

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received AUG 20 1984

date entered SEP 20 1984

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Sam (Choy) Brick Store

and/or common Angels Camp Jail

2. Location

street & number Bird Way n/a not for publication

city, town Angels Camp n/a vicinity of 18th

state California code 06 county Calaveras code 009

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant

4. Owner of Property

name City of Angels Camp

street & number City Hall

city, town Angels Camp n/a vicinity of state California 95222

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Calaveras County Recorder

street & number Government Center

city, town San Andreas state California 95249

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Inventory of Existing Resources,
title City of Angels Camp has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date March, 1982 federal state county local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office, PO Box 2390

city, town Sacramento state California 95811

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>n/a</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Sam Choy Store was built in Angels Camp in 1860-61 with a typical Mother Lode brick Classical Revival three-bay front with native schist stone rear and side walls. There are brick relieving arches over the three front openings, which consist of two doors and one window. The doors and window are covered with iron shutters. Holes were cut in the metal of the window shutter when the building became a jail. The schist walls are solid except for the west side where there is an iron door near the rear with brick in-fill around it and a small, barred window with wooden frame. Across the front of the building are four metal brackets which once must have supported a porch. There is a small cement cove cornice across the top front which covers the original brick cornice. The basic building has changed little in appearance since its construction in 1860. During the 1890's a second frame story was added to the building, but this was removed in the 1930's. The present low gable roof and end gables, both covered with corrugated metal, were constructed after the second story was demolished.

As there are no extant early photographs of the building, one must speculate as to its original appearance. But judging from other buildings in the area which were constructed during the same time period, it probably looks very much today as it did when it was first built. The early assessments simply list it as a "brick store" or a "fire-proof building." The identity of the builder is unknown at this time, but it was erected fairly rapidly, as the lot was purchased in August of 1860 and by May of 1861 it was assessed as a fireproof building for its full value. Originally it may have had a seamed tin roof, as did many others in the area. The interior probably had shelving against the walls and a central counter toward the front.

An informant remembers that during the 1920's it had a second frame story, and a wooden fence surrounded the property at the street. This fence had a chewing tobacco advertisement painted on the front. The frame second story was obviously removed when the building began its use as a city jail in the 1930's. At that time ventilation holes were cut in the front window shutter and a cement floor was poured. At present the interior consists of two rooms and two lavatories. There is a large room to the rear, the two lavatories in between, and a smaller room to the front, entered directly from the street. The building now sits slightly below ground level and quite a bit below street level. During the 1930's many houses were built on the old Chinese lots and the street was raised, so the aspect of the Sam Choy Store is undoubtedly different.

The property today simply covers the site of the building. During the period when the property was owned by Sam Choy the lot was larger and once contained a house and stable. In 1889 and 1891 Sam Choy sold portions of the lot to the owners of the Angels Hotel, immediately to the west. The building sits against the hill to the north, with a retaining wall behind it. Thus the store is below the level of the grade in the rear and below the road in the front, so it seems to fill a small depression. There is a house immediately to the east which was built in the 1930's, and an empty lot to the west.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
			Ethnic history: Chinese-American	
Specific dates	1860, 1930's	Builder/Architect	Unknown	

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The brick and stone Sam Choy Store, one of only two remaining associated with the period of Chinese occupancy in Angels Camp, is extremely significant in Mother Lode history, as it was built for Sam Choy in 1860 and occupied by him until 1892. Sam Choy was a successful merchant in Angels Camp from 1858 until the turn of the century. He raised a family in the community, sending his daughters back to China so that they could take their place in Chinese society. After the turn of the century, when the property was owned by an Italian, a wood frame second story was added to the brick store and it was occupied as a "female boarding house" with a Chinese staff. From the 1930's through the 1950's the building was used as the Angels Camp Jail. It now stands empty, but the City of Angels Camp has plans to restore it and develop it as a museum of its former uses.

