Lost Sierra Community History

Nested between the Northern tip of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and the southern terminus of the Cascades, the Lost Sierra region stood as a bastion of California's burgeoning economy. Its townships - Loyalton, Susanville, Portola, Graeagle, Quincy, Downieville, Greenville, and Chester- all contributed to the state's success in the early 1900's. These historical mining, railroad, and gold towns played a key role in shaping the destiny of California and the nation itself.

History of Loyalton

(Photo from: Sierra Nevada Geotourism)

Tucked away along Highway 49 in an eastern corner of the Sierra Valley, the largest sub-alpine valley in the American West, the town of Loyalton (pop. 769) is the only incorporated city in Sierra County. Originally named Smith's Neck when it was founded in 1854 by the Smith Company (a group of miners looking to raise cattle), the loyalty local residents felt to the Union army during the Civil War led the town to be renamed Loyalton in 1863, an effort led by the omnipresent Doctor A.G. Doom, better known as Dr. Doom, the town's storekeeper, postmaster, Justice of the Peace, physician, teacher and minister.

By 1901, when Loyalton was officially incorporated as a city, officials also stipulated the city be "dry", free of alcohol, supported by a strong religious interest of most residents. Interestingly, to keep the influence of alcohol far from town, the incorporation of Loyalton came with a 50 square mile boundary, making it the second largest city area-wise in California after Los Angeles. By

1930, the official size of Loyalton shrank considerably, down to three-quarters of one mile, a result of the lack of funding to maintain so many miles of roads. And the dry status of town also vanquished; the temptation of libation was too great.

Although Loyalton had a short history of successful silver and copper mining claims, the town was better known as a lumber and ranching community. The first significant sawmill in the area was the Lewis Mill, located 11 miles south of Loyalton on Smithneck Creek. Operating in the late 1880s, Lewis Mill hauled lumber to Truckee and Verdi, as well as supplying many Sierra Valley ranches using massive steam-powered tractors weighing 28 tons. The mill employed more than 100 people, and had 5 million board feet of lumber in its mill pond in July of 1896.

After the construction of the Boca and Loyalton Railroad in 1901, the prosperity of Loyalton, and its number of sawmills, rapidly grew, as did the number of cattle, dairy, hay and grain ranches. Although the Boca and Loyalton Railroad is long gone, the grade from Loyalton south still exists today as a 2.5-mile multi-use trail running on the west side of Smithneck Creek, a trail that SBTS helped resurrect in 2014. SBTS plans to continue following the historic route southward, eventually connecting to Truckee and Verdi through the Connected Communities project.

For those looking to do a beautiful hike, run or bike ride, start at Smithneck Creek County Park and take the Boca and Loyalton trail both up and downstream. Fall colors here are particularly stunning, as is the landscape that's recovering after a massive wildfire a couple decades ago.

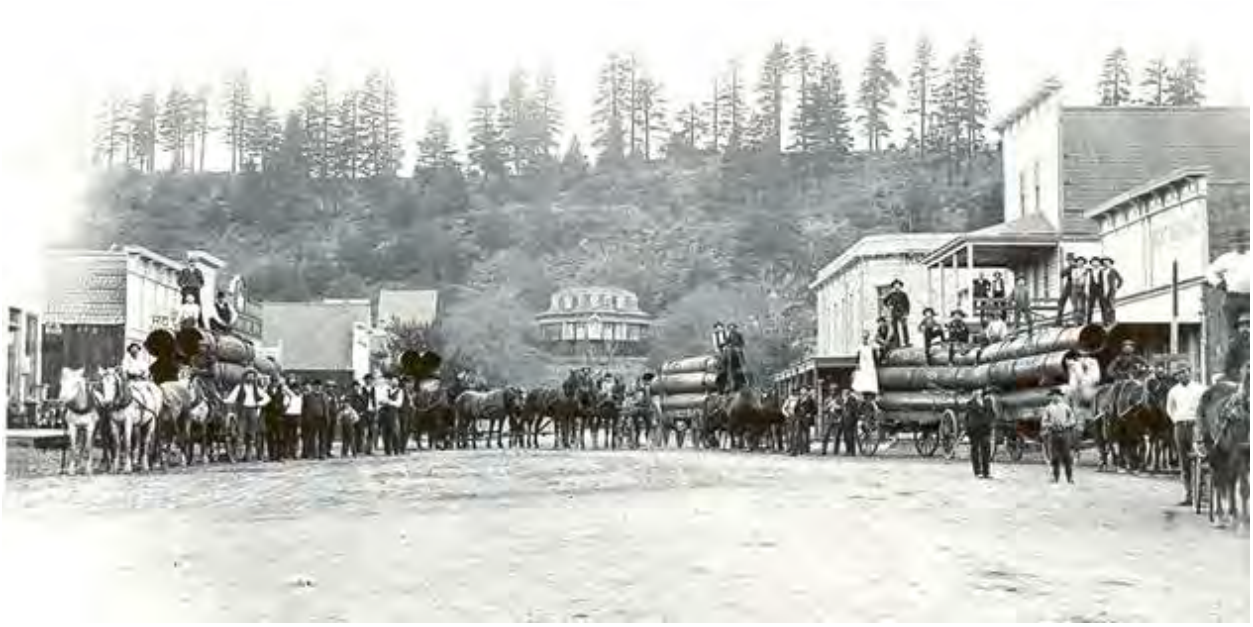
Loyalton is also known for its endearing characters. One of these characters was Hal Wright, known as the "Flying Paperboy", who published the Sierra Booster newspaper in Loyalton from 1949 until his passing at age 96 in June of 2000. Hal traveled Sierra, Nevada, Plumas and Lassen County, selling ads, meeting people and getting the scoop for his paper, doing it in his own Piper Cub airplane, dropping newspapers to readers from the sky.

And when a deadline had to be met, he met it, even if it meant skiing from a snowbound Loyalton, over Yuba Pass in a historic snowstorm (Highway 49 was closed for weeks), and down below Sierra City so he could catch a ride to the printer in Sacramento; a three-day adventure he actually accomplished in 1952 with absolutely zero skiing experience! Hal was a champion of local business and tirelessly promoted the area in order to attract a new generation of full-time Sierra County residents. Hal's legacy was shared with all of America in 1997 when CBS Sunday Morning aired a feature about his life. His daughter, Janice Buck, continues her father's legacy today with the Sierra Booster still going strong.

