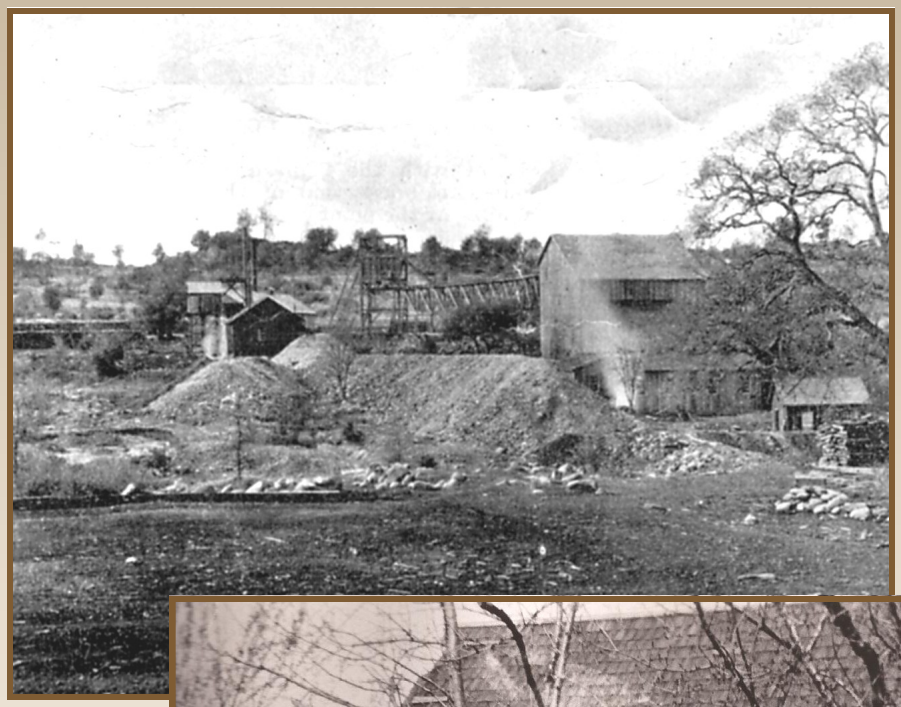
LOGTOWN

The Legacy of Ordinary Places



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Prepared for the California Department of Transportation, District 3, by Pacific Legacy Incorporated

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Cover Illustrations

The *Pocahontas Mine,* courtesy of the California History Room, California State Library, Sacramento, California.

The Bidstrup place, courtesy of Steve and Ronda Brooks.

Logtown

The Legacy of Ordinary Places

Table of Contents

Chapter 1—Introduction 1
Chapter 2—All That Glitters 4
Chapter 3—Logtown Gold 8
Chapter 4—The Gold Rush Comes to Logtown 11
Chapter 5—Going Underground 17
Chapter 6—The Mining Life 32
Chapter 7—Transition 40
Chapter 8—Driving to the Gold Rush 50
Chapter 9—Has anyone Seen Logtown? 59
Chapter 10—Suggested Reading 61

Sidebars

Logtown, The Legacy of Ordinary Places 3
The California Gold Rush 6
Free Gold 9
Logtown Snapshot: The 1850 Census 13
Value of Real Estate Owned 14
Logtown? 15
The Mother Lode 17
Crushing and Amalgamation 19
Amalgamation 21
Ingersoll Rock Drill 28
Gold Bug Park and Mine 30
Logtown Snapshot: The 1860 Census 35
Stories Behind the Names 37
Logtown Snapshot: The 1870 Census 38
Ancient Rivers and the Sawyer Decision 41
Gold Panning Instructions 54
Gold Prices 55
El Dorado County Historical Museum 57
Placerville Historical Museum 58

Table of Contents

Figures

1-1. The Mother Lode Highway 1
1-2. Logtown is located along State Route 49 South of El Dorado 2
1-3. Archaeologists weed-whacking near Logtown 3
2-1. Looking for the first signs of a fortune 4
2-2. Gold in mythology and folklore 5
2-3. A long tom was a simple piece of equipment 7
2-4. Miners working a long tom 7
3-1. Logtown landscape 8
3-2. Surface exposure of a gold-bearing quartz vein 10
4-1. A modern map of Logtown and the Gold Rush area 11
4-2. A typical placer-mining scene 12
4-3. Reproduction of a Logtown census page 14
4-4. Logtown graves today 16
4-5. James S. Denny, died in 1853 16
5-1. Cross-section of an underground mine 18
5-2. Stamp mill 20
5-3. Stamp mills displayed at the El Dorado County Historical Museum 20
5-4. An artist's depiction shows a horse powered arrastra 20
5-5. The remains of an arrastra at Logtown 21
5-6. A Chilean mill photographed at Logtown 21
5-7. Stetson's amalgamator 23
5-8. Survey map of the Pocahontas claim 25
5-9. 1873 King map of the Pocahontas Mine and "Empire City or Logtown" 27
5-10. Pocahontas Mine and mill, probably taken in the 1890s 27
5-11. Pocahontas boiler building, view from the road 27
5-12. Underground miner at work with a compressed air drill 28
5-13. Gold Bug Mine portal 30
5-14. Gold Bug Mine interior 30
5-15. Ore car, tracks, and loading chute 31
5-16. A quartz vein in the ceiling of the tunnel 31
5-17. Museum and interpretive center 31
6-1. Miners at the Church Mine, near Logtown in the 1870s 32
6-2. Logtown on the 1854 *Official Map of the State of California* 33
6-3. 1870 General land office map, T9N R10E 34
6-4. "Empire City or Logtown" as shown on the Pocahontas Mine Map, 1873 34
6-5. Close (Clous) house shown map of the Pocahontas Mineral Survey map 37
7-1. Picking fruit in El Dorado County about 1920 42
7-2. Ferdinand and Elise Bidstrup 43

Table of Contents

Figures Continued

7-3. El Dorado County property map 1895 44
7-4. El Dorado County property map 1925 44
7-5. The Bidstrup Place 45
7-6. Bidstrup barn, c. 1900 45
7-7. The third-generation of Bidstrups, c. 1930 46
7-8. The Bidstrup claim, 1920 46
7-9. Magnus Neilsen 47
7-10. Karoline Neilsen 47
7-11. The Neilsen Ranch in 1895 48
7-12. The Neilsen hay truck in the 1930s 48
7-13. The Forni Ranch, pre-1904 49
7-14. Cesare Forni with a work horse 49
8-1. Glenalex Mine in 1935 51
8-2. Dragline dredging on the Cosumnes River 51
8-3. Working with home-built equipment in El Dorado County 52
8-4. A gold pan 54
8-5. Article from the February 2, 1934, *Placerville Democrat* 55
8-6. The Ophir Mine in 1933 56
8-7. El Dorado County Historical Museum exhibit hall 57
8-8. Stamp mills and other mining equipment 57
8-9. El Dorado County Historical Museum research room 58
8-10. The Placerville Historical Museum 58
9-1. "Pocahontas Mine" in 1948 60

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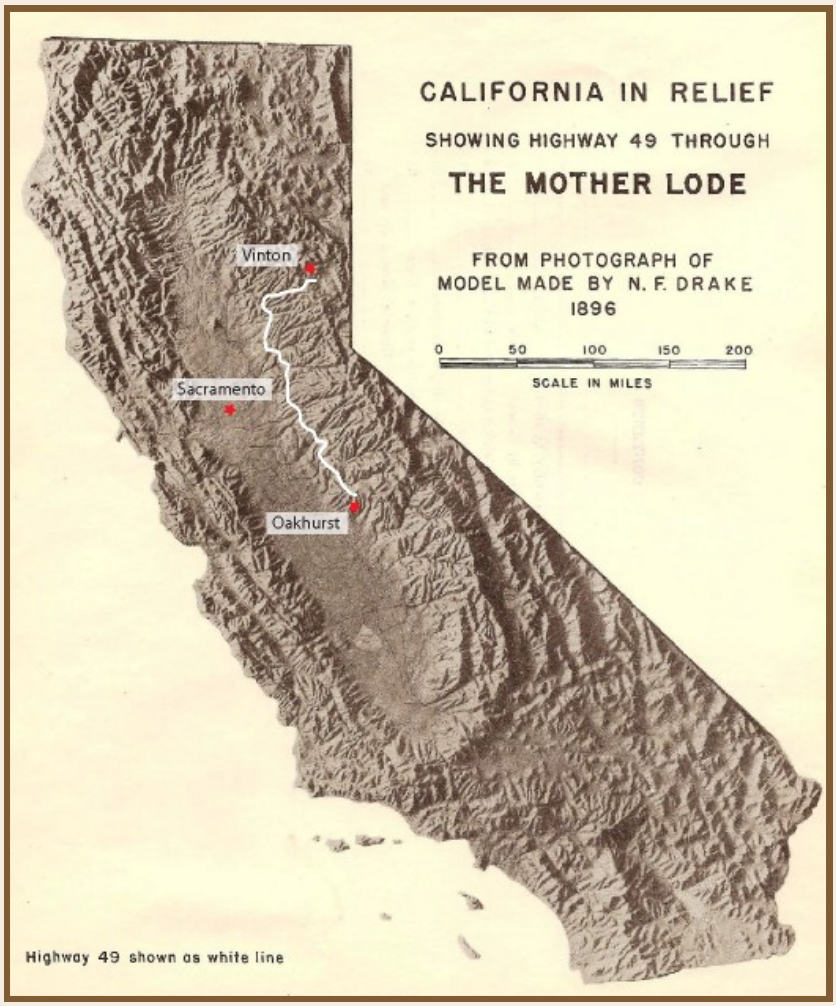
The writing and production of this booklet was a group effort on the part of the Pacific Legacy, Inc. cultural resource management team. Rob Jackson served as project manager, Erich Obermayr conducted background research and developed the text. Pam Koron designed the booklet and supervised production, and Judy Tordoff edited the booklet and contributed a number of important ideas and suggestions.

CHAPTER 1 — INTRODUCTION

Every day, thousands of people travel along California State Route 49. The road south of El Dorado along Logtown Creek takes people to their jobs and to schools in the morning, home in the evening, and to the appointments and errands that fill life in rural California. Other travelers are on longer trips, visiting historic attractions along the length of the "Mother Lode Highway," as Route 49 was officially designated in 1921. The highway spans the length of the gold country—295 miles through the western Sierra foothills from Vinton in the north to Oakhurst in the south. It crosses rivers and streams once lined with placer miners. It passes mines and mills, and the towns that grew up around them. At Coloma, the highway bridge over the American River is within sight of the lumber mill where James Marshall's discovery started it all.

But even when history surrounds us, we don't always see it. State Route 49 leads south from El Dorado into a pleasant little valley—lush and green in the spring, dried and marked by shades of brown in fall and winter. We pass the El



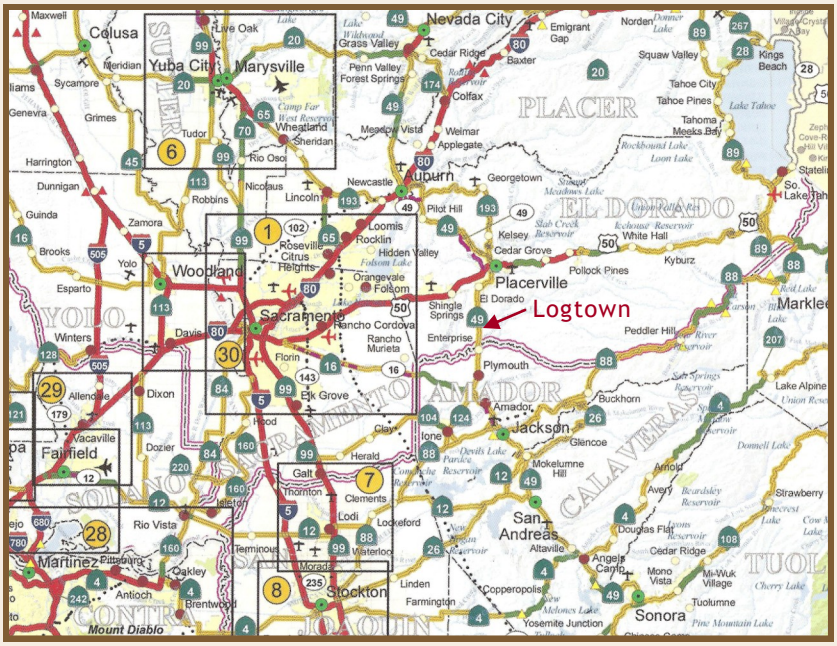
California Geological Survey

Figure 1-1: The Mother Lode Highway.

Dorado Cemetery, where the white marble headstones gleam in the sun, reminders of many Logtown residents who chose to be buried there. Ahead—at the place called Logtown—history is not so obvious. Logtown Creek, Logtown Ravine, and Logtown Ridge—along the east side of the ravine—are no different than any of the valleys, creeks, or ridges we could reach in a few minutes drive in any direction. If you were a driver intent on watching the road and not the landscape, you would miss Logtown. The thick grass on the hills and flanks of the ridge, the dense underbrush and cottonwoods along the creek, and the groves of oak trees—and years of decay—hide it well. They conceal the creek bank where gold seekers first tried their luck at placering; the piles of gravel they dug up and washed clean; the dams and ditches that brought water to where they needed it; the mine shafts that sank through hundreds of feet of rock; and the clusters of buildings that grew up around the mines and mills.

A place can also be hidden, or overlooked, because it is ordinary. Logtown was not the scene of extraordinary events. The ravine is one of many little valleys in the Sierra Nevada foothills, and the events here were not so different from what went on throughout Gold Country. There were no "firsts" or "largests" here. The archaeological and historical record of Logtown is comprised of ordinary things and ordinary events in peoples' lives, like buying or selling property, or being counted during the census. Yet they were part of the Gold Rush, and the eventual development of mining and agriculture in El Dorado County. As ordinary as the people and their stories might have been, they were the building blocks of a wider history.

At Logtown, we see placer mining at the beginning of the Gold Rush in 1849 and 1850. In the years following, there are the discovery of gold-bearing quartz veins and underground mining; the eventual decline of mining and the rise of ranching and agriculture; and finally another Gold Rush during the Great Depression. All this is built of peoples' experiences, which are there for us now in the notations of census takers, yellowed newspaper articles, the swirling penmanship of county clerks, images from photographs and sketches, and even the details of official state reports on such things as the condition of the mining industry.



California Department of Transportation

Figure 1-2: Logtown is located along State Route 49 South of El Dorado.

Logtown, The Legacy of Ordinary Places began with a research project exploring, documenting and analyzing those few visible remains of Logtown: rock alignments poking up above the grass, piles of gravel and mine tailings along the creek, remnants of dams and ditches, caved-in mine shafts, small leveled spots that were once homes, and the lost, broken, or discarded objects from everyday life. At the same time, museums, land and mining records, census forms, newspapers, and libraries were searched for written evidence of life at Logtown. The resulting technical reports (*Phase II Investigations at Logtown CA-ELD-685H El Dorado County California*, and *Phase III Data Recovery Investigations at CA-ELD-685H The Logtown Historic Mining District El Dorado County, California*) were aimed at a professional audience, with the objective of helping archaeologists and historians understand Logtown and its role in California mining history. *Logtown, The Legacy of Ordinary Places* takes this study one step further. It is meant to share Logtown's story with a wider audience—and make it available to the general public.

Pacific Legacy, Inc.

Figure 1-3: Archaeologists do not always use specialized scientific tools. Here weed-whackers are used to clear the ground for a closer look.

Logtown, The Legacy of Ordinary Places is presented by the California Department of Transportation, District 3. For any project involving Federal transportation money, Caltrans and the Federal Highway Administration take measures to mitigate impacts to archaeological sites in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act and the California Environmental Quality Act, as well as internal Caltrans policy. The Logtown Curve Realignment and Road Widening Safety Project did affect a portion of the Logtown historical archaeological site. Consequently, Caltrans conducted archaeological research at Logtown. The work included background historical research and extensive mapping of the site and its historic features, such as foundations and other structural remains; placer ditches, reservoirs and alterations to streambeds; and mine shafts. Test excavations were conducted at selected features with intensive follow-up excavation by Pacific Legacy, Inc. for Caltrans, at features directly impacted by road construction. The results of the studies were then presented in technical reports. *Logtown, The Legacy of Ordinary Places* fulfills the interpretive aspect of the project, by using the information in these technical reports to create a publication that can be shared with the general public.

CHAPTER 2 — ALL THAT GLITTERS

The night chill that went deep into your bones while you slept on the ground was losing a little of its grip. It was spring, and every morning the sun rose earlier above Logtown Ridge. It gradually warmed your camp along the creek bank at the bottom of the ravine. Someone stirred the little campfire back to life, and jammed the coffee pot into the embers and wisps of flame. You waited impatiently for it to heat up. Time was wasting, even while you ate breakfast—a couple of biscuits left over from supper, smeared with lard. You held your metal cup of scalding coffee delicately, not because of good manners---those were thousands of miles away—but to keep from burning your calloused, cracking fingertips. The coffee was weak. The grounds were boiled, and then boiled again, but it allowed you a few moments of warmth and luxury. Of course, once you struck it rich life would be nothing but warmth and luxury.

You stood in silence with your two partners close to the fire, shifting position to avoid the lazy column of smoke. Each man's thoughts were far away, with families who had been temporarily abandoned for California, and gold. You hardly knew one another, having formed your partnership completely by chance in the confusion of San Francisco. Thousands of men filled the town, all of them brimming with optimism, imagining the spectacular wealth that was practically at their fingertips. Others cleverly awaited the chance to take advantage of their fellow Argonauts, as you called yourselves, after the men who sailed with Jason in search of the Golden Fleece. A simple conversation about the unforeseen obstacles between San Francisco and the gold fields—which direction to go, which boat to take across the Bay, what about food, what equipment would you need—began the partnership. Somehow, three would be better than one.

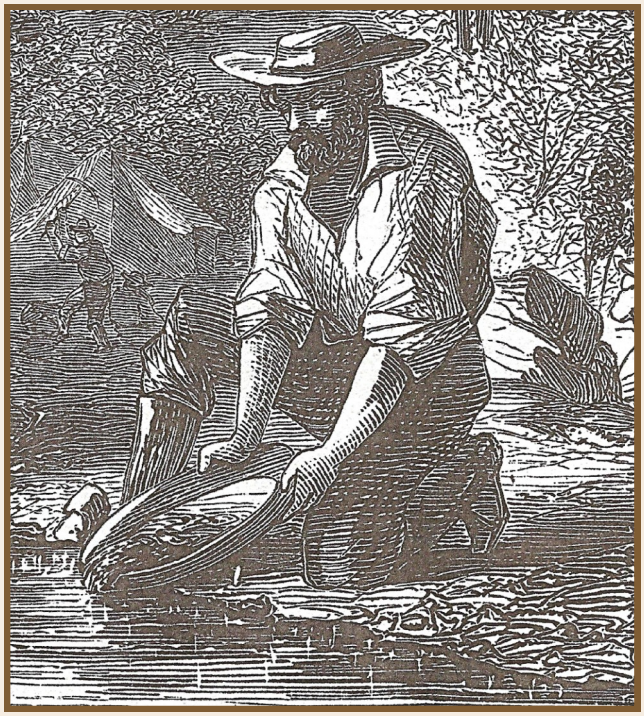


Figure 2-1: Looking for the first signs of a fortune.

You heard about Logtown Creek on the crowded riverboat that took you across the bay and up the river to Sacramento. The choice was a good one, judging from the number of prospectors already here when you arrived. Luckily, you found a short stretch of unoccupied creek bank. Now the whole ravine came to life as you and your

fellow miners went to work. In an hour the chill would be gone, and as the sun rose higher you would find yourself sweating in the spring sunshine. You worked until evening, when there was no longer enough light to see the tiny specks of gold you were pursuing.

