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USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form The Gamble Building

NPS Form 10-900 (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

NOV 16 1990

NATIONAL REGISTER

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Gamble Building and Miner's Bean Kettle

other name/site number: Express Office Building, Wells Fargo Building, Raggio Store, Cobden Building.

2. Location

street & number: 17544 State Highway 120

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Big Oak Flat

vicinity: \_

state: CA county: Tuolumne code: 109

zip code: 95305

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
__2__	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
__2__	_____	Total

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.

*Kathryn Guethrie*

  2-13-91  

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

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

   entered in the National Register

  x   entered in the National Register    See continuation sheet.

*Melvin J. ...*   3/22/91  

   determined eligible for the National Register

      See continuation sheet.

   determined not eligible for the National Register

   removed from the National Register

   other (explain):   

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic: Commerce/Trade

Sub: financial institution  
department store  
business

Current: Vacant

Sub:

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Italianate

Other Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Materials: foundation stone\_\_\_\_\_ roof metal-----
walls stone\_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance. \_X\_ See continuation sheet.

B. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: \_statewide\_.

Applicable National Register Criteria: C & A

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : \_\_\_\_\_

Areas of Significance: Architecture\_\_\_\_\_
Exploration/Settlement\_\_\_\_\_
Commerce\_\_\_\_\_

Period(s) of Significance: c. 1852 - 1930

Significant Dates ic. 1852, c. 1870

Significant Person(s): N/A\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation: N/A\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder: unknown\_\_\_\_\_

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

\_X\_ 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 Hist. Soc.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property: .25

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing      Zone Easting Northing

A	10	741435	4189590	B	--	-----	-----
C	--	-----	-----	D	--	-----	-----

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
 The southern sixty (60') feet of Assessor's Parcels 7-182-01, 7-182-02 and 7-182-25 (see enclosed plot map).  
 Boundary Justification: \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
 This includes all remaining property historically associated with the Gamble Building and the Miner's Bean Kettle building.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Mark V. Thornton/ Historian-Consultant for the Southern Tuolumne County Historical Society

Organization: South. Tuolumne Cty. Hist. Soc.      Date: 11-14-1990\_\_\_\_\_

Street & Number: P.O. Box 1849\_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: (209) 962-7805

City or Town: Big Oak Flat\_\_\_\_\_ State: CA      ZIP: 95305

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The Gamble Building

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The Gamble Building with attached jailhouse room is situated on the north side of State Highway 120 and east of the Big Oak Road. The highway is a slightly widened and paved version of the original wagon trail which constituted Big Oak Flat's Main Street. The Gamble Building was constructed between 1848 and 1852 and has remained virtually unchanged since then. Between the Gamble Building and the Big Oak Road stands a wood frame building known commonly as the Miner's Bean Kettle. This building was constructed c. 1870 and is attached to the south wall of the Gamble Building's jailhouse room.

The Gamble Building is a large, rectangular stone structure that's approximately 64' wide by 56' deep. A small rectangular one room jail is attached to the northwest corner. The Gamble building has a perimeter stone foundation and interior pier and post supports. The building is constructed principally of slate rock but features a wide, decorated brick frieze along the front facade that wraps around, in a tapered design, at each end. This frieze and the quoins around the three paired, bricked-lined doorways across the front (south wall) provide just a hint of an Italianate influence to the structure's design. The front doorways are 3'5" wide by 9' high and contain paired, folding iron fire doors which close over 1/2 glazed double doors. Across the back are three 4'9" wide by 8' high doorway openings that are enclosed by single large iron doors over interior wooden doors. The rear (north) wall is covered with vines. The east and west walls are solid stone with no openings, excepting the jailhouse extension towards the rear of the west wall. The perimeter walls of the Gamble Building, including the jailhouse, are roughly 18" thick.

The Gamble Building is comprised of four main sections, three large suites and one small jailhouse cell. Each suite has its own front and rear entry. The suites are divided into two, with the rear portion being smaller in size. The eastern suite is roughly 1000 square feet, the middle and western suites are about 1200 square feet each. An interior connecting arcade at the front of the suites has been walled shut. Trap doors in each suite provide access to separate root cellars measuring about 200 square feet each. The Gamble Building has a corrugated metal shed roof which covers the timber and mud mortared roof framing. The original terne plate covered adobe brick roofing was removed years ago.

Located to the rear of the Gamble Building on the west side is the aforementioned jailhouse. This small (11'6" wide by 21' deep) stone and adobe room appears to be a contemporaneous and integral part of the Gamble Building (see enclosed drawing). The room served for a time as the community's jail. Its eastern wall is solid, providing no access to the interior of the Gamble Building's western suite. Centered in the rear (north) wall of the jail is a small 12" x 18" window with metal shutter. A 33" by 47" high window with iron shutter is centered in the west wall. Iron bars are situated in the window opening. The exterior of the jail's west and south walls have been plastered. A small shed roof extends down from the Gamble Building's primary roof covering the jail and rear portion of the Miner's Bean Kettle. Entry to the jailhouse room is through the south wall which has been enclosed by the attached Miner's Bean Kettle building.

