

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	APR 15 1976
DATE ENTERED	JUN 7 1978

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC **Fiddletown (Oleta)**

AND/OR COMMON **Fiddletown**

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER **Six miles northeast of Plymouth, California, on Fiddletown Road**

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

**Fiddletown**

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

**14**

STATE

**California**

CODE

**06**

COUNTY

**Amador**

CODE

**005**

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<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 type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: <b>Town</b>

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME **Various public and private owners**

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. **County Recorder, County Courthouse**

STREET & NUMBER **108 Court Street**

CITY, TOWN

**Jackson**

STATE

**California 95642**

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE **\*Survey of Building Structures of the Sierran Gold Belt, 1848-70**  
**\*\*California Historical Landmark No. 35**

DATE **\*1948 \*\*19 2**

\_\_\_ FEDERAL  STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS **\*California Division of Mines & Geology**  
**\*\*California Department of Parks and Recreation**

CITY, TOWN

**\*1416-9th Street, Sacramento**  
**\*\*P.O. Box 2390, Sacramento**

STATE

**California**

## 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 type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

---

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Fiddletown (California Historical Landmark #35) is located along the north fork of Dry Creek in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains. Northern Amador County was rich in placer mining during the early 1850's and this pleasant valley along Dry Creek was an ideal townsite.

Wagons and tents were the first homes of the prospectors from Missouri who settled Fiddletown in 1849. The town grew slowly until 1852 when nearby placer mines started to produce gold in large quantities. By 1853 there were about 100 homes and businesses situated on either side of Dry Creek. Main street paralleled the creek on the south and Jibboom Street paralleled the creek on the north. A few cross streets and alleys with narrow bridges joined the two primary streets. A gulch on the west end of town marked the edge of the large Chinese section which extended west and included businesses, homes, shacks, cemetery, and farms.

On either side of the narrow main street with its raised sidewalks there are many buildings remaining from the town's period of historical significance as an early mining town. Two excellent examples of local brick with iron shuttered doors, dating from the early 1850's and in use today, are the general store and the blacksmith shop (now an antique shop). On Jibboom Street is an 1860's Classic Revival cottage which stands in good repair surrounded by old fashioned gardens. Farther down Jibboom Street is the site of the first lumber mill in Fiddletown. Several homes remain which were built with lumber from this mill. The largest building on Main Street is the Schallhorn Building, constructed in 1870 of hand-hewn volcanic tuff blocks. It was formerly a blacksmith and wagon shop. Across the street is a Gothic Revival home awaiting restoration.

In the early 1850's the first Fiddletown school was built on the top of the hill south of town. This was replaced in 1860 by a clapboarded schoolhouse which is in good repair and currently serves as a meeting place. Across the street from the schoolhouse is the cemetery, which dates from 1856.

In the Chinese section, west of town, there are partial remains of native rock buildings and complete buildings of adobe, native rock, and local brick. The most unusual building is an early 1850's rammed earth which is now the museum.

Unfortunately, some changes have intruded upon the integrity of the district, such as additions in design and fabric to old structures, and a few new structures. In general, however, Fiddletown strongly retains the flavor of its early mining town days.

# 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/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

## FIDDLETOWN

The name Fiddletown is a colorful reminder of the gold rush era. The town is said to have received its name because the earliest settlers from Missouri who founded the town, in 1849, enjoyed fiddling. The name Fiddletown was immortalized in a short story by Bret Harte entitled "An Episode of Fiddletown". However, the name was a source of embarrassment for Judge Purington, an early resident of the town. On his annual trips to San Francisco and Sacramento, he was jokingly called "the man from Fiddletown". He was influential in having the name changed to Oleta by an act of the State Legislature in 1878. However, through the efforts of the Committee of Historical Landmarks of the California Historical Society, the old name Fiddletown was restored in 1932.

In the early 1850's and 1860's, Fiddletown was the trading center for a number of rich placer mining areas including American Flat, American Hill, French Flat, Loafer Flat, Lone Hill and others. In addition to local mining and trading operations, the town was also the site of a steam powered sawmill, built in 1853 by H. C. Farnham and James McLeod. The mill provided lumber from local forests for the many frame houses built in the area. Local brick was also manufactured for construction of a number of the town's early buildings.

