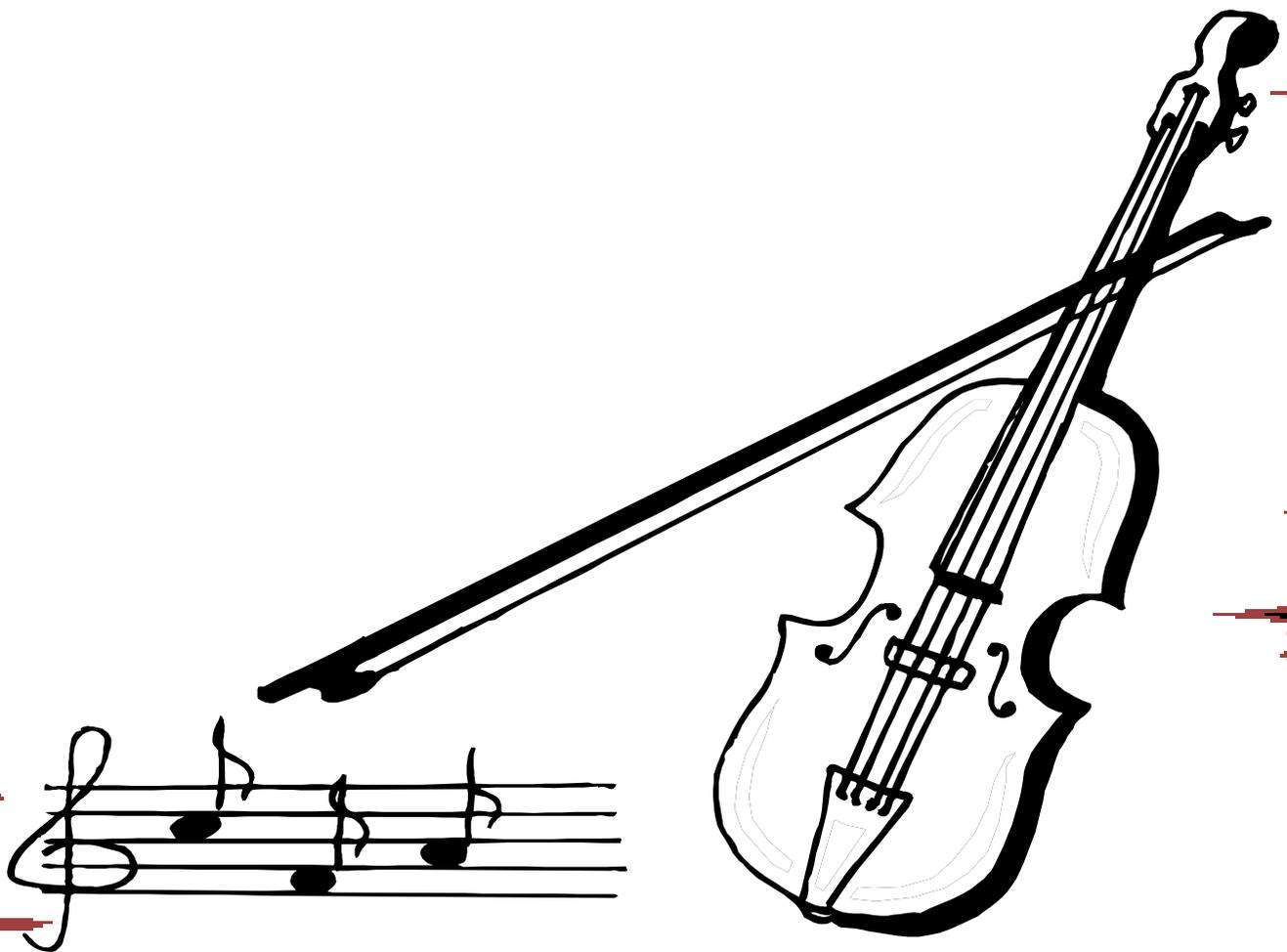


THE  
FIDDLETOWN  
HISTORICAL  
WALKING  
TOUR  
GUIDE



*WELCOME to the Fiddletown Walking Tour.*

*Be sure to print this and bring it with you when you come to explore our town. Please check out the Event section on the Web Site and plan on attending any or all of the events. We would love to have you.*

*Thank you, The Fiddletown Community Club*



The pages below are a list of the Historical Sites located in Fiddletown. Also, there are descriptions and pictures of each of the sites. Please enjoy your tour of Fiddletown.

