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## Stamp mill, blacksmith at museum

**S**outhern California's only working five-stamp mill doesn't look for gold, but it does help bring the past to life at Big Bear Museum.

At one time dozens of similar mills, some with just one massive stamp pounding ore into smithereens and others with up to 40 in action, were at work in these mountains. Now there's just the museum's, which actually came from Mariposa but is so representative of what was happening in Big Bear during Southern California's largest gold rush, 150 or so years ago.

When the museum mill roars to life it's an impressive sight indeed. The museum fires it up many weekends and it's a show worth seeing but hurry—the museum is only open for the season into October. If you're not fortunate enough to see the stamp mill in action, a small hand-crank replica suffices to demonstrate how the operation worked. Plus weekends also see gold panning demonstrations, another skill that was prevalent during Big Bear's past.

Big Bear's mining, logging and ranching history come alive at the museum, where a virtual Wild West town has sprung up on its grounds. There's a working blacksmith shop where fires and a lot of pounding turn metal into useful tools and even works of art, just like in the old days.

See the recently-finished one-room schoolhouse not unlike that used by teacher

Anna Crain, brought to life in the compelling story "Ghost Town School Marm" by the late Tom Core, at the old Big Bear mining town of Doble in the early 1900's.

The exhibit shows how school was for children in little mining towns all across the west. There's the chalkboard, globe, handwriting chart and 48-star flag, all pieces from the period and representative of the times except for the flag, which would have had only 45 stars while the Doble schoolhouse was operating.

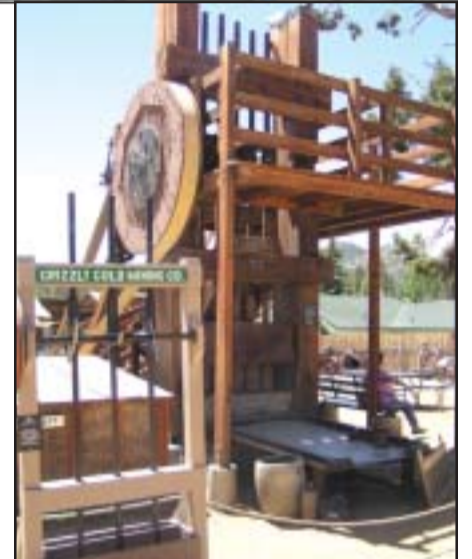
The 17'x 12' building is a piece of history in itself. It was once up at the old damkeeper's house on the west end of Big Bear Lake, where the reservoir, at the time considered one of the world's engineering marvels, was operated. The building came from the backyard of the late and legendary "Leonardo of Leather" Bob Brown, historian and master craftsman who dressed Hollywood's great cowboys, like Hopalong Cassidy, Gene Autry, Roy Rogers and more.

The building is believed to date back to 1884. You can even see the chop marks made by the hatchet that cut the wood. In front there's an authentic school bell, donated by volunteer Paul Allen, who helped fund the building's restoration project.

Indian village with teepee is another museum highlight along with the assayer's office. Also see the doctor/dentist office



*Jim Lanners has his irons in the fire at the museum's blacksmith shop; working stamp mill and miniature replica*



with primitive tools of the trade...ouch!

Saddle up to the authentic saloon, where guests can buy a sarsaparilla or soda for \$1. A buck also buys old-time photos from Big Bear's past, ready for framing. The museum is open Saturdays, Sundays, Wednesdays and holiday Mondays 10 a.m.-4 p.m. into mid-October.

Admission is a mere \$3, 14 and under free, making a trip to yesteryear inexpensive as well as entertaining.

The museum is located on Tom Core Dr. in Big Bear City Park off the boulevard at Greenspot. Call (909) 585-8100.



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