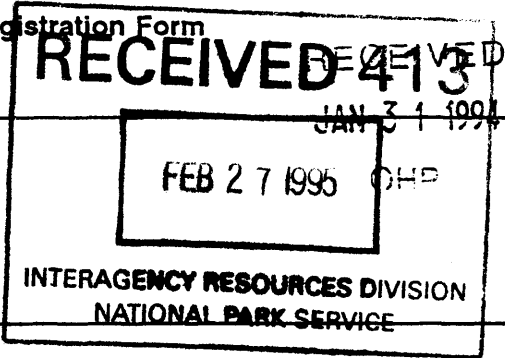


National Register of Historic Places, Registration Form



1. NAME of PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Watts & Tannahill Company Store

OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: Iron Door Saloon

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 18761 Main Street (State Highway 120)

NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A

CITY/TOWN: Groveland

VICINITY: N/A

STATE: California COUNTY: Tuolumne CODE: 109

ZIP CODE: 95321

3. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP of PROPERTY: Private

CATEGORY of PROPERTY: Building

NUMBER of RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:

	CONTRIBUTING:	NONCONTRIBUTING:
BUILDINGS:	1	2
SITES:		
STRUCTURES:		
OBJECTS:		
TOTAL:	1	2

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: N/A

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this x nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

>In my opinion, the property x meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. See continuation sheet.

Handwritten signature of Stead P. Craig

SIGNATURE of CERTIFYING OFFICIAL

DATE

California Office of Historic Preservation  
STATE or FEDERAL AGENCY and BUREAU

>In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. See continuation sheet.

SIGNATURE of COMMENTING or OTHER OFFICIAL

DATE

STATE or FEDERAL AGENCY and BUREAU

National Register of Historic Places, Registration Form

Tuolumne County, California

Watts & Tannahill Store

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain):

*Edson H. Ball*

*3/31/95*

Entered in the National Register

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

*for*

6. FUNCTION or USE HISTORIC FUNCTIONS (CATEGORY/subcategory)

CURRENT FUNCTIONS (CATEGORY/subcategory)

COMMERCE/TRADE: department store  
GOVERNMENT: post office

COMMERCIAL/TRADE/restaurant

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:

MID-19th CENTURY/other: stone commercial

MATERIALS:

Foundation: Stone/slate  
Walls: granite  
Roof: Metal  
Other:

OTHER DESCRIPTION:

Describe present and historic physical appearance.  See continuation sheet.

8. STATEMENT of SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

NATIONALLY  STATEWIDE  LOCALLY

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA: C & A

CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS (exceptions):

AREAS of SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture  
Exploration/Settlement

PERIOD(S) of SIGNIFICANCE: 1851

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1851

SIGNIFICANT PERSON(S):

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.  See continuation sheet.

**National Register of Historic Places, Registration Form**

Watts & Tannahill Store  
Tuolumne County, CA

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**  See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded in Big Oak Flat - Groveland Historic Sites Survey, 1988.

**Primary Location of Additional Data:**

- State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: Southern Tuolumne County Historical Society, Big Oak Flat, CA. 95305

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE of PROPERTY: .16

UTM REFERENCES: Zone Easting Northing			Zone Easting Northing		
A	10	743880	4191385	B	—
C	—	—	—	D	—

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description:  See continuation sheet.

All of Tuolumne County Tax Assessor's Parcel Numbers: 7-072-09 and 7-072-10.

Boundary Justification: \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

This includes all property associated with subject buildings under ownership of applicant.

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME/TITLE: Mark V. Thornton, Groveland Historian  
 ORGANIZATION: Mark V. Thornton, Historian-Consultant  
 STREET & NUMBER: P.O. Box 192  
 CITY or TOWN: Groveland STATE: California ZIP: 95321  
 TELEPHONE: (209) 962-7395  
 DATE: 1-17-1994