Today, Fiddletown is a quiet rural community in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. The main street follows the creek winding through the narrow valley. The town is laid out in linear fashion with Main Street paralleling the creek on the south side and another street, Jibboom Street paralleling the creek on the north. Along the Main Street stand the remaining business buildings and Chinese section of the town of Fiddletown. A number of buildings have disappeared since the Gold Rush days leaving the town with a more open feeling which has been filled in largely with vegetation. Modern construction in Fiddletown is noticeably absent. An exception is the Fiddletown Emporium, recently constructed in a western false-front motif and a new home being erected on Main Street on the site of the former Post Office whose design is reminiscent of the Post Office and retains as much of the original material as was salvageable. However, the majority of the town's buildings, which remain, date from the Gold Rush period.

The community has the overall feeling of a quiet village of the mid-to-late 19th century. The Chinese settlement at the lower end of Main Street contains the old Chinese gambling hall, and directly across the street from the Chew Kee Store.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Gudde, Erwin G., California Place Names, University of California Press, Berkeley, California, 1969.

Sargents, J. L., Amador County History, Amador County Federation of Womans Club, 1927.

(continued)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 100

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,0	696040	4263940
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1,0	694440	4264120
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

B	1,0	695950	4263560
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D	1,0	694470	4264640
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See continuation sheet.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Mrs. Marie Scofield, President

August 4, 1975

ORGANIZATION

Fiddletown Preservation Society

DATE

(209) 296-7463

STREET & NUMBER

Post Office Box 75

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Fiddletown

STATE

California 95629

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE x

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

*Herbert Rhodes*

TITLE

DATE

2-17-76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*Monty*  
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE *2/2/78*  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

*Walter C. Cole*  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

6-6-78

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

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RECEIVED	APR 15 1976
DATE ENTERED	JUN 7 1978

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 1

Inventory of Historic Structures Located Within the Fiddletown Historic District.

1. Chew Kee Store (Chinese Museum) (West Main Street): early 1850's, Rammed earth construction, galvanized and composition roof replaced original long wood shingles (DMBS Ama-H11).
2. Chinese Gambling House (West Main Street): representative of the early 1850 style building with a brick front and schist-mud lime mortar walls (DMBS Ama-H13).
3. Chinese Brick Store (West Main Street): ca. 1850, 2 story brick-covered stone walled store (DMBS Ama-H12); double square door opening and elaborate brick cornice across top. The raised sidewalk is part of the building.
4. Chinese adobe building (500 feet south of California Historical Landmark 35, West Main Street): ca. 1850, large adobe block construction, dimension 24' x 27'; heavy timber floor and beams; compacted earth ceiling under pitched roof.
5. Forge (former Blacksmith Shop), (Main Street): ca. 1852, brick (local) front, sides lime-rubble mortar, keystone arch over iron doors.
6. "Billie" Brown's Home (now Kaiser residence), (Main Street): ca. 1852, single family dwelling; original building constructed of local brick (walls); iron doors and pedimented entrance. Later, additions (wood) to original structure were made compatible to initial design of home.
7. Atkinson's Store (Shelander residence) (Main Street): 1858, wood frame building with vertical cover stripes; porch rails added later.
8. Wells Fargo Office (Community Hall--meeting room) Main Street: ca. 1853, native brick construction; plaster front intrusion of design and fabric.
9. Fiddletown General Store (Main Street): ca. 1855, local brick construction; iron doors; raised sidewalk in front.
10. Schallhorne Blacksmith and Wagon Shop (Main Street): 1870, a massive and excellently constructed building erected of rectangular hewn blocks (measuring 12 x 18 x 10 inches) of Valley Springs rhyolite tuff which is easily worked when first guarded but hardened after exposure. (Source of tuff, about 1.5 miles east of Fiddletown). (DMBS Ama-H10).

*Photo*

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	APR 15 1978
DATE ENTERED	JUN 7 1978

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

7 PAGE

2

11. Cooper residence (Main & Church Streets): ca. 1861, Gothic revival; partially destroyed by fire early 1975; restoration is planned.
12. Fiddletown & Masonic Cemeteries (Church Street): 1856.
13. St. Marks Lodge No. 115, F. & A.M. (Church Street) site, Masonic Cemetery.
14. Oleta School (Fiddletown School) (Church Street): ca. 1860, wood frame construction, clapboard siding; porch across front of building; belfry with bell. photo?
15. Judge Purington's Home (East Main): 1856, wood frame construction; clapboard siding.
16. James Head Home (Tieslau residence) (Jibboom Street): ca. 1862, classic revival cottage; 2 story, dormer windows, elaborate barge boards, shingle roof, local brick base. photo?
17. Farnham Ranch (Jibboom Street): ca. 1852, frontier style, unpainted wood siding; original barn and out buildings.
18. Chinese ruins (Tieslau property) (Fiddletown-Silver Lake Road near west boundary of Fiddletown historic district): early 1850s, site of Chinese farming, native rock remains of Chinese fireplace and building foundations. immediately