The Chinese had a long history in Angels Camp. J. D. Borthwick describes finding about 100 of them working a gulch (China Gulch) when he arrived in 1851. By the mid-1850's the commercial center of the Chinese community came to be located just north of Angels Creek and along both sides of the Angels Camp-Murphys Road, just east of Main Street. At its height the Chinese population numbered around 200; by the 1890's only 30 remained. Chinatown consisted of about 20 separate properties and included gardens, lodging houses, gambling dens, opium dens, three stores (two of brick and one of adobe), and a wash house. On the hill to the north of the community was located the graveyard, but all of the bodies have now been disinterred for shipment back to China, many of them not until the early 1930's. Most of the vegetable gardens were along the creek, and hogs and ducks were raised both for the use of the Chinese and for sale to local markets, as were the excess vegetables.

Most of the Chinese were single men, so many resided on bunks in lodging houses. However, there were a few families, mostly belonging to the merchant class. Many of the single men worked as miners along Angels Creek in the Slab Ranch area to the east. Sam Choy was the most prosperous of the local merchants, owning the brick store and several gambling dens. He controlled groups of Chinese workers, who were contracted to the mine owners, and he furnished the workers with food clothing, lodging, tools, and women. He collected the pay from the contractor and controlled the workers' finances.

It is difficult to follow Sam Choy through the Census records, as he appears with vastly differing ages, but always in the same location and as a retail merchant. He is listed as living with other male Chinese on the 1860 and 1870 Federal Censuses, but the 1880 census lists him as being 45 years of age, his wife Leong as 31, with daughters Anna (Ah Nee), 10, and Ellen, 8, both born in California. When Ah Nee returned to China in 1883, an Angels Camp schoolmate wrote a poem at the sadness felt by the children in Angels Camp at her leaving. Evidently his daughters returned to China, and perhaps his wife did also, as the 1900 Census lists him as boarding with Lien Sing, a nearby merchant who also built a brick store in Chinatown in the 1860's.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Pioneer Days in Angels Camp, Edna Bryan Buckbee, Calaveras Californian, 1932
John Chinaman in Angels Camp, Ed Leonard, Vol. XII, #1, Calaveras Historical Society
Quarterly, Las Calaveras, October, 1963
Geologic Guidebook Along Highway 49--Sierran Gold Belt, The Mother Lode Country,
Olaf P. Jenkins, chief, Division of Mines, September 1948

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 0.02

Quadrangle name San Andreas

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	0	7	1	5	9	4	0	4	2	1	6	1	5	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

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D

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Verbal boundary description and justification Lot 32, Block 4 of Angels Camp Townsite, being a portion of original Lot 23, Block 4 of Townsite Map of 1871. Boundaries encompass the building on its present lot, the surviving remnant of a larger lot subdivided over the years (see Section 7 for full discussion).

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	n/a	code	county	n/a	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Judith Cunningham

organization Calaveras County Museum and Archives

date September 1983

street & number Government Center

telephone (209) 754-4203

city or town San Andreas

state California 95249

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

William Mitchell Wilson

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

date August 14, 1984

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date

9-20-84

Judith Cunningham
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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The most extensive records on Sam Choy are the assessments, and by studying them it is possible to trace his years of prosperity and decline, which closely parallel the vicissitudes of the Chinese miners in Calaveras County whose population ranged from 22.4% of the total population in 1860 to .05% in 1910. He first appears on the assessments in 1858 as the owner of a house and lot (value \$1000) on Main Street in Angels Camp, and finally disappears from the records in the year 1913, when he is assessed for two lots and an old wash house with Lien Sing as his agent. During the late 1870's he opened a store in Bostwick's Bar, a booming placer mining community on the Stanislaus River, composed primarily of Chinese at that time. The boom years for Sam Choy were the 1860's - 1880's, by the late 1860's he owned not only the brick store, but two other houses on the north side of China Street and three houses on the opposite side which were occupied as gambling houses. By 1900 he still owned the store at Bostwick's Bar and a few lots in Chinatown. Sometime between 1905 and 1909 he moved away, as Lien Sing began to act as his agent, and by 1914 there are no longer any assessments in his name.