Gold is unique, in both fact and imagination. It is a metallic chemical element, designated Au on the periodic table (from Latin aurum, meaning "shining dawn"). Its attraction lies in its pure, bright yellow color. Its low melting point and relative softness make gold easy to cast or work into intricate shapes, and it can be hammered into extremely thin, decorative sheets. People have made gold ornaments and jewelry since prehistoric times. About 2,700 years ago, the Greeks began making gold coins, and great civilizations have used it ever since as a medium of exchange. In the United States, the power to "coin money" is vested in Congress by the Constitution. In the early 1800s, the U.S. Mint was producing gold coins in $1, $2.50, $5, and $10 denominations. The government began minting the $20 gold piece in 1849 (worth about $450 today), in response to the influx of gold from California.

In myth and folklore, gold is the key to wealth and happiness, although it just as often exposes human greed and foolishness. The gods of Greek mythology granted King Midas his wish that everything he touched turn to gold, which became a curse as soon as he laid hands on the food he was about to eat. Aesop's story of The Goose with the Golden Egg shows how you can lose everything by wanting too much too soon.

Figure 2-2: Gold in mythology and folklore. *King Solomon receiving gold from Ophir*, and an illustration from *The Goose that Laid the Golden Egg*. The biblical land of Ophir is the namesake of the Ophir Mine at Logtown. Names like "Ophir", "Midas", and "Golden Goose" were common in the mining districts of the West.

Gold has never lost its grip on human imagination and desire. The alchemists of the ancient Muslim world and the European Middle Ages laid the foundation for modern chemistry in their unending attempts to turn base metals, such as lead, into gold. The quest for gold motivated the Spanish *conquistadores* in their conquest of Mexico and South America. Even the smallest event in the most insignificant place can let loose a gold rush, as when in January, 1848, a man named James Marshall held some tiny nuggets of yellow metal in his hand, and wondered if they were gold. He found them in great quantities in the gravel along the American River—at a spot about ten miles north of the future Logtown—while constructing a lumber mill. His suspicions—or hopes—were quickly confirmed. It was impossible to

contain news of the discovery. Word spread to San Francisco, from there to the rest of the country, and eventually to the world. Gold was there for the taking in California.

None other than President James K. Polk confirmed the importance of Marshall's discovery in his 1848 end-of-the-year address to Congress. Polk acted in part on a report from Richard Mason, the military governor of California (California did not have a civilian government until 1850, when it became a state). The President described the situation in measured terms, but he did nothing to curb anyone's imagination:

"The accounts of abundance of gold in [California] are of such an extraordinary character as would scarcely command belief were they not corroborated by the authentic reports of officers in the public service." To emphasize the point, the War Department put on display two-hundred thirty ounces of gold nuggets and dust Mason had purchased and sent to Washington along with his report. In describing Old Dry Diggings—later renamed Placerville—Mason said men "frequently carried about their persons thousands of dollars worth of gold."

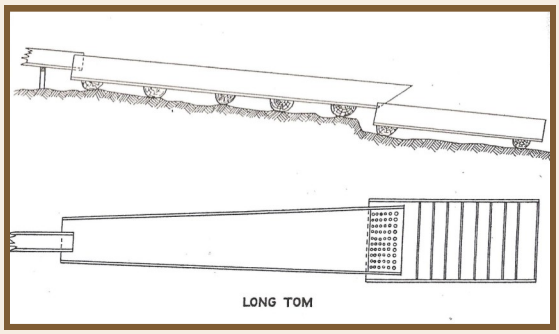
THE CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH

Between 1848 and the mid-1850s, more than a quarter of a million people immigrated to California, comprising one of the largest population movements in human history. They came not only from the United States, but also from Latin America, Europe, China, and Australia. The Americans traveled overland across the continent, or they made the trip by sea. The ocean voyage meant either a circumnavigation of the southern tip of South America, or a three-stage journey from the eastern seaboard to the Caribbean coast of Mexico or Central America, overland to the Pacific, and then another sea voyage up the coast to California.

The newspapers of the day soon sank their teeth into the story, complete with exaggerated rhetoric and images of "El Dorado," the city of gold. A typical "letter from California," printed in a Midwestern newspaper said, "Here the streams are paved with gold. It sparkles in the sands of the valleys, it glitters in the coronet of the steep cliffs." The papers assured their readers the gold was there—it was simply a matter of going to California to get it. The Argonauts left families, jobs, and farms behind. Wives and children would carry on without them, which often meant taking responsibility for running farms and businesses or caring for elderly relatives. But it was all going to be worth it when the men returned.

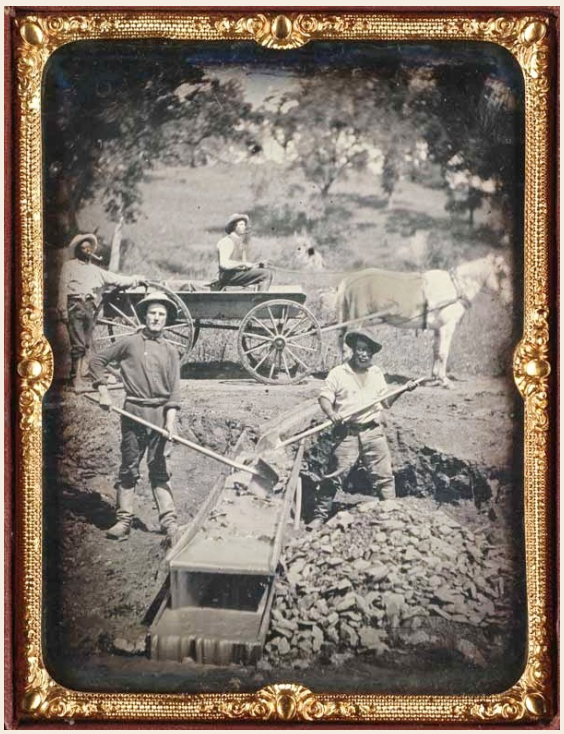
Your claim covered about fifty feet of creek bank. You slept nearby, on the rocky dirt floor of the tent. For all you knew, a life of luxury—including a feather bed—waited in the gravel a few feet under your bedroll. The work of getting rich had already become routine. First, you started water flowing through the ditch that fed the operation. You took a shovel to the upstream end of the ditch where the gravel diversion you built out a few feet into the current had invariably washed away during the night. A few shovelfuls of gravel restored the flow of water to the ditch, and you followed it along, clearing out any blockages where the sides of the ditch had collapsed.

The flow reached the head of the long tom, a shallow wooden trough about twelve feet long laid on the ground, its far end extending out over the creek bank. A sheet of perforated steel blocked the end of the long tom, and water quickly pooled behind it. The first buckets of dirt and gravel, dug from the nearby creek bank, hit the water in the long tom with a startling, muddy splash. Each man took turns filling and dumping the buckets, and shepherding the gravelly mix the length of the trough, stirring it to break up the dirt and tossing out the larger rocks. The perforated steel was set at an angle, so the mix could pile up against it while the water, sand, and smaller gravels dribbled through the holes. The slurry splattered down onto the riffle box underneath it. The riffle box was a smaller trough, sloped so the slurry would flow over a series of wooden slats. The slats trapped the heavier sand—and gold—while the water carried the lighter particles away. Two or three times an hour you scooped out the accumulation behind each slat and emptied it into a bucket. When the bucket was full, the three of you took it to the creek and—each man squatting at the water's edge with his own gold pan—worked through the contents. You picked out the tiny flecks of gold with your dripping fingertips, if you could, or with the tip of a pen knife. The gold went into a leather pouch that the three partners peered into for a moment and then, without a word, went back to work.



California Geological Survey

Figure 2-3: A long tom was a simple piece of equipment.



California History Room, California State Library, Sacramento, CA

Figure 2-4: Miners working a long tom

CHAPTER 3 — LOGTOWN GOLD

Ten miles south of where James Marshall stood on January 24, 1848, examining the shiny bits of yellow metal that had caught his eye, a small, stream flowed down the middle of a wide ravine, flanked on the east by a long, broad ridge and on the west by an uneven line of hills. The stream completely filled its channel, swollen from winter rains and fed by countless, tiny tributaries making their way down the grassy slopes. It moved steadily, cutting away the soil along its banks, carrying rocks, sand, and silt along until its force slackened and the load was dropped to await the next surge in current. Nothing distinguished this creek from any of the others in the rolling, oak-covered hills that reached in every direction as far as the eye could see.

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Figure 3-1: Logtown landscape.

Prior to the Gold Rush, two groups of Native Americans—the Northern Sierra Miwok and the Nisenan—lived, hunted, and gathered in the Logtown region. Their name for Logtown Creek has been lost. They commonly located their villages along small streams, and other villages in the area included *Llemo*, southwest of Placerville; *Opok*, on the North Fork of the Cosumnes River; and *Miminik*, near what became the mining town of Nashville, 6 miles south of Logtown. The area was relatively isolated, and may have provided refuge for Native Americans from the demands of the California mission system and the enterprises of Euro-American settlers, such as Johann August Sutter. Sutter obtained a 48,000-acre land grant from the Mexican governor that included the future site of Sacramento and the mill site where James Marshall made his momentous discovery. It may have included the future site of Logtown, but the boundary was an arbitrary line on a piece of paper that only approximated the actual limits of the grant. The Logtown area—like the rest of California—became part of the United States as a result of the Mexican War. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo formalized this change in February, 1848, a month after Marshall's discovery.

In 1848, the gold that would soon lure the Argonauts to Logtown remained hidden in the sediment at the bottom of the ravine. It existed as tiny flecks and small nuggets in the black topsoil or the thick layer of sand and gravel deposited on the ravine floor. The creek and its tributaries constantly reworked the sediment. Individual particles of free gold—being so much heavier than other rock and mineral particles—separate themselves and accumulate in the deeper parts of the channel, in crevices, or behind any obstructions blocking the force of the current. Streams change constantly, with the seasons and as the channel erodes certain areas and deposits sediment in others. In this way, older accumulations of gold are being constantly exposed and new ones created.

The gold in Logtown Creek had to come from somewhere—but where? This was more than an interesting geological question because the "Mother Lode," or original bedrock source, could be much richer than the scatter of nuggets and flakes in the stream gravel. The first prospectors to arrive at Logtown—even with their hands full digging, panning, sluicing, and hoping the next riffle box would make their dreams come true—would have asked themselves this question. The bedrock exposures on the slopes above the ravine were the obvious place to look. It did not take long for the prospectors to locate veins of quartz in the bedrock outcrops dotting the hills around them, and a few of them exchanged their gold pans for picks, sledgehammers, steel drills, and black powder.

FREE GOLD

Free—or placer—gold is gold that is uncombined with other substances. Placer mining is the process of separating free gold from soil, sand, or gravel—usually with moving water. It works because of gold's high specific gravity. The water's motion carries away particles of lighter rocks and minerals, leaving the gold behind.

By way of comparison, gold has a specific gravity of 19.3 (meaning it is 19.3 times heavier than an equal volume of water). Granite, quartzite, and slate have specific gravities between 2.6 and 2.8.

Gold at Logtown and throughout the Mother Lode originates in quartz veins. This whitish, crystalline rock is easy to spot, and the veins vary from a few inches to several feet thick. Not all quartz contains gold, but to find gold in the Mother Lode, you need to find quartz. In fact, "quartz" was used synonymously with gold, when miners referred to their "quartz claims" or "quartz mills." The formation of quartz veins begins deep in the earth's mantle. The extreme heat and pressure at that depth melts rock, but not all at once. Silica has a relatively low melting point, so it melts first, taking with it dissolved minerals—such as gold. The silica solution rises, and works its way into fissures or faults in the earth's crust. Closer to the earth's surface, the pressure and temperature fall. The silica precipitates out as quartz crystals, forming veins that also include precipitated gold. The veins do not reach the surface, but intrude into rock formations which eventually erode away and expose the quartz. The sun's heat, winter cold, water and wind, and even tiny rootlets, begin breaking down the quartz and releasing the gold. The flakes and nuggets then begin their journey down the hill to the creek bed, and a hopeful miner's gold pan.

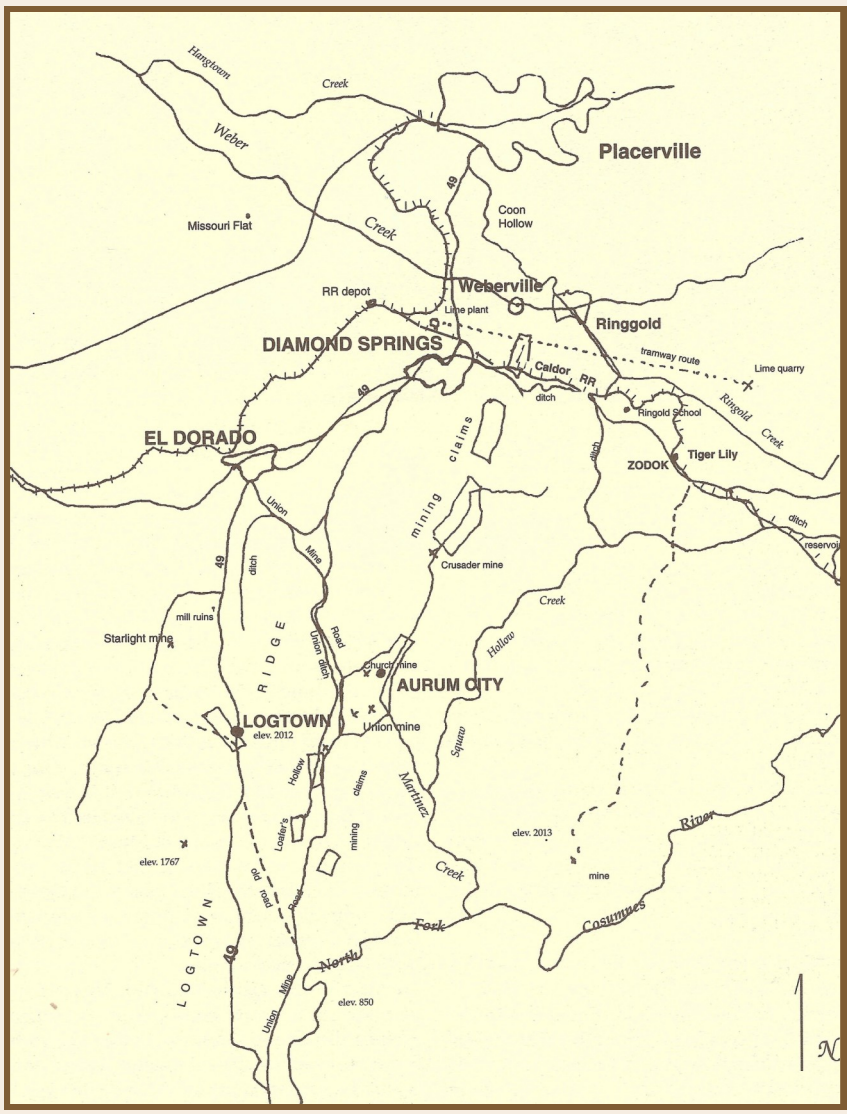
Ron Wolf

Figure 3-2: Close-up view, surface exposure of a gold-bearing quartz vein at Cedarburg Mine, El Dorado County.

The Logtown quartz veins are in metamorphic, dark greenish volcanic rock known as greenstone. Geologists call this the Logtown Formation. It formed during the upper Jurassic geological period, 135 million years ago. It was subsequently covered by massive ash flows from the eruptions that built the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The ash flows were several thousand feet thick, but they were comprised of soft rock, and they eroded relatively quickly. This eventually exposed the rock of the Logtown Formation, and created the modern landscape.

CHAPTER 4 — THE GOLD RUSH COMES TO LOGTOWN

The Gold Rush began as a trickle of hopeful, curious prospectors following Marshall's discovery in 1848. It turned into a flood of gold-seekers intent on making their fortunes. By the end of the year, an estimated five thousand prospectors lined the rivers, creeks, and gulches that emerged from the Sierra Nevada foothills along a vast area between the North Fork of the Feather River and Mariposa Creek. With them came stores, taverns, eateries, hotels and boarding houses, not to mention thieves and gamblers, and purveyors of every sort of transportation from riverboats to mule trains. Another 100,000 people had arrived by the end of 1849, and tens of thousands more followed during the early 1850s.



Alan Patera *El Dorado and Diamond Springs, California*

Figure 4-1: A modern map of Logtown and the Gold Rush area, showing several of the mining camps and towns that sprang up during the early 1850s, and a number of the mines that developed later. Placerville was originally called Dry Diggings, and then Hangtown. El Dorado was known as Mud Springs in the early 1850s.

We do not know exactly when the first prospector dipped his gold pan into Logtown Creek, but it likely happened soon after word of Marshall's discovery at Coloma began to circulate. Logtown Creek is only ten miles away, and its geological setting—a shallow, gravelly ravine—would certainly have looked promising. The first year of the Gold Rush saw rich placer discoveries in the surrounding area, including Placerville and Weber Creek to the north, Aurum City on Martinez Creek east of Logtown Ridge, and Drytown, about 15 miles south of Logtown. There is no reason to think Logtown Creek was not explored.

Some time between 1848 and 1850—probably within the space of a few months—Logtown Ravine filled with placer miners. There was no time to waste once a promising location became known. We do know that by late 1850, Logtown was a well-established location. A "letter from Logtown" published in December of that year by the *Alta California* (reprinted from the *Placer Times* of Sacramento) offers a short description:

Buena Vista Ranch

Figure 4-2: A typical placer-mining scene.

> *"The miners here are doing a good business. It is estimated that in this valley—about three miles in length, there is already dirt thrown up which will yield from $3 to $500,000. I should judge there were about 1,000 men engaged. Logtown is quite a village. I suppose there are not less than 20 stores, two blacksmith shops, two taverns, shoemakers, bakers, carpenters, and one gambling house—this last house, however, does but a limited business, there being comparatively few miners green enough to 'buck up' to monte or other games. Eucre, ten-pins, and old sledge constitute the principal games of this Burg. We have preaching here nearly every Sabbath, and always good attendance."*

The years between 1848 and 1850 also saw rapid political developments in California, culminating in statehood in September, 1850. One month later, in October, Logtown and the rest of California were included in the 1850 US Census. The Census confirmed Logtown was much more than a simple mining camp. It was indeed a small town, or "burg," as the *Placer Times* writer put it. There were 417 people in "Logtown and vicinity," 387 adult males, 5 adult females, and 25 children under eighteen. The *Placer Times* may have exaggerated the number of miners, but the census confirms the image of Logtown as a busy, thriving place.

Logtown Snapshot: The 1850 Census

Census data provide information for piecing together the story of communities like Logtown, one person at a time. It gives us men, women, and children and facts about them such as age, marital status, and occupation. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 made California a US possession. It became a state in September of 1850, just in time for the seventh decennial US Census. The census basically consisted of a census taker walking door to door, counting the residents, and recording a few facts about each person. The information was recopied by hand onto census sheets, which were then bound together.

The census offers insights on life at a personal level, although not without a certain amount of interpretation. The Superintendant of the 1850 Census, J.D.B. DeBow, complained about the difficulty of finding qualified statisticians and admitted the enumerators often proved entirely incompetent, perhaps because of their low rate of pay. Forty-five marshals supervised the counting of every person in the United States, a job done by 3,231 enumerators. Mr. DeBow lamented the fact that often data from small towns and villages **were** not kept separate, but combined with counts from the entire county. He noted this should be corrected next time but, unfortunately in the case of Logtown, just the opposite occurred. The only year in which Logtown was counted separately was 1850. From then on, Logtown residents were lumped with the rest of the Mud Springs Township, that included the town of Mud Springs (later El Dorado) and the area in southwestern El Dorado County. It was still possible, however—with some detective work—to sort out Logtown from the rest.