## National Register of Historic Places, Registration Form

Watts & Tannahill Store  
Tuolumne County, CA

## Continuation Sheet: Section Number 7

The Watts and Tannahill Store, known as the Iron Door Saloon since 1937, is located on the south side of State Highway 120. The highway is a slightly widened and paved version of the original Big Oak Flat to Yosemite wagon road and serves as Groveland's Main Street. The saloon is part of a block of four buildings which date from three different eras. This block is bounded on the east and south by Back Street and on the west by a narrow alley. Proceeding from east to west, the block consists of a single story wood frame building erected in 1982, a single story stone building constructed circa 1851, a two story combination poured concrete and wood frame edifice built in 1920, and a two story adobe building dating from circa 1851. This block is divided into three parcels. The 1982 structure and the stone building share one parcel, the other two structures comprise a parcel each. The eastern and middle parcels belong to the same party, the western parcel is under different ownership. The western parcel, upon which stands the two story adobe building, is not a part of this submission. (The adobe building appears to be an excellent candidate for the National Register.) The stone and adobe buildings are historically associated and information about that relationship is contained in Section 8 of this application. The buildings adjoining the Iron Door Saloon are considered noncontributing resources. A description of each resource is included in this section. These resources should be re-evaluated when the buildings are remodeled in conformity to historic themes.

The Iron Door Saloon is a tall, single story building measuring approximately 30 feet wide by 57 feet deep. The walls originally formed a parapet around a flat roof. A nearly flat, gable roof was installed in 1920, after a fire destroyed the original roof. In the late 1940s a large gable roof was built to cover both the saloon and adjoining concrete and wood frame building. The north (front) and south elevations of the saloon are comprised of large, cut granite blocks. The east and west walls consist of slate stone. Two entry ways are located symmetrically across the front facade. The entries are separated by about 4 feet 7 inches of wall space and stand some 5 feet 6 inches in from each corner. The right hand entry (or western doorway) has recessed double doors with glazed transom above. Each wooden door sports 8 panes over 2 panels. The left hand entry (eastern doorway) has had the doors replaced with two fixed panes over a cedar paneled area. The front doorways each measure 7 feet 4 inches wide by 11 feet 3 inches high. Two iron doors, measuring 7 feet 4 inches by 2 feet 5 inches (each) swing down over the transom areas. Below the transom doors are two sets of 8 foot 10 inch high iron fire doors. The two iron doors hung on the inside edge of each entry are about twice the width of the outer doors (4 feet 7 inches wide versus 2 feet 4 inches wide). The fire doors swing flat against the front wall when fully open, with the central doors overlaying each other in the space between the entries. Metal strips fastened to these iron doors create an 8 panel pattern on the narrow doors and a 16 panel pattern on the wider doors.

The saloon's front wall is slightly taller than its side walls. The resulting diminutive false front has an equally modest cornice with plain frieze below. Originally, a shed roof awning extended across the front but a hip roof awning supported by square wooden posts is now located below the false front. A 5 foot wide concrete walk, poured circa 1916, extends across the front of the Iron Door Saloon and neighboring buildings. Small, grated openings centered below each front entry are partially covered by granite block thresholds. A stone lined cut-out behind these grates opens into a dirt floor, root cellar. Stone walls extend down around the 12 foot by 30 foot (originally 6 by 30) cellar on the east, north and west side. A low, stone retaining wall on the south side of the root cellar is backed by an earthen area which abruptly slopes upward to the south wall of the saloon building. This wall, and the cellar's enlargement, date from the late 1930s. A narrow crawl space exists between the area behind the retaining wall and the saloon floor. A 10 inch by 12 inch floor joist, with pier and post support, runs north and south down the middle of the saloon. Parallel to this, on the west side, a four by four full length floor joist has recently been installed for additional support.

Two rear entries on the south elevation of the Tannahill Store have been significantly altered. The symmetrically placed doorways were apparently about half the width of the front entries. The eastern door was removed in the late 1930s and the entry modified to accommodate the installation of a stone fireplace and stone chimney. The chimney runs up the outside of the building's south (rear) elevation. The other entry's transom area was enlarged in the early 1980s to facilitate the installation of cooling system equipment. A poorly constructed combination concrete block and wood frame addition, which covers about half of the rear wall of the Iron Door Saloon, surrounds this entry. The Tannahill Store originally had no openings in the east and west walls. During the late 1940s, a doorway was cut in the middle of the east wall to provide internal passage from the saloon building to the adjacent frame structure. At this same time, a passage was also cut in the west wall near the north end to gain access to the adjacent concrete and wood frame structure.