Sam Choy's original store on Main Street must have been successful, for in August of 1860 he purchased a lot from Henry Mathews for \$75 (60' x 90'), and by May of 1861 was assessed with Yim Kee for a fire-proof building on China Street, valued at \$1000. The property continued to be assessed as Sam Choy's Store until it was sold to Walter Tryon in April of 1892.

The 1895 and 1898 Sanborn Insurance Maps list the building as a Chinese Merchandise Store, but it had acquired a second story and was listed as a vacant Chinese building; although not owned by Chinese it was probably still used by them. The second frame story was probably built by Fred Pareto, who owned the building from 1897-1903. During the period it was owned by the Monte Verda family, 1908-1928, the brick building was surrounded by a wooden fence and occupied by a Chinese prostitute. This was during the heyday of the red-light district in Chinatown in Angels Camp, and during one of the booms of prostitution in the Mother Lode.

In 1928 the property was sold to the County of Calaveras and passed into the ownership of the City of Angels Camp, who used it for a jail until the mid-1950's. The upper story was removed and holes were cut in the iron shutters of the front window and a barred window was placed in the rear side wall at this time. Informants remember drunks singing in the jail all the night long.

The Sam Choy Store has had an unusual role to play in the history of Angels Camp, first as the store of a prosperous Chinese merchant, then as a house of ill-repute, and later as the city jail. It has stood empty for many years now, awaiting its fate. Recently, in 1980 the E. Clampus Vitus placed a plaque upon its west wall and a large crowd of Chinese and European Americans witnessed the dedication. In time, with restoration and interpretation, the building can take its place in the community as a museum to the Chinese peoples who played such a large but little remembered role in the mining camps of the Mother Lode.

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Continuation sheet

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The Sam Choy Store is an outstanding example of the architecture of the 1855-65 period in the Mother Lode. The three-bayed brick front with stone rear and side walls was one of the common forms of construction at the time, but in all too many instances the buildings are no longer in existence or have been so altered that they are no longer recognizable. Although this structure was owned and operated by Chinese, it is unlikely that it was built by them, as the architecture differs from the brick buildings constructed in the south of China at the time. It is, however, much like many of the other stripped Classical Revival commercial buildings constructed in the Mother Lode immediately after the Gold Rush, and could have been built by any one of the numerous stonemasons who had flocked to the area from all parts of the globe.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

Three Years in California, J. D. Borthwick, Biobooks, Oakland, California, 1948
The Ethnic Dimension of Calaveras County History, Dr. Joseph Giovinco, unpublished manuscript at the Calaveras County Museum, 1980