Written by Pat McAlpin and Elaine Zorbas for The Fiddletown Community Club and The Fiddletown Preservation Society. Excerpts were also taken from Cook Books made by the Community Club.

## 16 HISTORICAL SITES

- Chew Kee Store (museum)
- Chinese Gambling Hall
- Chinese Brick Store
- Chinese Adobe Building
- The Old Forge
- Billie Brown home
- Atkinson Store
- Community Hall
- General Store
- Schallhorn Building
- Isaac Cooper House
- Fiddletown & Masonic  
Cemeteries
- Oleta School
- C.A. Purinton House
- James Head House
- H.C. Farnham House

## #1 CHEW KEE STORE



The Chew Kee Store was built by Chinese workers during Fiddletown's heyday, around the mid-1850s. The rammed earth walls, an ancient Chinese construction technique, involved packing mud between two wooden forms and pounding it until it became hard as a rock. The store was completely restored in the late 1980's and is now open as a museum on Saturdays from noon to 4 p.m., April through October.

The store was originally an herb shop, founded by herb doctor Yee Fung Cheung, who arrived in the United States during the Gold Rush to administer to the medical needs of Chinese miners. His assistant, Chew Kee, took over the operation of the store after Dr. Yee returned to China in the early 1900's. The store functioned as an herb shop, grocery, and community center for Fiddletown's Chinese population. In 1913, it was left by Chew Kee to Fong Chow Yow or "Jimmy" Chow, who lived in the store until his death in 1965. Jimmy Chow was Fiddletown's last Chinese resident.

A visitor today will surely appreciate the contents of the herb shop: photographs, books, letters, an altar with an incense burner in front, shelves filled with containers of tea, rice, soy sauce, pickled vegetables, wine and medicinal herbs. The many artifacts within—shiny papers over the doors to ward off evil spirits, plank beds with thin straw mats, clothing, cooking utensils, Jimmy's cut off queue— provide an authentic portrait of Chinese life in America during and after the Gold Rush.

## #2 CHINESE GAMBLING HALL



The Chinese Gambling House, with a brick front and schist-mud lime mortar walls, was most likely constructed by Chinese in the late 1850s or early 1860s. It was used as a gambling hall in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and owned for many years by Yee Fung. It was built into the hillside and is square, rather than rectangular. Note the single small window.

## #3 CHINESE BRICK STORE



This two-story building, made from local brick, was probably constructed by Americans in the mid 1850's, but occupied by Chinese through 1899. The merchant Foo Kee, owned the property, as well as other properties in Fiddletown. The small windows are unusual.

## #4 CHINESE ADOBE BUILDING



Located on a hill to the south of the Chew Kee Store, this building was originally constructed by Chinese with adobe brick. It consists of a single room with a large loft area beneath the roof. The building is privately owned.

**NOTE:** The Chinese population inhabited nearly all the western end of Fiddletown. Geographically, the town was cut in two by a stream which ran under the Main Street. North of the stream (the present locations of the Community Hall the General Store, the Schallhorn Building) was Caucasian. The Chinese district has four buildings remaining: the Chew Kee Store, the gambling hall, the Chinese brick store, and the Chinese adobe (privately owned).

## #5 THE FORGE



The Old Forge, circa mid-1850s, was built as a blacksmith shop, originally operated by Isaac McClary, and later by Billie Brown, who also became an Amador County Surveyor and Fiddletown Postmaster. The front is made of brick; sides are lime-rubble mortar. Note the keystone arch over iron doors. The building has now been converted to living quarters, still containing enormous bellows from blacksmith days.

## #6 BILLIE BROWN HOME



Billie Brown's house stands adjacent to The Forge. The main part of the house was constructed in the 1850's from local brick. Two additions were later made: a bedroom in the 1940s and the eastern wing in the 1960s.

## #7 ATKINSON STORE



This was a general store, operated by William Adkinson. Next door to the west, was a large livery stable, which also belonged to Atkinson. The original owner of the property was a blacksmith named Isaac McClary. It is now a private residence.