The Granite Store's original floor plan is unknown but it was probably similar to what existed from the late 1890s until the 1970s. During this period the building was divided into four rooms. Two rooms of equal

## National Register of Historic Places, Registration Form

Watts & Tannahill Store  
Tuolumne County, CA**Continuation Sheet: Section Number 7**

size were located in the rear third of the building along the east wall, another small room extended across a portion of the west wall. The fourth and largest room filled the northeast area of the building. In the large room Giacomo De Ferrari established a bar in 1896. The two rooms in the southeast portion of the building served initially as living quarters being converted years later to card rooms. A billiards table was located within the room along the west wall. Although the Iron Door Saloon has a high ceiling, no upper floor lofts are known to have been constructed above any of the rooms. The high ceiling over the bar was finished off with tongue and groove boards, said material still being in place today. De Ferrari's original bar was apparently removed or remodeled many years ago and a formica topped bar installed. In the early 1980s, the bar and back-bar were relocated to the west wall. Internal partitions, between the various rooms, were also removed and a passageway was cut in the west stone wall, this time toward the south end. The south third of the eastern suite of the adjacent concrete and wood frame building was subsequently converted into a billiards room, with sole access being through the saloon.

The current owners have been involved in the slow process of restoring the saloon. On the inside of the building, most of the walls have been carefully stripped of cladding, plaster and paint to reveal the craftsmanship of the stone walls. The exposed natural rock has been covered with a non-gloss, clear coat sealant. The owners also have replaced the formica topped bar with a highly attractive, laminated wood bar. Externally, the front wall of the saloon has been stripped of its old coat of white paint, exposing the granite blocks. Like the inside, this wall has been sealed with a clear coat, excepting for the frieze which was repainted.

The wood frame building located along the east side of the Tannahill Store is considered a non-contributor because of its age and, more significantly, non-conformity to the structure it replaced. The first building known to have occupied this site was erected by De Ferrari, circa 1916. That building had a dropped shed roof, board and batt siding, and a small false front. A shed roof awning extended across the front. In later years, corrugated metal was placed over the wood shingles. The present building (about 10.5 feet by 57 feet) has aluminum frame windows, plywood siding and an extended, shed roof (an extension of the gable roof over the Iron Door Saloon and adjoining concrete and frame structure). It also has a stepped, false front. This building is currently divided into three areas. The north (front) room houses a business known as the "Groveland Appraisals" with an outside entry located on the north wall. The central area contains restrooms for the Iron Door Saloon (and appraisal business). A small pantry and liquor storage room fills the south end of this building. A walk-in refrigeration unit has been added to the back of this building. Access is provided through the pantry.

The concrete and wood frame building located along the west side of the Iron Door Saloon was originally constructed in 1920. This building spans the space between the saloon and the two story adobe structure. The ground floor forms a rectangle (43.5 feet wide by about 57 feet deep). The upper story has a "T" shaped perimeter, with the top of the "T" being the north wall. The front of this building consists of a two story poured concrete wall. Located symmetrically across the ground floor are three entries. The right and left doorways (east and west) contain multi-pane, cross buck doors flanked by fixed sash windows. The middle entry opens to a stairway that leads to the second floor. Single story, concrete walls wrap around each side of this stairwell in an "L" pattern (forming a right angled "U"). Where the walls meet, a single story, concrete wall extends to the south dividing the ground floor into two separate suites. The eastern suite's east wall is the stone wall of the Iron Door Saloon. The front half of the western suite's wall is that of the adjoining adobe building. The north end of the eastern suite houses the Iron Door Grill (restaurant). The western suite houses the Iron Door Store. The upper story is currently used for storage.

The north (front) third of the upper story is divided into four rooms of nearly the same size. Each room has a corresponding 1/1 window which faces Main Street (east two windows are double hung, the western two are single hung, aluminum frame types). Because the Iron Door Saloon's walls are only about one and a half stories high, a wood frame wall was constructed along the east side of the concrete building's upper story. This wall is in-set along the rear two thirds of the building leaving a small space between it and the saloon. The two story adobe structure is about half the depth of the Iron Door Saloon. Consequently, a concrete wall (one story high) was constructed from the back of the adobe to the rear of the concrete and wood frame building. As with the east side, the upper story west wall, above the Iron Door Store, is made of wood framing where it leaves the wall in common with the upper story of the adobe building. Similar to the east side, the west wall is in-set thus giving the upstairs its "T" shaped perimeter. The south (rear) wall of the Iron Door Grill and Iron Door Store consists of a concrete wall on the first floor and wood framing on the second.