The 1850 Census - Logtown and Vicinity

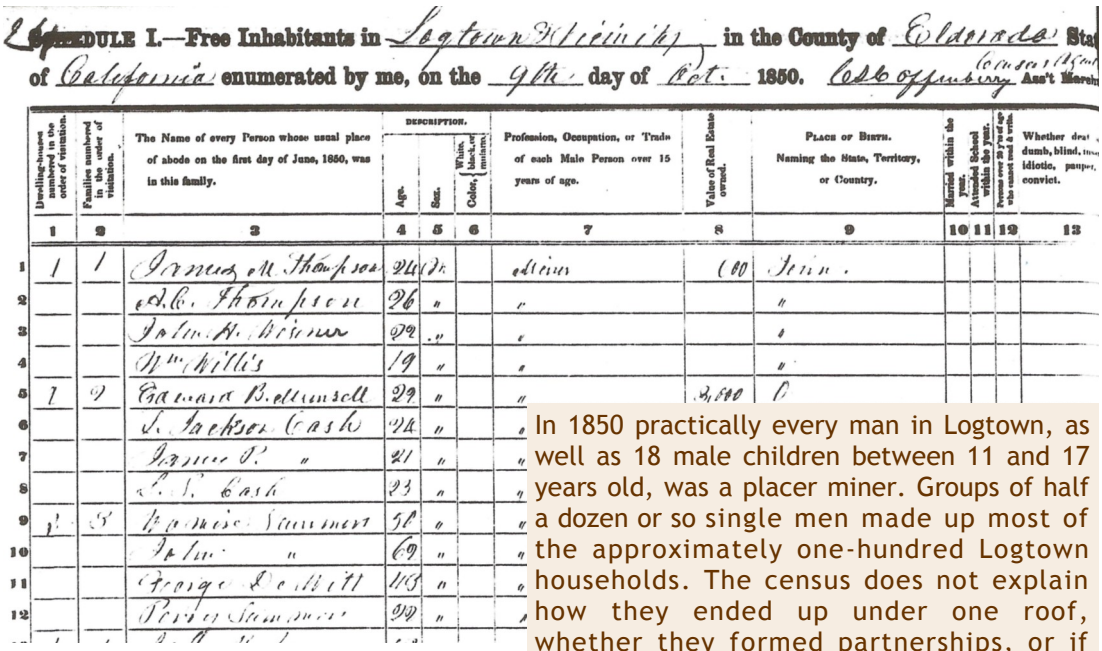
Residents	Dwellings	Families	Adult Males	Adult Females	Children
417	91 (approx)	103*	387	5	25

*The census taker's designation of "family" would be better described as a "household," as most include apparently unrelated individuals sharing living space.

Color (The three options on the form were *white*, *black*, and *mulatto*)—Everyone was white except one member of the Austin family, who was black.

Origin—Residents came from 22 different states and 8 different European countries including England, Canada, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Germany, Holland, and France.

Profession, Occupation, or Trade of Males over 18—367 of the 387 adult males were miners. There were three hotel keepers and five merchants. Other occupations included carpenter, clerk, drover, herder, joiner, laborer, and trader.



SCHEDULE I.—Free Inhabitants in Logtown Division in the County of Eldorado State of California enumerated by me, on the 9th day of Oct. 1850. Cob Oppenheimer Ass't Marshal

Dwelling-houses numbered in the order of visitation.	Families numbered in the order of visitation.	The Name of every Person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June, 1850, was in this family.	Age.	Sex.	Color, White, Black, or Mulatto.	Profession, Occupation, or Trade of each Male Person over 15 years of age.	Value of Real Estate owned.	Place of Birth. Naming the State, Territory, or Country.	Married within the year.	Attended School within the year.	Persons over 20 years of age who cannot read & write.	Whether deaf, dumb, blind, insane, idiotic, pauper, convict.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1	1	James M. Thompson	24	M		Miner	100	Tenn.				
2		A. C. Thompson	26	"		"		"				
3		John H. Brown	22	"		"		"				
4		Wm. Willis	19	"		"		"				
5	2	Edward B. Allensell	29	"		"	3,500	O				
6		L. Jackson Cash	24	"		"						
7		James S. "	21	"		"						
8		J. S. Cash	23	"		"						
9	3	Francis Summers	50	"		"						
10		John "	62	"		"						
11		George Dewitt	18	"		"						
12		Perry Summers	22	"		"						

Ancestry.com

Figure 4-3: Reproduction of a Logtown census page

VALUE OF REAL ESTATE OWNED

For the census as a whole, the Superintendant commented that "the value of real estate is taken loosely, and induces no confidence." People would have had many reasons to either exaggerate or minimize the value of their property, especially when talking with a government census taker. In Logtown of 1850, the most valuable real estate would have been mining claims, rather than the miners' flimsy dwellings. And in a town with a transient population, there was always the possibility they were referring to property "back home."

In 1850, 95 of the 417 Logtown residents (about one in four) said they owned real estate. Half of these properties (47) were valued at less than a thousand dollars; 24 were valued from one to two thousand dollars; 14 from two to three thousand; 4 from three to four thousand; 2 between four and five thousand; and 4 properties were valued at six thousand dollars.

In 1850 practically every man in Logtown, as well as 18 male children between 11 and 17 years old, was a placer miner. Groups of half a dozen or so single men made up most of the approximately one-hundred Logtown households. The census does not explain how they ended up under one roof, whether they formed partnerships, or if they began their enterprise as friends or neighbors. Family connections were important, as we find about 30 sets of brothers living together. There were also fathers and sons, which we assume from a number of men with the same surname, whose ages differ by twenty years or so. Logtown was no place for senior citizens. The vast majority of residents were in their late teens, twenties, or thirties, and only a handful were forty or fifty years old. John and Wamire Sumers, ages 50 and 62, were the oldest men in town.

It was also a man's world. There were only two complete families, comprised of parents and children. Henry Dean and his wife Olive had seven children, and John and Catherine Rupe had five children. Henry Dean and two of his sons were miners. The Austins were another large family group, although they included only the father, Henry Austin, and his five sons. Henry was 41 and his sons ranged in age from 10 to 19. The household also included Gabriel Austin, a 34-year-old black man. From the birthplaces listed on the census form, the family possibly came from the slave state of Virginia or Kentucky. Gabriel may have been an Austin slave who adopted the family name when they lived in the south.

The census and newspapers do not tell us what Logtown looked like in 1850, but we can imagine tents and simple log or wooden houses spread along the creek from one end of the ravine to the other. The business district probably consisted of a cluster of tents and more substantial buildings. According to the *Placer Times*, there were as many as 20 stores, two taverns, and services like blacksmiths, shoemakers, bakers, and carpenters. The census confirms this picture, listing three hotel keepers and five merchants, as well as a carpenter, clerk, drover, herder, joiner, laborer, and trader. By 1851, the El Dorado County Recorder had licensed 15 merchants in Logtown who sold "goods and/or liquors." In 1852, an additional four liquor licenses were granted in Logtown.

LOGTOWN?

We do not know how or exactly when Logtown became "Logtown." The name applied to the area between the southern outskirts of El Dorado and the divide at the head of what became Logtown Creek, and the cluster of residences and other buildings along the creek. The ravine itself became Logtown Ravine, and the ridge to the east became Logtown Ridge. We know from the census and the *Placer Times* that the name was in use by 1850. Slate Creek, at the north end of the Logtown Ravine, was also known as the West Fork of Logtown Creek, and the climb from Nashville to Logtown on State Route 49 is still called Logtown Grade. Local residents speculate the name may have come from the pine forest that once extended westward from Placerville, although oak trees dominated the landscape in the immediate Logtown area. The name might have come from stockpiled logs at one of the local mills, or perhaps the first structures at Logtown were built of logs. Once in place, the name persisted, even after a later attempt to call the cluster of buildings opposite the Pocahontas Mine "Empire City."

Logtown Graves

A mile north of Logtown and set among the hills east of State Route 49, a picket fence encloses a small cluster of headstones. There are only seven graves—four with headstones and three marked by wooden four-by-four-inch posts. A few more graves, their wooden markers long gone, might lie forgotten in the thick grass nearby, but they do not account for the number of deaths that must have occurred at Logtown. The El Dorado Cemetery is only a mile away, on the southern outskirts of that town. Even though people thought of themselves as Logtown residents, many of them were buried in the El Dorado cemetery.

Judy Tordoff

Figure 4-4: Logtown graves today.

Judy Tordoff

Figure 4-5: James S. Denny, died 1853

The four headstones are among the few surviving grave markers in El Dorado County from the early 1850s. They memorialize four young men who died between December 1850 and March of 1853. Local legend has it they died in a mining accident, but their varied dates of death rule this out. They more likely died in separate accidents or from cholera, smallpox, or any of the other infectious diseases that ravaged the gold camps on a regular basis.

One of the four, Perry Summers, is listed in the 1850 census. The census takers enumerated him in October of 1850, slightly more than two months before his death in December at age 21. We know that young Mr. Summers lived in a household with two other men from his family, and a third unrelated man. They were all miners. Wamire and John Summers, age 50 and 62, were probably brothers and one of them was likely Perry's father. Two doors away—or perhaps two tents away—Perry Summers' brother William, age 14, lived with three other men, also miners. The census and the gravestones do not tell us how successful the Summers men were at finding gold, or if they even had any success at all. Joining the Gold Rush changed their lives, exactly how we do not know, but when they moved on they left one of their number behind.

CHAPTER 5 — GOING UNDERGROUND

If success meant going to California and returning home a rich man then the Gold Rush was a colossal failure for almost everyone. But the gold was there for the taking: ten million dollars worth in 1849, forty-one million in 1850, seventy-six million in 1851, eighty-one million in 1852. Some Argonauts did come back with the Golden Fleece. For example, when the steamer *Cherokee* arrived in New York from California in 1851, it had on consignment more than two million dollars in gold dust. The ship's passengers brought along another quarter of a million dollars' worth. Back in California, the men who did not strike it rich kept working their gold pans, rockers, long toms, and sluice boxes. They paid exorbitant prices to feed, clothe, house, and amuse themselves, but they made enough to keep going—even though fantastic riches remained just out of reach.

Others were not content to glean flakes and nuggets from the creek gravels. The gold came from somewhere and even men with only a passing knowledge of geology and mining knew that "somewhere" was the bedrock underlying the rolling hills all around them. These men took to searching among the slabs of rock that stood out like unfinished monuments on the grassy slopes and hilltops. They very quickly found what they were looking for. The gold was locked in veins of quartz, some a few inches thick and some several feet wide. The exposures of white quartz were not hard to spot in the dark greenstone. The veins could be traced from one outcrop to the next, even when soil or vegetation hid the spaces in between.

Gold occurred in quartz, but not all quartz contained gold—at least not enough for profitable mining. The surface exposures could be the tip of a golden iceberg, or simply ordinary rock. Underground mining called for vision and imagination that could recognize the potential of a surface quartz vein, and picture it hundreds of feet underground. The miner needed to calculate where to sink a vertical shaft or horizontal tunnel to intersect the gold-bearing vein. The vein could then be explored in any direction, in search of the richest concentrations of ore.

THE MOTHER LODE

Miners called the ultimate source of gold the "Mother Lode." The term was eventually applied to the one-hundred and twenty-mile-long web of gold-bearing quartz veins that traversed the Sierra Nevada foothills between the American River and Mariposa. A vein at the Tennessee-Nashville Mine, about 5½ miles south of Logtown, was possibly the first discovery to earn the name "Mother Lode." Logtown itself is technically not part of the Mother Lode. Prospecting at Logtown in 1850 and 1851 was no different than exploring quartz veins anywhere in the region, but the network of Logtown quartz veins is several miles north and west of the famed Mother Lode, and part of a different system.

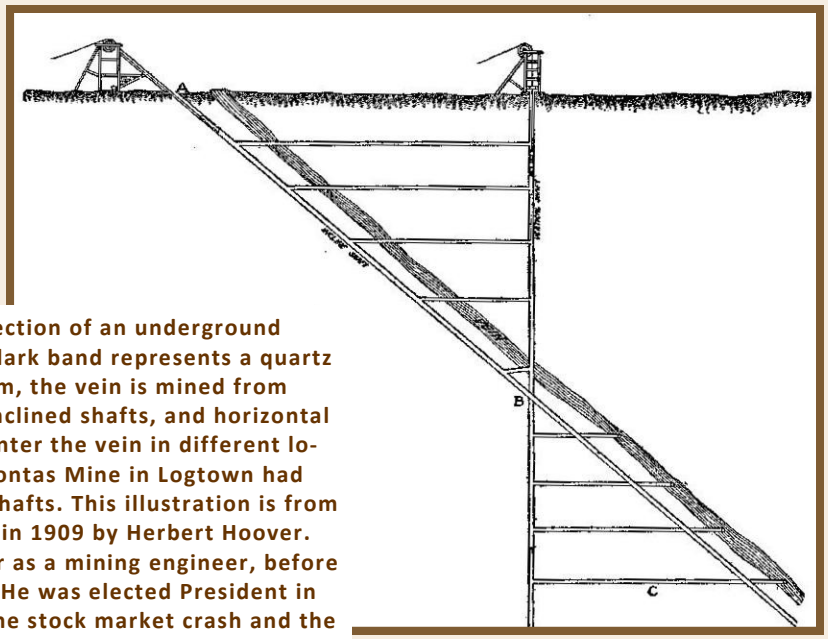


Figure 5-1: Cross-section of an underground mine. The sloping dark band represents a quartz vein. In this diagram, the vein is mined from both vertical and inclined shafts, and horizontal tunnels that encounter the vein in different locations. The Pocahontas Mine in Logtown had two such inclined shafts. This illustration is from a textbook written in 1909 by Herbert Hoover. He began his career as a mining engineer, before turning to politics. He was elected President in 1928, only to see the stock market crash and the Great Depression begin a few months after he took office.

Herbert Hoover *Principles of Mining*

It probably seemed to the men working the creek bottom that searching the hills for quartz veins was trading a bird in the hand for two in the bush. Or perhaps they knew they lacked the skills and knowledge to find and work an underground claim. The first record of hard rock mining at Logtown is a claim dated April 19, 1851, filed by three men for the "Logtown Quartz Mine" located "in the ravine or hollow near Logtown called Logtown Hollow . . ." Others followed in the same year, including Dr. Dulin's Quartz Mining Claim, and a claim by the Cornucopia Quartz Mining Company.

In September of 1851, about a year after the Census recorded a valley filled with placer miners, a man named Jeremiah C. Green sold 1/10 of his interest in the Logtown Quartz Vein to L. H. Robinson for $320. Three hundred and twenty dollars was a substantial investment, roughly the equivalent of a ship-board cabin on the voyage from the eastern seaboard to California, and double the cost of a hammock spot between decks. The record of that transaction noted the vein was 1050 feet long. It also included a list of machinery and supplies that tells us something about the requirements of underground mining.

3 lb. powder	600 lbs of hay
Mining tools	½ bottle of quicksilver
1 force pump	1 gal. oil
300 feet of hose	1 cook stove
1 Bogardis quartz machine	1 mortar

3 lb. powder and mining tools: Black powder was used for blasting. Mining tools would include picks, shovels, hammers, and drills. Tunneling into solid rock began with a pattern of holes, drilled in the rock with sledge hammers and hand drills. The holes were packed with black powder, fuses were attached, and lit to ignite the powder. The explosion broke apart or at least loosened a few feet of rock, which would then be "mucked" out, and the face of the tunnel cleared for a new set of holes.

force pump and 300 feet of hose: Ground water became a serious problem once a mine reached the water table. The hand-powered force pump was probably used to pump water out of the mine, although the milling process also required a water supply.

Bogardus quartz machine: Named for its inventor, a Mr. James Bogardus from New York, the Bogardus machine was used for processing ore. It worked by grinding the quartz between two spinning horizontal metal plates. The ore was most likely first crushed in a stamp mill or arrastra, then ground to a finer consistency in the Bogardus mill. This prepared the ore for the amalgamation process, which worked more effectively on finely ground rock.

600 lbs of hay: Hay was a vital commodity in the era of horse, mule, and oxen power. Arrastras were often turned by draft animals, and in the larger mines mules pulled the ore cars. Six hundred pounds of hay in 1851 could be thought of today as equivalent to a storage tank full of fuel.

½ bottle of quicksilver: Quicksilver, or mercury, was an integral part of the amalgamation process, a final step in extracting gold from rock.

Underground mining was complicated, risky, and expensive, but the potential payoffs far exceeded the earnings from small-scale placering. The cost of equipment and machinery dwarfed the price of a few gold pans, shovels, and sluice boxes. The skilled, experienced workers it took to run a mine and mill had to be paid. And if any part of the operation failed—a partner pulled his money out, the machinery broke down or was wrong for the job—the whole enterprise could fail. Events completely beyond the miners' control could also put them out of business. Depression or financial panic in faraway markets could dry up investment capital, or politicians could manipulate the price of gold. On top of it all, no one could really guarantee what would be found hidden in rock hundreds of feet underground.

CRUSHING AND AMALGAMATION

Once a mine was operating, and ore hauled to the surface and brought to the mill, the rock had to be crushed, ground to a fine sand, and then processed to recover the gold.

CRUSHING

Ore was crushed in stamp mills and arrastras. Stamp mills were basically a set of steam or water powered steel hammers that pounded the ore into smaller and smaller pieces. It was then sifted through a heavy mesh screen. The smaller particles passed through to the next step in the milling process, while the large pieces were fed back under the stamps.

Arrastras ground ore between heavy stones, much like a grist mill. The ore was spread out over a circular stone platform, then larger stones were continuously dragged across it to break up the pieces of rock. The arrastra employed relatively simple technology, and was among the first crushing methods used in California. Horses or mules, and later steam engines and water wheels, supplied the power to drag the large stones over the ore. Arrastras were often used in combination with stamp mills, with the stamps doing the coarse crushing and the arrastras completing the fine grinding.

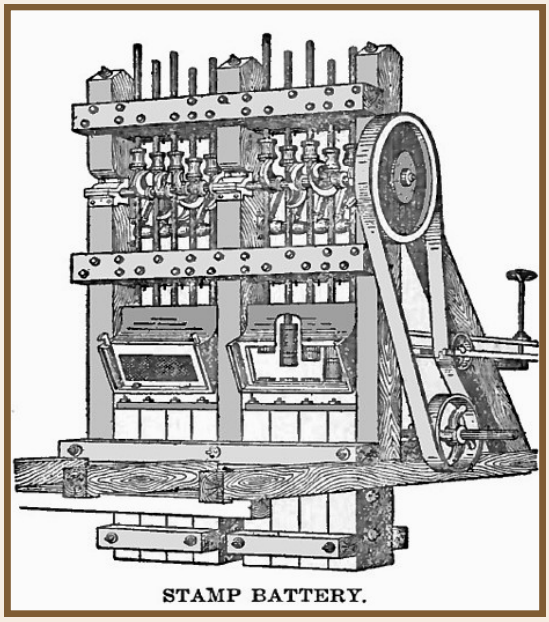


Figure 5-2: Stamp Mill.

Pacific Legacy, Inc.

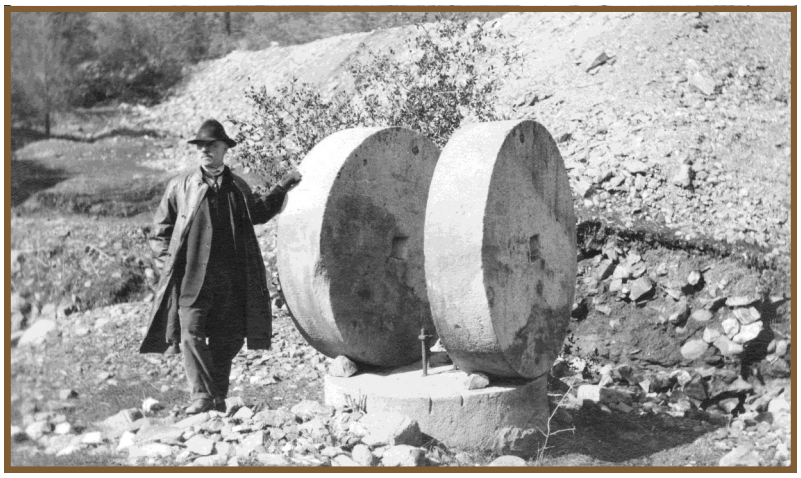
Figure 5-3: Stamp mills displayed at the El Dorado County Historical Museum.