CALAVERAS COUNTY RECORDS

Deeds
Assessments

FEDERAL CENSUS

1860, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910

NEWSPAPERS

Calaveras Californian, February 24, 1972

ORAL HISTORIES

Bird, Ted. Sam Choy Store and City Jail, January, 1984

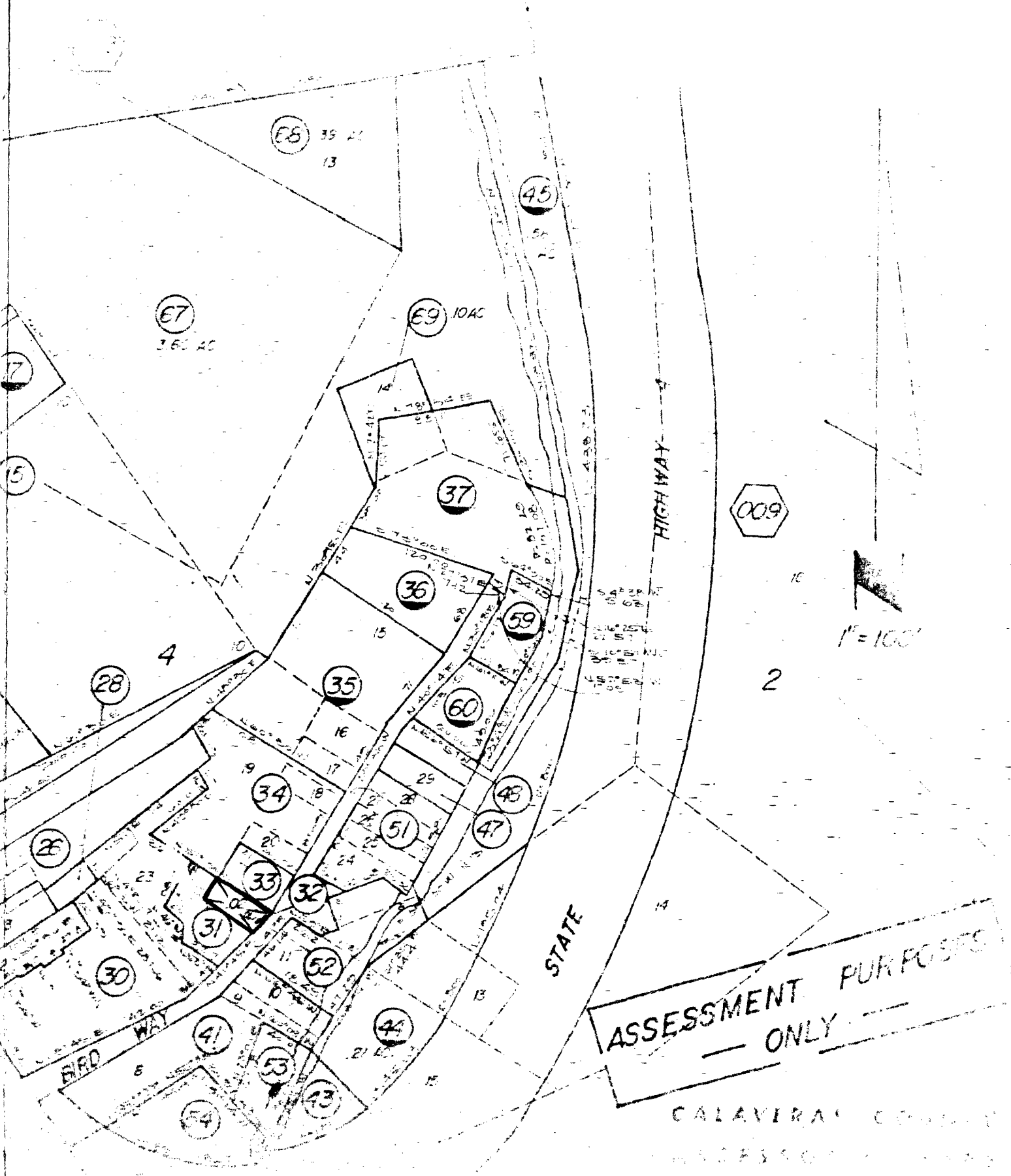
Carley, Joe. Sam Choy Store, City Jail, Chinese Cemetery, November, 1983