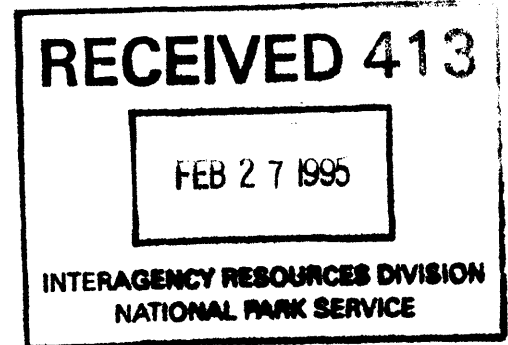
**National Register of Historic Places, Registration Form**

Watts & Tannahill Store

**Continuation Sheet: Section Number 7**

Tuolumne County, CA

Originally a small, wood deck stretched along the rear two thirds of the east and west elevations and across the back of the south elevation of the upper story. Eaves projecting from a slightly pitched, gable roof provided some shade. Around 1949 the upstairs of the concrete and wood frame building burned. After the fire, a large gable roof was installed which covered both the repaired upper story and also extended over the top of the Iron Door Saloon. A large, common attic now exists over both buildings. Horizontal boards fill the gable ends above the original concrete and stone walls. In the early 1980s, two poorly constructed, single room additions were added to the southeast and southwest corners of the upper story of the concrete and wood frame building. The present owners plan to eventually remove these additions. In 1987, a large mural was painted across the front of the building depicting scenes associated with Yosemite National Park. The mural does not cover the front of the Iron Door Saloon.



## National Register of Historic Places, Registration Form

Watts & Tannahill Store  
Tuolumne County, CA

## Continuation Sheet: Section Number 8

**Applicable Significance Criteria**

The Iron Door Saloon, originally known as the Watts and Tannahill Company Store or the Granite Store, is significant under Criteria C, representing a fine example of Gold Rush commercial architecture. Although the building has been incorporated under the spreading roof of the adjacent concrete and wood frame building, its skillfully constructed front wall of cut granite blocks make it highly distinguishable from the adjoining buildings. Several adobe and two stone buildings were erected during the Gold Rush in Garrote (Groveland). The Tannahill Store is believed to have been the only structure to feature granite block walls. The other stone building was destroyed during the last century leaving the Iron Door Saloon the only stone, Gold Rush era building left in Groveland today. The various stone buildings erected in the neighboring town of Big Oak Flat were generally constructed primarily, if not exclusively, of slate rock. The use of cut granite appears to be unique to the Tannahill Store. Most of Big Oak Flat's stone, Gold Rush era buildings are gone.

The subject property is one of the oldest buildings in Tuolumne County, and one of the oldest Gold Rush buildings in the Mother Lode. It has a high degree of integrity having undergone few significant alterations during its lifetime. It displays splendid craftsmanship, with solidly constructed native slate stone walls in the basement and carefully fitted granite blocks on the front and rear walls with slate stone for the side walls. The building derives significance under Criteria A, being one of the first permanent structures in Garrote (Groveland). The building has been at the center of Groveland's commercial life, serving first as a mercantile store from circa 1850 until the late 1880s and then playing a prominent role in the town's social life, serving continuously from 1896 to the present as a saloon (or "soft drink establishment" during prohibition) and bar.