Figure 5-4: This artist's depiction shows a horse-powered arrastra. The two placering methods that share the illustration were unrelated to the arrastra—that processed mined ore. The man in the background is operating a "rocker." These were essentially compact sluice boxes. They used water and a rocking motion to wash the sands through a sieve to the bottom level where the gold could be trapped by riffles (nailed to a bottom board).

California Geological Survey

El Dorado County Historical Museum

Figure 5-5: This photograph, probably taken after the major mines were abandoned, shows the remains of an arrastra at Logtown.



El Dorado County Historical Museum

Figure 5-6: A "Chilean Mill," also photographed at Logtown. This type of mill used a pair of very large grinding stones, that were rotated on an axle extending through the square holes at the center of the stones. Also note the large pile of waste rock in the background.

AMALGAMATION

The amalgamation phase, which extracted the gold from the ore, relied on the unique attraction between gold and mercury. These two minerals bond together into an alloy, or amalgam, whenever they come in contact with one another. It took only a small amount of mercury added to the mixture of water and ore, or "pulp," to begin this process. By themselves, gold and mercury are both very dense minerals, so a variety of methods were developed to use gravity to isolate and recover the amalgam. It was then heated to boil off the mercury—which was condensed and reused. The gold was then melted into bars or ingots.

At one time or another, there were more than a dozen mines operating in Logtown Ravine. The Pocahontas, Empire, Lamoille, Ophir, and Minnehaha, were the most prominent, as the Placerville *Mountain Democrat* described in an article from February 5, 1858:

> *Almost every person here is more or less interested in quartz mining, and quartz is the constant topic of the day. There are now six mills in active operation in this neighborhood, employing, in the aggregate, not less than one hundred and seventy-five men.*
>
> *The Lamoille Mill, owned by J.R. Beard, propelled by a steam engine of sixty horse power, running eight stamps and two arrastras, crushes fifteen tons of rock in twelve hours, and nets a weekly profit of from two to eight thousand dollars.*
>
> *The Pocahontas Mill, also propelled by a steam engine of sixteen horse power, driving five stamps, and four arrastras, lately erected at a cost of twenty thousand dollars, is probably the best mill in the county; the work having been done in the most thorough manner under the immediate supervision of Mr. David Stoddard, a skillful machinist of San Francisco.*
>
> *The Empire Mill, also propelled by steam engine of twelve horse power, running three stamps, and four arrastras, built by Messrs. Fiske & Deihl at a cost of eight thousand dollars, is now doing a fine business.*

Money was often raised by pooling resources or officially forming a company and issuing stock. For example, in October of 1851 a Dr. J.R. Dulin filed a claim on "Dr. Dulin's Quartz Mining Claim, Logtown." He, along with nine others, formed "Dr. Dulin's Quartz Mining Company," intending to "proceed to work... as soon as machinery can be obtained." In 1857, it cost Joseph Beard $21,000 to buy "Beard's Lead," and build a sixty-horsepower steam plant, eight stamp mill, and an arrastra. Beard was a San Francisco entrepreneur who invested in El Dorado County, purchasing or leasing properties during downturns that left many good mines and claims available at cheap prices.

Detailed accounts of the region's mines were the mainstay of Gold Rush newspapers, and Beard's Lead (later the LaMoille Mine) was the subject of an article in the *San Francisco Daily Evening Bulletin*, September 18, 1857. (Lead—pronounced "leed"—is a common term for a vein or ledge deposit.) Several of Logtown's earliest residents first claimed Beard's Lead in 1850 or 1851. They sold it to Joseph R. Beard in 1856. The *Evening Bulletin* writer begins with a description of the quartz vein itself, and the mine workings.

> *Both leads are encased in a sort of granite, that is very soft and greatly decomposed, so that considerable quantities of it are necessarily taken out with the quartz. The quartz itself is also greatly decomposed and has a chalky appearance, with harder pieces mixed through it. It also contains a large percentage of the sulphurets of iron, [found] in connection with the gold. Both leads are worked by perpendicular shafts, striking the vein at fifty feet below the surface. At present, twenty-two men are employed in the leads and six about the mill.*

Sulphurets of iron are brass-colored lumps of mineral, similar to pyrite.

The quartz is crushed in the battery as usual, where, however, it is in contact with mercury, more of which is also added to it as the work proceeds, at the rate of a couple of ounces every hour.

The "battery" refers to the row of hammers in the stamp mill.

From the batteries the pulverized quartz passes through Stetson's Amalgamators, the drawers of which are charged with mercury, as usual.

The Stetson's Amalgamator was one of many ingenious pieces of equipment designed to stimulate the amalgamation process, and separate the gold-quicksilver amalgam from the pulp. Manufactured by Alva M. Stetson of Sacramento, the machine was like an oversized chest of drawers, but with shallow, perforated drawers. The edges of the perforations were slightly raised, so the bottom of each drawer could be covered with a thin layer of mercury. The pulp poured from a mixer onto the top drawer until it overtopped the edges of the perforations, dribbled through the holes, and splattered onto the drawer below. This was repeated on each drawer, with the splattering action completely mixing the gold and mercury together. The bottom drawer, which was not perforated, tilted slightly so the excess pulp flowed off, leaving the amalgamated gold and mercury behind.

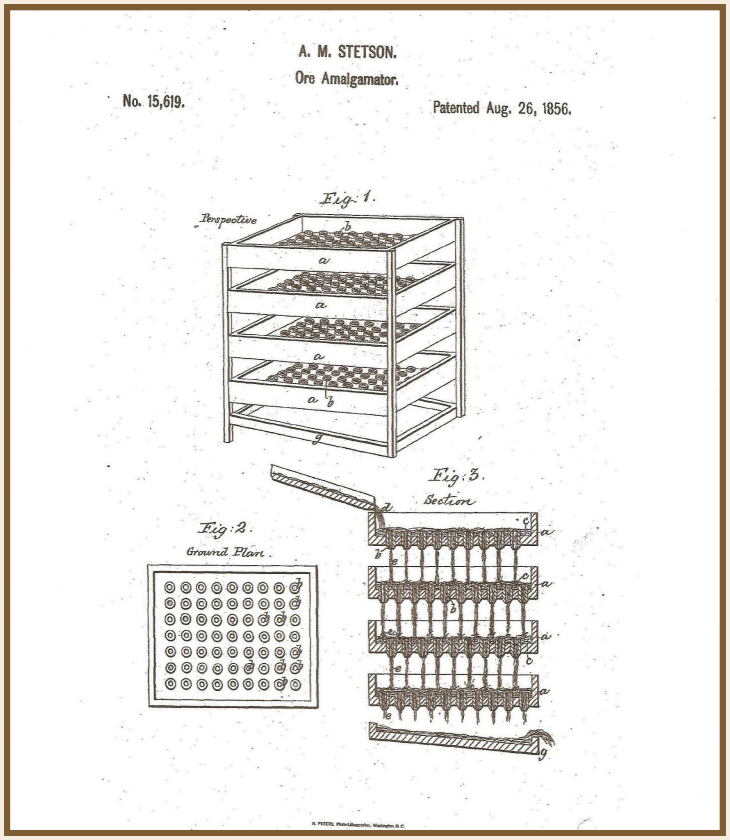


Figure 5-7: Stetson's Amalgamator.

This "self-operating" piece of equipment was lauded in *The Mining Magazine:*

> *It is universally acknowledged by all practical men with whom we have conversed, that the principle by which it brings the sand in contact with the quicksilver is the correct one. The machine requires but little attention, is more easily "cleaned up" than any other in use, and is not liable to get out of order.*

A Stetson's Amalgamator was listed for sale for $225 in the 1859 California State Board of Agriculture Statistical Report.

The story in the *San Francisco Daily Evening Bulletin* continues describing the journey through the milling process:

> *Thence through troughs, only about ten feet in length, lined with blankets, which are changed once in fifteen minutes. The blankets collect most of the sulphurets of iron, which are then ground in the arrastras.*

The rough surface of the blankets caught whatever particles the amalgamator missed. The sulphurets—which at this point contained the remaining gold—were rinsed from the blankets, returned to the arrastra for more grinding, and sent through the amalgamator again.

In 1857 Beard mortgaged "Beard's Mill" and all his quartz claims in El Dorado County to Darius O. Mills. Mills owned the Bank of D. O. Mills & Co, in Sacramento, one of the leading banks in the state. Years later, he became a principal in the Bank of California that financed and eventually controlled most of the mines and mills in Nevada's Comstock Lode. The Lamoille was fully developed by the mid- to late-1850s, but in the 1870s, when it was surveyed for a patent claim, the property was abandoned and the mill had been removed. In 1873 Beard deeded his interests to the LaMoille Mill and Mining Company—in exchange for stock certificates. Although the mine reopened in the mid-1880s, the company was apparently a failure. The last mention of the LaMoille in any mining publication was in 1896, when it was noted as "idle."

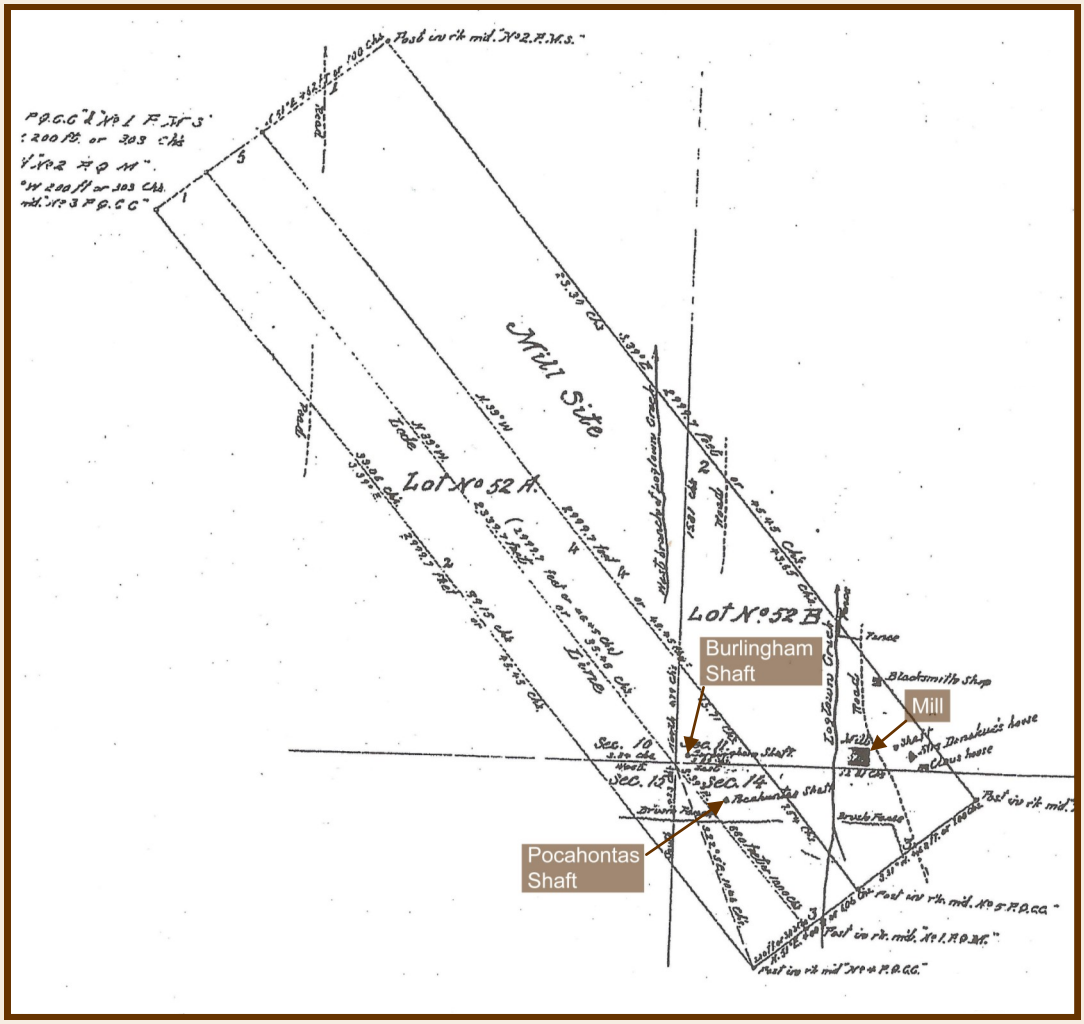
The most successful Logtown mine was the Pocahontas. Its development through the years—from the original claim in 1851 until its abandonment and dismantling by 1919—tracks the story of Logtown mining. The company's ups and downs—from the optimism of the newest investors to lawsuits and sheriff's sales—marked the thin line between success and failure that defined the mining enterprise.

1850\51 The Pocahontas is "located." (A claim staked and recorded.) The Pocahontas quartz vein is later described as 1500 feet long.

1854-57 The Pocahontas Mine is open by 1854, and a mill is constructed in 1856. In 1855, James McCullum sells a 1/5 share of the Pocahontas quartz vein to Lucius A. Booth for $1600, which would put the total value of the mine at about $8,000. Booth is a Sacramento merchant and prominent California investor. He is a shareholder and one of the nine original directors of the Central Pacific Railroad Company of California. The Central Pacific would eventually build the western half of the transcontinental railroad. In 1856, Benjamin Tallman mortgages to Lucius Booth his 3/10 interest in the Pocahontas Quartz Mining Company, including "mill buildings." We have no record of the actual incorporation of the Pocahontas Quartz Mining Company, but an 1857 document lists L. Garwood as President and B. W. Wilder as Secretary. Wilder was married to Elitha Cumi Donner, who as a young girl had survived the Donner Party tragedy. The Wilders raised their family in the area, and still resided in Logtown according to the 1870 census.

1858 The Pocahontas mine and mill are fully operational. A government mining survey describes the mill as "the best mill in the county." The Placerville *Mountain Democrat* in February, 1858, adds more detail. The mill has a sixteen horsepower steam plant. David Stoddard, a machinist from San Francisco, supervises the installation of the boiler, five-stamp mill, and four arrastras. The machinery costs about $20,000 installed. The mill processes twelve tons of ore per day, valued at $25 per ton, for a gross production of $300 per day.

1860s By 1866, the owners of the Pocahontas, including J. D. Goldy and Nathan Decatur Burlingham, double the number of stamps in the Pocahontas Mill to ten. An 1867 article in the *Mining and Scientific Press* notes that Goldy and a partner named "Buffington" are extracting $20-$30 per ton of ore from the Pocahontas. Goldy and Burlingham are also partners in the Empire Lode, that rivaled the Pocahontas in the early 1860s. In 1869, the Empire, along with the Pocahontas, Empire Extension, and the Excelsior, are consolidated under the newly incorporated Pocahontas Gold Mining Company, with Lucius A. Booth of San Francisco as president. The company's capital stock of $120,000 is divided into 1200 shares of $100 each. The principal place of business—headquarters—is San Francisco. Records show the company raised additional funds by issuing certificates of increase of capital stock in 1872, 1874, and 1878. This money goes toward improvements in the mine and mill, or to pay off previous obligations. A government mining report in 1869 describes the Pocahontas as producing ore averaging $15 per ton from a vein four feet wide. It goes on to say, "There is a 10-stamp mill that has been at work one year, and has paid for itself and for all the work done in opening the mine."



Bureau of Land Management

Figure 5-8: Survey map of the Pocahontas claim. This map was made in 1882, however features such as the two main shafts (Pocahontas and Burlingham) and the mill had been in place for years.

1870s The *Mountain Democrat*, April 29, 1871, presents a glowing description of the Pocahontas:

> *This valuable mine for the last year has been worked with regularity, and has not failed in declaring a handsome monthly dividend. The new shaft is 250 feet deep, shielded on top by a building that shades a twenty horse power engine, with a boiler of corresponding capacity. The brake, connections, care, ladder, etc. all work admirably, displaying taste, science and a thorough knowledge of those practical ideas so essentially necessary to successful mining operations. Considerable improvements are constantly taking place.*

To make this point about constant investment and improvement in the Pocahontas, the July, 1872 *Mountain Democrat* notes:

> *The mill on this mine [Pocahontas] has been closed for some little time, for repairs, a new boiler—the largest ever brought into this county—being put in. It is already in place, and the mill will again start up about the middle of next week. The company have about 600 tons of good rock on the dump and we expect to hear of good returns from there during the next month.*

Lucius Booth applies for a patent on the Pocahontas in 1871. The notes accompanying the patent application describe the claim as 3,000 linear feet, with shafts 250 and 275 feet deep, steam hoisting works, a 15-stamp quartz mill and other mining improvements. There are eight other applicants in addition to Booth, seven from San Francisco and one from Sacramento. One of the new investors, A. J. Ralston, is the brother of William Ralston, whose Bank of California was among the most powerful financial institutions of the time. The early 1870s are the peak years for the Pocahontas. The *Mining and Scientific Press* notes the mine has 30 men working underground, and in one eleven-day period reported production of 50 pounds of gold. An 1873 map of the Pocahontas shows a cross section of the mine, the mill, and support structures like a blacksmith shop and the supervisor's office. The cluster of houses across from the mill is referred to as "Empire City or Logtown," probably in reference to the Empire lead mine. It is perhaps an attempt to rename the growing community.

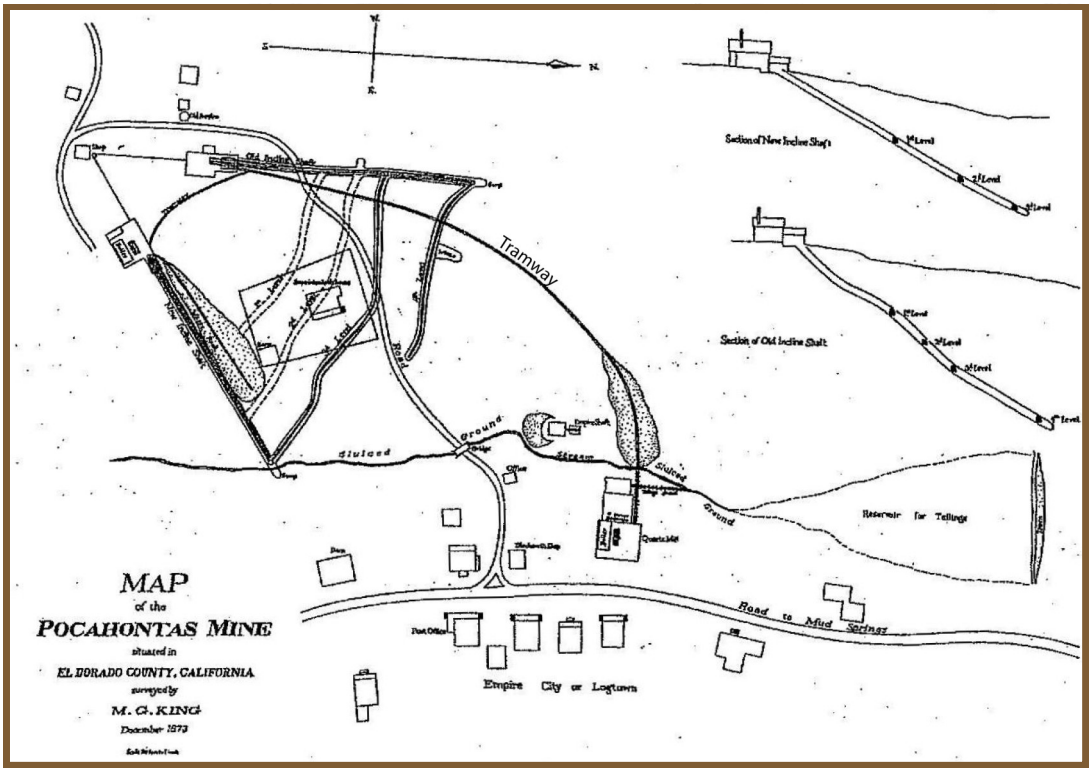
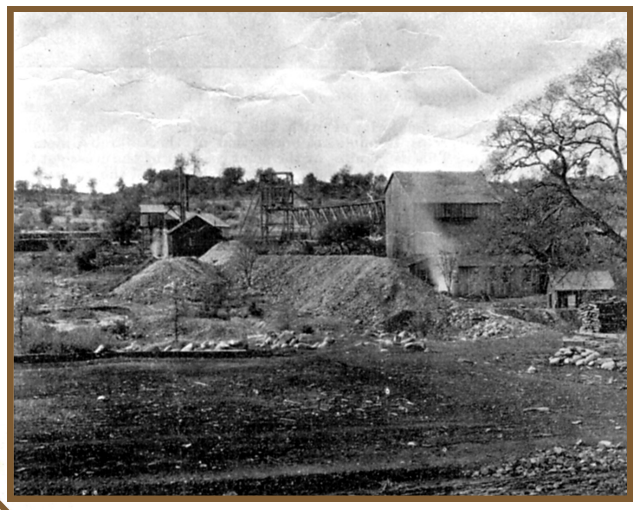


Figure 5-9: 1873 King Map of the Pocahontas Mine and "Empire City or Logtown."



