Memorial to the Chinese Laborers

The Alameda County Historical Society dedicates this panel to:

Ah Bing–41, Kim Yuen–29, Toy Sing–31, and Lock Sing–33, who died outside this tunnel. This panel is also dedicated to the countless unnamed and unsung Chinese laborers who worked on Lake Chabot Dam from 1874 to 1892.

In 1888 and 1889 Chinese laborers dug and dynamited 1,438 feet through rock hillside to make this spillway tunnel. Overflow water from the lake passes through the tunnel, into the 670 foot masonry-lined canal and then back to San Leandro Creek.

On the evening of September 16, 1889, a dynamite explosion killed four Chinese laborers who were digging the canal outside this tunnel.

While records of Chinese laborers are scant, their achievements were enormous. Using hand tools such as pickaxes and shovels, they cleared 333 acres of bush and timber, blasted 3,100 feet of tunnels, built more than 15 miles of roads and 18 miles of fences, and moved 600,000 cubic yards of earth.

Chinese laborers built Lake Chabot with back-breaking labor. Belatedly, we honor their significant contributions to the historic legacy of California.

The hand cut stone used for the tunnel was quarried from creeks nearby and pulled by steamboat on a barge like the one above.

Translation courtesy of Helen May-Hong Chou and Ernest Chann

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