Today, many of the cattle ranches in the Sierra Valley near Loyalton are owned by the same families that founded them more than 150 years ago, still producing hay just as they did during the Gold Rush. And although Loyalton has suffered economic hardship swings over the years with the repeated opening and closure of sawmills, small businesses and new residents are

moving in, drawn by the beautiful, secluded and peaceful setting in the southeast corner of the Sierra Valley; a development that the Flying Paperboy would surely be proud to see.

History of Susanville



(Photo from: At a Glance, a Susanville History)

Situated at 4,186 feet elevation along the Susan River on the northeastern corner of the Sierra Nevada, the city of Susanville has a unique and colorful history, established in the aftermath of an 1863 skirmish called the Sagebrush War. Before the war, the area was known as Rooptown, named after Isaac Roop, one of thousands of emigrants who camped at the foot of the Sierra Nevada before making the final push to the coast. Rooptown was a popular stopover thanks to its lush grasses and ample water, something emigrants hadn't seen for hundreds of miles while crossing the Nevada desert.

In 1853, Isaac Roop constructed a cabin that became a trading post, and later, a fortification used during the Sagebrush War. The war was rooted in a boundary dispute about Rooptown and whether it was in Plumas County of California or Roop County in the Nevada Territory. The citizens of the area played both sides against each other, refusing to pay taxes when both territory's officials would appear to collect, claiming they were residents of the other territory.

Soon this lack of tax collection came to a head, and after legal wrangling between the two territories could not solve the problem, posses were formed and a gun battle between the two counties ensued, using Roop's cabin as a stronghold against Plumas County, which became known as Fort Defiance. After four hours of shots fired back and forth with only a few non-lethal casualties, both sides realized this dispute wasn't worth dying over. To this day, Roop's cabin stands, bullet holes and all.

As a result, the California/Nevada border was resurveyed from Lake Tahoe to the Oregon border, and the results showed Rooptown in the state of California. To appease the residents who did not want to be annexed into Plumas County, the state legislature created Lassen County in 1864, making the new town of Susanville (named after Susan Roop) the county seat, which it remains to this day.

Susanville had a long stretch of economic health thanks to strong logging, farming and mining economies. But by the 1960s, these industries waned, landing the community in economic hardship. Susanville had the California Correctional Center that opened in 1963, but it wasn't until the construction of the High Desert State Prison, California in 1995 that the population – and the jobs that came with it – started to skyrocket. The Census shows this growth, with Susanville's population expanding from 7,279 residents in 1990 to 13,541 in 2000, an 86 percent increase.

The overall economic and social health of Susanville as a “prison town” has been debated by locals for years, but one thing about Susanville is undeniable; it is rich with natural beauty and breathtaking terrain, especially in fall with vibrant changing colors on the mountains towering above town. Just as the emigrants found Rooptown an attractive stopover on their overland journey, modern day adventurers will find Susanville an ideal waypoint in the Connected Communities network of trails.

History of Portola

(Photo from:City of Portola)

The city of Portola (pop. 2,104) is situated at 4,856 feet elevation near the headwaters of the Feather River, a federally recognized Wild and Scenic River, with Smith Peak to the north and Beckwourth Peak to the south. Named after Gaspar de Portola, the first Governor of California,

Portola has much more in common with logging and railroads than it does the Spanish colonial province of the 18th Century.

In the 1850's, the local legend fur trapper and explorer James Beckwourth was considered the first non-native to settle in the area, with a unique mixed heritage of American Indian and African American. A self-described "mountain man", Beckwourth scouted the lowest elevation pass across the Sierra Nevada, with today's California Highway 70 running through the heart of Portola, marking the route Beckwourth established. Beckwourth's cabin was an outpost and stage stop for prospectors in the Gold Rush and still stands today along the Feather River a few miles east of Portola.

It wasn't until the late 1800s that the yet-to-be-named Portola emerged as a community, thanks to the need for lumber in nearby Reno, Nevada. The abundance of lumber mills in the area gave rise to the railroad, and by 1910, the Boca and Loyalton, the Nevada, California and Oregon and the Western Pacific all linked their rail lines into Portola. The town's name was thought up by the daughter of a Western Pacific engineer, and became official in 1910.

But if it weren't for the surveying and engineering wisdom of Arthur Keddie, Portola may not have become the railroad hub it is today. Keddie was responsible for engineering the Feather River Route for the Western Pacific, a narrow and treacherous run through the Feather River Canyon from Oroville to Quincy, making the Western Pacific part of the trans-continental railway, with Portola as a crucial stop.

Although Keddie scouted the route in the 1860s, following the footsteps of Beckwourth, it wasn't until 1909 that the line was completed. The Feather River Route marked a significant engineering achievement, as it was an alternative to the Donner Pass route, and ran a gentler grade as well as being 2,000 feet lower in elevation than Donner Pass.

The Western Pacific Railroad Museum in Portola, located inside a former locomotive facility, documents this rich railroad history, featuring more than 30 locomotives, and a couple dozen passenger cars and cabooses.

Aside from its railroad history, Portola is rich in natural beauty. The volcanic spires of Beckwourth Peak tower over the town to the south, while less than 10 miles to the north, Lake Davis boasts world class fishing, along with hundreds of miles of scenic dirt roads connecting to even more remote lakes and streams.

The Lost and Found Gravel Grinder cycling event has attracted thousands of cycling enthusiasts from across the country to the endless dirt roads around nearby Lake Davis, and is quickly becoming a destination for riders looking to do long miles or adventurous multi-day bikepacking rides. And of course, Lake Davis is a world-class fishing destination, well known with boaters and anglers.

SBTS will be breaking ground in 2021 on the Beckwourth Peak trail, a new 20-mile singletrack loop around the peak starting and finishing in Portola. The Beckwourth Peak trail will offer commanding views of the Sierra Valley while serving as a Connected Communities route to link the neighboring Gold Mountain/Nakoma community via singletrack.

History of Graeagle

(Photo from: Sierratrails.org)

Sitting in the shadows of Mount Elwell and the Lakes Basin, along the middle fork of the Feather River at 4,373 feet elevation, the town of Graeagle (pop. 596) has a rich and colorful history. The community was originally known as Davies' Mill, named after Arthur Davies who purchased a vast 13,000 acre timber tract in 1916 from Sierra Iron Company, spanning from Blairsden to Calpine.

After the land acquisition, Davies built a sawmill and an entire town to house employees. But instead of constructing new buildings, Davies utilized existing structures from other mills he owned in the region. Most of the small red houses seen today in downtown Graeagle were actually transported from Davies' other mill outpost in the Sardine Valley, just north of Stampede Reservoir. The homes were sawn in half, then placed on the Boca-Loyalton Railroad to Beckwourth, then on the Nevada-California-Oregon Railway to Clio, where they were dragged to

their current location in Graeagle.

