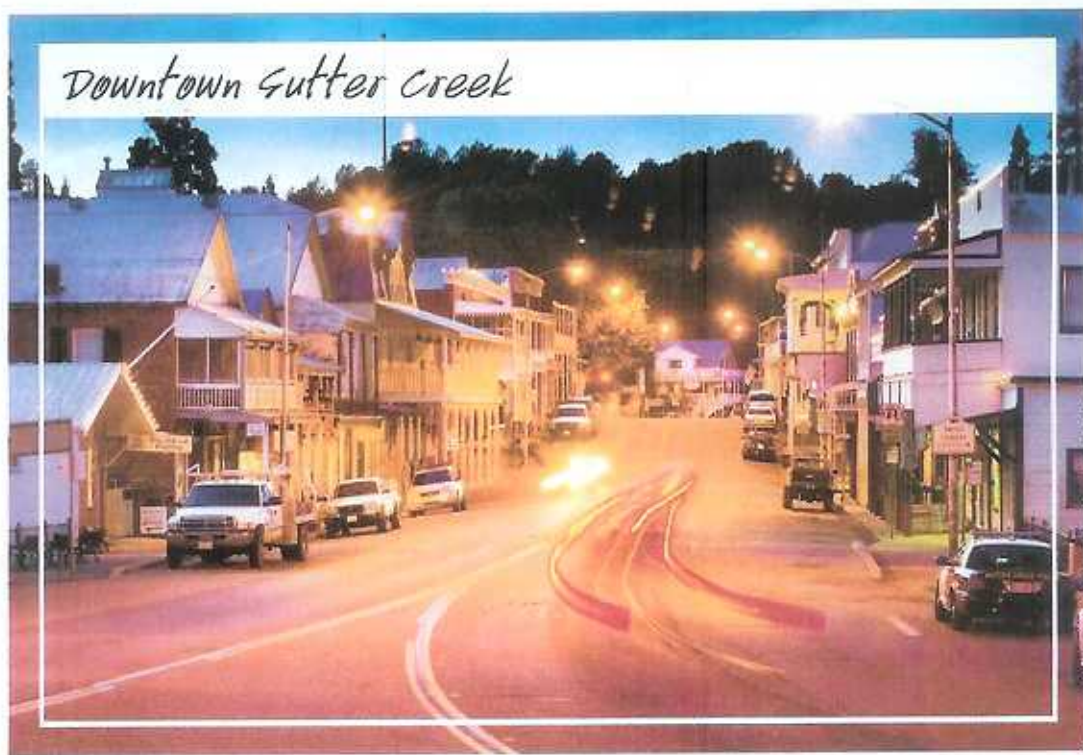


Sutter Creek

History-rich Sutter Creek traces its roots back to 1846, when gold was first discovered at John Sutter's mill. The area grew in size due to the Gold Rush and Sutter Creek became an incorporated town in 1854.

*Advertorial by
Kimberly Horg and
Stan Countz*



Like most places in California, Sutter Creek is on the grow. Some of the historic buildings are getting a face-lift, but the work is being conducted with the utmost care. Real estate development company, The Griffin Company, bought three old buildings in downtown Sutter Creek—Caffe Via d' Oro (that just had its' grand re-opening in March), Bellotti's, located inside The American Exchange Hotel across the street and the old building that used to house Zinfandels which now houses Argonaut Mortgage. Owners Dennis and Julie Griffin are attempting to update the the buildings while staying true to the past as much as is practical. The company specializes in the renovation of older buildings, including areas in and around Sacramento and the Bay Area.

The Sacramento-based company moved to Sutter Creek in 2000 after a visit to the area. "My wife and I came

to Sutter Creek and Julie fell in love with the area and wanted to stay. So, I said 'Okay!'" admitted Dennis Griffin. "To be honest, when The Griffin Company moved to the Sutter Creek area, it was because the bypass was going to be finally completed and, of course, the population explosion is happening. The town lives on sales tax and we could see an opportunity to buy, renovate and improve the value of the buildings that so desperately needed TLC," stated Griffin.

Currently, cars and trucks traveling up and down Highway 49 have to maneuver the town's small, narrow roads to get to their destination. The newly-approved bypass for many is a welcome change that will divert traffic highway off the city streets. It is expected to be finished within the year.

ANTICIPATED BYPASS

"The bypass is probably a good thing," stated Central House Internet owner

Joe Rohde. "I'm a little cautious about the immediate outcome for Sutter Creek only because when you've got that enforced traffic going through town, you've got a percentage of people that are going to stop. I think for residential real estate here it'll be great," he added. "For the business district, if they band together and market the area properly, it can also be a very good thing," he said.

Sutter Creek chef and wine connoisseur Susan Carter, owner of Susan's Place Wine Bar and Eatery at 15 Eureka Street, feels that the Highway 49 bypass will not be a problem for businesses in Sutter Creek, but rather will be "a good thing," noting that the absence of large trucks will add to the atmosphere heading into town and will make Sutter Creek more of a destination. "It will seem a little safer and a little more quaint," she states.