## #8 COMMUNITY HALL



Fiddletown's Community Hall was built in 1934 as a dance pavilion. Fiddletown dances attracted people from all the surrounding communities. It now serves as the headquarters of the Fiddletown Community Club. The brick building abutting it was constructed about 1853.

## #9 GENERAL STORE



The General Store was built around 1855 of local brick. Like many Gold Rush buildings, it has iron doors to protect it from fire. The general store was initially owned by merchants Sloat & Kaul. James Burt and James Head (Burt & Head) took over the business in the late 1860s. The store continued to function under a variety of owners until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is presently a private residence.

Since the ground rises in the back of the lot, the original builder made the back of the store sit on top of a rise. Hence, the front rises several feet above the level of the street. This made it easy for customers to load their wagons with purchases and to have a basement which more importantly allowed access to the hand-dug well. This well was said to have once supplied the needs of the original village.

## #10 SCHALLHORN BUILDING



The Schallhorn Blacksmith and Wagon Shop, built in 1870, is a massive and excellently constructed building erected of rectangular hewn blocks measuring 12x18x10 inches, of Valley Springs rhyolite tuff. The source of the “tuff,” which is easily worked when first quarried but hardens after exposure, was located about 1 ½ miles east of Fiddletown. It was hauled to town via team and wagon. A second story was added in 1880.

The Gibb’s House to the left of the Schallhorn Building was constructed over an 1860’s brewery operated by Thielon & Muller.

## #11 ISAAC COOPER HOUSE



This gothic revival house was built by John Chestnut in 1861. It was purchased in 1875 by Charlotte Cooper. Her husband Isaac Cooper, the nephew of author James Fenimore Cooper, retired to Fiddletown with his family after a successful career in Des Moines, Iowa. One hundred years later, in 1975, the house was gutted by fire. It is now in the process of being restored.

## #12 FIDDLETOWN CEMETERY



This site actually contains two cemeteries, the public cemetery and the Masonic cemetery, divided by a fence on the northwest side. These historic cemeteries contain graves of Fiddletown pioneers and families. The I.O.O.F. cemetery is just east of town.

## #13 OLETA SCHOOLHOUSE



The Oleta (Fiddletown) School, built in 1862, is made of wood frame construction with clapboard siding, with a porch across the front of the building and a belfry on top. It is located on Church Street (now American Flat Road) across from the Fiddletown and Masonic Cemeteries.

The building operated as a one-room schoolhouse until 1955 and is now in the process of being restored by the Fiddletown Preservation Society.

This was Fiddletown's second schoolhouse. The first schoolhouse was built in 1852. The first teacher was Mr. Dennis Townsend, also Fiddletown's first postmaster, who later became the County Superintendent of Schools.



## #14 C.A. PURINTON HOUSE

The house dates from the mid 1850's and was occupied by Columbus A. Purinton, the wealthy owner of the Consumnes Mining and Ditching Company that brought water to Fiddletown. Purinton instigated the name change in 1878 from *Fiddletown* to *Oleta*. This house has been torn down & a new house built in its place.



## #15 JAMES HEAD HOUSE

Merchant James Head built this stately gothic revival house on Jibboom Street in 1862. In 1867 James Head and James Burt took over the General Store, operating a dry goods, clothing, and drug store. They continued to serve the residents of Fiddletown through the 1870's, supplying hardware and mining equipment in addition to the food, clothing, and medicine.



## #16 H. C. FARNHAM HOUSE

Hiram C. Farnham built this home in 1855 for his bride Eunice Haynes. It overlooked the creek and the steam powered sawmill that Farnham and partner James McLeod constructed in 1853 to serve the new rich gold strike in Fiddletown. In 1993 the house was dedicated as an historical site by the Native Daughters of the Golden West and the Amador County Historical Society



## OTHER AREAS OF INTREST

### HISTORICAL MARKER

The bronze marker designates Fiddletown as California Historical Landmark no. 35. The town was called Oleta form 1878 to 1932. The marker was dedicated in 1934.



### MINING WATER DITCH

This is a creek that was running through town and some people called a mining ditch.