In 1918, California Fruit Exchange (CFE) purchased the outpost from Davies, using the lumber facilities to manufacture fruit boxes. CFE wanted to change the name of the town, so they held a naming contest. The winning submission was a simple compounding of the word Gray Eagle (from nearby Gray Eagle Creek) and removing the Y, resulting in Graeagle. Locals pronounce it like it's spelled, sounding more like “graygle” than “gray eagle”.

With a new name, Graeagle was built out by CFE with many new buildings to support the manufacturing business and accommodate more employees. By the 1930s, Graeagle was thriving with a hardware store, butcher shop, slaughterhouse, dairy, restaurant, schoolhouse, filling station and a dance hall. In 2018 the Graeagle Store celebrated its 100th anniversary, still a fixture of the town for both locals and visitors.

There was much for community members to do in town, including monthly dances, orchestral performances, silent movies, baseball games and even twice monthly boxing prizefights at a lighted outdoor arena accommodating 800 spectators. Another highlight was the annual September arrival of a trainload full of grapes to Graeagle from CFE's farms, stomping them down into wine. But by the 1950s, the combination of dwindling lumber availability and cardboard replacing wooden boxes for fruit transportation forced CFE to shut down the Graeagle Lumber Mill. Within weeks the mill's infrastructure was auctioned off and the town was virtually deserted.

In 1958, Harvey West, Sr., a Placerville-based timber operator purchased the entire town of Graeagle from CFE, consisting of 42 buildings plus 13,482 acres of timberland, farm and meadowland and both water and power plant rights. West had a plan to develop the town into a quaint, rural community, and thanks to the rapid expansion of highways in the 1960s, Graeagle was no longer as isolated as it used to be, becoming hardly more than an hour's drive from Reno.

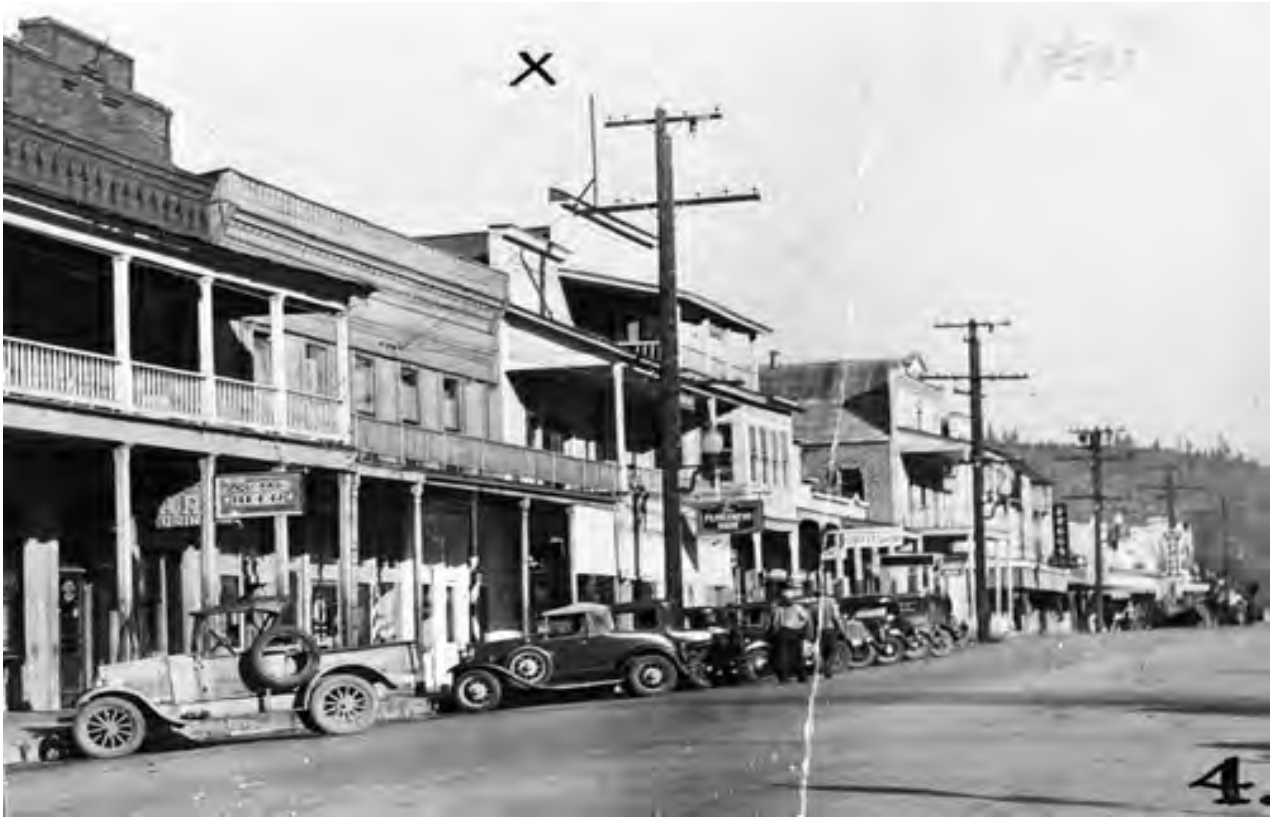
The West family subdivided the timberland near town for residential homes, as well as constructing the 18-hole Graeagle Meadows Golf Course, completed in 1970. Since the 1960s, Graeagle has become a generational escape for families who love the outdoors. With unparalleled access to the beautiful and rugged Lakes Basin region, featuring two dozen alpine lakes carved by glaciers, both residents and visitors to Graeagle can experience some of the best fishing, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, backcountry skiing and snowmobiling in California.

The West family continues to keep the classic rural charm of this frontier community much like it was generations ago, while supporting local businesses and the growing popularity of a recreation-based economy. Mountain biking has seen noticeable recent growth in Graeagle, thanks in part to the nine-mile long Mills Peak Trail, completed by SBTS in 2018 after an 11 year partnership with the Plumas National Forest and a number local volunteers and supporters. And

with the upcoming construction of Beckwourth Peak trail and the ongoing planning of the Mohawk Rim trail, Graeagle will be connected via singletrack to nearby communities of Portola and Calpine.

For a more comprehensive history on Graeagle, visit the Graeagle Associates history page, written by the West family.

History of Quincy



(Photo from: Calisphere)

Located halfway between Oroville and Reno on the Feather River National Scenic Byway, Quincy and its surrounding neighborhoods total nearly 5,000 residents, the largest community in Plumas County. Situated in the lush and expansive American Valley at 3,432 feet elevation, Quincy is known for its rolling green ranchlands buttressed by towering peaks, beautifully preserved historic buildings and a vibrant downtown area.