El Dorado County Historical Museum

Figure 5-10: The Pocahontas mine and mill, probably taken in the late 1890s. The bridge-like wooden structure and tower at the rear of the mill are part of the tramway shown in Figure 5-9.

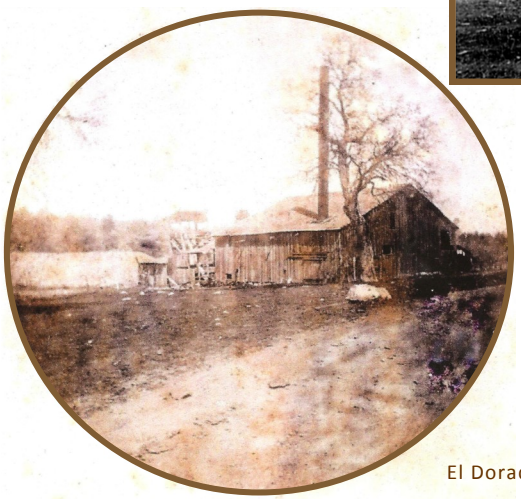


Figure 5-11. Pocahontas boiler building, view from the road. The mill is in the background. Date unknown.

El Dorado County Historical Museum

Mid- to Late-1870s The fortunes of the Pocahontas decline rapidly in the mid-1870s. The national economy fell into depression—the Panic of 1873—and this could have cut off investment in the mine. The backers of the Pocahontas quite possibly suffered losses in their other enterprises. By 1874, the Pocahontas is sold at a sheriff's sale for unpaid taxes. The property is described at that time as including 60 acres of land in Logtown Creek, 1500 feet of the Pocahontas Quartz Vein, and 1400 feet of the Empire Extension. Over the next few years, El Dorado County records are filled with judgments against the company for everything from non-payment of taxes to claims for unpaid bills. In 1878 the Pocahontas Gold Mining Company is mortgaged to Andrew Kohler, of Oakland, for $8,000. The inventory of property includes land, a fifteen-stamp mill, hoisting works, dwelling house and other buildings, tools and implements. Some additional details are found in an 1879 judgment of $1269.42 in favor of one C. J. Eaton, plaintiff, vs. the Pocahontas Gold Mining Company. The judgment is levied against property listed in the mortgage, but also mentions an air compressor and engine, and an Ingersoll drill battery. Compressed air drills were a tremendous technological advance over the painfully slow hand drills, or steam drills that only added to the humid, foul air underground. The Pocahontas kept its equipment up to date, even while it fell behind in the bills. By 1878, the Logtown mines are reported as not doing well, although as usual "new owners" predicted the Pocahontas would reopen soon.

INGERSOLL ROCK DRILL

The Ingersoll Rock Drill Company, formed in 1871, was the leading manufacturer of the steam and compressed air rock drills that revolutionized hard-rock mining during the 1870s. An 1879 article in *Manufacturer and Building Magazine* listed the exceptional qualities of the Ingersoll Drill:

1st. Durability, so that expense could be saved, both as to repairs and loss of time resulting from breakage;

2nd. Simplicity, so that any ordinary workman could operate the machine efficiently;

3rd. Light weight, so that two persons could easily handle and carry the drill, which is extremely essential in mines;

4th. Adjustability, so that the machine could be readily placed in position for boring holes at any angle.

Figure 5-12: Underground miner at work with a compressed air drill, similar to those manufactured by the Ingersoll Rock Drill Company. Note the candle mounted above the miner's head. This photo was taken at the Church Mine, in Martinez Canyon on the east side of Logtown Ridge, probably during the 1870s.

El Dorado County Historical Museum

1882 Andrew Kohler becomes owner by virtue of a Sheriff's sale, for $8,220.80, presumably because the company defaulted on his mortgage. Kohler has the Pocahontas claim surveyed for a patent application on behalf of the Pocahontas Gold Mining Company. The surveyor's notes offer an updated description of the mine. There are two shafts, the Burlingham and Pocahontas, the former 300 feet deep and the latter 400 feet deep. Both are "filled up," most likely flooded with water, but perhaps caved in. There are houses and other buildings noted, and a new shaft to the east of Logtown Road. The surveyor describes the lode as about two feet in width, and comprised of high grade ore. The challenge at the Pocahontas was not necessarily a lack of good ore, but the complicated job of getting to the ore, getting it out of the ground, milling it—and making money.

1884 The Pocahontas reopens, at least briefly. Andrew Kohler enters into an agreement with George S. Wilson, in which Wilson agrees to erect hoisting works and work the Pocahontas to 400 feet, and put the mine and mill building in good condition and repair. He is also to sink a well-timbered shaft, 4½ by 7½ feet, deep enough to meet the main ledge, to take out 50 tons of milling ore, and mill it for one-half the profits. Along with payment for his work, Kohler agrees to give Wilson one-half the mine and mill upon completion, and Wilson agrees to hire competent laborers and mechanics. It is not clear how much progress Wilson makes. Kohler dies in 1885, and Wilson turns his contract over to Alpheus Staples. Staples is a Logtown property owner, so this sale brings the Pocahontas back to local control. The mine apparently operates sporadically. In 1888, the California State Mining Bureau does not list the Pocahontas among the 49 working mines in El Dorado County.

1890s The Pocahontas is open again in 1893. An article in the Placerville *Mountain Democrat* describes the owner and his irrepressible optimism. "A. D. Staples . . . is at work on an extension of the old Pocahontas, and has a shaft down about sixty feet, taking out some fine looking quartz, rich in free gold. He has had several opportunities to bond this mine, but thinks he has a good thing and prefers to keep a controlling interest. We hope to see these mines realize the very bright promises they gave of future wealth." A few years later, the *Report of the State Mineralogist for the Two Years Ending September 15, 1896*, includes further description of the Pocahontas. "There are two veins, 300 feet apart, designated the Empire and the Pocahontas, both dipping east. The formation is quartz porphyry on the surface, but at a depth of 495 feet, slate is encountered. The Pocahontas vein is from 4 to 9 feet wide, the Empire 20 inches." The report goes on to say "a steam hoist will soon be placed over one of the shafts, along with a temporary pump capable of moving 10,000 gallons per hour (to be replaced later by a Cornish jackhead pump). Outside the mine, a 700-foot-long tramway leads to the mill." The report ends with the observation that "seven men are employed," which are too few to run the operation as described, and indicates work has not yet gone beyond planning and wishful thinking. The mine is backed by New York ownership, with James Richards of El Dorado as superintendant.

By the late 1890s, the Pocahontas is once again insolvent. On two occasions the company is sued and its equipment sold at sheriff's sales to satisfy debts. In 1897, James Richards sues for $4,356 and $1,963.72 in unpaid bills for goods and services. He wins the suit and the Pocahontas mining equipment and real estate are sold at auction. In a second sheriff's sale, in 1898, more equipment is sold to the highest bidder. Mining apparently ends for good at the Pocahontas during the first few years of the twentieth century.

By 1919, according to the California State Mining Bureau report for that year, all the Pocahontas machinery had been dismantled and sold, and the shafts caved in.

The roughly two decades between the early 1850s and the mid-1870s were Logtown's most productive years, but the fortunes of individual mines varied widely. Profits stimulated expansion and investment in new equipment, and attracted investors and corporations, and the cycle continued even when conditions deteriorated. There always seemed to be someone willing to take a chance on Logtown, but the mines generally declined during the 1880s and 1890s. By the end of the nineteenth century, the upswings could no longer keep pace with the downturns.

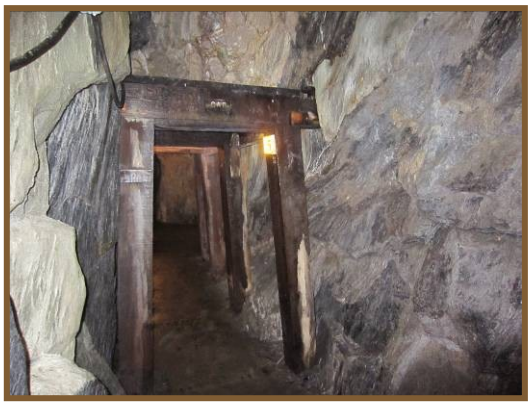
GOLD BUG PARK AND MINE

The Gold Bug Park and Mine, in Placerville, offers a complete look at mining in the Mother Lode area. The mine itself captures the feel of what it was like to work in an underground mine, even though it has been outfitted with electric lights and a wooden walkway for guided and self-guided tours. The Gold Bug dates to the 1880s, and most of the work was completed before 1910. It was typical of the hundreds of "mom and pop" mines in the region. Families or a small number of partners owned and operated the mines, which often only provided a part-time income to the miners. The Bidstrup Mine in Logtown Ravine was one of these family mines.

Pacific Legacy, Inc.

Figure 5-13: Gold Bug Mine Portal (above).

Figure 5-14: Gold Bug Mine Interior (below).

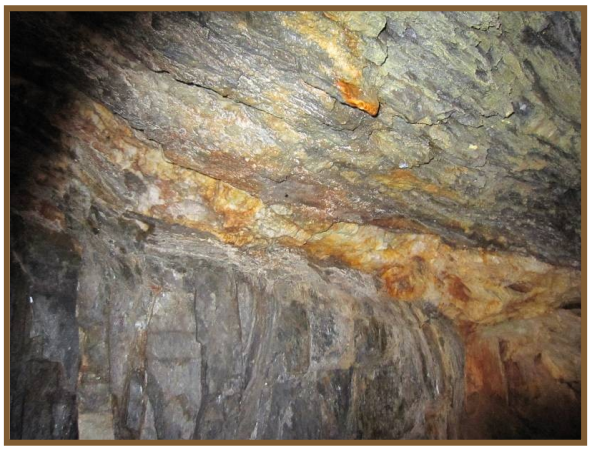


Pacific Legacy, Inc.

The Gold Bug "drift" extends 352 feet into the hillside. The interior of the mine is close, damp and—in summer—remarkably cool. The temperature underground remains at 50-55 degrees, while water constantly drips from the ceiling and seeps down the sides of the tunnel. Gold-bearing quartz veins can also be seen in the walls and ceiling. The empty chambers, or stopes, leading out from the main adit (a horizontal underground passage) show how the miners followed these veins in whatever direction they went—including straight up.

Pacific Legacy, Inc.

Figure 5-15: Ore car, tracks, and loading chute.



Pacific Legacy, Inc.

Figure 5-16: A quartz vein the ceiling of the tunnel.

The Gold Bug Park also includes a small but very informative museum and interpretive center, an original stamp mill and a working scale model, a gift shop, and a number of other mining displays and activities. Hiking trails lead to a number of historic mining features in the park. Among them are a typical dry ravine and creek, where early placer miners would have panned for gold; stamp mill tailings; small, exploratory "drifts" and trenches; and ditches that brought water for mining and milling from the area's streams and reservoirs.

The Gold Bug Park and Mine is owned and operated by the City of Placerville. At least 20,000 people visit each year, and 4,000 school children tour the mine as part of their fourth-grade study of California history.

Pacific Legacy, Inc.

Figure 5-17: Museum and Interpretive Center.

The boarding house was for all practical purposes a drafty, cramped two-story wooden box. It sweltered in the summer heat, but offered a bed at night in the honeycomb of little upstairs rooms, and breakfast and dinner in the dining room downstairs. For an extra ten cents a day you got a lunch bucket with a few slices of bread and cold meat. The others finished breakfast while you puffed on your pipe, and drank the last of your watery coffee. In a few minutes it would be time to take the short walk across Logtown Creek, and up the hill to the mine.

An oversized wood plank building enclosed the entry to the mine, and the hoisting works. It offered some protection against the weather, but became stifling hot in the summer. The boiler that powered the hissing steam engine redoubled the heat and humidity of the still air. A wide leather belt looped from the engine to the large steel spool wrapped in flat, braided wire cable. The cable was hooked to a string of ore cars, pulling them up the inclined track, or lowering them—empty—back down into the darkness.

El Dorado County Historical Museum

Figure 6-1: Miners at the Church Mine, near Logtown, in the 1870s. Note the candles each man is holding.

You rode the empty oar cars—four or five men to a car—down the incline, tethered to the slowly unwinding cable. The air quickly cooled, much to everyone's relief, and the darkness enveloped everything but the feeble glow of the lantern set on the floor between your feet. If not for the slight lurching of the ore car, and the rumble of steel wheels on the tracks, you would hardly know you were moving.

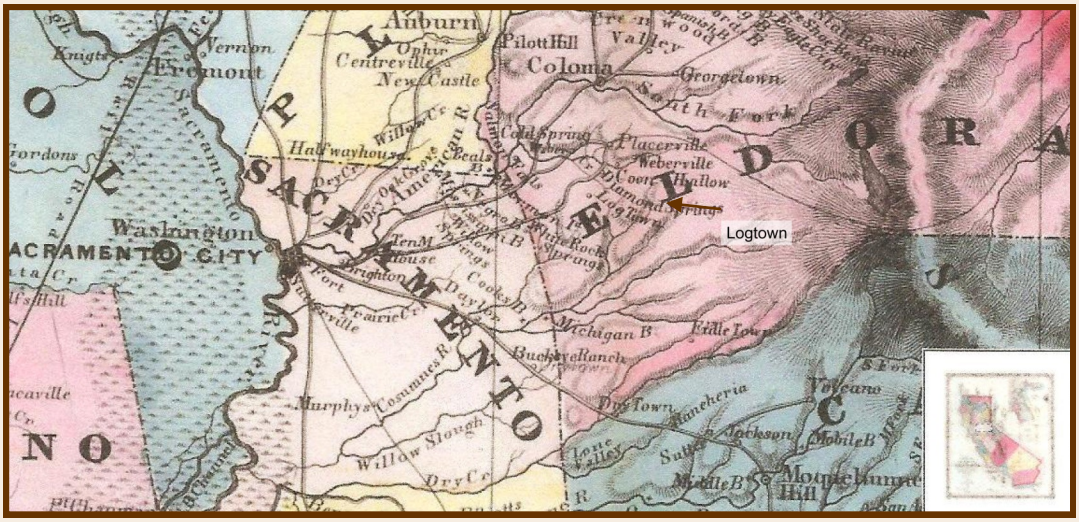
The car stopped at the 100 foot level, at a large alcove carved from the rock. The crew scrambled onto the platform, around the wooden ore bin and the steel chute that extended out over the ore car. Someone lit the two or three candles mounted on the wall and you made your way almost by feel down a short, narrow tunnel.

It ended abruptly, just as your feet came up against a pile of rubble on the floor. The rock around you was inky black and glistened in the water which seeped down the walls and dripped from the ceiling. Your eyes began to adjust, and you could see in the rock at the end of the tunnel the two-foot-wide vein of ghostly white quartz you had been following for weeks.

The last thing the crew had done yesterday was set off the charges packed into the drill holes at the end of the tunnel. The smell of powder and rock dust still lingered in the air. The first job today was mucking out the broken-up rock on the floor and then—with a pick—break loose whatever you could from the fractured vein. The rock would be carried in buckets the short distance back to the ore bin, but before the tunnel got much longer you would lay rails and transport the rock in a small ore car. Once the face of the tunnel was cleared, the process began again with a new set of drill holes. One man held the drill bit, another pounded it with a sledgehammer, each blow making the hole a bare fraction of an inch deeper. The holes—anywhere up to a dozen—were a foot or so deep. They were packed with powder, and fuses set so they would explode in sequence, beginning at the center of the pattern. One man would light the fuses, then retreat with the others to the safety of the alcove and await the explosion.

The work was hard, and dangerous, but wages were steady. There was always money left for a drink after you settled up with the boarding house at the end of the week. But it was not the fortune you had come to California to make. No matter what they paid you, you were never going to ride the ore car up the inclined shaft at the end of the day and emerge through the doors of the hoisting works a rich man.

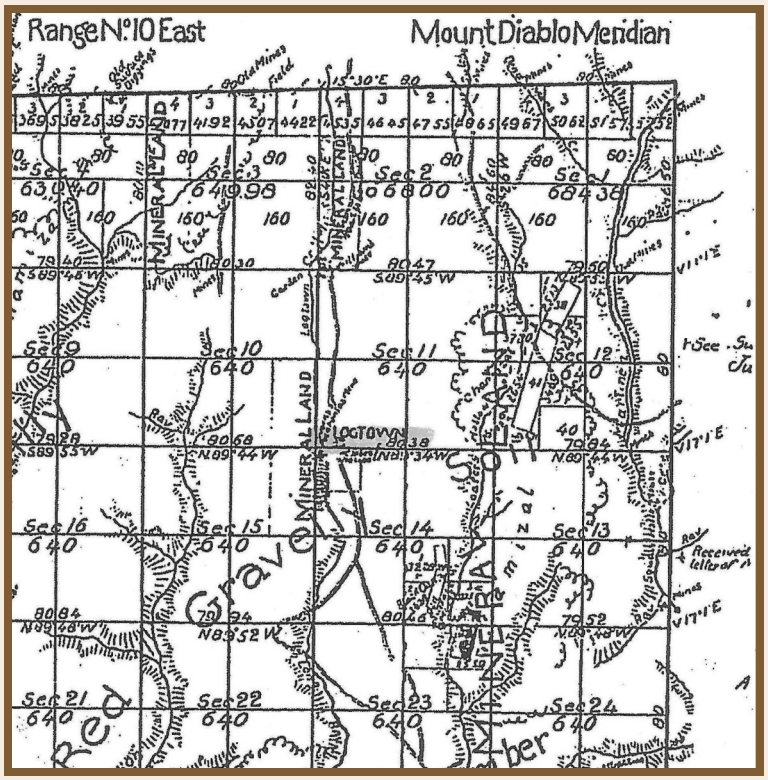
The Placerville *Mountain Democrat* set the scene at Logtown in February, 1858. Everyone in town, the article says, "is more or less interested in quartz mining, and quartz is the constant topic of the day." There were six major quartz mills in the region, and three of these—the Lamoille, Pocahontas, and the Empire—were in Logtown. The six mills employed at least 175 men, and we can assume 80 to 90 of them worked at Logtown. According to the census, as many as 160 people could have been living in the Logtown area in 1860, encompassing



David Rumsey Historical Map Collection

Figure 6-2: Logtown on the 1854 *Official Map of the State of California.*

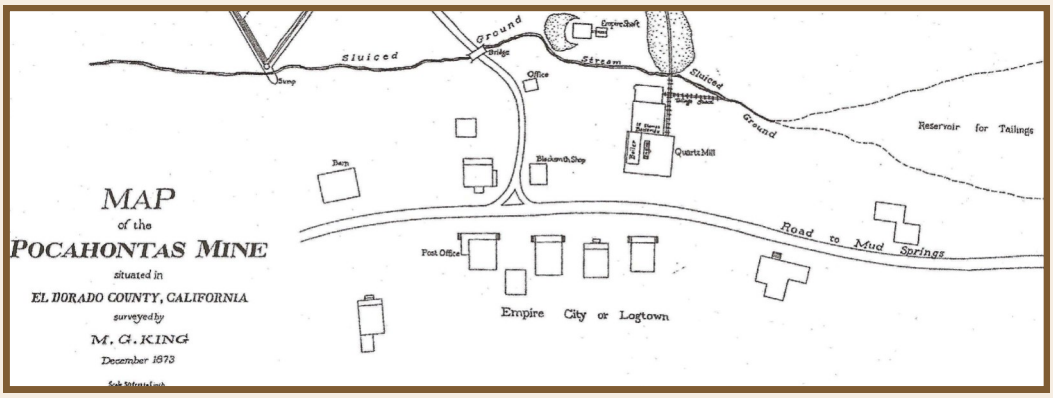
the entire three mile length of Logtown Ravine from the divide toward the southern outskirts of El Dorado. More likely, most people made their homes along a three-quarter mile section of Logtown Creek between the Pocahontas Mill on the south and the Lamoille claim to the north.