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED DEC 29 1976
DATE ENTERED JUN 7 1978

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 53

Intrusions to the District

1. Two 1950's ranch houses and auxiliary buildings, including two barns, one metal shed, one garage, and one pump house. Style incompatible.
2. 1940's cottage, two small wood-frame outbuildings, garage, small bridge. Style incompatible.
3. 1940's ranch house. Style incompatible.
4. Single-story, small metal shed. Materials incompatible.
5. Two two-story metal sheds joined with single-story building. Materials and style incompatible.
6. Wood-frame board and batten house of 1960's vintage with scalloped birch board. Style incompatible.
7. Yellow wood-frame clapboard cottage of 1920's vintage. Color and style incompatible.
8. Large, one-story barn-like structure. Style incompatible -- relatively modern.
9. Fiddler's Emporium -- constructed in 1920's to resemble Gold Rush Era. Integrity questionable as it is contemporary version of historic structure.
10. Small Kaiser intrusion, new addition to 19th Century structure.
11. Contemporary wood-frame structure compatible in style and materials, and similar in design to original structure on site.
12. Small, 1920's stucco structure.
13. Early 1900's wood-frame cottage well set back from street.
14. 1950's tract ranch house. Style incompatible.
15. 1930's red wooden shed used for Fire Department storage.
16. Fiddler's Inn -- two-story stucco structure of 1930's or 1940's. Style incompatible.
17. Community Club -- 1930's structure with oversized fiddle mounted in the front.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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RECEIVED	MAY 23 1978
DATE ENTERED	JUN 7 1978

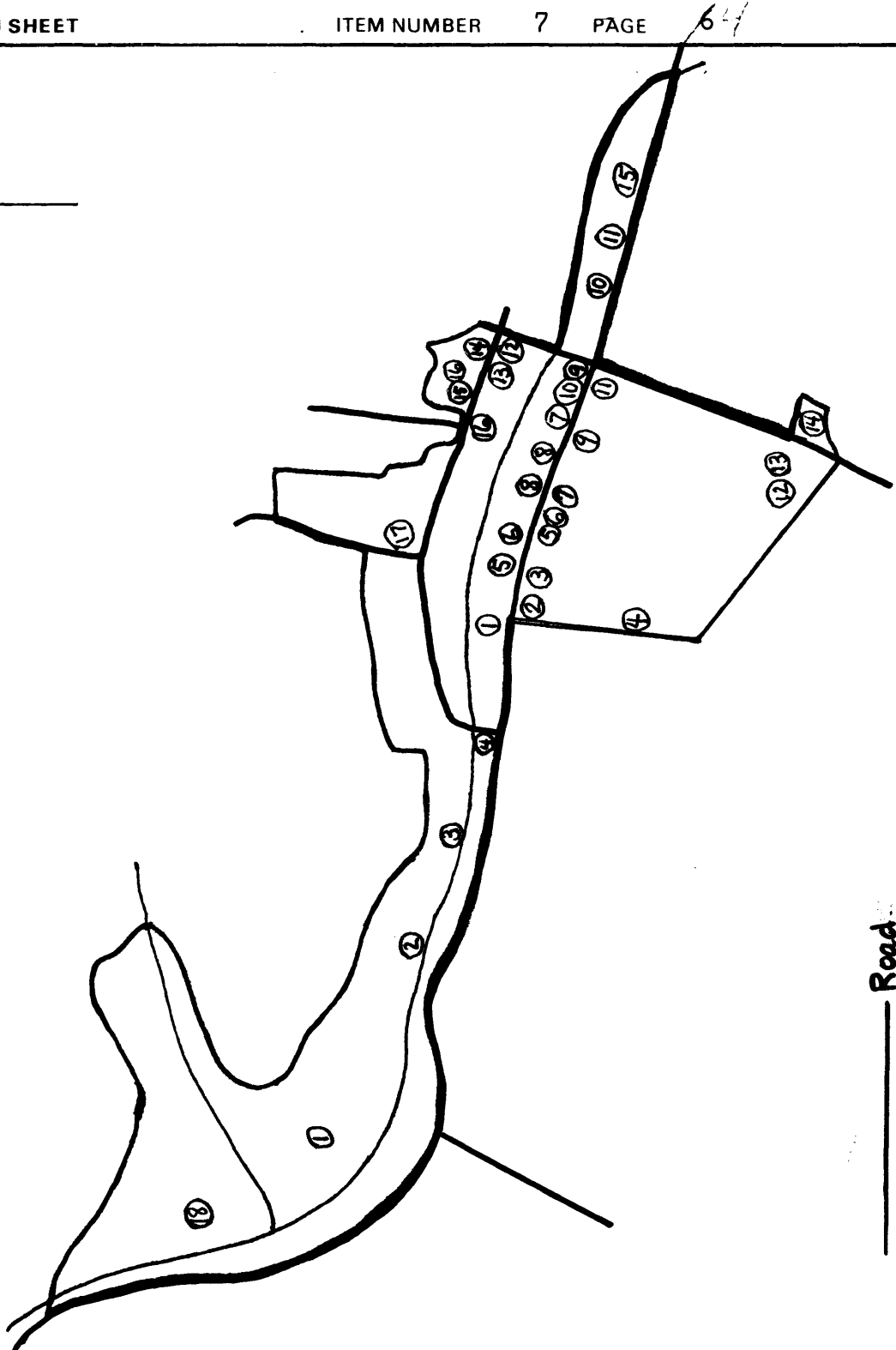
FIDDLETOWN, AMADOR COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 64