Before settlement by white pioneers in the early 1850s, the American Valley was home to the Mountain Maidu tribe, as the valley provided ample sun, water, good soil and habitable weather for year-round living. The Mountain Maidu escaped summer heat up into the mountains above Quincy, including the Buck's Lake area, prime hunting grounds for the tribe.

Originally affiliated with Elizabethtown, a Gold Rush mining camp, Quincy came to be in 1858 after settler Hugh J. Bradley donated land and laid out the town, naming it after his Illinois farm (allegedly named after the sixth U.S. President, John Quincy Adams). Soon after the town was established, hordes of miners surrounded the American Valley, hunting up countless streams and tributaries of the North and Middle Fork of the Feather River, finding extensive pockets of auriferous gravel.

The completion of the Western Pacific Railroad in 1910 saw the rise of lumber in Quincy, as well as the town's growing community of African American loggers who moved to Quincy, leaving the deeply segregated south and its dying logging camps. By 1940, 40 percent of Quincy's population was African American. Even more remarkable was the rapid desegregation in Quincy; schools were fully integrated in the 1940s, and in the Spring of 1954, Quincy High School had its first African American student body president. Although there were still challenges, Quincy's African American citizens experienced integration far earlier than the rest of the United States.

In the early 1990s Quincy made national news, having a significant impact on federal land management policy with the formation and success of the Quincy Library Group. Fed up with watching the area's once healthy forests become overgrown, then county Supervisor Bill Coates approached environmental attorney Michael Jackson, and met with Tom Nelson, a forester with Sierra Pacific Industries, California's largest private landowner and the primary employer of the town at its Quincy sawmill.

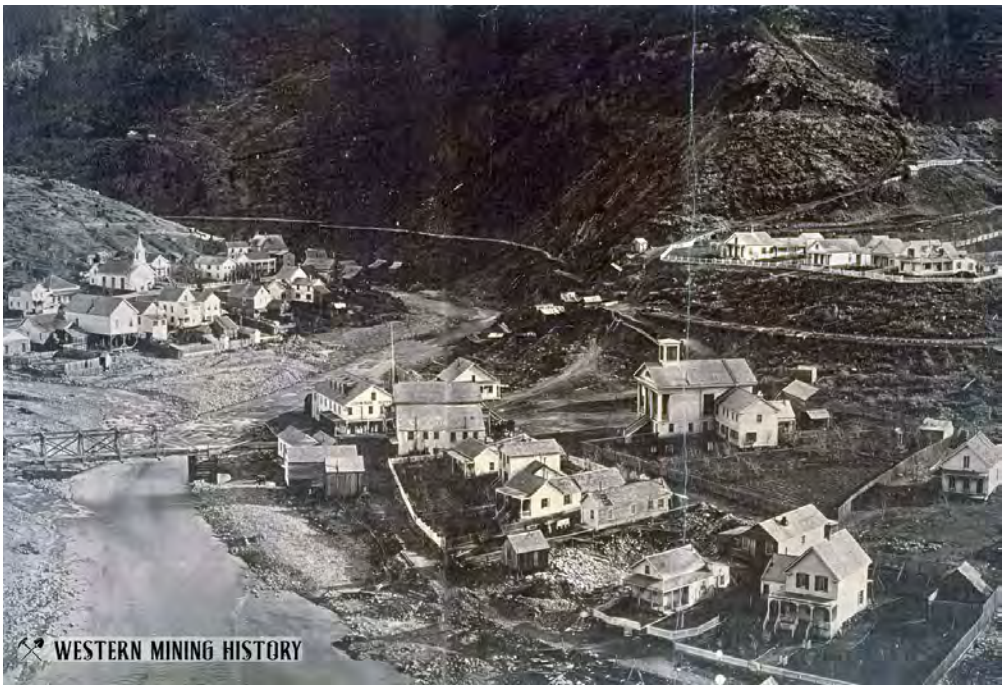
This potent threesome of local representation, private enterprise and environmental watchdog brought focused goals of repairing the area's forests, including a more stable economy, job preservation, funding local public resources, reducing fire threat and protecting the environment. Early in the group's existence, there were heated discussions, prompting the group to find a neutral meeting place. Legend goes the group chose the Quincy library because it was the only place they couldn't yell at each other. The name stuck.

The Quincy Library Group Forest Recovery and Economic Stability Act of 1997 was one of the most important pieces of environmental legislation ever created, not only because it passed almost unanimously in the House of Representatives – 429 to one – but also because it balanced environmental concerns with the preservation of local forestry and logging jobs. After the overwhelming majority vote, Supervisor Bill Coates was quoted as saying, "You couldn't get a deal like that voting for the American flag."

Quincy is home to the Plumas County Museum, offering an extensive and interactive history of not only the town, but the entire region. Located in the historic Variel Home built in 1878, the building was renovated over the course of seven years and dedicated to the Plumas County Museum Association, Inc. in 1996. A visit to the museum during operating hours is highly recommended, as their collection of artifacts, exhibits, photography and literature is extensive,

and tells a fascinating story of Plumas County. More information can be found at plumasmuseum.org.

History of Downieville



(Photo from: Western Mining History)

The history of Downieville runs as rich as the auriferous gravels found in the countless emerald blue-green pools of the North Yuba River. Gravels that changed the course of human history, giving birth to the overnight millionaire and get-rich-quick schemes that dominate modern society. Boasting barely 200 year round residents, sitting at just under 3,000 feet elevation along the confluence of the Downie River and North Yuba River, Downieville was originally known as “The Forks”.

Settled by William Downie and a group of prospectors in 1849 with the help of a Kanaka guide named Jim Crow, The Forks was renamed to Downieville after Downie and his crew constructed a cabin along the Downie River in November 1849 to withstand winter. Their findings along the North Yuba were so rich that word got out quickly. By the summer of 1850, nearly 5,000 prospectors were scattered everywhere above Downieville, with the town boasting more than a dozen hotels and gambling houses. Although rumors of Downieville narrowly losing to Sacramento in 1853 as California's first state capital are inaccurate, Downieville was still one of only a half-dozen towns considered for being the capital thanks to its wealth and population at the time.

There's no shortage of stories about Downieville that have become stuff of legend, but perhaps the most notorious was the 1850 hanging of Josefa, a Mexican woman accused of murdering a

miner named Thomas Cannon. Even historians are conflicted around the exact details of how the hanging played out, but what can be agreed on is that an angry mob of miners wanted to incite the “miner's law”, and without a trial, Josefa was the first – and only – woman to be hanged in California. Just before her death, Josefa made it clear that she was unapologetic about the act, saying it was in self-defense and would do it again if provoked.