### POST OFFICE LOBBY

Visit the lobby of the Fiddletown Post Office which is filled with historical photographs of local places and people.



### FIDDLETOWN FIDDLERS' JAM

Each year in September Fiddletown celebrates with a day filled with fun and frolic. Prior to the late 1970's, a fiddlers' contest was held every year in May. It was so well attended that it became necessary to move the celebration to the Fairgrounds in Plymouth, 6 miles west. In 1992 it was decided to bring the celebration back to Fiddletown as a fiddlers' jam. The event is sponsored by the Fiddletown Community Club on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday in September and held at the Fiddletown Park. In addition to music, it also features arts and crafts booths, a BBQ, raffle, and activities for kids. Admission is free, participating musicians receive a free lunch. Funds raised by the Jam are used for maintenance on the historic Community Hall.

## **ANECDOTES FROM 1881 AMADOR COUNTY HISTORY**

The town of Fiddletown in the early days, was little more than sprawling shacks and tents of miners. Insects were prevalent and whiskey flowed like water. Of the very early settlers little is remembered except that when there was water they mined, and when the rains stopped, they “fiddled.”

Fiddletown, in its infancy, was known as the “taxless town.” At election time, the town declared itself a part of the neighboring El Dorado County; however, at tax time, the citizens insisted they were on neutral territory and refused to pay.

The first court under “home rule” was held in 1851. Major Shipman, residing in town, was appointed judge. The first trial was a supposed horse thief. The jury found him guilty and fixed his punishment at 100 stripes.

The first church was built in the winter of 1852-53, approximately 12’ x 20’. Elder Blain, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, held services there occasionally.

In 1878 embarrassed and tired of being ribbed as “the man from Fiddletown,” ‘Judge’ C. A. Purinton changed the town’s name to “Oleta.” Oleta it remained until it was changed back again to “Fiddletown” in 1932.

Some historical dates:’

November 17, 1863-Stage stopped and express robbed of \$2,000 between Fiddletown and Drytown.

January 2, 1869-Stage robbed by four bandits between Fiddletown and Drytown.

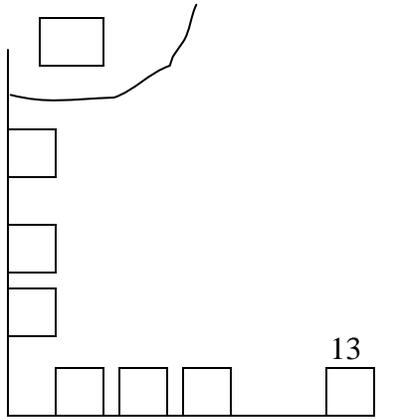
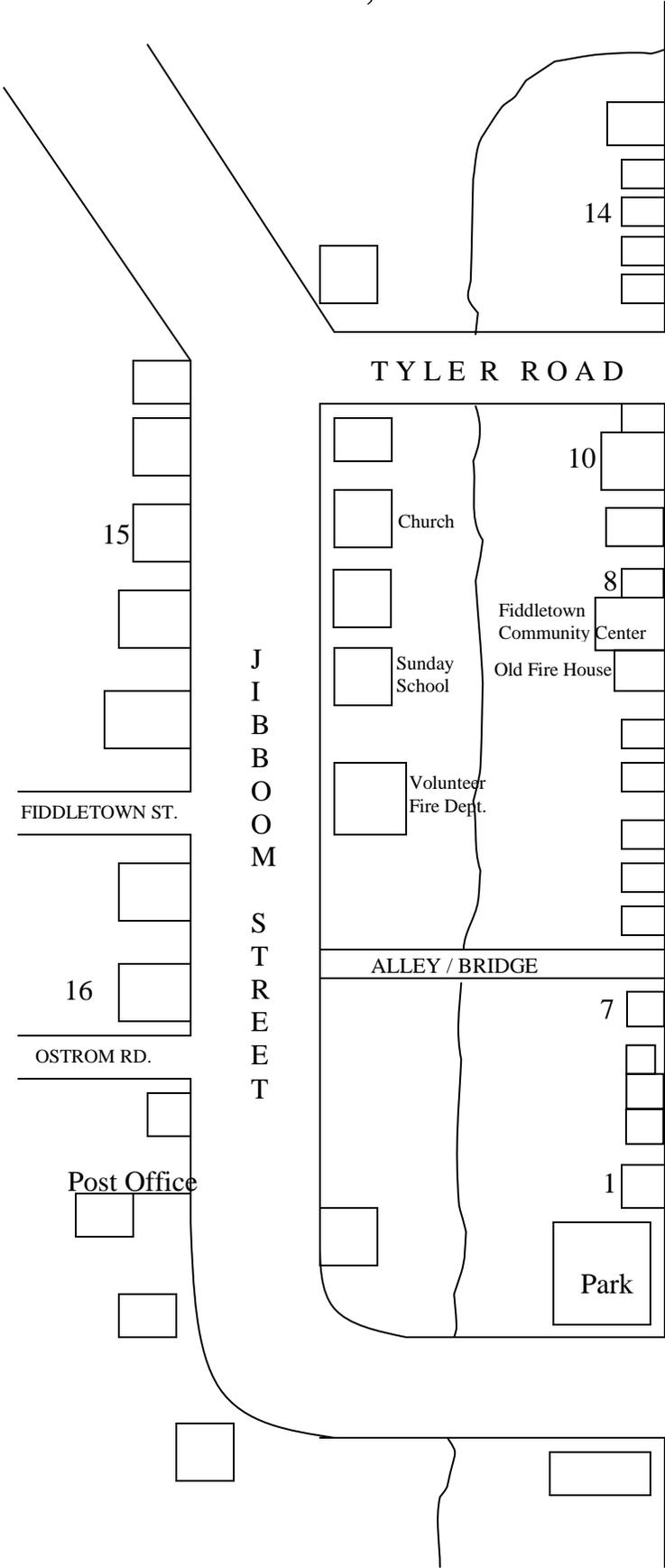
January 9, 1876-Stage robbed between Fiddletown and Plymouth.