Harbinson, Olivia. Chinatown, Buildings, etc., 1980

ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS

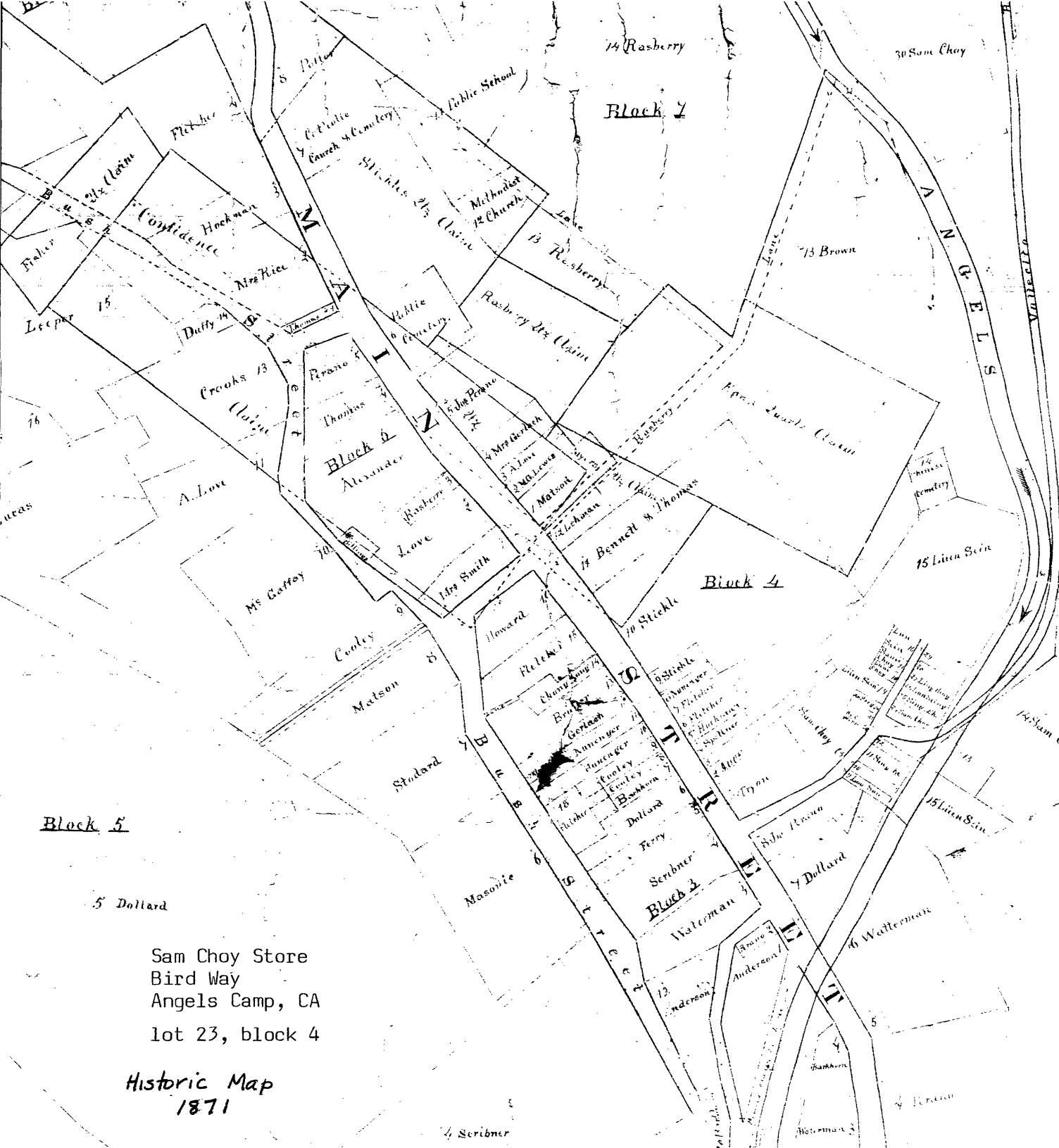
McCabe, Bob. Sam Choy Building, Angels Camp

SAM CHOY BRICK STORE
Bird Way
Angels Camp, Calaveras County, CA



ASSESSMENT PURPOSES
— ONLY —

CALAVIRAS COUNTY
ASSessor



16 Crocker



Block 5

5 Dollard

Sam Choy Store
 Bird Way
 Angels Camp, CA
 lot 23, block 4

Historic Map
 1871

Map commenced Oct 9th completed Dec 7th
 1871

PLAT
 of
ANGEL'S CAMP
 Calaveras County
 Surveyed and Drawn
 By
 A. B. Beauvais
 County Surveyor
 of
 Tuolumne County
 Cal

Comprising the NE 1/4 of the NE 1/4 and NE 1/4 of
 the NE 1/4 of section 22, T12N, R12E and NW 1/4
 of 22

4 Scribner