Then there were the tales of gold. Tin Cup Diggins was a popular spot in the early days, where it was alleged that prospectors could fill a tin cup full of gold in one day's work. In nearby Slate Castle Ravine, there was the legendary tale of discovering one of the biggest gold nuggets in human history, weighing in at almost 230 pounds. But the nugget never saw the light of day before the four prospectors who found it, fearing they would be murdered if they took it into town, split it in four even pieces and disappeared, never to be seen again until the story surfaced 25 years later.

Downieville is one of the most well preserved frontier towns in all of California's Gold Country. Although the high times of mining and timber that kept the town thriving are long gone, the magic that remains is in the trails originally cut in the quest for gold. Outdoor recreation, particularly mountain biking, has helped save Downieville from extinction. Downieville has become internationally famous with mountain bikers, and it is also the 2003 birthplace of the Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship.

History of Greenville

(Photo from: Indian Valley Chamber of Commerce)

Strolling down the quaint main street of Greenville is like walking back in time. You won't see chain stores, or chain restaurants, or chain anything for that matter; most of the businesses in Greenville are locally owned. There are few towns left in California with the personality of

Greenville. Aside from the well kept storefronts and unique building architecture ranging from the 1860s to the 1940s, Greenville's rural setting alongside the Union Pacific railroad is what makes this town of 1100 residents so endearing. Located in the northwest corner of the Indian Valley along California Highway 89, surrounded by towering timbered peaks on the northernmost fringe of the Sierra Nevada Range, Greenville is only nine miles from Lake Almanor and the start of the southern Cascade Range, home to Lassen National Park.

The story of Greenville started before the town existed, in a neighboring settlement to the south called Round Valley. Founded after discovering a rich gold placer field in 1860, Round Valley quickly became home to 400 miners, with four saloons, a hotel, two sawmills, a post office, school and a Wells Fargo. A dam was constructed in 1864 that is still standing today where Round Valley used to be, on the shores of Round Valley Reservoir. But the rough road up to Round Valley from Indian Valley was difficult for wagon travel, and people began staking land near the base of the road nearly 1,000 vertical feet below, which is now known as Greenville.

By 1864, Greenville was replacing much of Round Valley's population, and as the mines in Round Valley began to play out, so did the life of the town. By 1870, nobody was left in Round Valley. As Round Valley became a ghost town, Greenville expanded rapidly. Greenville was named after John Winthrop Green and his wife, proprietors of Green's Hotel. Mrs. Green served hot meals and accommodations from their cabin in the quickly growing town. Although the cabin wasn't much of a hotel, Green's Hotel was so popular that the town adopted the family's name and became Greenville.

By the late 1870s the town's population doubled, and by the early 1880s Greenville boasted 500 residents; the second largest community in Plumas County. However, Greenville was not without its struggles, suffering a fire in 1881 that claimed most of the buildings on the north side of Main Street.

Despite numerous fires over the years, Greenville still features many buildings from the 1860s, as well as many built in the early 1900s into the 1930s. It's this architectural diversity and well kept nature of the buildings in Greenville along Highway 89 that compel first time passers by to pull over and go for a walk.

Like many other Sierra Nevada frontier towns, as mining played out, logging and ranching grew as replacement industries. The community thrived in the early to mid 1900's on logging and ranching, and to this day there are still ranches in the Indian Valley, some of which are generational dating back more than 100 years.

Logging was particularly prominent in Greenville, especially during World War II, when the appetite for lumber was insatiable. The influx of new residents to California in the 1950s escalated the demand. As a result, lumber and sawmills in Greenville operated around the clock, causing skies choked with smoke from the burning of scrap lumber.

However, the economic future of places like Greenville depend greatly on tourism and recreation. Fortunately for local residents, Greenville and the Indian Valley area have no shortage of remote mountain beauty to share with visitors, and as a bonus, very few crowds.

History of Chester

(Photo from: Sierratrails.org)

Built on top of volcanic rock deposits from nearby Mount Lassen and situated on the northwest shore of Lake Almanor at 4,500 feet elevation, the town of Chester has attracted more than a century of tourism and recreation, as well as being home to a premier sustainable lumber operation. Chester received its name from Burwell Johnson and Oscar Martin in 1894. Johnson was raised near Chester, Illinois, and Martin hailed from Chester, Vermont, so the name came naturally.

After two giant volcanic eruptions of Mount Lassen in 1914 and 1915, Lassen National Park was established in 1916, attracting tourists and travelers to Chester. Through the Prohibition era, Chester gained a reputation for bootlegging and gambling, with loggers and cowboys often clashing with fists at the Bear Club, among other vices, earning it the nickname “Little Reno”.

The opening of Collins Pine Company in 1943 stabilized both the population and reputation of Chester to this very day. The family-owned Collins Pine Company had many logging operations around the country, but the 67,000 acres it owned near Chester would become one of the first experiments in sustainable forestry, diametrically opposed to the traditional “cut and run” practices of competitors. The company's operations are also entirely powered by burning leftover sawdust and wood chips, creating steam power that runs an electric generator. This sustainable approach has helped Chester produce a steady, long-term supply of lumber while preserving habitat and providing a stable community that endures in the 21st Century.

Nearby Lake Almanor was originally known as Big Meadows, inhabited by the Northern Maidu tribe. But the arrival of the Gold Rush pushed the Maidu out, with settlers using the lush, green pastures of Big Meadows for grazing cattle, supplying the numerous nearby mining camps. Dr. Willard Pratt pioneered resort tourism in the area, building a hotel at Prattville in 1867. Thousands of tourists flocked to the region for world class fishing and boating opportunities.

Hydro power soon changed the face of Big Meadows, and by 1890 the Great Western Power Company built the Big Meadows Dam, capturing water from the North Fork of the Feather River, submerging the frontier outpost of Prattville by 1914 when the new Lake Almanor reservoir was filled. After two dam expansions, today's Canyon Dam is 130 feet tall, making Lake Almanor 13 miles long by 6 miles wide, considered one of the biggest lakes in California.

The name Almanor comes from the daughters – **Al**ice, **Mar**tha and Ela**nor** – of Guy C. Earl, vice president of Great Western Power. Today the lake is owned by Pacific Gas and Electric and is used for hydroelectricity production. Lake Almanor is also very popular for boating, swimming, fishing and personal watercraft.

