents in the collection was started so they can be safely stored as digital files. We purchased a professional scanner for this important job.

Next summer we will photograph the collection's three-dimensional objects—mining tools, furniture, clothing, kitchen gear and household items—and post those online as well.

Our goal is to eventually post photos of the whole JHS collection online so researchers and other interested folks will have easy access to these historical treasures.

Last spring's matching fundraising campaign yielded enough money to continue this project until it is completed. Thanks very much to everyone who contributed to this campaign. We couldn't do this work without your generous support.



Johnsville, Winter 2022

Seeking Donations for the JHS Antiques, Treasures, and Collectibles Sale

by Katie Agnew

Later this year the Johnsville Historical Society (JHS) will host an antiques sale to help raise money for historical preservation projects and maintenance of St. John's church—and we are looking for donations of antiques or collectibles.

You never know what you might find tucked away in your Johnsville attic, so please look for possible antique treasures!

A date for the sale will be announced in our summer newsletter.

The JHS gold-mining-era collection holds duplicates of some antiques, so the extra copies will be sold. Since some of these items are valuable, we will curate the sale and make it more selective than previous JHS sales.

If you have antiques or collectibles you would like to donate for this fundraiser, please send a photo of the item along with a brief description to jhs@johnsvillehistoricalsociety.org. All donations are tax-deductible.

We are also looking for volunteers to plan and manage the sale; help sort, price, and display items; and handle event publicity. If you would like to help, please contact JHS via email at jhs@johnsvillehistoricalsociety.org.

Is It Time to Renew Your Annual JHS Membership?

If your JHS membership renewal is due, or you'd like to give the gift of membership to a family member or friend, please send a check made out to JHS, along with your name and email address (or the gift recipient's name and email address) to:

JHS
260 Colfax Avenue
Grass Valley, CA 95945

Annual membership fees:

- \$25 Individual
- \$50 Family
- \$100 Patron
- \$150 Business
- \$250 Founder

If you're not sure whether it's time to renew your membership, or you have other membership questions, email Kim Zwick at kzwick@pacbell.net. Thank you!

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Photos courtesy of David Daun, Brian Pearson, and Mary Nejedly Piepho