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The three room Miner's Bean Kettle is 14'6" wide by 33' deep and is divided into two sections with the front (and larger section) having a corrugated metal covered gabled roof. The rear portion is covered with a corrugated metal shed roof that extends down from the Gamble Building and runs back to cover the jail. The Miner's Bean Kettle has a pier and post foundation with corrugated metal siding over the original plank siding. The windows on the south (front) and west sides and the front entry have been boarded over with scrap plywood. A narrow gap exists between the east wall of the Miner's Bean Kettle and the west wall of the Gamble Building's western suite. Large Chinese Locust "trees of heaven" grace the west side of the Miner's Bean Kettle. A rear entry is off-set in the north wall.

The corrugated metal siding and roofing for the Miner's Bean Kettle and roofing for the Gamble Building were added around 1900. A recently constructed slate stone walk extends across the front of the Gamble Building, starting at ground level on the east property boundary running westerly to terminate in a two step stair on the west side of the Miner's Bean Kettle. This stone walk replaced a smaller concrete walk which in turn had replaced the original boardwalk. A shed roof awning across the front of the Gamble Building was removed a number of years ago. A small portion of the rear wall of the Gamble Building failed a few years ago but was carefully restored. Discoloration in the stone on the front wall of the eastern suite raises questions about this portion of the Gamble Building's history, although any changes done there appear to have been performed during the structure's first decade of life. Because the exterior walls surrounding the rear rooms of the suites show poorer workmanship and crude materials and due to the slightly different floor plan, it's been suggested that this part of the Gamble Building (including the jailhouse) might predate the front portion and may constitute the original Savage Trading Post. It's also possible that Big Oak Flat's great fire of 1863 damaged the rear portion of the Gamble Building necessitating reconstruction.

Electricity arrived to Big Oak Flat in 1906 and interior wiring appears to date from that time. Some of the original furnishings of the Raggio Store, shelving, counters and etc., are still to be found within the Gamble Building. In 1934 the wood frame Brinham Store building was constructed on the parcel immediately to the east of the Gamble Building, replacing an earlier structure. This building runs along most of the eastern wall of the Gamble Building. Today it is used primarily for storage. The wood frame Raggio House, built circa 1901, is located on the north portion of Assessor's Parcel 7-182-01 and is not a part of this property registration. A small well house for this residence is located on the west side of the jailhouse.

The Gamble Building and Miner's Bean Kettle have served generally as storage space for the past 30 years. The Gamble Building's close proximity to a heavily traveled State Highway has not gone without causing some structural strains but despite this and the several aforementioned minor alterations, both the Gamble Building and the Miner's Bean Kettle still maintain a high degree of integrity and they serve as striking and vivid reminders of the glories of Big Oak Flat's more prosperous past.

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The Gamble Building is significant under Criteria C as representing one of the finest examples of Gold Rush stone commercial architecture to be seen today. It is one of only two surviving stone buildings in Big Oak Flat and it is one of the oldest buildings to be found in Tuolumne County. It has a high degree of integrity having undergone few alterations during its lifetime. It displays splendid craftsmanship, with solidly constructed native slate stone walls accented by brick lined doorways and brick frieze. The building also derives significance under Criteria A, being one of the first permanent structures in Big Oak Flat and having played a long role in the town's commercial life. The Gamble Building continuously served the town of Big Oak Flat from the 1850s until the 1930s.

The associated wood frame building (known as the Miner's Bean Kettle sometime after 1925) was constructed circa 1870. It represents one of only three wood frame buildings in Big Oak Flat today built prior to the 1890s. The building has had few changes since its erection (chiefly the addition of corrugated metal siding and roofing) and it provides insight into the simple but efficient commercial architecture of the 1870s. This building served as a residence/business facility until the 1940s.

Big Oak Flat is located east of the Mother Lode in the east belt mining region of southern Tuolumne County. The setting is a small mountain valley which once had a broad, flat grassy floor dotted with stately oaks and pines. Along the south side of this meadow runs a small creek where, in late 1848 or early '49, James Savage discovered gold. Savage established a trading post near this creek and the resultant mining camp was known as Savage's Diggings. Savage's stay was short lived; after his departure the camp was renamed Big Oak Flat in tribute to a magnificent oak tree which stood guard over the west end of the flat. Several hundred people were engaged in either mining or catering to the miners' needs by 1850.

One of the earliest and most successful merchants in Big Oak Flat was Alexander Gamble. The Gamble Building was constructed sometime between 1848 and 1852. Tuolumne County's oldest tax records (1852) shows that Gamble had an assessed valuation of \$5,000 for land and improvements, the highest amount in town. He was one of only a half dozen residents to be assessed in excess of \$1,000. A typical frame dwelling house and lot would have run for \$100. The tax rolls of the 1850s referred to Gamble's building alternately as either "The Gamble Block" or "The Express Office." Wells, Fargo and Company occupied the eastern suite until 1893. Gamble also owned a smaller stone building located elsewhere in town.