History of Sierraville

Fourth of July Celebration in Sierraville in 1902.
Courtesy: Jim Turner and Mrs. Margaret E. Lambert.

(Photo from: Sierratrails.org)

Once home to the only traffic signal in all of Sierra County (a flashing red light), the ranching community of Sierraville counts more heads of livestock than it does human residents, which numbers about 200. Situated at the intersection of California State Highway 49 and 89, Sierraville is located in the south central corner of the Sierra Valley at 5,000 feet above sea level; one of the largest sub-alpine meadows in North America and an ancient lakebed the size of Lake Tahoe that existed during the Ice Age.

Today, the Sierra Valley is the headwaters of the Feather River, a Wild and Scenic River, with its dozens of marshes and springs draining into the waterway towards Portola. The biodiversity of the Sierra Valley makes it famous for attracting a wide range of migratory species of birds.

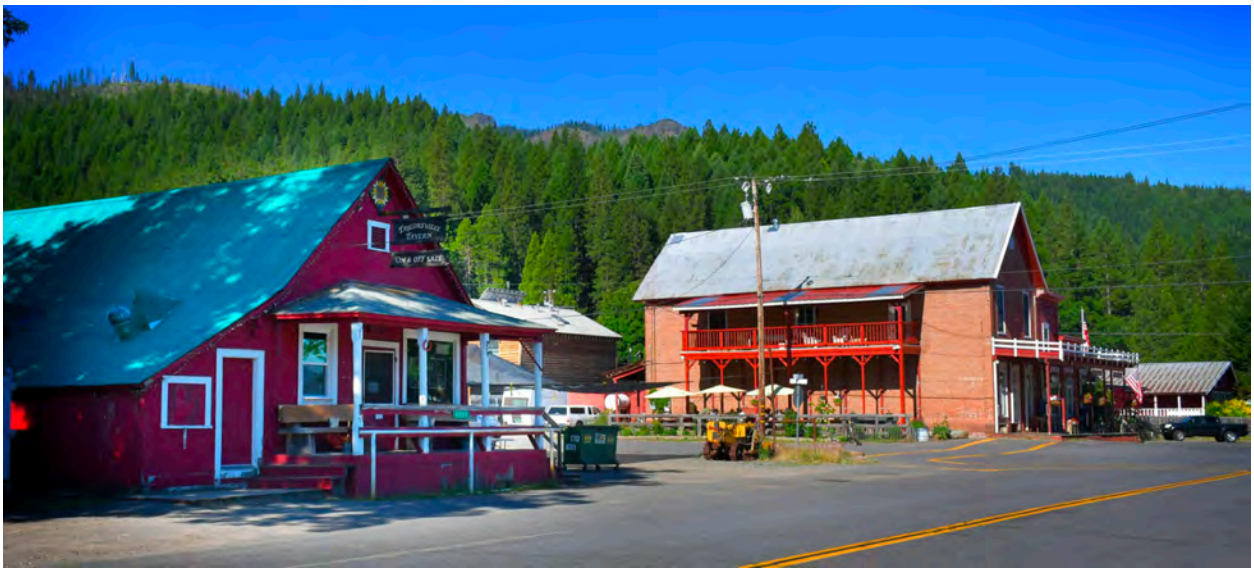
About a year before Sierraville was first named in 1854, the settlement of Randolph was established a mile south of Sierraville. As the community grew, the two settlements spanned the mile distance, and the name Randolph was dropped in favor of Sierraville, although residents of south Sierraville still keep the Randolph name alive to represent their corner of town.

William Arms was the early developer of Sierraville, owning a majority of the land in the settlement, constructing a general store, hotel, blacksmith shop and a public hall. Arms also established the first post office and became Sierraville's first Postmaster in the late 1860s. Arms' ranches grew large amounts of hay and grain to supply the mining camps of Virginia City and Carson City. Arms also had interests in lumber and made a handsome business supplying the aforementioned Nevada mining towns with Sierra Valley timber. There were many other family-owned ranches in Sierraville during the Gold Rush era, many of which are still owned by the same families to this day.

Sierraville was an early pioneer of recreation as a resort destination thanks to Campbell's Hot Springs just to the southeast of town, known today as Sierra Hot Springs. As one of the first established resorts in the region, the sulphur springs were discovered by settlers and developed by Corel Howk in the 1850s, and ever since then have been a therapeutic attraction for sore bodies, hangovers and rheumatism. A former Sierra County Sheriff, Jack Campbell, bought the 160-acre hot springs ranch in 1874 and developed it into a spa and retreat for travelers of Northern California, which it remains to this day. Matters didn't end well for Campbell, as he was gunned down in September 1882 while relaxing on the porch of the nearby Randolph hotel, a victim at the hands of shooter J.J. Stubbs, who ended up serving 18 years in San Quentin for murder.

The resort almost succumbed to the Cold Creek wildfire in 1959, but was saved thanks to a hot shot fire crew flown in from Arizona. For a few days during the Fourth of July weekend, the historical resort was in jeopardy of being a total loss. Legend has it that when the resort hotel building was threatened, the owners took their entire beer and liquor inventory of considerable value and threw it all in the bottom of a six-foot deep swimming pool to save it. The sweaty and parched firefighters quickly discovered the submerged cache, so they went for a cool dip in the pool, emerging with bottle after bottle of booze, passed from man to man all the way to the fire line. By the time the blaze was extinguished, more liquid had passed down the firefighters' gullets than water on the actual fire; a small price to pay for saving this historic resort.

History of Taylorsville



(Photo from: Sierratrails.org)

The first stop in a six-month Connected Communities public outreach tour is the quaint little town of Taylorsville, tucked into the corner of Indian Valley in the shadow of mighty Mount Hough. Located at the northernmost point of the Sierra Nevada range, Taylorsville straddles the geologic border between where the Sierra Nevada ends and the Cascade Range begins, making for some spectacular mountain vistas and unique geologic features.

Ranches and old barns line the area surrounding Taylorsville, enhancing its serene, bucolic setting. The road through Taylorsville sees more bicyclists than it does cars, and residents enjoy a peaceful and quaint existence in this fertile sub-alpine meadow that comes alive in the fall with brilliant colors reminiscent of northern New England.

With a population of only 140 residents, Taylorsville has more full-time bovine residents than it does humans, but it didn't used to be this way. Frontiersman Peter Lassen first came across the Indian Valley in 1850 in search of the elusive and mythical "Gold Lake". Building the first non-native structure in 1851, Lassen established an outpost supplying travelers with goods on their own quest to find Gold Lake and the alleged auriferous riches it held. Although trading posts like Lassen's operated all summer, most white settlers left the valley in winter. One settler named Jobe Taylor claimed the now named Taylorsville, building the first permanent residence in the valley at Taylor's Ranch, becoming a hotel and eventually a full-time community.