"When the bypass is completed, Sutter Creek will receive Main Street

back and won't have to deal with CalTrans," states Griffin. "I his will give the people a chance to have parades, art festivals, local events and they could, if they decided, close the street to hold those events." Sutter Creek Mayor Bill Hepworth points out that they still have until November the 11th or so of this year before the bypass is open. He believes that "it will only enhance the town." Sarah Allen, owner of Village Real Estate in downtown Sutter Creek and Amador County resident since 1979, is anticipating that the bypass will "eliminate much of the truck traffic going through town so that the area can be quieter."

Rob Duke, Manager for the city of Sutter Creek, thinks it will be a better place without the trucks. Duke says Amador County is growing fast and people fear it will lose its' atmosphere. The goal is to maintain the quality of life here and to attract visitors. "Growth is a necessary evil," he admits, "but it will benefit the

Griffin said. "The Griffin Company realizes this and is most interested in keeping the town as it was while enhancing the draw for tourists," he stated. "Generating tourism is the most important thing this area can accomplish so all can see and live that history," he added.

The renovations have to follow the Historic Preservation Ordinance (which began in 1968). The renovations began immediately after Griffin purchased the buildings last year and the completion date is set for June of this year. Griffin says he is really excited about the completion of Bellotti's Restaurant and the American Exchange Hotel. When completed, the hotel (which has not been rented since the 1960s) will have 25 rooms decorated in the Gold Rush theme, a full restaurant, a banquet room for up to 90 people and original historic balconies on the front of the building. The second and third floor rooms are being remodeled and on the first floor is the bar and Bellotti's



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in the Gold Country and this area is well-preserved," Bethel said. "I have heard nothing but positive things from customers. Sutter Creek is a destination spot; it has the wineries and gold mining and is going to be the hub," he added. Griffin adds that Sutter Creek is a wonderful place to live and visit, convenient to wine tasting, skiing, hiking, fishing, tours of gold mines and shopping.

at the intersection of Highway 104 and Highway 49. Less than a mile away from this new shopping center, two 18-hole golf courses with 1300 homes are being built over the next several months and years by other builders and developers so there should be an ongoing supply of new homeowners looking to shop at the shopping center.

Like most areas throughout the

Reinvented and Renovated

merchants and the community in the long run. The renovations have been consistent with the historical feel of the city," he said. Jane King, Mortgage Consultant at Argonaut Mortgage, Inc. in Sutter Creek, says the bypass "will be fantastic and will make a huge impact; the streets are not wide enough for the big trucks coming through town," she said.

RENOVATION AND PRESERVATION

Griffin says change is tough but he thinks he has shown the community that he doesn't want to renovate to change the historical feel of the town; he wants to keep the exterior the same and simply remodel the interior, such as upgrading the electrical, plumbing, heat and air, fire sprinklers, windows, etc. "Sutter Creek is history and preserving that history is the most important thing,"

Restaurant (which has been serving Italian food since the 1930s). The restaurant is named after its previous life when it was Bellotti Inn and the American Exchange Hotel has its original name.

Caffe Via d'Oro (known as the Malatesta building) was bought in 1909 by Anunzio Malatesta from Morris Brinn who built the brick building in 1862 after it was destroyed by a fire. The new restaurant recently re-opened with a remodeled two-floor building complete with a mural depicting life in Sutter Creek down to gold miners and the inviting surroundings. The Caffe Via d'Oro is a fine dining experience with the atmosphere to match. Bellotti's and Caffe Via d'Oro General Manager, Bill Bethel, says the buildings are being restored to look as near as possible to the way they may have looked back in the 1870s. "We are

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Marv Dealy has been working with Sutter Creek businesses for nearly a decade. His company, Throckmorton Enterprises [throck.com], has designed web sites for the city and various foothills businesses including several sites for Griffin. Dealy has created website such as TheGriffinCompany.com, the two restaurants, CaffeViaDoro.com and Bellottis.com, their hotel American-ExchangeHotel.com and a general information web site called Sutter-CreekInfo.com. The company has also produced a number of audio/video presentations for The Griffin Company to help showcase their various developments, including the Gold Country Plaza in Sutter Creek. The Griffin Company is also building the Gold Country Plaza at Sutter Hill shopping center, located

valley and foothills of California, small towns are growing with the times but, according to Argonaut Mortgage Consultant Jane King, even though there has been a big jump in real estate values, Sutter Creek and Amador County is still a relatively well-kept secret and people can still get acreage for a reasonable price. Real estate broker Verlyn O'Neil points out that the average home price has doubled in value over the past five or six years to around \$300,000, but that Sutter Creek has always been a popular destination.

"We used to come up all the time to go skiing and rafting and recreating up here and one day I said 'Let's just do it; let's just move' and we did," reminisces Bill McKenna (aka "The Singing Realtor" for his operatic outbursts). "It's the smartest thing we ever did," he adds. **www**