**Brief Contextual Background**

In 1848 Benjamin Wood led the first known group of gold seekers into what is now Tuolumne County. One of the members of the "Wood's Party" was an American by the name of James D. Savage. Savage was widowed in 1846 as the result of the rigors of an overland journey from the East. Shortly after his arrival to California, Savage began marrying into various Indian tribes. His "wives" afforded him favorable position with tribal leaders. In the Spring of 1849 Savage, his wives, and several other Americans left Woods Creek and ventured into the rugged mountains southeast of the Tuolumne River. About 2,000 feet higher in elevation than the river, Savage's party discovered placers along a small stream flowing through a broad, flat valley. A second encampment was soon established in a smaller valley some three miles to the east. Collectively, the mining camps were known as "Savage's Diggings." Although Savage was known for his ability to negotiate peaceful relations with local Indian tribes, his own small band of Indians apparently proved too much a cause for tension with the incoming tide of miners. As a result, Savage left the area. By the Spring of 1850 the western camp had become commonly known as "Big Oak Flat," in tribute to a particularly large specimen that stood near the west end of town. Meanwhile, many Mexicans had taken up prospecting in and around Savage's eastern camp. The cause for renaming this camp is unclear but a Mexican apparently killed a fellow countryman, possibly in an attempt to steal gold or a horse (or both). The felon was quickly apprehended, tried, convicted and, as tradition has it, hung on an old oak tree in camp. The camp became known as "Garrote." Members of a smaller camp located at San Ignacio Flat, some three miles to the east, attended the proceedings and, thus, the two camps became known as "First Garrote" (or simply, "Garrote") and "Second Garrote." They were also called "Garrote No. 1" and "Garrote No. 2."

Tuolumne County was created in 1850, the same year California achieved statehood. By 1852 post offices had been established in Big Oak Flat and First Garrote. A thriving population of several hundred to a few thousand miners and other residents led to the erection of numerous buildings of wood, stone, and adobe construction. Big Oak Flat incorporated as a city in 1860 but a devastating fire in 1863 laid waste most of the town. With the Gold Rush era of prosperity already waning, Big Oak Flat disincorporated in 1864. Most of the buildings lost in the fire were never rebuilt. First Garrote was spared the ravaging effects of fire, so common to other mining camps. Consequently, even though the town was smaller than Big Oak Flat, more of its Gold Rush era buildings have survived to the present day. In 1875 a more staid populace, desirous of portraying a hospital image to the traveling public, succeeded in having First Garrote renamed Groveland.

In addition to the Gold Rush, Big Oak Flat and Groveland experienced two other periods of significant economic growth. First was the hard rock mining boom, from about 1895 to World War 1, during which time several stamp mills and numerous other buildings were erected to accommodate the thriving business of mining. On the heels of this period came the Hetch Hetchy era (1914 to 1929), a reference to the construction days of the Hetch Hetchy Water and Power System, a project undertaken by the City and County of San

**National Register of Historic Places, Registration Form****Continuation Sheet: Section Number 8**Watts & Tannahill Store  
Tuolumne County, CA

Francisco. The U.S. Congress approved the damming of Hetch Hetchy Valley (located within Yosemite National Park) in 1913. Because of its strategic location, San Francisco chose Groveland as its "Mountain Division Headquarters." A railroad was built to transport the materials, equipment and laborers to damsite, and to the work camps along the aqueduct system. The line started at a point on the Sierra Railroad in western Tuolumne County and extended twenty-seven miles eastward to Groveland. Dam site was another forty-one miles east of town. Groveland became the site for the railroad shops and warehouse. This immense new labor force elicited a need for renovation and new construction. Today, many of Groveland's buildings date from this era. A fourth period of pronounced economic growth began in the late 1960s and continues to the present. Despite development pressures, much of the business district still carries the ambiance of an early twentieth century, western mountain town with the subject property serving as a significant contributor to that historic built environment.

**Historical Background of Subject Property**

H. O. Lang, in his 1882 history of Tuolumne County, writes that James Tannahill started his mercantile business in the Fall of 1850. The earliest record of the Tuolumne County Tax Rolls, which date from 1852, lists a property assessment value of \$4,000 for J. H. Watts. This was, by far, the largest figure for any Garrote property at that time. In 1853, "Watts and Company" were listed for \$6,000. The 1854 Tax Rolls are gone but in 1855 "Watts and Tannahill" are jointly assessed for \$2,000 in improvements and \$6,000 in personal property. Watts and Tannahill owned both a stone building (the subject of this National Register submission) and a neighboring two story adobe structure. It is generally accepted that both buildings were erected by Watts and Tannahill sometime prior to 1852. Based on Lang's history, the construction date may be as early as the Fall of 1850. Neither John Watts nor James Tannahill filed a possessory claim to the land upon which they established their business. The Watts and Tannahill Company store was located in the stone building, said building being commonly known as "The Granite Store." A hand-dug well, located immediately behind the building, provided water for the store.