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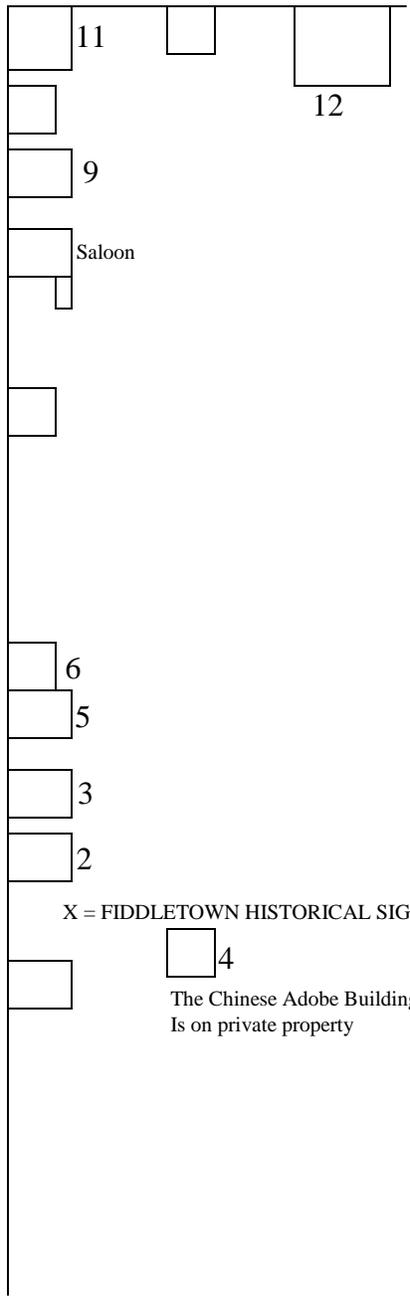
Fiddletown is now an historic district. Within the district are 18 historic sites listed on the “National Register of Historic Places” (United States Department of the Interior).

The “Old Fire House” which was built in the 1950’s, is now an annex of the Fiddletown Community Center. The “All Volunteer Fire Department” was moved over to Jibboom Street in 1993, because the new fire truck was too big for the building.

# FIDDLETOWN, CA



## AMERICAN FLAT



F I D D L E T O W N  
R O A D

X = FIDDLETOWN HISTORICAL SIGN

4  
The Chinese Adobe Building  
Is on private property