

A Brief History of Anderson Springs

Special thanks to Bob Giardina, Jennie Rossotti, and the Lake County Historic Courthouse Museum.
 NOTE: (HM) refers to the page from the collection by Lake County Historian Henry Mauldin
 Revised and compiled by Voris Brumfield ~ 9/ 12/ 01

The explorer and surveyor William Bell Elliott discovered the area of Sonoma and Lake Counties known as the Geysers in 1847. About the time of the Civil War, a stagecoach service into the area was established. Dr. Aleck Anderson of Vallejo and his brother-in law, Laban S. Patriquin, located several springs at the head of Loconoma Valley, situated 5 miles northwest of Middletown along a branch of Putah Creek. He named them after himself in 1873. Thus began the known history of Anderson Springs as a resort area. The original hotel was built in 1876 and could accommodate about 30 guests. Bathhouses were near the hotel, but the hot spring was 2,500 feet away with water conducted through a wooden pipe. A steam bath was arranged over a hot spring on the bank of the creek. The two developers constructed all of these. For many years daughters of Dr. Anderson ran the resort. In 1910, the hotel and cottages provided accommodations for 150 guests.

"These valuable mineral springs are situated in Lake County, 19 miles from Calistoga, 5 miles from Middletown, and 10 miles from the Great Geysers. They are of easy access by stage from the termini of the railroads, Calistoga and Cloverdale. Mountain roads are well kept, and the stage ride is one of the most picturesque in the state. The hotel and cottages afford ample accommodations, with every facility for comfort. The table is superior. Camping and outdoors life on the grounds around the springs are well adapted. Miss Joey Anderson, the proprietress, is untiring in her efforts to please her guests and make them comfortable." Winslow Anderson, M.D., M.R.C.P./ Mineral Springs and Health Resorts of California

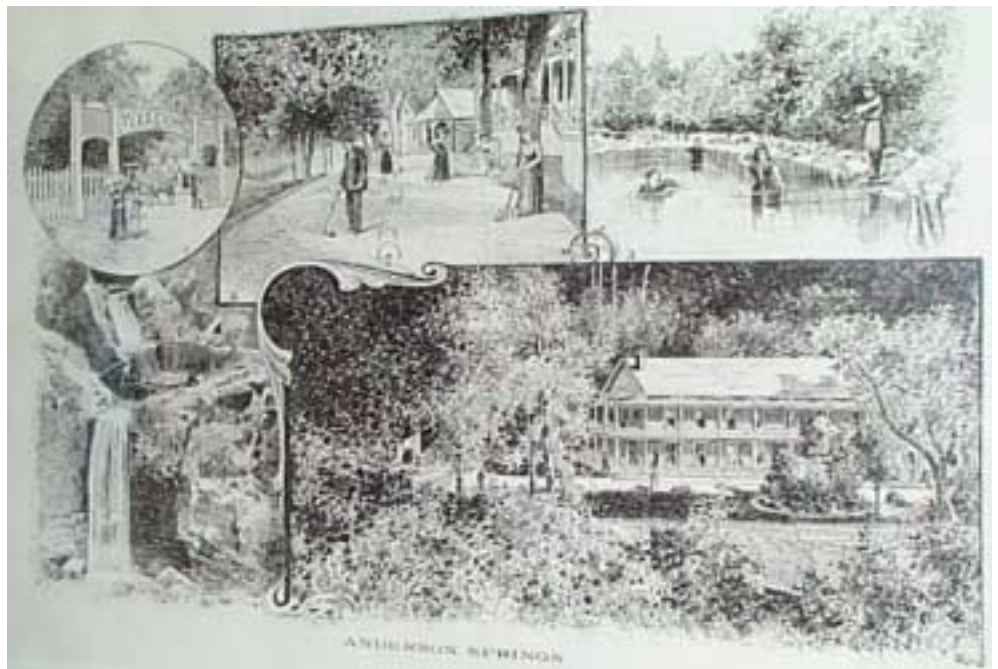
There were nine different springs on the property, both cold and warm, the names of some being iron, sour, magnesia, hot sulfur and iron, iron and magnesia. The water emerges at rather widely separated points on the property, but is reached by paths that form pleasant walks along the wooded canyon. The Cold Sulfur Spring, which is the farthest downstream, issues from schistose material at the creek edge 300 yards east of the hotel. It has been protected by a cement basin and yields a small flow of



cool, clear, rather strongly sulfured water used for drinking. About 400 yards by trail eastward and southward from the hotel, in a little gulch on the side of a ravine, is the Sour Spring, which yields a slight flow of water that tastes of alum. The spring is perennial, but it seems to be supplied by surface water that becomes mineralized by seeping through crushed sedimentary material. Across the creek and about 100 yards northeast of the hotel, in a rock-walled pool at the creek edge, is Father Joseph Spring, which yields mildly sulfured water that is pleasant for 675 yards west of the hotel and beneath a gravel bank at the north side of the creek. The water rises in a pool a few feet in diameter and also in a barrel sunk nearby. It is much used for drinking, but it tastes disagreeably strong of sulfides. The other five springs form above ground about 325 yards farther upstream, where they issue from bands of greatly altered sedimentary rock. The Hot Spring, which is the principal one, rises in a barrel that forms a drinking pool. The water is then piped to a small reservoir and a bathhouse nearby. This water is mildly sulfured and, when cooled somewhat, it is a palatable drinking water. Near it are two short tunnels that also yield warm water of similar character, and a few yards away vapor vents are utilized in small steam bath cabinets. The other two springs are a few yards westward, across covered with an iridescent film, possibly sulfates of aluminum and of iron-crystallize on the adjacent banks. The other spring is about 60 yards away in a branch ravine. It yields clear water that tastes strongly of alum, and the banks nearby are also usually coated with alum. The waters of these last two springs have been only slightly used and are not fit for drinking, as they are too astringent. (HM 443)



of the subterranean heat and too low a quality ore. Swartz owned Anderson Springs and lost a lot of money in this mine. He then turned the Anderson Springs property over to his nephew, Mr. Meade. It has never been mined since." By Dave Strickler of Middletown 4/7/1953



