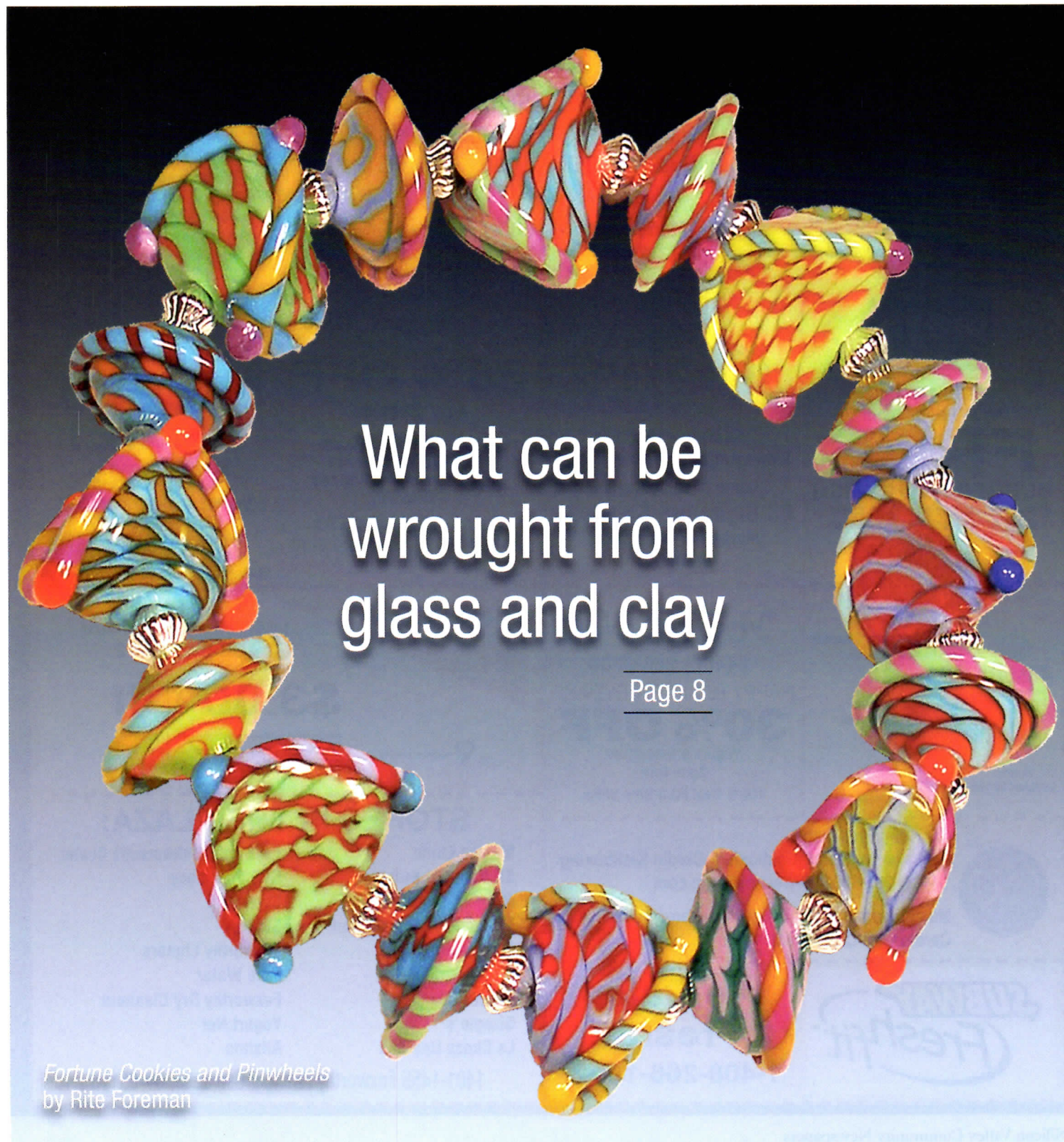


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MAGAZINE

JULY 2013



What can be
wrought from
glass and clay

Page 8

Fortune Cookies and Pinwheels
by Rite Foreman



Mike Darby teaching the art of panning for gold

Gold takes many forms in the Mother Lode country

BY DIANE LeBOW

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN MONTGOMERY

There's more than gold up in those hills. Just 2 ½ hours north-east of San Francisco, the Gold Country has been drawing people for more than 150 years. When the Mother Lode, as the early gold miners called it, was discovered in 1848, people came here to seek their fortune. Today people flock up here for a variety of pleasures and activities from relaxation, wine tasting and antiques, to golf, cave explorations, hiking, river rafting, even skiing and yes the famous Calaveras County Frog Jumping contest held each spring, following Mark Twain's legend capturing story.

Traversed by the appropriately named Highway 49, former boomtowns with their old timey storefronts, wooden sidewalks, gourmet restaurants and charming and comfortable lodging of every type make your stay a pleasure. Angels Camp is one of the convenient and fun locations from which to explore the region.

The nearby Greenhorn Creek Resort offers comfortable accommodations to golfers and non-golfers alike with its luxurious condos, lovely



Main Street, Sutter Creek

pools and spa, as well as the gorgeous Robert Trent Jones Jr. re-designed golf course which overlooks New Melones Lake. Camps Restaurant serves regional produce, wines, Calaveras beef from golf lunches to Winemakers' six course dinner. Frog's Tooth Vineyards hosted our luscious dinner. I enjoyed their slogan: "If wine can have legs, frogs can have teeth."