Bureau of Land Management

Figure 6-3: 1870 General Land Office Map, T9N R10E.

Logtown was never officially surveyed and mapped. The town apparently never developed to the point of including formal city blocks, lots, and streets. The evidence we do have of Logtown's layout comes from brief newspaper descriptions and mining claims and patents. The most detailed of these is an 1873 King Map, that includes the Pocahontas Mine and Mill, and a group of adjacent structures labeled "Empire City or Logtown." Logtown consisted of a loose collection of houses, and a few commercial buildings, spread out along Logtown Ravine and clustered near the mines and mills. You could probably walk from one end of the core residential area to the other in half an hour or less, and you would always know you were in a mining town. The most prominent buildings enclosed the hoisting works and mills, and the sounds of steam engines, the clanking of machinery, the grinding of the arrastra stones, and the deafening pounding of the stamp mills would be unmistakable.



California History Room, California State Library, Sacramento, California

Figure 6-4: "Empire City or Logtown," as shown on the M.G. King Pocahontas Mine Map, 1873.

LOGTOWN SNAPSHOT: THE 1860 CENSUS

Beginning with the 1860 Census, the census takers combined their counts of Logtown, El Dorado, and the scattered miners and farmers in southwestern Mud Springs Township. With some sleuthing, we can get an idea of which census sheets cover Logtown. The census taker for the area—a Mr. Larkin—would have gone door to door from one end of town to the other, questioning the residents and recording information about them. We also have numerous official county documents from the time—deeds, mining claims, bills of sale—in which individuals identify themselves as residents of Logtown. By searching the original census sheets for these known Logtown residents, we can identify which pages Mr. Larkin recorded in Logtown.

It appears Mr. Larkin worked his way from south to north, recording nine families who formed the core of Logtown. He first encountered the Goldy family, who lived several hundred yards south of the Empire Mill. James Goldy also appears as one of the first locators of the Pocahontas claim. The Gilmores were the last Logtown family. In 1861, Nathan Gilmore claimed a homestead on the west side of Logtown Creek, about one-half mile south of El Dorado. He later owned land northwest of the Pocahontas Mine. Like many of the early residents, Nathan Gilmore became a prominent regional figure. In 1863 he discovered Glen Alpine Springs near Lake Tahoe, and later opened a resort at the location, touting its "curative waters." He also served as Treasurer, Assessor, and Tax Collector for El Dorado County. He died in Placerville in 1898.

There are seven other families on Mr. Larkin's list between the Goldys and Gilmores, totaling 28 residents. It also seems likely, from the *Mountain Democrat's* 1858 description of 80-90 mine and mill workers in Logtown, that more than 28 people would have called Logtown home a short two years later. Mr. Larkin enumerated the nine core Logtown families on July 23, 1860, but he also filled several other pages on that same day. It is possible to expand our view to include the rest of the people Mr. Larkin counted on the 23rd as residents of "Logtown and vicinity," as the area was referred to on the 1850 Census.

Core Logtown Families—1860 Census

Total Residents	Dwellings	Families	Adult Males	Adult Females	Children (under 16)
28	9	9*	19	5	4

*The census taker did not distinguish individual families within each dwelling. While there were several obvious family units consisting of mother, father, and children, they also in several instances shared the dwelling with apparently unrelated individuals.

Color (The three options on the form are *white, black, mulatto*) - Everyone was white except three Chinese, in one household.

Origin — 10 different states and 3 different countries (Denmark, Scotland, China).

Profession, Occupation, or Trade — 19 adult males listed occupations, 14 miners, 3 laborers, one peddler, and one farmer.

Real Estate — Six families or individuals owned real estate; four valued at between $100 and $400; one at $2,000 and one at $3,000. Five individuals listed personal estates, ranging from $150 to $700 in value.

Logtown and Vicinity 1860 Census, including the Logtown Core

Total Residents	Dwellings	Families	Adult Males	Adult Females	Children (under 16)
160	55	55	107	20	33

Color — Everyone was white except sixteen Chinese, in three households.

Place of Birth — 22 different states and 14 different countries (All European with the exception of China, Mexico, and Canada).

Profession, Occupation, or Trade - Of the 107 adult males who listed occupations, 79 were miners; 8 farmers; 7 laborers; 4 teamsters; 2 "milkmen;" 2 cooks and one each physician, grocer, wood chopper, peddler, and merchant.

As early as 1854, Logtown was important enough to appear on *The Official Map of the State of California*, produced by R. A. Eddy. It also warranted its own voting precinct in the election of that year. While the Eddy map did not show a road through Logtown, it was a stop on the Placerville to Drytown route of the Condee and Company stageline. Drytown was about 15 miles south of Logtown. The stages made three stops a week in 1854, increasing to daily trips by the spring of 1855. In the middle of March, 1856, some Drytown residents started their own, tri-weekly line along the same route.

A look at the 160 people in "Logtown and vicinity" in 1860 shows, like the Gold Rush census of 1850, a predominantly male population. Mining is by far the most common occupation. Many miners lived by themselves, but they also shared households with other single men. In a couple of places, they boarded with married couples. In contrast to 1850, Logtown included about fifteen family units consisting of husband, wife, and children. These were almost equally divided between farm and mining families.

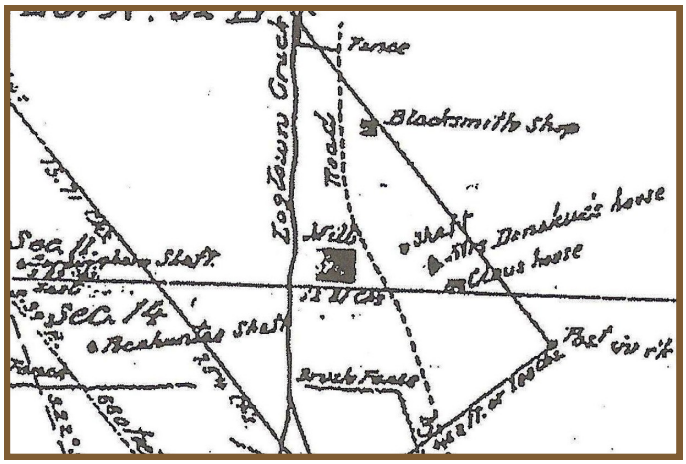
But life revolved around mining. The first household listed in the Logtown core area consisted of James D Goldy, his wife Lydia, and Nathan Decatur Burlingham. The Goldy house was at the southern end of the Logtown core area, south of the Empire Mill. James Goldy was 34, his wife Lydia was 22, and Nathan Burlingham was 28. The Census lists both Goldy and Burlingham as born in New York. They shared a house in 1860, and would later become business partners, so it seems likely they knew each other in the east and came to California together during the Gold Rush. Mining and property documents show both men were in California by 1850 or 51. They became partners in the Empire Lode in

1861, and part owners of the Pocahontas later in the decade. One of the inclined shafts at the Pocahontas was sometimes referred to as the "Burlingham shaft." In 1869, Goldy sold a portion of the Pocahontas Quartz Vein to Burlingham for $4200. The Pocahontas was subsequently incorporated along with the Empire and several other claims as the Pocahontas Gold Mining Company, but Goldy and Burlingham are not among the trustees. The 1870 Census has Burlingham—now married and with three children—still living at Logtown. There is no mention of James and Lydia Goldy. Burlingham and his family eventually moved to the Georgetown area, and are listed in the 1880 Census as residents of Kelsey. Nathan Decatur Burlingham became a venerated pioneer as a member of the society of "Territorial Pioneers of 1849 and 1850," that counted among its members anyone who settled in California prior to statehood.

The Close family, who lived near the center of the core Logtown area, also offers insight into mining town life. Their names first appear in the El Dorado County Marriage Certificates in 1858, when Seymour Close married Sarah A. Sackett in Logtown. The Close family appears on three US Censuses: 1860, 1870, and 1880. Their house was also mapped on the 1870 General Land Office map of the area, and an 1882 mineral survey map of the Pocahontas Mine. They live alone in 1860, with Seymour's occupation listed as miner. In 1870, Seymour is a seventy year old teamster, and Sarah is "keeping house." They share their residence with five boarders—apparently all single men, all miners, as well as three children belonging to one of the miners. The couple is last enumerated in 1880. They are again living alone, with Seymour's occupation listed as farmer. Seymour Close died in 1882, and his wife passed away fifteen months later. They were buried in the El Dorado cemetery, but noted as residents of Logtown.

STORIES BEHIND THE NAMES

The names on a census form can lead us to stories of life in places like nineteenth-century Logtown. James D. and Lydia Goldy, and Nathan Burlingham, shared a household in Logtown in 1860. By 1870, Nathan Burlingham is married, has three children, and still lives in Logtown. Neither James nor Lydia Goldy are listed in the 1870 Census, however a James Goldy, age 9, lives in Placerville with Phillip and Annie Teare. In 1880, Nathan and Louisa Burlingham and their now five children live in Kelsey, about five miles north of Placerville. James D. Goldy—by this time a widower—lives next door. Lydia Goldy has passed away, perhaps dying in childbirth if the young James Goldy living in Placerville with the Teare family in 1870 is her son. In 1880, thirty years after they came to California together, James Goldy and Nathan Burlingham are again neighbors. The Burlinghams' youngest child, a daughter age 7, is named Lydia.



Bureau of Land Management

Figure 6-5: The Close (Clous) house shown on the Pocahontas Mineral Survey map, across the road from the Pocahontas Mill.

LOGTOWN SNAPSHOT: THE 1870 CENSUS

The 1870 Census presents the same challenge of isolating Logtown residents from the rest of the Mud Springs Township. It was possible, again, to use other types of records to identify families with property at approximately the north and south ends of Logtown. The Logtown of 1870 lay between the Williams and Close families at the south end, and Moses Kelsea at the north.

Logtown 1870

Total Residents	Dwellings	Families	Adult Males	Adult Females	Children (under 16)
67	15	15	39	8	20

Children—Four of the children are noted as having attended school during the current year; many are too young but it appears only about half the school-age children attended school, no doubt in El Dorado as there was no school in Logtown.

Color—Everyone was white except 8 Chinese in 3 households.

Origin (place of birth) - Ten different states, Mexico, China, and 4 European countries, including England and Wales, Denmark, Ireland, and Poland.

Profession, Occupation, or Trade of Males over 15—Of the 36 males who listed occupations, 24 are mining related (16 miners, plus 5 quartz mill workers, 3 men listed as "engineer in quartz mine," and one as superintendent of a quartz mill); other male occupations include 3 saloon keepers, 2 cooks; 3 blacksmiths; and a stock raiser, farmer, carpenter, and teamster. Eight women are listed as "keeping house," and one woman is a bartender.

Real Estate—Seven different properties totaling $2000 in value are listed. They are owned by people of all occupations, including farmers, and probably represent residences. In addition, Moses Miller, a blacksmith, lists real estate valued at $12,000. This would make him by far the wealthiest property owner in Logtown.

The 1870 Census recorded a moment in Logtown history just after a number of mines and mills had consolidated to form the Pocahontas Gold Mining Company. The prosperous years of the early 1870s were just ahead. The *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 20, 1872, offered a thumbnail description of Logtown as "a pious hamlet in Mud Springs Township, El Dorado County." The *Mountain Democrat* of April 29, 1871 went into more detail: "Miner's cabins and suitable family residences dot the surface in all directions, and the question is often asked will Logtown be the El Dorado of our Township, or will El Dorado supplant the Logtown of the same." Logtown, in the eyes of at least one newspaper reporter, now rivaled El Dorado. The residents of Logtown may have seen themselves the same way. The 1873 map of the Pocahontas Mine labeled the central area of town "Empire City or Logtown." We do not know who decided to rename the town after the Empire Mine and Mill, but it certainly sounded more impressive and relevant than the "logs" of Logtown.

The 1870 Logtown households reflect many of the same living arrangements as the 1860 census. Five families are headed by a husband and wife, the husband being a miner. Three of these families have also taken in boarders. One includes six children, ages 5 to 16, plus two Chinese men—one a cook, and one a farmer. A second family, comprised of a miner, his wife and three children, ages 2 to 6, has eight boarders. Two are Chinese miners, one man is a blacksmith, and one is listed as an engineer in a quartz mill. The third family, Seymour and Sarah Close, have no children but their household includes four adult male miners, and another man—also a miner—and his three children, ages 8 to 10. Another household is comprised of four Chinese men, all quartz mill workers.

No merchants are listed in 1870. There are three saloon keepers and one woman bartender, cooks, and blacksmiths, but no retailers. This could be an accident of the census, in the way people answered questions about their occupations. Or it could be that Logtown residents were able to buy what they needed from the small but diverse business district in El Dorado. There may not have been enough business to warrant setting up shop in Logtown.

The views of Logtown from the 1860 and 1870 censuses reflect a way of life that did not markedly change over the course of ten years. The basic elements of life in a mining town remained the same, but this cannot be said of the following decades in which mining at Logtown—the underpinning of this way of life—finally gave way to a different economy.

CHAPTER 7 — TRANSITION

The 1880 Census showed little change in the total population of the Mud Springs Township, which stood at 1,561. Mining remained the most common occupation, with farming second. The development of the township's infrastructure was shown by the addition of stagecoach drivers, ditch agents, and railroad workers. The Census of 1890 was destroyed during the 1920s, but the 1900 Census confirmed what people living in the Mother Lode region could already see for themselves: ranching and agriculture were replacing mining as the foundation of the economy. For the first time, census takers counted more farmers in El Dorado County than mine and mill workers.

A traveler on the road from El Dorado to Nashville would still see the old mines and mills along Logtown Ravine, but most were idle, and some had been stripped of their machinery and abandoned. The noise and bustle of the 1870s were gone, replaced by cattle grazing among empty buildings and weed-covered waste rock piles and mill tailings. The LaMoille and some of the smaller mines closed by 1896, and the Pocahontas stood idle. Its machinery had been auctioned off to satisfy unpaid debts. The Minnehaha remained open, and according to the *Mountain Democrat* of April 7, 1900, was working a vein 18 inches wide, with a four-stamp mill in operation. The article lauded the two miners in charge, Froelich and Perham, for their "perseverance and common sense methods." While the writer complimented the two for their sensible, conservative approach, "perseverance and common sense" were a far cry from the excitement and risk-taking of Logtown's heyday.

Agriculture's rise, and mining's decline, was described in a history of El Dorado County, *California's El Dorado Yesterday and Today*, written after the turn of the century.

> *Mining, no doubt, will continue to be one of the great resources of this county, but each succeeding year more distinctly marks the boundary between the two great pursuits, mining and agriculture. The former, steadily on the decline, leaves but a wreck behind, without a shadow of hope for recuperative energy. The latter steadily augments the wealth of the county, affords constant employment, and permanent homes, cultivating not only the rich valley land, but daily extending its lines toward the Sierras . . . fencing, plowing, planting, and reaping over and around the deserted ditches, sluice-ways, tunnels, and shafts."*

The author clearly liked the changes he saw. His harsh assessment of mining probably reflected the animosity California farmers felt toward the hydraulic mining industry. Hydraulic mining in the upper reaches of the Yuba, Bear, and American Rivers from the 1860s to the early 1880s had choked these rivers with huge volumes of gravel and sediment that literally buried lowland farms. It was only stopped after a successful lawsuit pitting farmers against the mining companies.

ANCIENT RIVERS AND THE SAWYER DECISION

For tens of millions of years, the landscape of the west slope of the Sierra Nevada was constantly rearranged by uplift, erosion, volcanism, and other geological processes. New rivers were created, while some ancient channels were left high and dry. The early prospectors quickly realized these old river channels were also rich in placer gold deposits. They used hydraulic mining—essentially placer mining on a gigantic scale—to get at the gold. Unfortunately, hydraulic mining washed countless tons of sand and gravel into rivers and streams and eventually buried thousands of acres of downstream farms under "slickens," as the debris was called.

This led to a bitter political and legal fight between mining and agricultural interests, which came to a head late in 1883 and early 1884. Throughout the 1870s, farmers mounted one protest after another against hydraulic mining. They took their arguments to the state legislature and state court, only to see the problem ignored or half-heartedly addressed with dams and levees—which ultimately did not work. In 1882, they took their case—*Edwards Woodruff vs. North Bloomfield Gravel and Mining Company et al.*—to federal court in San Francisco. In January, 1884, after more than a year of evidence and argument, they won. Judge Lorenzo Sawyer granted a perpetual injunction against hydraulic mining in the Yuba River basin. With the force of the federal government behind it, this ruling effectively ended hydraulic mining everywhere in the state.

Even in the early days of the Gold Rush, new arrivals to El Dorado County recognized the area's agricultural potential. The moderate climate, relatively gentle topography, plentiful rainfall and year-round water supply originating from summer snowmelt in the Sierra Nevada created ideal conditions for raising grain, fruit, vegetables, and livestock. Farmers focused initially on raising feed—barley, wheat, oats and hay—for the draft animals that powered everything from stagecoaches to arrastras. Irrigated vegetable fields, and peach and apple orchards soon followed, and by 1860 El Dorado County grew more orchard produce than any other county in the state.

Ten years later—in 1870—El Dorado County agricultural statistics showed how the county's farmers were successfully filling the needs of the mining communities. There were over 4,000 milk cows, almost 5,500 head of cattle, 4,000 swine, and over 18,000 sheep in the county. Grain production included 8,330 bushels of barley and 5,280 bushels of wheat, rye, corn, oats, and buckwheat. Over 6,000 tons of hay were grown. Vegetable crops included 1,251 bushels of peas and beans and 5,728 bushels of potatoes. Other products included almost 40,000 pounds of wool, 224,885 pounds of butter, 23,892 pounds of cheese, and 1,660 pounds of honey. Viticulture—grape and wine production—was also well established by this time, with the county making 108,981 gallons of wine that year. In 1869, the transcontinental railroad opened the nation to California products. The development of refrigerated railroad cars in the mid-1880s created whole new markets for growers of perishable fruits and vegetables—like the farmers of El Dorado County.

At the turn of the century, the California State Agricultural Society was praising El Dorado County's climate, and recounted the agricultural potential and accomplishments of the county. Nowhere else in the world, the Society reported, did one find a "greater variety of climate with a more agreeable and healthful general result" than in El Dorado County—ranging from the Sacramento Valley, where snow never falls, to the Sierra Nevada, where snow is twenty feet deep in winter. According to the report, the foothill area in between the valley and the mountains yielded hay and grain and irrigated clover and alfalfa. In the western part of the county, olives, figs, and grapes adapted perfectly to the soil and climate. Father east, at elevations between 500 and 2,000 feet, peaches, plums, nectarines, prunes, and cherries flourished, as did apples and pears at somewhat higher elevations between 2,500 and 3,500 feet. Grapes and olives thrived under irrigation, along with vegetables like potatoes, cabbage, and beets. Dairying was profitable, although the Agricultural Society report pointed out that the county's dairymen were only just beginning to introduce modern methods and machinery.