SKETCH MAP OF KEY BUILDINGS AND INTRUSIONS



- Road
- - - Boundary
- ~~~ Creek
- ① key buildings
- ② Intrusions



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FIDDLETOWN, AMADOR COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 5

List of Intrusions in Fiddletown Historic District

1. Two ca. 1950's ranch houses and auxiliary buildings, including two barns, one metal shed, one garage, and one pump house. Located at the edge of the district in a rural setting; does not intrude upon townscape.
2. Ca. 1940's cottage with two small wood-frame outbuildings, garage, and small bridge; complex is set back across creek at the edge of the district in an area of openspace and does not intrude upon Fiddletown townscape.
3. Ca. 1940's ranch house; screened from district by trees.
4. Two two-story metal sheds.
5. Wood-frame board and batten house of ca. 1960's vintage with scalloped verge boards.
6. Yankee Fiddler--constructed in 1970's to resemble a Gold Rush era building. Is a new building which has no relationship to any which may have previously existed at that site.
7. New wood-frame structure compatible in style and materials, and similar in design to original structure on site. Some material from previous building on that site was reused in the new construction.
8. Ca. 1950's tract-type ranch house.
9. Ca. 1960's single-story concrete block garage.
10. Single-story, 1950's flat-roofed, wood-sided red house.
11. Two metal garages.
12. Ca. 1940's stucco cottage with garage.
13. Ca. 1950's large stucco church.
14. Ca. 1950's wood-frame cottage.
15. Ca. 1940's stucco cottage.
16. Large metal 1940's quonset hut.

THESE INTRUSIONS ARE KEYED TO THE ATTACHED SKETCH MAP IN RED

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED DEC 29 1976

DATE ENTERED

JUN 7 1978

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 5

18. Wells Fargo Building -- contemporary alteration from original.
19. Modified wood-frame 19th Century structure with concrete blocks and asphalt siding modifications. Now a Post Office.
20. 1960's single-story concrete block garage. Style and materials incompatible.
21. Single-story, 1950's flat-roofed, wood-sided red house. Style incompatible.
22. Large metal garage. Materials incompatible.
23. Small metal garage. Materials incompatible.
24. Green, wood-frame period cottage with altered and enlarged frame windows and recent porch.
25. White 1940's cottage with garage.
26. 1940's wood-frame garage. Style incompatible.
27. 1950's large stucco church. Style, materials, and length incompatible.
28. 1950's wood-frame cottage. Style incompatible.
29. 1940's stucco cottage. Style incompatible.
30. Large 1940's Quonset hut. Style and materials incompatible.
31. White, two-story, 1920's house with asphalt siding.
32. Early 20th Century highly modified cottage with asphalt siding and three small outbuildings.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAY 23 1978
DATE ENTERED	JUN 7 1978

FIDDLETOWN, AMADOR COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 76

The sketch map locates 16 properties which intrude upon the historic setting of the Fiddletown historic district. The map also shows the locations of 18 properties which are of primary importance to the district. Several dozen other buildings exist, forming the matrix into which the key properties and intrusions are set; these **additional** buildings, while not individually distinguished, do contribute to the overall sense of time and place of the district.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	DEC 29 1976
DATE ENTERED	1978

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 7

The area to the west of intrusion no. 5 was a rather densely populated area of Chinese settlement during the Gold Rush era of the 1850's and 1860's. Chinese settled along the banks of the now dry creek and the Chinese pharmacy, general store, and gambling house served this population.

Other than these three structures, visible above-ground remnants of the earlier Chinese settlement have almost totally disappeared. The area included in the nomination is drawn to follow the natural contours of the hills and stream configuration, where settlement would naturally have occurred. The Chinese settlement was of considerable significance to the early development of Fiddle-town and relates importantly to the existing remaining structures.

This area has not totally been surveyed for historic archeological resources. Historic associations and the rich potential of historic archeological resources justify its inclusion in this district.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	APR 15 1976
DATE ENTERED	JUN 7 1978

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