While Lassen sold his land holdings and moved on, Taylor remained and expanded, constructing a barn, a store, a saw mill, a grist mill, a blacksmith shop and a butcher shop. Because Taylor gave some of his land to anyone willing to start a business in the area, by the early 1880s Taylorsville was the third largest community in Plumas County. Unlike most other frontier communities, the people of Taylorsville, guided by Taylor himself, sought to understand and co-exist with the native population, which was the case for decades after Taylorsville was established.

Before white settlers, thousands of Northern Maidu Indian tribe called the now-named Indian Valley home. Thanks to ideal hunting grounds, an abundance of oak trees supplying acorns, ample water and a temperate climate at 3,500 feet above sea level, the Northern Maidu lived well. But by the early 1900s, the Northern Maidu population dwindled from the thousands to only a couple hundred. Much like the rest of the American West, the lure of minerals, timber and agriculture by Europeans had overrun the native population.

In addition to agriculture, mining was an early economic staple of Taylorsville, with two gold mines located nearby. By the early 1900s, mining ran dry and the town dwindled, with most businesses shutting down. In 1926 a fire destroyed most remaining businesses and 35 residences. Taylorsville was rebuilt in 1927, but with only one saloon, a hotel, grocery store, meat market and gas station, which is about what still exists in Taylorsville today.

Aside from Jobe Taylor, in the 1860s another name rose to prominence in Taylorsville that still has presence today. The Young family has been a cornerstone of the Taylorsville community, with five members of the family serving as Postmaster between 1876 and 1924. Young's Market, originally opened by William George Young in 1862, is one of the few businesses currently operating in Taylorsville, although the market is now owned by Kelly Tan and family.

Young's Market is rich with history, and is home to the oldest operating cash register in the nation; 105 years young. National Register Company made the two-foot wide by two-foot deep by three-foot tall register specifically for Young's Market back in 1915. It's made from wood and decorative brass, featuring a mechanical hand crank, pushbuttons, bells and two cash drawers. The register is an icon of Taylorsville, and draws customers from all over the region to experience a piece of history still working hard every day.

History of Westwood

(Photo from: Sierratrails.org)

Laying atop lava fields erupted from Mount Lassen between Lake Almanor and Susanville, the town of Westwood is one of the southernmost Lassen County communities in the Cascade Mountain Range with legendary logging lineage, home to one of the greatest character duos in American folklore. Sitting at 5,128 feet elevation, Westwood recorded 1,647 residents in 2010, a drop of more than 300 since recording 1,998 in the year 2000.

Like many other Lost Sierra communities, Westwood has struggled with loss of population due to lack of industry, but it didn't used to be this way. Blessed with abundant forests of massive sugar pine trees, Westwood was founded in 1913 and built into a company town by the Red River Lumber Company of Minnesota, thanks in part to the Fernley and Lassen Railway constructed at the same time.

In order to attract and retain employees, Red River Lumber Company developed Westwood into a fully functioning town including a school, hospital, church, bakery, hardware store, an opera house and The Westwood Club, featuring a restaurant along with barbershop, billiards room and a newsstand. There was even The Big Store, built in 1913, a predecessor to the modern shopping

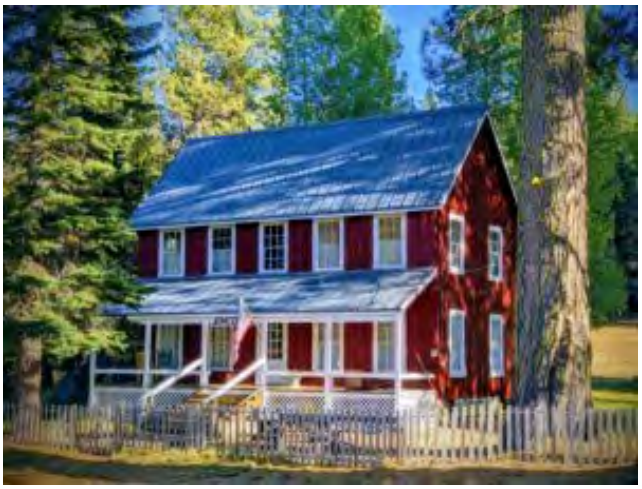
mall. The Big Store had 18 departments and was a block long by a block wide, supplying everything residents needed.

Red River Lumber Company was innovative, boasting the world's largest electrical sawmill of its time, as well as developing one of the first electric railways in California in 1927. The company also built more than two dozen bunk houses steam heated in the winter from mill operations. By the 1930s, Red River Lumber Company was the largest pine lumber mill in the world, occupying more than 100 acres and employing more than 5,000 people. Red River Lumber Company was sold in 1944 to Fruit Growers Supply Company, and by 1956 the mill closed.

But Westwood's most enduring claim to fame was the legend of Paul Bunyan and his blue ox, Babe. Created by William Laughead, an ad man for the Red River Lumber Company, Paul Bunyan and Babe were the subjects of short stories Laughead wrote to promote the lumber camp's operations. Designed to be bigger than life, the legend goes that Paul and Babe could clear 640 acres of pine trees in one day's work. And once Laughead brought the iconic characters to life through animation, companies like Disney and Warner Brothers immortalized Paul and Babe in American folklore with cartoons.

To celebrate this piece of Americana, for more than 30 years, the Paul Bunyan Mountain and Blues Festival in Westwood combines music with rich logging history and lumberjack competitions including standing block chopping, singlebuck saw race, chainsaw race, axe throwing and a choker race. Folks visiting Westwood today can see the bigger-than-life statues of Paul and Babe on display in the center of town, a lasting tribute to the legend of this quaint frontier town.

History of Jonesville



(Photo from: Sierratrails.org)

Hidden in the northern Sierra Nevada between Chico and Lake Almanor at 5100 feet elevation beneath Humboldt Summit, the hamlet of Jonesville has a rich and colorful history, although it has no full-time residents. Originally established as a way station on the historic Humboldt Road – a toll road built by General John Bidwell from Chico to the silver mines of Nevada and Idaho – Jonesville was one of 14 way stations along the toll road that met an early demise once the Central Pacific Railroad was completed in 1867. Of all the 14 way stations along the Humboldt Road, only the historic Jonesville Hotel remains standing today, a beautiful two-story structure recently raised and reset on a concrete foundation after an extensive restoration by the Jonesville Cabin Owners, Inc. Although Jonesville was established as a stopover, its high elevation setting on the edge of a lush meadow along Jones Creek made it an attractive summertime getaway for Chico residents.