The Gamble Building was constructed near (or possibly) on the site of Savage's Trading Post. By 1852 upwards of 3,000 people are estimated to have been in and around the Big Oak Flat area. A sizable collection of permanent buildings soon surrounded the Gamble Building, including hotels, boarding houses, livery stables, restaurants and, of course, saloons. About a dozen of these buildings were constructed of stone or adobe, the rest were wood frame. Only a few buildings came near in size and value to Gamble's, none surpassed it. The Gamble Building was an impressive architectural achievement with its fourteen foot high stone walls and brick detailing across the front. The stone and brick were obtained locally but



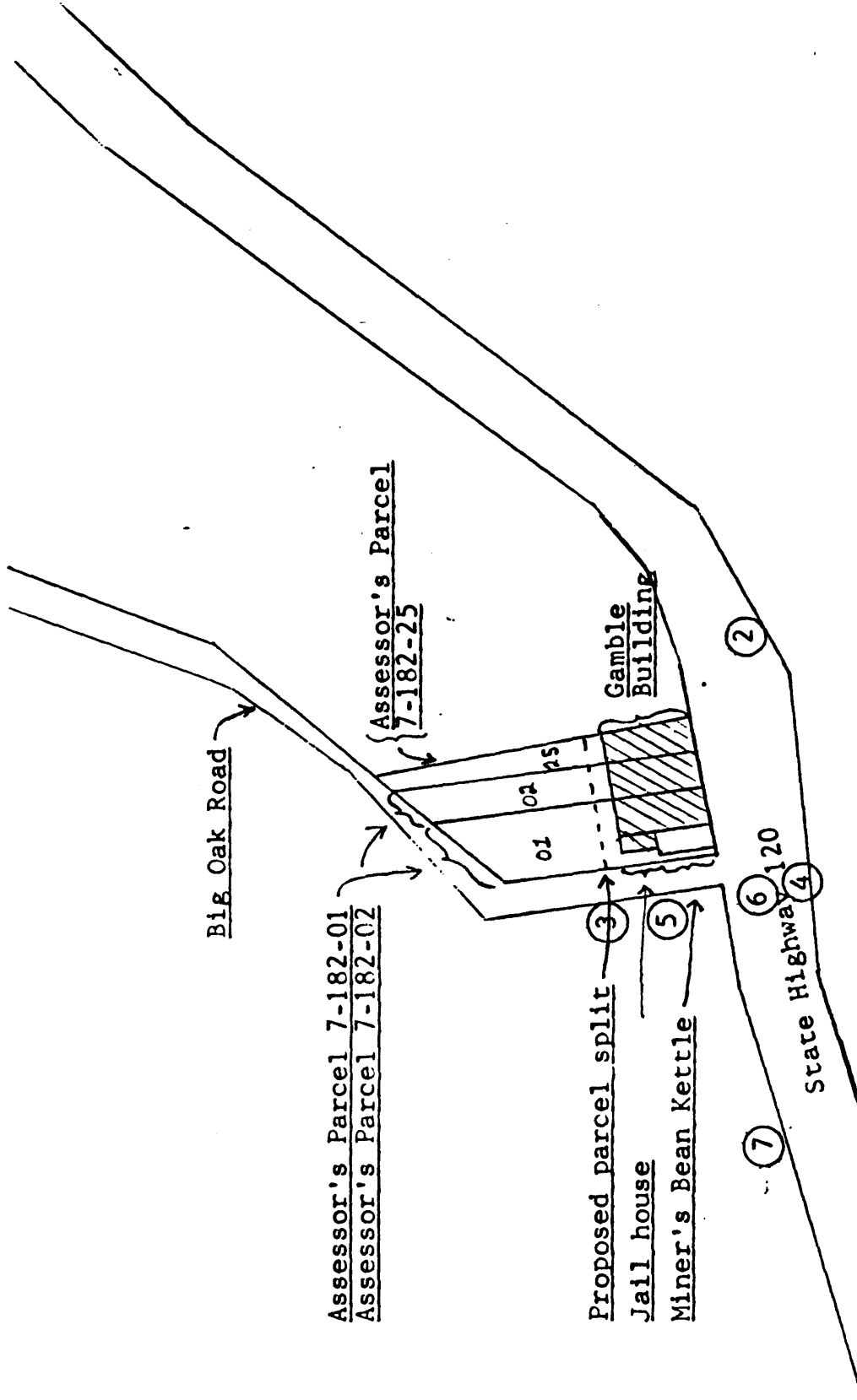






North

1" = 100'



①

Gamble Building - Big Oak Flat - California

○ = photograph locations

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Gamble Building

Tuolumne County

California

Mark V. Thornton, photographer

All photos taken 9-20-1990

Negatives on file with MVT, P.O. Box 192, Groveland, California

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- #1:                      Front (south) wall, looking north.
- #2:                      Southeast corner, looking northwest.
- #3:                      Rear (north) wall, looking east.
- #4:                      Southwest corner, looking northeast.
- #5:                      West wall jailhouse attachment, looking north, NE.
- #6:                      Southwest corner of the Miner's Bean Kettle, looking northeast.
- #7                      West side of the Gamble Building showing relation of jailhouse to the Miner's Bean Kettle, looking east.