This store is a rare example of rammed-earth adobe construction. Built in the early 1850's, it was used by Dr. Yee and his son as an office, herb shop and residence. Dr. Yee was succeeded in ownership of the building by Chew Kee who operated a Chinese general store on the premises. The contents of the store from all previous owners still remain in place and are of significant historical value of a prime example of early California Chinese culture. The collection of Chinese artifacts in the building has been described by at least one expert as perhaps the most outstanding collection of Chinese-American culture in the United States.

The Fiddletown Preservation Society is the caretaker of the building and the contents have been left in place so that the building represents an early Chinese merchandising outlet exactly as it appeared when it was in operation. Even the living quarters in the back of the building have been left intact as they were last used by the last occupant. The building is open on some weekends during the year as a museum.

Near the Chinese store and gambling den, is located a third adobe structure from the Chinese settlement. It is constructed of large adobe block and is located on the hillside to the south of Main Street, several hundred feet up a narrow roadway.

The upper portion of Main Street contains the present general store built in the early 1850's, the former blacksmith shop, several brick buildings, Classical Revival based residences in the rear, and the Cooper House, a large Gothic Revival building which was partially destroyed by fire early in 1975. Across the street from the Cooper House is the Schallhorn Building, which formerly operated as a blacksmith and wagon shop. Other 19th century houses line the residential street which parallels the creek on its north side. The schoolhouse and cemetery sit above the town on a hillside to the south.

After the original 1850's schoolhouse was destroyed, the present schoolhouse was built on the original site in 1860. It is typical of its type and period, based upon Classical Revival lines with clapboard siding, a small belfry and a covered front porch. Dennis Townsend, Fiddletown's first school teacher, later went on to become Superintendent of Schools in Amador County, a post which he held for many years.

Generally, the community of Fiddletown has retained much of its early feeling with its narrow winding streets and buildings from the 1850's scattered along the streets. Intrusions into the district have occurred mainly through attrition of former buildings. Many of these vacant building sites have now been filled in by vegetation, but very few modern intrusions exist. The town with its early structures and heavy vegetation represents a pleasant rural setting which contains a large collection of significant early structures dating from the California Gold Rush of the 1850's.

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED APR 15 1979
DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE 1

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9

1

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California Division of Mines and Geology, Ferry Building,  
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Geologic Guidebook Along Highway 49--Sierran Gold Belt, The Mother  
Lode County, (Centennial Edition). Bulletin 141, Division of  
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Mason, J. D. History of Amador County, California. Thompson &  
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DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

Verbal Boundary Description:

Beginning at the NW corner of the NE 1/4 of Section 33, proceed S to the County Road, Follow the Fiddletown Road in a SE direction to a point due N of the westerly boundary of Lot #5, then proceed through Lot #2, S along the W boundary of Lot #5, from the SW corner of Lot #5 take a straight line in a SE direction to the SE corner of the cemetery Lot #27, proceed across Church Street, E around and including all of Lot #14, at the NE corner of Lot #14 proceed N on Church Street to Main Street, W on Main Street to a point where Dry Creek and Main Street intersect in Lot #28, follow Dry Creek W to Church Street, N on Church Street to the NE corner of Lot #18, follow the N & E boundaries of Lot #37, N boundaries of Lots #16 and #24, at the NW corner of Lot #24 proceed S to Jibboom Street, W on Jibboom Street to the SW corner of Lot #12, proceed N along the W boundaries of Lots #12, #47, #50, #10, and #26, at the NW corner of Lot #26 proceed in a straight line to the NW corner of the NE 1/4 of Section 33 true point of beginning.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

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RECEIVED DEC 29 1976
DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE

UTM references for Fiddletown Historic District:

- A: 10/695870/4264030
- B: 10/695720/4263620
- C: 10/694840/4263980
- D: 10/694660/4264360
- E: 10/695160/4264360

Acreage of nominated property: Approximately 65 acres.