A few minutes away in town is the Angels Camp Museum, which includes one of California's oldest schoolhouses as well as a fine collection of old carriages and wagons. While you are in town, join Michael Darby for one of his Gold Panning Tours. Michael taught us how to swing a pick, then carry the chips of clay and quartz down to the river bank, and finally how to sit in the middle of a stream and pan for gold. Well, it was cool, especially cool that I found several gold chips which I got to take home with me.

Just a few miles away is Murphy's, reputed to be one of the wildest towns during the early gold rush days. Thus, it seems fitting that Murphy's is now called "the wine tasting capital of the Sierra." Many of the 32 local wineries have tasting rooms in Murphy's. At Murphy's Hotel (1856), which is on the National Register of Historic Places, you can not only relax over a delicious meal or stay in a historic room but also visit the President Ulysses S. Grant's room (1880). Other hotel guests included Mark Twain, Horatio Alger, Susan B. Anthony, JP Morgan, Black Bart and John Wayne.

Just across the street from the hotel, the Old Timers Museum, once a Wells Fargo stage coach office, is well worth a visit with its unique historic collections, including Sierra Miwok and Paiute, tales of some of the early stage drivers, and old scales for weighing opium. After a long day panning gold, those miners needed a break! Just next door to the Museum is artist Tom Smith's Iron Horse Native American Art Store. Tom's store features finely woven Miwok pine needle baskets. You can watch Tom, who is part Cherokee, carve intricate designs and inlay turquoise and oyster shell into works of elk horn and deer horn.

Up the road from Murphy's is Calaveras Big Tree State Park and its spectacular North Grove of giant sequoias. A state park since 1931, it is said to be the longest continuously operated tourist facility in California and is a great place for a hike. Another town we visited is Sutter Creek which is known as the "Jewel of Amador County." Sutter Creek was born of the surrounding deep rock gold mines as well as early lumbering begun by land baron Captain John Sutter. Its rich history includes Hetty Green, the onetime richest woman in the world, owner of the Old Eureka Mine, and Leland Stanford, who hit the "Mother Lode," leaving him with unlimited resources to become a railroad baron, U.S. Senator, and Governor of California, as well as founding a major university.

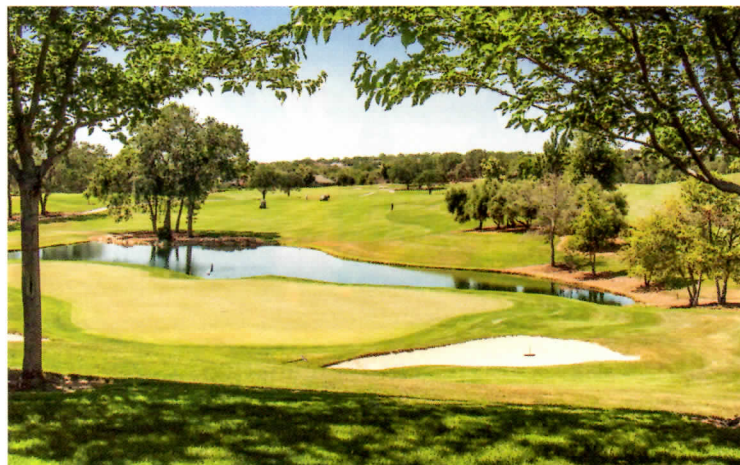
A lovely place to stay is the pre-Civil War Sutter Creek Inn, which was the first bed and breakfast west of the Mississippi. Family owned and run for the past 40 years, its cozy New England style buildings, quiet gardens, library, hammocks, delicious hot breakfasts and moderate prices, not to mention several rooms with unique hanging beds beckon you to linger. Historic Main Street, with its Victorians, New England-style homes and Greek Revival buildings, is fun to explore.

Amador County has a 150 year history of wine production, especially famous for its Zinfandels, and more than 30 superb wineries and tasting rooms. Located eight miles east of Sutter Creek, the Chaw'se Indian Grinding Rock State Park is a unique spot. In years past, the ample supply of acorns led the Miwoks to create some 1,185 mortar holes for grinding, the largest collection of bedrock mortars in North America.

Of course, there are almost infinite numbers of gorgeous wineries to visit and wines to sample. Award-winning Ironstone Vineyards, in addition to tastings, offers tours, concerts, picnic areas, and



Murphy's Historic Hotel (1856)



Greenhorn Creek Resort, Angels Camp

IF YOU GO:

- Greenhorn Creek Resort
www.greenhorncreek.com
- Camps Restaurant
www.campsrestaurant.com
- Sutter Creek www.suttercreek.org
- Sutter Creek Inn www.suttercreekinn.com
- Murphy's www.visitmurphys.com
- Murphy's Hotel www.murphyshotel.com
- Gold Panning Tours, Michael Darby,
1227 S. Main Street, Angels Camp,
209-736-0044

LOCAL WINERIES:

- Ironstone www.ironstonevineyards.com,
- Frogs Tooth www.frogstooth.com,
- Domaine Becquet www.BecquetWinery.com,
- Villa Vallecito www.villavallecitovineyards.com,
Coppermine, Zucca



Villa Vallecito Winery

a look at their "Crown Jewel," a 44 pound crystalline gold specimen in their Heritage Museum. Want a taste of heaven in both wines and location? Visit Villa Vallecito which is perched atop a secluded peninsula. You can overnight in their casita, luxuriously decorated with Mexican designs, soak in the pool and spa while overlooking New Melones Reservoir and the rolling Sierra Foothills. On this trip, I learned to handle a jumping frog and pan for gold. I also enjoyed the delicious wines, cuisine, and hospitality of California's Gold Country. Gold takes many forms.