General comments from the Lake County Courthouse Museum materials

The Anderson heirs sold the resort property to A.R. Meade, and Mr. Meade sold off portions of the property and a number of homes constructed on the premises. (HM 9576)

No.19 Mead Prospect, 1942 The Meade prospect is on land owned by Ray Meade of Middletown in sec. 35. T. 11 N. R. 8W., on the ridge between Bear Canyon and Gunning Creeks. It is 5 miles by road and 1 mile by trail northwest of Middletown.

(Possible manganese deposits) A. Meade and H. Meade were trustees for the Callayomi School from 1885-2907 (HM 9509) (HM 2342)- "The old Meade place was northeast of Putah Creek about ½ mile below the ash bank. This was from 1880 to 1900 in round figures." Elba Woods (HM 1984) "Big Chief Mine was first opened up by Ernest Swartz near 1920 or earlier. He had a small resort and got out quite a production for a small mine. This was finally forced to close on account

Personal Remembrances of Anderson Springs

In addition to researching Anderson Springs at the Lake County Courthouse Museum and having lived in Anderson Springs for 26 years, I interviewed two seasonal residents of Anderson Springs, Bob Giardina and Jennie Rossotti. They began visiting the Springs nearly 60 years ago at the age of 6 years. Their comments, reflections, and remembrances follow. Voris Brumfield

Bob Giardina: We first came to Lake County in 1937 and stayed at a Whispering Pines cabin. Then my aunt bought a lot in Anderson Springs and my dad bought the piece of property next door to my aunt in 1938 from Ray Meade. People came up here mainly to hunt and fish back then. I was 6 years old and spent all my summers in Anderson Springs. We would also come up for the opening of fishing and hunting season, too, and about once a month to make sure the cabin was okay. My dad signed the papers for our lot, \$125 cash, in Ray Meade's

house, that was across from the Recreation Center and Pavilion. I remember, Ol' Ray kept some big trout in a pond next to the big pool where he would let you fish after paying for your lot. It was a great gimmick. There weren't many Italian families here in the Springs; we were just about the first. The deed my dad signed stated that no Chinese, Blacks, or Indians could own property in Anderson Springs. The movers and shakers in Anderson Springs came from Vallejo and Petaluma and were primarily doctors and their friends.

When I was a kid, there were no homes in the Annex. That was a campground. My Uncle stored his trailer there. At our cabin, the barbecue outdoors was where the women did all the cooking. Sometimes we'd have 40 – 50 people sitting out back for lunch. You had to shower before Saturday because the water system had limited storage and would often run out of water. We had a water tank outdoors behind our house with a pipe that ran through the fire and into the house. If you wanted hot water, you had to build a fire and let the water run through the barbecue to heat it up. Showers had to be short to get hot water.

I don't remember going up to the old springs very much, just fishing in Anderson Creek, hiking and chasing girls. As teenagers we "raised a lot of cane" in the summer in the Springs, then would go up to Hobergs to hang out with the girls. In the mid-'40s we would wait for the bus from San Francisco to come up and drop off the girls on Thursday for the weekend. We would fool around, see them off to the bus the following week and meet a new group of girls. It was great. In 1948 there was a big fire that threatened most of Anderson Springs, but our cabin was saved because of the firebreak that was made behind our home. It came from the Harbin Mt. side of Highway 175 and destroyed lots of homes in Anderson Springs.



Jennie Rossotti: My cabin was built in 1929. I have been coming up for 59 years. By 1945 the hotels in the springs were gone, and to use the baths you called to make reservations. We didn't like going as little kids because the water was hot and black; you had to go nude because it would

dissolve the elastic in your swimsuits. The first big pool I remember was black sulfur water. Also there was a little room with really hot water. There were a lot of little cabins just big enough for the bathtub size soaking baths. These were scary. When we swam at the recreation area there were no walls and no kiddies pool. There was a board that extended out over the water that we use to dive off, but it didn't have any spring. Al Baker in 1944 or 1945 built the stone retaining walls at the recreation center.

The "Lower Road" (Anderson Springs Road) use to go in front of our cabin, cross the creek and along Alder Lane, then cross the creek again in front of the entrance to the recreation area. Back then you crossed Anderson Creek four times to make the loop. Dr. Anderson got the County to move the road over about 30 feet to give us more front yard, then the County rerouted the road to the south side that eliminated two creek crossings. The County then abandoned that part which is now lower Alder Lane. The concrete creek crossing is still there but now there are only two bridges around the loop that cross the creek.

Jennie sent a transcript from A.G. Patriquin, taken in 1944, it will be incorporated later.



*Transcript from Patriquin
9/27/1937.*



Fishing has always been one of my favorite things to do. Until they created Lake Berryessa in the early '50s Steelhead would spawn in Anderson and Bear Canyon Creeks. With the construction of the Monticello Dam, the California Fish and Game would stock the creeks in Anderson Springs. It changed fishing because so many people knew the truck on site, followed it, and parked all over the place, tromping through peoples property. Fish and Game stopped planting fish. It is still fun to fish the creeks. Some years are better than others, and April 2000 was the best. A few things have changed since I have been coming to Anderson Springs. Now we have earthquakes. The last one knocked things off our shelves. There were no quakes when I was a kid, not until after the 1970s when the steam wells got more prevalent did quakes start.