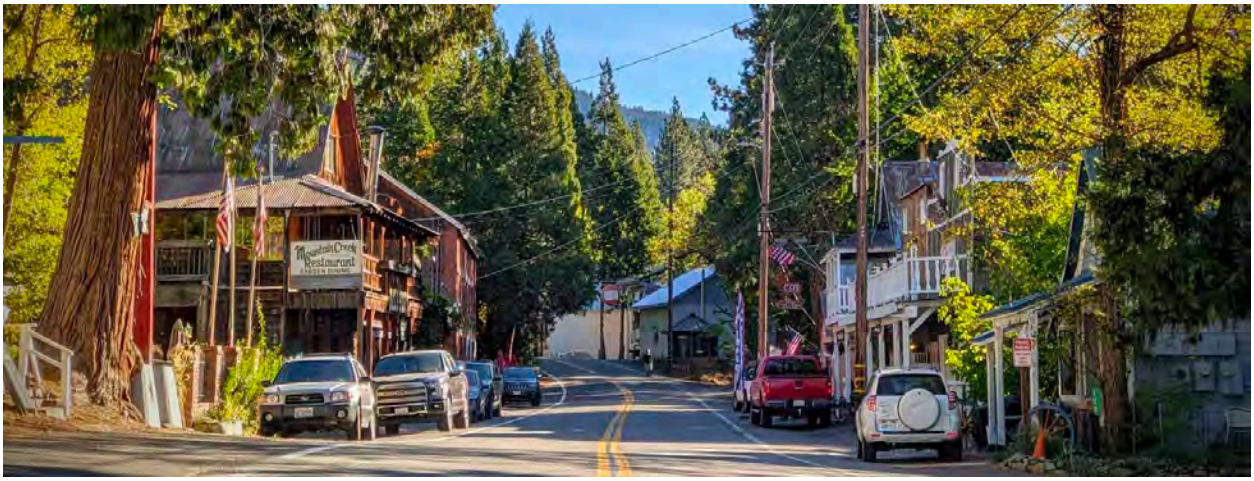
When the mercury rose north of 100 degrees, Chicoans took to their horses and made the short 40-mile trek northwest out of the blazing hot valley, escaping for cooler, crisp mountain air, running water and towering pines. In 1870, the town's namesake, George F. Jones, built a cabin on the hillside behind the hotel. Other families followed suit, and soon Jonesville became a popular getaway of cabins on unclaimed land. In 1884, Jacob Franklin Sims homesteaded 160 acres of Jonesville, and for more than 100 years, a majority of the land in Jonesville was owned by a small number of families that leased plots to cabin owners.

Generations of families spent summers vacationing and living in Jonesville, enjoying the numerous creeks with ample fishing, the expansive lands with excellent hunting and a spring-fed water system constructed in the 1930s that helped sustain the community. When the snow started falling, the town was boarded up for winter and owners headed back to lower elevations; a tradition that continues to this day.

It wasn't until the early 1990s that an organization was established for cabin owners to actually purchase and own their lots, along with maintaining the historic Jonesville Hotel. In 1993, a group of 47 cabin owners who leased land from a small group of landowners created the Jonesville Cabin Owners, Inc. and purchased the land, issuing stock to each individual cabin owner. After several years and hundreds of thousands of dollars, JCO completed a much needed restoration on the Jonesville Hotel, setting it on a new concrete foundation with new plumbing and electrical work. Today the hotel is used by JCO members for events and family reunions. It's an iconic hallmark of Jonesville's heritage, as well as an invaluable piece of California history.

To document Jonesville's own history, in 1998 the Butte Meadows-Jonesville Community Association History Committed published *A Small Corner of the West*. The book documents not only the history of Jonesville, but also Butte Meadows and Chico Meadows. It is a highly recommended read for anyone interested in learning more details of this region's history. Since the late 1860s, Jonesville has been a recreational escape for generations of families. Its idyllic setting and fascinating history gives Jonesville unique charm that will surely draw more trail users and visitors. As the Connected Communities project progresses, Jonesville will eventually be linked via singletrack with 14 other communities of the northern Sierra Nevada, expanding trail access to a remote and little-known corner of Butte County.

History of Sierra City



(Photo from: Sierratrails.org)

Set at 4,147 feet elevation along the North Yuba River in the shadows of the Sierra Buttes towering high above at 8,587 feet elevation, Sierra City is a beautifully preserved Gold Rush-era town with breathtaking mountain vistas reminiscent of the Swiss Alps. Founded in 1850, the original town of Sierra City was located higher up the south face of the Sierra Buttes than its current location along Highway 49. An avalanche in the winter of 1852-53 decimated the town, forcing the residents to rebuild further down the mountain.

After its reconstruction, Sierra City became a company town, with the British-based Sierra Buttes Company running the highly productive Sierra Buttes Mine, one of the biggest and best-managed quartz mines in the state. The mine ran for more than 80 years, employing an average of 250 miners, most of whom lived in Sierra City. The Sierra Buttes Mine was a massive gold operation on the south face of the Sierra Buttes. The mine featured nine tunnels ranging from 700 to 5,000 feet in length and as deep as 1,700 feet below the surface. The mine had two massive stamp mills, one with 50 stamps, another with 60 stamps, both water powered to smash thousands of tons of quartz. One of the largest gold nuggets ever discovered in California was found at the Monumental Mine above Sierra City, weighing 106 pounds, a piece of gold the size of a football.

One mile east of Sierra City on Highway 49, the Kentucky Mine Museum keeps Sierra City's rich mining history alive with engaging exhibits and a 70-foot tall mill building housing the only remaining operational stamp mill in California, complete with a working Pelton wheel.

At its peak, Sierra City had nearly 3,000 people living in its vicinity. Today, Sierra City has 220 residents, and virtually all of the town's economy is rooted in recreation, particularly from visitors camping in the Lakes Basin region and through-hikers on the Pacific Crest Trail, a 2,600-mile hiking trail running from Canada to Mexico, passing a mile east of town.

Sierra City is also known as the starting line of the legendary Downieville Classic cross-country mountain bike race, where riders climb seven miles up the brutally steep jeep road from Sierra City to Packer Saddle, a 3,000 vertical foot ascent, before plunging 15 miles downhill to finish in Downieville. In addition to the remarkable views of the Sierra Buttes, the well preserved Gold Rush-era buildings and rich history, the people of Sierra City are friendly and welcoming, making this tiny historic town a must-stop visit for anyone passing through the Lost Sierra.

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