Watts and Tannahill's use of the associated adobe building is unknown. From the 1850s through the 1870s it was known as the Masonic Lodge Hall. The second floor served as a meeting place for the Mt. Jefferson Lodge No. 107, founded May 15, 1856. The Tax Rolls indicate that the Masons held title to this floor while Watts and Tannahill owned the first floor (and real estate beneath). Other than this, the legal relationship between the store keepers and the Masons is unknown. Tannahill did serve as treasurer for the Masons.

In 1868 Watts sold his property and business interests to Tannahill. The deed stated that he was conveying an "... undivided one half part of the stone storehouse... [and] the undivided one half part of the lower story of the two story abode building used as and for a Masonic Hall..." and also an "undivided half interest in lot with barn..." The barn was located to the south of the Granite Store. In 1858 Watts and Tannahill had purchased a rather large and attractive home from a Thomas H. Burns. It was located a couple hundred feet to the east of the Granite Store. The 1868 transaction also included an "...undivided half interest in lot with dwelling house which is occupied by [Tannahill]". Initially, Watts or Tannahill may have used the rear portion of the stone building as a residence but after the purchase of the Burns' home (and the departure of Watts from Garrote soon thereafter) the stone building served solely as a commercial structure.

The 1877 Townsite Map of Groveland places Tannahill's stone and adobe buildings within Lot 1 of Block 3. The lot was bounded on the north by Main Street on the east and south by Back Street and on the west by a narrow alley which encumbered portions of Lots 1 and 2 of Block 3. Besides housing Tannahill's mercantile business, the stone store building probably saw use as a postoffice. Tannahill served as Post Master from 1863 to 1880. Speculation about the stone building's use as a bar during this time is controverted by the fact that there's a prohibition against bars and post offices occupying the same building. Besides, there is no record of Tannahill ever acquiring a liquor license. After Tannahill's death, in 1884, the stone and adobe buildings were acquired by Charles Kassabaum, a successful local cattle rancher. As an aside, the Deed to Kassabaum included no reference to the Mason's claim in the upper story of the adobe building.

Kassabaum's use of the buildings is unknown. His estate was settled in 1895. William A. Grade, Joseph Barrett, and Pauline Kassabaum, executors of the Last Will and Testament of Charles Kassabaum, conveyed title to Giacomo De Ferrari on December 30th 1895. The Deed indicates that probate was handled by the Mariposa Superior Court which filed a "Notice of Sale" on November 11, 1895. Daniel Corcoran submitted a written bid of \$1,000 for the property which included all of Lot 1. The Court notified Corcoran in writing on the 16th of November that the property would be awarded in an open court hearing scheduled for December



## National Register of Historic Places, Registration Form

Watts & Tannahill Store  
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## Continuation Sheet: Section Number 8

30th. At that hearing De Ferrari offered 10% more (\$1,100) and thus gained ownership. The Deed was recorded in Tuolumne County on January 3rd 1896.

Giacomo "Jake" De Ferrari was a highly successful gold miner. He was partially disabled in a serious mining accident in 1887. His mining days were long over when De Ferrari established what's believed to have been the first saloon located within the confines of Tannahill's old "stone storehouse." The affairs of the local miner's were centered at the Miner's Hall located across the street from the Groveland Hotel and Bar. This bar was established in 1900 on the east side of Back Street, opposite De Ferrari's saloon. Despite the nearby competition "Jake's Place," as De Ferrari's bar was known, flourished throughout the hard rock mining era and into the Hetch Hetchy period. De Ferrari rented his adobe building to Sal Ferretti for use as a meat market during this time. In 1901, De Ferrari had a wood frame building erected along the west side of his saloon. The space between the 1901 building and the adobe building was filled in by a single story frame structure in 1916. This was also the year that De Ferrari had a small, single story wood frame building erected along the east side of his saloon. Prior to the erection of these three frame buildings, Tannahill's Granite Store and the Masonic Hall had stood apart from all surrounding structures. Although De Ferrari's new buildings now covered the east and west walls of the stone building, no significant structural changes were performed on the saloon building.

