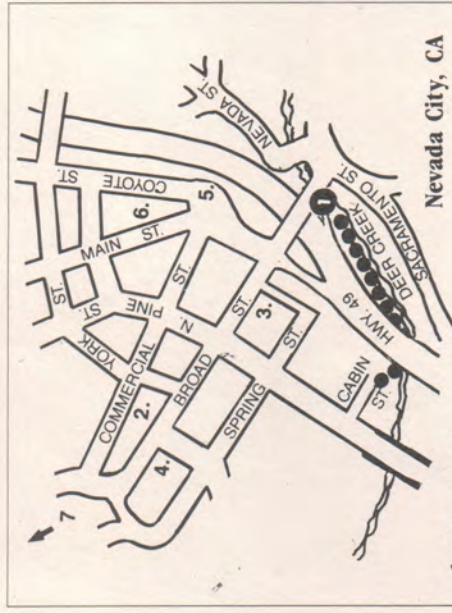


# Thank you for walking Miner's Trail.

Take this pamphlet, with its story of the earliest days of Nevada City, home with you. We hope it stimulates your interest in this most fascinating area of California. We Nevada City residents are very proud of our historic mining town, and we are glad to share it with you. The history of the Nevada City Gold Fields is a truly fascinating bit of American Heritage, and you are encouraged to delve further into its history by visiting the following places of interest in and around Nevada City.



1. Miner's Trail
2. Firehouse No. 2, Broad Street, 1861. Housed the Pennsylvania Hose Co. No. 2, one of Nevada City's early volunteer fire companies.
3. National Hotel, 211 Broad Street. Hotel in operation since 1854. Breakfast, lunch and dinner served daily. Historical items on display in the lobby.
4. Nevada Theater, 401 Broad Street, 1865. Oldest theater building in the state. Still offering both staged productions and select movies.
5. South Yuba Canal Building. Present home of the Nevada City Chamber of Commerce. Building is State Registered Landmark No. 832.
6. Firehouse No. 1, 214 Main Street, 1861. Now a museum of local and statewide historical interest.
7. Hydraulic diggings north of town.

Nevada City Rotary thanks the following sources for information presented in this pamphlet.

*Nevada County Historical Society, Historical Treasures.*  
214 Church Street, Nevada City.

*Nuggets of Nevada County History,* Juanita Kennedy Browne.  
Nevada County Historical Society, Ed Tyson, President.

Searls Museum, Ed Tyson, Curator.

*A Self-guided Tour of the Grass Valley-Nevada City Mine Sites,*  
F.D. Calhoun.

Tahoe National Forest Historian, Carmel Meisenbach

## Station 1

### The Search for Gold

Welcome to Miner's Trail — a walking introduction to the earliest days of Nevada City, and to the part that Deer Creek and Gold Run Creek played in its history. Follow the trail and imagine yourself transported back in time to Nevada City, then called Nevada — in early 1850.

You arrive with nothing more than a pick and shovel, prospector's pan, the clothes on your back, and the dream (lust?) for fabulous wealth — GOLD! You are one of thousands of men. Very few women are here and many of those are of questionable character. You are young, probably 25 years old or less, and your home town is somewhere back east. You traveled here via the Emigrant Trail, and, rather than continue on to Sacramento, you took the westernmost fork of the trail which follows present day Highway 20 to Nevada City.

## Station 2

### Nevada City Gold

The gold found in Deer Creek and the Nevada City area came from what would be later called the Northern Mines, and was not part of the Mother Lode. The Mother Lode stops near the present day Placerville. More gold was mined from the Northern Mines than from all the mines in the Mother Lode combined.

Nevada City is located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range. The canyon, or ravine, through Nevada City was formed by eons of erosion. As the Sierra Nevada Mountains developed, volcanic action formed gold-bearing quartz veins that criss-crossed the eroding canyons.

Most of the eroded material continued down-

*More gold was mined from the Northern Mines than from all the mines in the Mother Lode combined.*



Gold Miners using a cradle (left) and panning for gold (middle). The man with the shovel is a "mucker."

stream to form the fertile California Valleys. Gold also washed downstream, but, being one of the heaviest metals, it was trapped in low spots of the river beds. This free gold, in the form of nuggets and smaller particles, was found here in Deer Creek in gravel beds, or "placer" deposits. Prospectors located these deposits soon after the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill in 1848, but the wealth of the find was not realized until later in 1850.

The 49ers found this placer gold and separated it from the gravel by panning, rockers or cradles, and sluice boxes. All three methods worked on the same principle. Water flowing over gold-bearing gravel washed away the lighter rocks and dirt and left the heavier particles, such as gold, behind. Panning was the least efficient method of separating free gold from the gravel deposits. Rockers or cradles were more productive, but water had to be carried to them. Sluice boxes were the most efficient because water was diverted upstream to the sluices and thus had a constant flowing water supply.

This area of Deer Creek was lined with sluice boxes during the "Gold Rush" days. In 1850, 10,000 miners worked Deer Creek and its tributaries in and around present day Nevada City.





Sluicing at Coyote diggings  
NEVADA CITY, 1851.

## Station 4

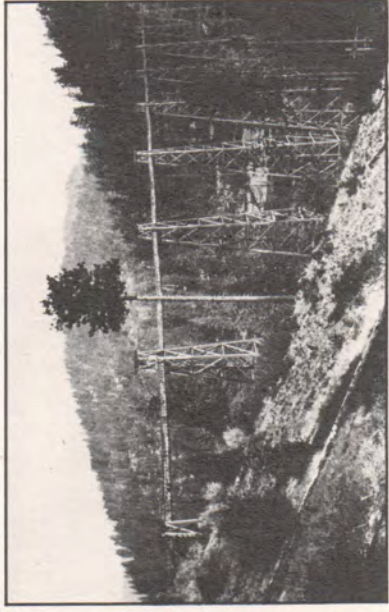
### Pay Dirt

Nevada City nestles in the canyon made by Deer Creek. The bedrock here was literally paved with gold. If you picked up a rock, under it you could be assured of finding \$10.00 in gold nuggets and dust. The rich diggings extended up the north bank of Deer Creek and under the volcanic ash and gravel hills beyond.