El Dorado County Historical Museum

Figure 7-1: Picking fruit in El Dorado County about 1920.

At Logtown, agriculture and the last of the mines existed side by side, although the ravine was used for grazing rather than growing the grain, vegetables, and fruit found in the rest of the county. This was not exactly new: pioneer accounts note ranchers used the Logtown area as winter range as early as the 1860s. In some cases, mining and agriculture shared the same piece of land. In 1886, a conflict arose when Andrew Kohler—pursuing his 1882 patent application for the Pocahontas Mine—had his application rejected because it apparently included about 20 acres of Ferdinand Bidstrup's homestead application. The fate of Kohler's application is not clear, but a bill of sale was recorded between Ferdinand and Elise Bidstrup and Kohler's widow, in which the sellers reserved the right to use the surface for agricultural purposes, while the buyers "can enter and build any mining works and sink shafts as necessary."

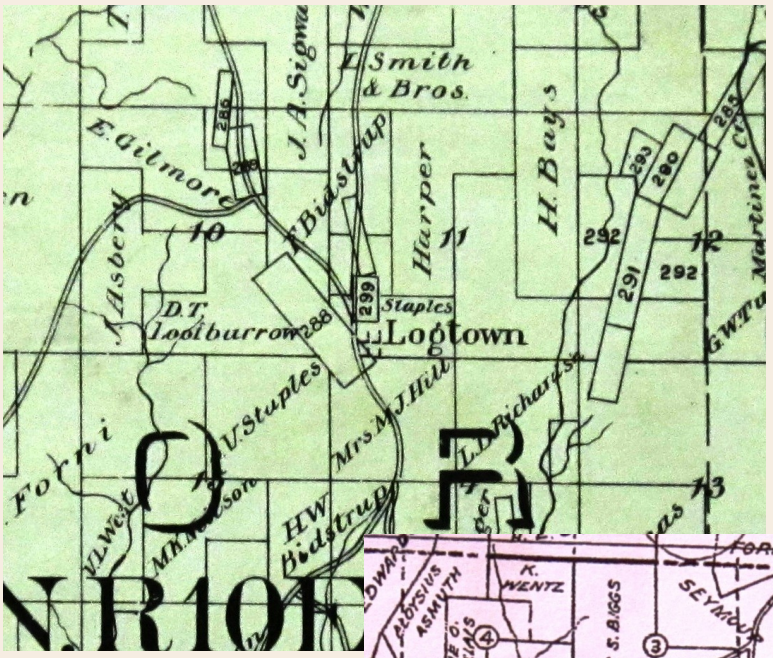
Steve and Ronda Brooks

Figure 7-2: Ferdinand and Elise Bidstrup.

During the 1880s and 1890s, land in Logtown Ravine was consolidated into larger parcels owned by fewer individuals and families. By 1895, the Bidstrup, Hill, and Staples families owned the core Logtown area. The 1895 Placer County map still showed Logtown as a separate entity, and the symbols on the map seem to indicate structures at the location. The 1900 census also reflected how the changing relationship between mining and farming affected the Logtown population. Ferdinand Bidstrup, by then a widower, lived in Logtown with his son Walter, and daughters Nettie and Alice. His occupation was listed as farmer, and Walter's as a gold miner. The census pages before and after the Bidstrup family include fewer of the typical mining "households" of previous censuses—namely groups of unrelated single men living under one roof. The Bidstrup's immediate neighbors were one exception. The household—probably a boarding house—consisted of several miners, a mine laborer, a mining engineer, a cook, and a dishwasher. But elsewhere in the Logtown area, family units—including mining families—far outnumbered the households of single, unrelated miners.

The Bidstrups spanned the time between Logtown's mining days and the eventual change to an agricultural economy. Family members were deeply involved in both mining and agriculture. The Bidstrup brothers, Hans William and Ferdinand, arrived in El Dorado County in the mid-1860s. In 1864, Hans William paid $700 for one acre of land, including a "house and garden and field at Logtown, known as the Sacramento Store." The 1870 Census listed him as a stock raiser who lived by himself and owned real estate valued at $400. In 1881, Ferdinand Bidstrup bought 120 acres of land encompassing the top of the ridge on the west side of Logtown Ravine, north of town. Between 1881 and 1900, Hans and Ferdinand expanded their holdings south of the divide at the head of Logtown Creek. They also acquired land north of Logtown, and on Logtown Ridge east of town.

The family's mining interests included the Bidstrup and Bonner Quartz Claim at the northern end of Logtown Ravine, filed by Hans W. Bidstrup and Frank Bonner in 1877. It was described as "500 ft south of the Eureka Canal Company ditch at or near the dwelling of William Bidstrup." Ferdinand Bidstrup located the Centennial Quartz Mine Claim situated on the east bank of the "west branch" of Logtown Ravine, which was actually Slate Creek, just southwest of El Dorado. In 1878, Ferdinand filed a placer claim in Logtown Ravine. One of these Logtown claims later became the Bidstrup Mine. The 1894 California State Mineralogist Bulletin described it as a small claim, 800 feet by 400 feet, owned by F. T. Bidstrup of Mud Springs.



El Dorado County Historical Museum

Figure 7-3: El Dorado County property map 1895.

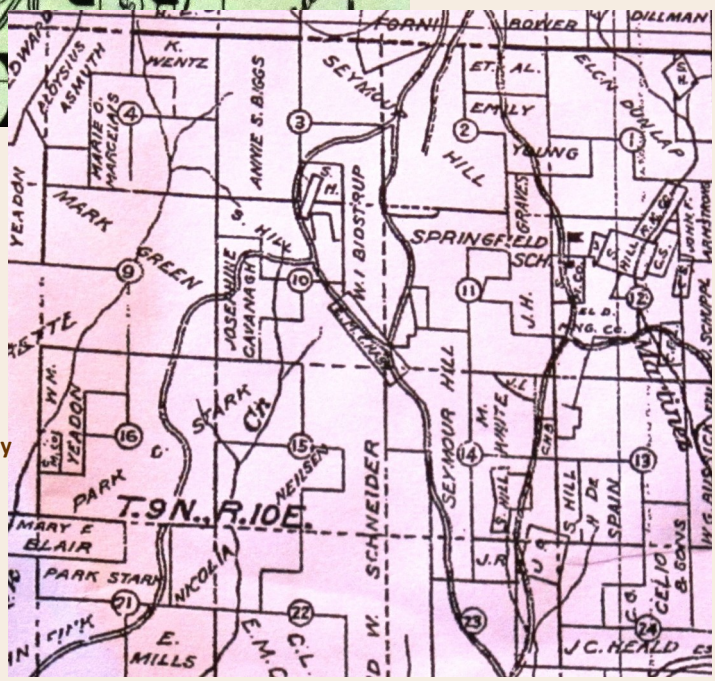
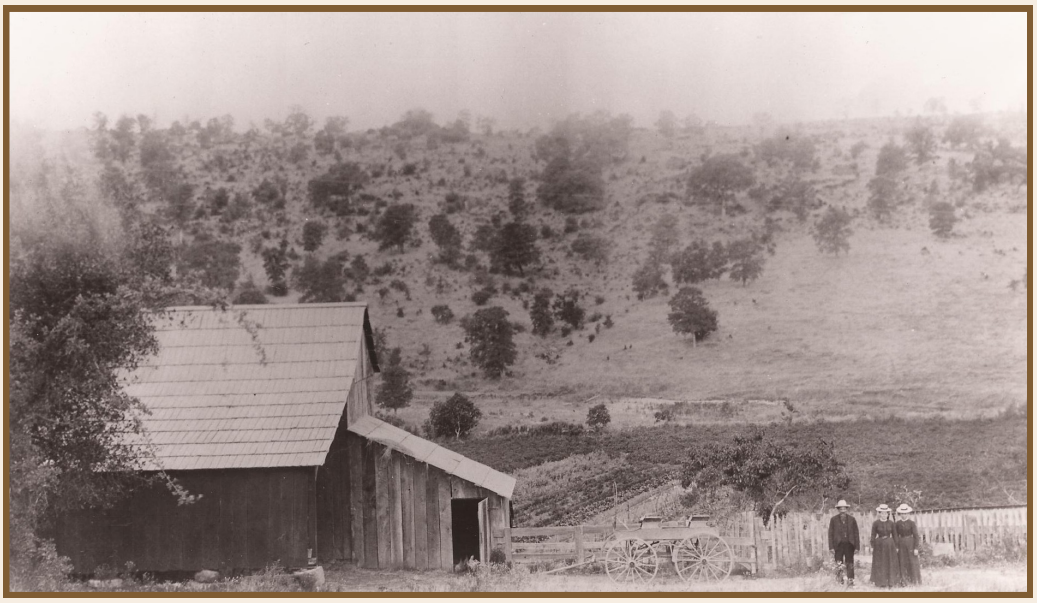


Figure 7-4: El Dorado County property map 1925.

El Dorado County Historical Museum

Steve and Ronda Brooks

Figure 7-5: The Bidstrup Place, date unknown.



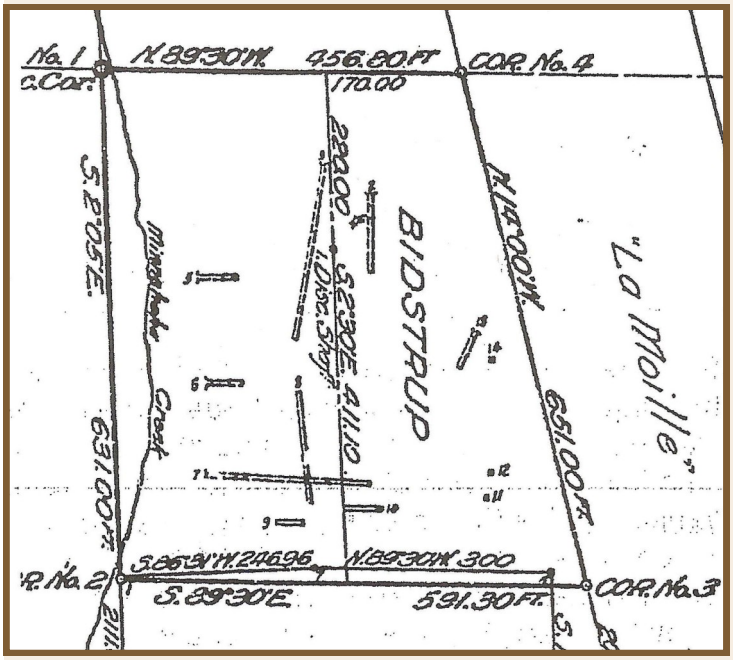
Steve and Ronda Brooks

Figure 7-6: Bidstrup barn, c. 1900. Note the wagon and truck garden in the background.

Steve and Ronda Brooks

Figure 7-7: The third-generation of Bidstrups, c. 1930. These children, left to right, Gloria, Twyla, Waltha, Walter, and Patricia, grew up just north of Logtown.

An 1898 article in the *Mountain Democrat* also showed how actively involved the Bidstrups were in their mining projects. The article is a short note recounting how Walter Bidstrup "was hit in the face by rock from a blast and one of his eyes severely injured," while working on his claim near the Union Mine. The Union Mine was in Martinez Canyon, a mile east of Logtown on the opposite side of Logtown Ridge. The state reports of 1896 and 1919 listed the Bidstrup Mine as idle. But in 1920, Walter I. Bidstrup, Ferdinand's son, filed a survey of the "Bidstrup Lode." It included 5 shafts, 3 cuts, and 6 tunnels. The application for patent was approved in 1922.



Bureau of Land Management

Figure 7-8: The Bidstrup claim, 1920.

The Hill family was another example of how, even as the overall economy changed, certain individuals were able to adjust—and prosper. Samuel Hill settled in Logtown in the early 1850s and worked as a miner. His family ultimately owned four patented mines—the Mohawk, Santa Inez, Sam Hill, and the Lookout—along Logtown Ridge. Samuel Hill married Mary Jane Sackett, who was the daughter of Seymour Close's wife, Sarah, from a previous marriage. The Closes lived across the road from the Pocahontas Mill; their home is depicted on the 1882 Pocahontas Mineral Survey Map. Samuel Hill raised cattle on the 160 acres he owned in Logtown, and served as a state assemblyman in the early 1860s. He and Mary lived in a yellow, two story house where their six children grew up. Their son Seymour became a prominent businessman in El Dorado, owning a hotel and dealing in hay, grain, coal, and wood. He and his brother Grant also maintained mining claims in Logtown, and by 1925 had expanded the family holdings both north and south of the townsite.

There were also families for whom the switch in emphasis to agriculture simply meant business as usual. The Neilsens settled southwest of Logtown, and the Fornis bought property just south of El Dorado. Both families arrived during the 1870s, when mining at Logtown was at its peak. They farmed and raised cattle, and continued doing so after the mining industry withered away. In fact, both properties have been passed down through the generations, and continue today as functioning cattle-raising operations.

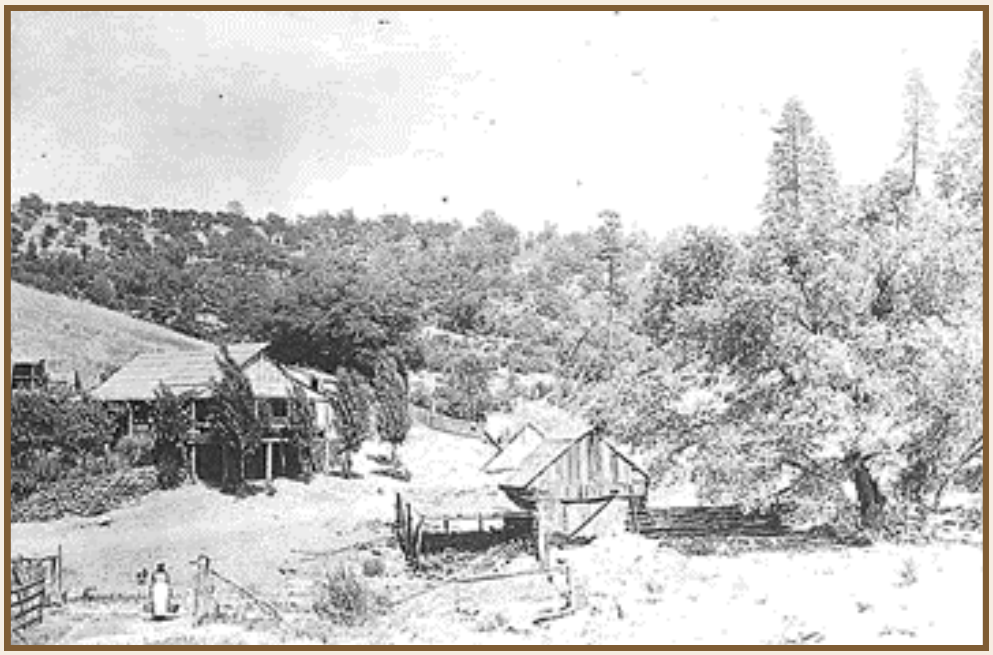
Howard and Carolyn Neilsen

Figure 7-9: Magnus Neilsen

Magnus Neilsen came from the Danish island of Börnholm, where he was an acquaintance of the Bidstrup family. Magnus did some incidental mining, but he came to the American West intent on fulfilling his dream of becoming a cowboy. While serving in the Danish Merchant Marine, Magnus created a brand—MN—which he used to mark his possession and subsequently his livestock. The brand is still used by his great-grandson in the operation of the ranch.

Figure 7-10: Karoline Neilsen

Howard and Carolyn Neilsen



Howard and Carolyn Neilsen

Figure 7-11: The Neilsen Ranch in 1895. Though extensively remodeled, the large house on the left side of the photograph is still the family home.

Figure 7-12: The Neilsen hay truck in the 1930s.

Howard and Carolyn Neilsen

George and Toni Forni

Figure 7-13: The Forni Ranch, pre-1904. Cesare Forni in the foreground.

Alessandro Cesare Forni also arrived during the 1870s, with a group of other Swiss-Italian dairy men. He took over what was called the "Milk Ranch," that was owned by William Bacchi, and produced dairy products for the miners. One of Cesare's grandsons, John D. Forni, married Patricia Bidstrup, Ferdinand Bidstrup's granddaughter. Along with dairy products, they raised grapes, garden crops, and chickens. The modern ranch, still in the Forni family, focuses on cattle raising.

George and Toni Forni

Figure 7-14: Cesare Forni with a work horse. The El Dorado Cemetery is in the background.

CHAPTER 8 — DRIVING TO THE GOLD RUSH

Smoke from the campfire woke you up. You opened your eyes and blinked away the sting as the smoke drifted off somewhere else. You were not at home in bed, but lying in the back seat of the car, looking up at the tattered cloth lining on the inside of the roof. The summer night had been hot, and you only needed a blanket in the very early morning when it finally cooled down. Your family had driven from Sacramento the day before, arriving at your campsite along the creek just before dark. There were other families camped nearby, and a man came over and said he'd panned fifty cents worth of gold that day. Fifty cents was a lot of money. You could tell from the way your mother and father looked at each other when he said it. The man also said the name of the place was Logtown Creek, and wished your family good luck as he walked away. You wondered what a "log town" was, and looked forward to seeing it when the sun came up in the morning.

You did not have your own gold pan. That was for your father and older brother, who had real gold pans just like the 49ers. They bought them at the hardware store in Sacramento. Your brother said they would have cost a dollar more if they had waited until they got to El Dorado. Your mother helped, finding a sandbar at the edge of the little stream and lifting out a dripping scoop of sand and gently dropping it into the waiting gold pans, first your father's, then your brother's. They dipped their pans in the water, and worked the muddy mix around, tossing out rocks, and swirling more and more sand out until all they had left was about a saltshaker full of tiny black grains. Your mother would stand looking over your father's shoulder as he picked through particles with the tweezers he had taken from the medicine chest, occasionally dropping something into the little glass jar your mother held.

Your gold pan was a frying pan. Not the good cast iron one from home, but a tin frying pan your mother brought along on trips but did not like because it burned the eggs. She let you use it after breakfast. You had to mix in a handful of sand with some creek water to try and rub off the bacon grease and cooked egg. It only partly worked. There was egg under your fingernails, and the grease made grains of sand stick to your skin. But finally you scooped a double handful of sandy black muck up from the creek bank, and pushed and swirled it around in the frying pan like your father and brother did. You thought about the big nugget of gold you would find, like the one the man in the newspaper picture was holding. Somewhere in this creek there was a chunk of gold just like that, and you were going to find it and make everyone in your family rich.

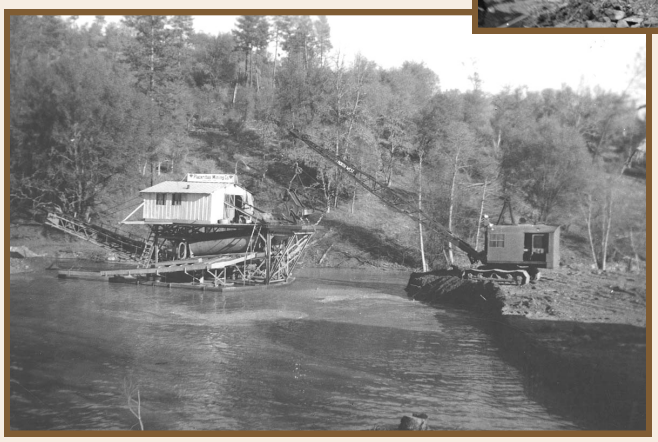
The Great Depression began with the stock market crash of October, 1929. Unemployment and economic hardship continued for a decade, and reached into every American household. There was also a Gold Rush during the Depression. An estimated ten percent of workers in California hunted gold in one form or another in the 1930s, mostly in the old mining areas. The hard times of the Depression prompted this Gold Rush, which rivaled in many ways the original Gold Rush of '49. These two historic events occurred less than a century apart, but in profoundly different worlds. They shared some remarkable similarities, but

were also very different. For example, the snipers of the 1930s—as the itinerant, independent placer miners were called—had a distinctly improved way of getting to the gold fields, one that has led historians to call their endeavor the "automobile Gold Rush."