In 1920 a devastating fire broke out on the north side of Main Street leveling several buildings, including a two story structure. The fire also set the "De Ferrari Block" of buildings ablaze. The resulting inferno gutted Ferretti's butcher shop, which was mostly vacant as Ferretti had relocated his business two doors to the west. The fire destroyed Smith's Cash Store and the Pacific Cooperative League's store, the two wooden structures between the adobe and stone buildings. Jake's saloon roof ignited but the building's stone walls prevented the fire from spreading to the little wood frame building along the east side. That building, which was initially the site of the "Hetch Hetchy Restaurant," served much of its life (after the fire) as a barber shop.

According to Carlo De Ferrari (Tuolumne County's Historian), Jake's Place featured "...a fine rosewood bar..." parallel to the east wall. Near the south end of the bar stood "...a large wood stove set in a sand box..." The balance of the barroom was filled with "...round card tables and captain chairs..." The pool room (located along the west wall) housed "...a massive billiards table..." Along the west wall of this room hung a row of oak framed, pictures depicting "famous historical scenes such as Civil War battles etc." Racks for the pool cues were fastened on the south end of this wall and "overhead were lines with the counting chips..." Carlo also reported that Jake performed few, if any, changes to the stone building during his ownership. As for the saloon's social role in the community, during the winter months "...old timers' would sit around the stove and smoke and drink until about 9:30 p. m. when everyone would go home and the bar would close."

Saloons were outlawed after July 1, 1919 by act of Congress. The 18th Amendment (Prohibition) became effective on January 16, 1920. The newspaper reports about the 1920 fire stated that De Ferrari maintained a "soft drink establishment" within the confines of the stone building. After the fire, the saloon building was repaired and a two story concrete and wood frame building erected in the space between the stone and adobe buildings. Photographs taken circa 1924 show that the concrete building housed "The New Hetch Hetchy Restaurant." It appears that the saloon building was still a place to obtain "cold soft drinks." In comparing these photographs with the oldest known pictures of the stone building, dated circa 1900, only the front awning seems to have been changed.

Rumors persist to today that De Ferrari maintained a still in the root cellar of his saloon. He reportedly kept many a local resident (and laborer) fully satisfied. It is highly unlikely, though, that a still was located here. On the other hand, it was not uncommon to find stills on ranches, with a particularly steady supply coming in from the Knights Ferry-Oakdale area. In 1922 De Ferrari was arrested, along with a number of others, for selling liquor. Most of those arrested pleaded guilty but De Ferrari fought the charge. The first two trials ended in hung juries. The third trial led to a conviction which was overturned on appeal. Another equally persistent legend about De Ferrari was that he stashed thousands of dollars in gold coin in the basement area. Later excavations of the dirt floor only gave up a large iron kettle (which was empty, so they say). Actually, De Ferrari did have a large cache of gold coins but they'd long since been removed from the saloon by the time George Laveroni undertook the enlargement of the root cellar. During the excavation, Laveroni did find a few old coins (no gold ones) and an assortment of broken bottles.

Giacomo De Ferrari died in 1926. In the settlement of his estate, Frank De Ferrari acquired the subject buildings. It was Frank who later parceled off portions of Lot 1 of Block 3, finally breaking the single ownership

## National Register of Historic Places, Registration Form

Watts & Tannahill Store  
Tuolumne County, CA**Continuation Sheet: Section Number 8**

of the four buildings. Prohibition was repealed with the passage of the 21st Amendment on December 5, 1933. In 1937 George Laveroni acquired the stone building. It is Laveroni that coined the name "The Iron Door Saloon." His inspiration came from the reading of Harold Bell Wright's book, *The Mine With the Iron Door*, coupled with the existence of the fire doors themselves. During Laveroni's tenure a large, white question mark was painted on the front door. This shrewd tactic lured many an inquisitive visitor into his establishment. After they bought a drink, or two, Laveroni would give an explanation, maybe. During Laveroni's ownership, a stone fireplace was erected on the south end of the saloon. He also enlarged the root cellar from 6 feet by 30 feet to its present dimensions of 12 feet by 30 feet. By regulation saloons had to also provide food, therefore Laveroni installed some type of kitchen facility in the back portion of the building. Like Jake, Laveroni operated a saloon that catered to the local population. With mining no longer a viable industry the mainstay of the community was cattle ranching. "Old timers" and ranchers would gather at the Iron Door Saloon on a regular basis to talk politics and catch-up on the latest news in the community.