At first the overburden on top of the bedrock was removed by shovel, then by ground sluicing, then by hydraulic mining to obtain the gold. These gravel deposits close to bedrock were so rich that each miner was limited to one claim of 100 square feet. Even that small area produced from \$20,000 to \$30,000 and that's when gold was worth less than it is now. Someone said that all the claims, gravel piles, miners huts and the miners working feverishly looked like a bunch of coyotes digging in for the winter. This type of mining came to be called "coyoting"; and Coyote Street in Nevada City is named after this activity.

When the state built the Highway 49 freeway through Nevada City in the 1960s, Manzanita Ravine and the creek that ran through it, which was a beehive of this early mining "coyoting", was forever obliterated.

Early in the 1850s the fame of Deer Creek and its fabulous gold deposits was spread far and wide. Miners followed the creek bed and discovered the immense gravel beds just north of Nevada City. Up to 12 ounces of gold a day could be extracted from the cradles, while miners using hydraulic mining monitors, or giant nozzles, and sluice boxes could mine a quart tin pail full of gold, much of which was as coarse as wheat grains. The light colored cliffs just north of Nevada City are the results of hydraulic mining. They attest to the ingenuity of the gold seekers, and the vast destruction that hydraulic mining had on the environment. Hydraulic mining was so destructive that it was virtually outlawed by Judge Lorenzo Sawyer on January 9, 1884.



A suspension flume. The 49ers used the latest technology to bring water to their "diggins."

Many of the ditches and flumes still exist, and the transported water is now used for irrigation. Over 350 miles of these flumes and ditches are still used for water transportation in the Nevada City area. The flume you see across the creek carried water until the middle 1950s.

## Station 3

### The Need for Water

Placer gold couldn't be mined without water; lots of it! So instead of bringing the pay dirt to Deer Creek, water was brought to the pay dirt by a network of ditches, flumes and pipes. Remnants of one of these water ways can be seen across the creek just below Sacramento Street. This flume was originally made of wood, but was made of concrete in later days.



Hydraulic mining — great for gold, devastating for the environment.

## Station 5

### Nevada City Natives, the Maidu

The Nisenean Indians, a Southern Maidu tribe, made their home in this area. The Maidu were an organized, family oriented tribe with complex tribal customs. Men hunted and fished, and women (who occasionally became chiefs) provided the plant food that comprised the bulk of their diet.

The history of the relationships between the Maidu and the miners is marked with broken agreements and brutality on both sides. Eventually the miners prevailed. Many of the Maidu were moved to reservation-like compounds, called Rancherias, in the Northern Sacramento Valley. As early as 1852 the local census showed the immigrant Chinese outnumbered the native Indians 3,886 to 3,226. By 1870, only nine Indians were listed in the census.

Prior to the gold rush there were very few Chinese in California. After the news of the discovery reached China many Chinese immigrated. By late 1850 they found their way to the gold fields. They worked the placer diggings along with the other miners. Most came to seek their fortune and then return to China, but many remained. For years the Chinese maintained their own culture and customs which offered stability to their

*The history of the relationships between the Maidu and the miners is marked with broken agreements and brutality on both sides.*

lives when compared to the raucous, uncivilized existence of the other miners. The descendants of those that stayed played a leading role in the future development of the Gold Country and California.

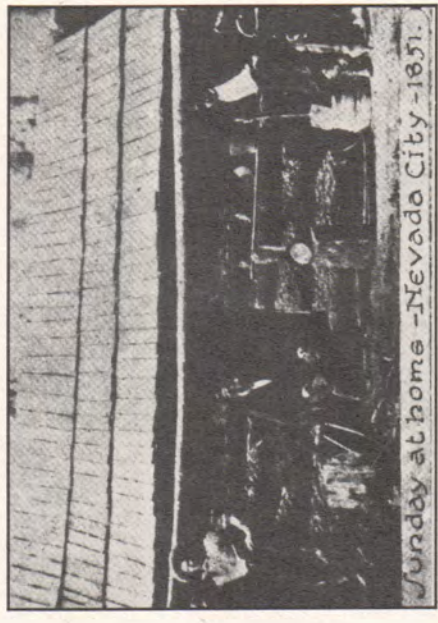
## Station 6

### Pay Dirt in Nevada City

To your right and under the center of the span of the Pine Street Bridge is where Gold Run Creek joins Deer Creek. The first cabin in Nevada City was built on the northeast bank of Gold Run Creek at Deer Creek in September 1849. It was here that the richest gold bearing area was found.

In late June, 1866, a ledge of pay dirt was discovered during the excavation for a cellar on Spring Street in back of the National Hotel. An extension of the ledge was found on the south side of the ravine. Shafts and tunnels were started on both sides of Deer Creek near the bridge. The pile of grey rocks seen on the opposite side of Deer Creek near the southern bridge abutment is the mine dump for the south shaft. The discovery of the ledge of gold bearing pay dirt caused much excitement in Nevada City because it was in the town proper. Although it appeared to be a rich find, the ledge soon "petered out," the mines were abandoned, and Nevada City returned to a normal way of life.

*Although it appeared to be a rich find, the ledge soon "petered out"...*



Sunday at home - Nevada City - 1851.