Frank J. Halousek bought the Iron Door Saloon in 1946. Shortly thereafter, he acquired the adjoining concrete and wood frame structure. During his ownership an opening was cut in the east wall of the saloon to provide internal access to the frame building on the other side. Halousek resided in this building. He also had an opening cut in the north end of the west wall of the saloon to gain access to the eastern suite of the concrete and wood frame building. It is uncertain what use Halousek made of the ground floor of this building but the upstairs was converted into an apartment, which he rented out. In 1949 or 1950, the upstairs burned and after reconstruction a large, gable roof was installed over this and the saloon building.

Halousek sold his properties in 1956. Shortly after this a small cafe was opened on the ground floor of the concrete and wood frame building. During either the 1950s or '60s, a neon sign was added to the front of the Iron Door Saloon. The sign, which cantilevered over the street and faced oncoming traffic, read "Historical Iron Door Off Sale." From Halousek's ownership to today, tourism has become an ever increasing component of the local economy. The "historical" nature of the Iron Door Saloon has been touted by subsequent owners as a means to capture the passing motorists patronage. Other than this sign, few alterations occurred to the various buildings of the "De Ferrari Block" until the 1970s and '80s.

In the 1970s, several revisions were performed to the south elevation of the concrete and wood frame building. In 1982, the frame structure along the east side of the Iron Door Saloon was demolished and the present building erected. As for the Iron Door Saloon, it didn't undergo any significant modifications until 1982. During construction of the new building along the east side of the Iron Door Saloon, the existing passageway in the east wall of the saloon was slightly enlarged. Along the saloon's west wall, near the south end, a large doorway was cut to gain access to the present billiards room located in the rear portion of the east suite of the concrete and wood frame building. The eastern front entry doors were also removed and the space filled with glass and wood paneling. Also dating from the early 1980s is the concrete block and frame addition along the south side of the Iron Door Saloon. The old Granite Store well was also covered.

The present owners, Bettika and Peter Barsoti, have embarked on a slow, careful process to restore the Iron Door Saloon to the character and romance of a Gold Rush era building. Action has been taken to stabilize the foundation and arrest further decay to the building. Much of the inside of the perimeter walls have been stripped of various wood cladding, paint and plaster with the purpose of restoring their natural stone appearance. Today, these walls appear very reminiscent of the way they probably looked during Tannahill's ownership. The outside of the front wall of the Iron Door Saloon has also been stripped of the various layers of paint that were added in this century (except in the frieze area). The highly attractive granite blocks that comprise this wall have been sealed with a non-gloss protectant. A fast food grill was recently established in the adjoining concrete and wood frame building's eastern suite. Cladding on the portion of the outside of the saloon's west wall, which faces the dining area of the grill, has been removed. The exposed stonework has undergone the same treatment as the inside walls of the saloon. This probably marks the first time in more than 60 years that a portion of the saloon's west wall exterior can be observed.

The Iron Door Saloon presently is operated as a restaurant-bar. Consequently, minors have legal access to the inside of the stone building. School tours have become a popular sideline for the owners. A large collection of Groveland history memorabilia hangs from the high ceiling of the saloon. Old photographs and additional artifacts decorate the interior walls. The Iron Door Saloon building has undergone several changes throughout its life but it's impressive front granite block wall and internally exposed perimeter slate stone walls convey a very real sense of place and time, giving a vivid insight into Groveland's glorious Gold Rush and Hard Rock Mining eras.

## National Register of Historic Places, Registration Form

Watts & Tannahill Store  
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## Continuation Sheet: Section Number 9

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Interviews: Bettika and Peter Barsoti, Mary Laveroni, and Jim Litke. Additional assistance from Carlo M. De Ferrari, Tuolumne County Historian.

The following photographs are included in this report:

- 1: The Iron Door Saloon, north (front) elevation.
- 2: The Iron Door Saloon, north elevation.
- 3: North elevation (left to right) Groveland Appraisals (wood), Iron Door Saloon (stone), Iron Door Grill and Iron Door Store (concrete) (east end of adobe building showing on right edge of photo).
- 4: North and east elevations of Iron Door Saloon and associated buildings.
- 5: South and east elevations of Iron Door Saloon and associated buildings.

Photographs taken by Mark V. Thornton. Negatives on file with same, Groveland, California.