The Depression saw many small gold mining operations in El Dorado County, such as the Glenalex Mine (right) and dragline dredging on the Cosumnes River (below). There was also a dragline—or doodlebug-dredge on Slate Creek in 1939.

El Dorado County Historical Museum

Figure 8-1: Glenalex Mine in 1935.



El Dorado County Historical Museum

Figure 8-2: Dragline dredging on the Cosumnes River.

Many of the Depression era "Argonauts" were very likely descendants of the Argonauts of 1849, but they left home under two very different sets of circumstances. A Gold Rush is a gold rush, and of course it was all about finding gold. But the 49ers made a freer choice to leave their homes and families, cross to the other side of the continent, or the world, to seek their fortune. There were exceptions, but they were temporarily trading an ordinary or comfortable existence for a chance at real, life-changing wealth. The Depression did not offer the luxury of that kind of choice. Unemployed workers, tradesmen, or bankrupt small businessmen took to small-scale placering because there was no other way to make a living, and they preferred it to charity, the government dole, or the breadline. For others, it supplemented what little work and wages they could find. As one writer in the Saturday Evening Post described it:

> *The main fact is that a lot of unemployed, unfortunate, impoverished Americans are doing their damnedest to make a living for themselves and their families, and though it may be a sparse living—as it is, mostly—it is still an honest living.*

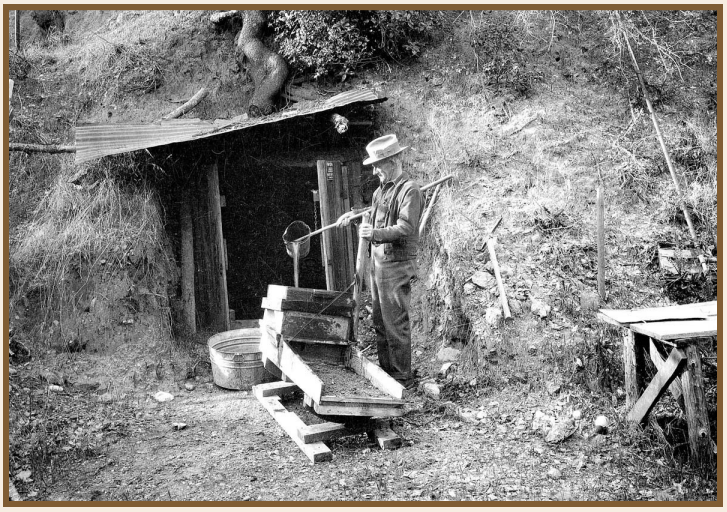
Or, as another writer put it, when confronted with the difficulty and hard work that lay ahead, and told that "wages would be mighty small, if any" the fledgling placer miner invariably replied, "They can't be any worse than they are now." In reality, they could expect to recover anywhere from 50 cents to several dollars a day, depending upon "their location, energy, experience, equipment, and to no small degree, luck."

The California Division of Mines observed that 1930 saw a marked revival in small-scale placer mining operations in the state, including "many transient individuals and small groups who worked with pan, rocker, sluice-box or dry washer, on bars, in stream beds and gulches. . . ." The state's total gold production increased from $8,526,703 in 1929 to $9,451,162 in 1930, and rose again in 1931 to $10,708,000—with the ten to twenty-five thousand people a year engaged in small-scale placer mining playing their part.

One magazine writer imagined how it all started:

> *The date is uncertain, but, anyhow, some man who had an automobile but no job and no prospect of getting one and who did not fancy a bread-line existence, piled his family into his car in 1931... He had heard about the gold diggings, and that gold is still there, in the sands and under the boulders in the river beds, in the hills and gulches; he had heard that a man could make wages if he was lucky and wanted to work..."*

The roads leading into the streams and rivers of Mother Lode country filled with vehicles of all sorts, jammed with kids and gear. No one was particularly concerned with legal technicalities. The important thing was to find a good location, where some initial panning turned up enough "color" to make a more extended stay worthwhile. There were no restrictions on placering public lands, and private landowners or absentee claim holders were hard-pressed to monitor their property. According to an article in the *New York Times*, you could not travel a mile without encountering camps of anywhere from one to eight families.



El Dorado County Historical Museum

Figure 8-3: Working with home-built equipment in El Dorado County.

A typical camp arrangement consists of a tent, with its Dutch oven, pile of dry firewood, fresh vegetables, sugar, salt, flour, bacon, beans, rice. A canvas awning is spread between the tent and the jacked-up automobile. When it rains this protected space serves as the living-dining room. The car, with a cutaway front seat, provides comfortable sleeping quarters.

The Engineering and Mining Journal, in 1935, included an observation on the appearance of these camps, as well as some thoughts on their inhabitants:

The camps of these gold seekers are pitched beside the roads, on the river banks and even perched on scanty footing on steep gulch sides. Some have tents; others are without. Yet with all the struggle and hardship of it, I found not one grumbler among the scores interviewed. All seemed smiling and happy to be in the great outdoors, with its independence, though the actual gold harvest might be scanty. They have at least reduced the numbers in the bread lines in the cities during the past three summers [1932, 33, 34].

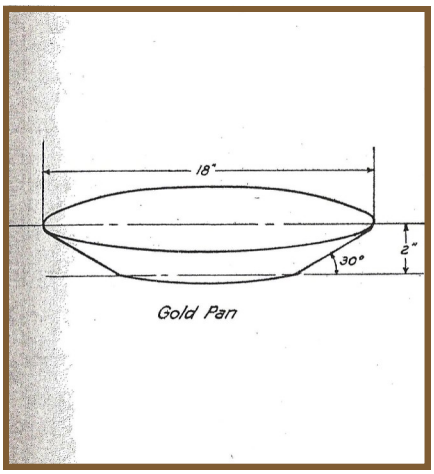
The Depression-era snipers and the 49ers did have two important things in common. First, neither group began with any practical knowledge about what they were about to do. Second, the basic equipment they used was remarkably similar. Given the history of mining in California and the West, even city residents had some familiarity with it—if only in terms of its promise. It was also noted that with the proliferation of automobiles and recreational camping, Californians were not strangers to living out of doors, especially during the summer. But the average person knew nothing about placer mining. A New York Times article in 1931 described them as ". . . armed with a skillet punched full of holes, a can of beans and a short-handled shovel these pitiful adventurers set forth full of hope, but with no more ideas of how to do the trick than a pup has of hatching eggs."

Like their predecessors, they were more than willing to learn, even though they were evading poverty rather than chasing a dream. Nor were the skills involved especially difficult to master. The Depression-era miners also had the active help and support of the State Mineralogist and Division of Mines. The government was well aware that each gold seeker who at least made enough to support himself and his family meant one less destitute family turning to the state for support. In fact, one short-lived proposal that the governor and state officials actually considered for a time would have put 200,000 to 300,000 unemployed men to work in the gold fields. The army was to supply them with tents, shovels, and other equipment, and they would be trained by the State Mining Department. Once they had made enough to cover these expenses, the rest of any money they made would be theirs to keep.

The California State Division of Mines actually did publish a special article, in their quarterly journal of April 1932, specifically aimed at assisting the novice gold miner. It was "Elementary Placer Mining Methods and Gold-Saving Devices," and was produced in response to thousands of inquiries at state geology offices asking about "the best places to look for gold." The initial, 3,000 copy printing of "Elementary Placer Mining Methods and Gold-Saving Devices" was gone in a week.

GOLD PANNING INSTRUCTIONS FROM "*ELEMENTARY PLACER MINING METHODS AND GOLD-SAVING DEVICES.*"

The object of panning is to concentrate the heavier materials by washing away the lighter. . . . The pan is filled about three-quarters full of gravel to be washed, then it is submerged in water. First the large gravel is picked out by hand, then the clay is broken up, after which the operator raises the pan to the edge of the water, inclining it slightly away from him, moving it with a circular motion combined with a slight jerk, thus stirring up the mud and light sand and allowing it to float off. This is continued until only the heavier materials remain such as gold, black sand, and other minerals having a high specific gravity. . . . Panning may be best learned by watching an old-timer or experienced operator at work, learning certain tricks in the trade from him.



California Geological Survey

Figure 8-4: A gold pan.

The basic equipment and methods described in the article were remarkably similar to those used by the 49ers—and just as simple as 80 years before. The design of gold pans, rockers, long toms, and sluice boxes had not changed. Operating them still required nothing more than a shovel, some buckets, and a water supply. The article also pointed out "The equipment described herein and in the accompanying article, with the exception of some of the large machines, will cost only from one dollar to a few hundred dollars, and some of it can be homemade."

The Depression-era miners also had to contend with the success of their predecessors. The best places were between the streams and their high water marks, since that was where new sand and gravel were deposited each year. There was no point in digging more than a foot or two deep, since the ground below that had been worked and reworked ever since 1849—and there was literally no gold left to find. As before, rockers, long toms, and sluice boxes used flowing water and a sieve to separate the fine sand and gravel from the river rocks. It was then washed over riffle boards, where gravity and the water's current concentrated the gold. One "modern" improvement included covering the riffles with old carpet. The coarse fabric trapped the gold particles, that were then recovered by washing out the carpet. According to the State Mineralogist, the miner could expect a dollar a day or less; in exceptional cases, and with hard work, sometimes more could be removed. By one calculation from the early 1930s, if a man and his family could work 10 cubic yards of gravel a day through a sluice box, they could produce an income of $2.00 a day, although 25 cents per day was a more realistic expectation.

The increase in the price of gold from $20.67 to $35 per ounce in 1934 added more incentive to the automobile gold rush. This also stimulated mining endeavors throughout the West. The new price made underground mining, dredging, and open-pit mining—along with small-scale placering—profitable in many areas where it had not been worthwhile before. Gold mining was one of the few industries that actually expanded during the Depression. With the intrepid automobile miners contributing their share, U. S. gold production—at 2,292,000 ounces in 1933—rose to an estimated 4,117,000 ounces in 1937, and increased every year until 1941.

At times, snipers certainly crowded the streams and rivers of El Dorado County, but the local newspaper—the Placerville *Mountain Democrat*—never gave the phenomenon more than passing attention. Perhaps the itinerant snipers were taken for granted, but also gold hunting along the rivers and streams was simply part of life. Local families made their own weekend expeditions, complete with stories of lugging homemade rockers and sluices down into the canyons, or grandparents who always had piles of panned, black sand around the house to pick through at their leisure.

$6 Nugget Found By Boys Sluicing Near Pilot Hill

Pilot Hill—(Special to The Democrat) — Charles Lewis, Jr., and Lester and Darrell Nance, grammar school boys, found a gold nugget in their sluice box which they had set up on the creek near their homes. The nugget is valued at $6.07. The boys have also found other smaller pieces.

Figure 8-5: Article from the February 2, 1934, Placerville *Mountain Democrat.*

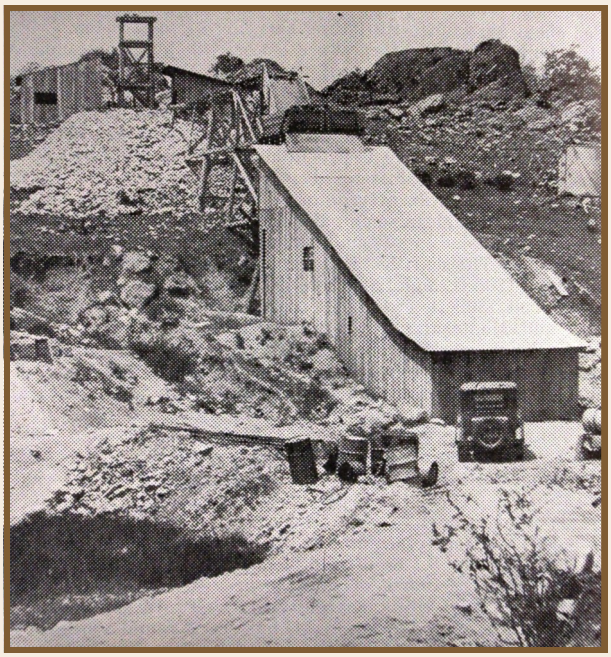
GOLD PRICES

Unlike today, when the price of gold is determined by the open market, the government set gold prices in the United States until the early 1970s. This was done by laws which specified exactly how much gold would go into each gold coin—to make, for example, a $20 gold piece, or any other denomination. The price of gold had been set in this way at $20.67 per ounce since the 1890s. Of course, this was a political decision so numerous interest groups were constantly seeking to change, or maintain, this price. Decreasing the amount of gold it took to make a dollar meant the same amount of gold could make more dollars and actually "create" more money. This was seen as a way to stimulate the economy during difficult times, like the Depression. President Roosevelt did exactly that in 1934 when he raised the price of gold to $35 dollars an ounce and reduced the amount of gold which actually went into each dollar.

The *Mountain Democrat*, in a 1931 article, did confirm that statewide unemployment was causing men to turn in large numbers to placer mining. One article quoted Joseph McKee of the Placerville Hardware Company commenting on the brisk sale of gold pans. "I believe we have sold a gross of gold pans in the past six or seven months" he said. Another article from 1934 mentions "a hundred snipers at work in the vicinity of Lotus and Coloma, earning 50 cents to $3-4 per day." A local gold buyer reported in that same year that there were five times as many snipers as three years before, and they were bringing in 40 percent more gold.

When the stock market crashed in 1929, underground mining had all but stopped in Logtown Ravine. It was ten years since the equipment at the Pocahontas had been dismantled and sold. In the 1930s, the mine office building was dismantled and moved to El Dorado, where it was reconstructed behind the fire station. The Bidstrups had their mine surveyed in 1920, and patented it in 1922. The improvements listed at that time included five shafts, three cuts, and six tunnels—all valued at $5,260. The State Mineralogist reports from the 1930s only mention the Ophir Mine, which had a two-stamp mill in operation along Logtown Creek in 1933. One resident summed up the story of the Ophir, recalling that James Long put $10,000 into the mine during the Depression—and got $10,000 out. An article in the *Mountain Democrat* from 1951—a column of historical memories entitled "*Twenty Years Ago*"—quotes a 1931 article that said, "J. Francis Long was in town last Friday from El Dorado with a generous assortment of most alluring samples from the Ophir mine near El Dorado. Long and his father worked the property 43 years ago [1888]. Then Long moved away to Oklahoma and he reports, he 'always had a notion the claim was good.' Recently he returned to the property and struck a rich vein that, if it holds up, will mean much in the way of reviving gold mining in the El Dorado section." The vein apparently did not "hold up," as the annual reports of the State Mineralogist make no mention of Logtown mines after 1933.

The increased price of gold was not enough to keep underground mining alive in Logtown Ravine. But residents of the area remember Logtown Creek as a busy place during the Depression. Walter Bidstrup says he made two or three dollars a day placering in Logtown Ravine. His wife Pearl, and Howard and Carolyn Neilsen recall people were camped everywhere, placering along Logtown Creek. Others recall a large tent city on the Cosumnes River, several miles south of Logtown Ravine. As Andrew Taylor, one of Logtown's Depression-era miners, put it, "There were miners everywhere during the Depression; that's all there was to do to make money around the Logtown/El Dorado area." As the decade ended, the last major Logtown-area mining enterprise was a dragline-dredging operation by the Hoosier Gulch Mining Company at the confluence of Logtown Creek and Slate Creek, just south of El Dorado.



California Geological Survey

Figure 8-6: The Ophir Mine in 1933.

For many Americans, the Depression did not really end until World War II. But the war also brought an end to gold mining in the West. The government shut down the gold mining industry once America entered the war.

The miners, their skills, their investments and equipment were shifted to the production of strategic minerals for the war effort. Gold was a luxury the nation would have to do without.

EL DORADO COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM

The El Dorado County Historical Museum is located in Placerville, next to the County Fairgrounds. It features both indoor and outdoor exhibit areas and an extensive research facility. The exhibit hall includes displays of basketry and artifacts of the Nisenan, Maidu, Miwok, and Washoe Native American people who have lived in the region since long before the Gold Rush. Other exhibits focus on mining, logging, and aspects of day-to-day life in 19th -and 20th-century El Dorado County. The outdoor exhibits include large pieces of mining, logging, and railroad equipment.

Pacific Legacy, Inc.

Figure 8-7: El Dorado County Historical Museum exhibit hall.

Pacific Legacy, Inc.

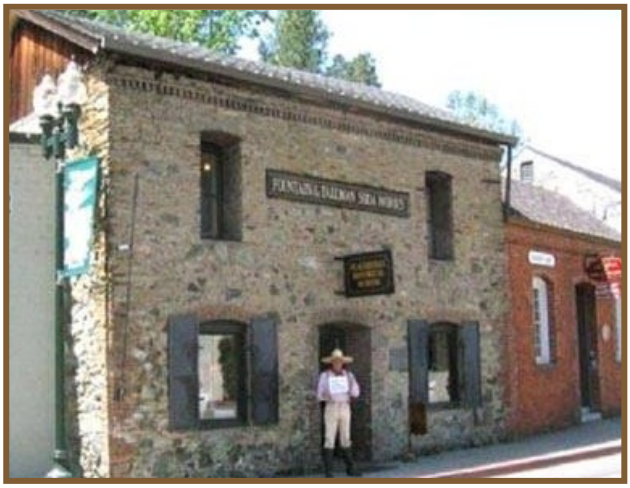
Figure 8-8: Stamp mills and other mining equipment. The stamp mill on the left came originally from one of the Log-town mills. It was donated to the Museum by the Bidstrup family.

The Museum's extensive research facility and archives include historical photographs, maps, newspapers, county records and documents, as well as letters, diaries, and other personal items and artifacts. The collections are available to the public for genealogical or historical research.

The Museum's mission is to collect, document, and preserve artifacts and records that are significant in El Dorado County history, and to share these with the public. The Museum and its collections are maintained by volunteers, under the supervision of a professional staff. Volunteers also serve as docents, organize and participate in fundraising, and assist the general public and other researchers in working with the archives and research materials.

Pacific Legacy, Inc.

Figure 8-9: El Dorado County Historical Museum Research Room.



Placerville Historical Museum

Figure 8-10: The Placerville Historical Museum, 524 Main Street, downtown Placerville.

PLACERVILLE HISTORICAL MUSEUM

The El Dorado County Historical Society runs the Placerville Historical Museum, in the Fountain and Tallman Soda Works Building in downtown Placerville. It was the first substantial stone structure in Placerville, and originally housed a soda works, where spring water was carbonated and bottled. Pacific Gas and Electric Company owned the building from 1927 to 1961. The Historical Society obtained the building in 1981, and in 1983 opened "The Biggest Little Museum in the West," that features exhibits on the soda works and Placerville history.

Chapter 9 — Has Anyone Seen Logtown?

Time has hidden Logtown. Its memory diminishes with each passing generation. Old letters or family photos are lost or forgotten. They are lost in fires, or to neglect. And in its best days, Logtown never stood out from the crowd. Everyone knew it when they saw it, but no one can say exactly where it began and ended, or even how it got its name.

To newspaper writers and census takers of the 1850s, Logtown was two or three miles of creek bed swarming with placer miners. Hard rock miners made money there in the next few decades—when they weren't going broke. Today, people remember Depression-era "snipers" in Logtown Ravine. And they caution us about making too much of Logtown. It had no post office, school, or cemetery—within official records. There is a 140-year-old map with a building labeled "post office," and a place across the road from the Pocahontas Mine called "Empire City or Logtown." An official post office, or just someone who collected and distributed mail? And which name was it going to be, "Logtown" or "Empire City?" Did a handful of graves make a cemetery?

In 1948, the California Division of Mines published *The Mother Lode Country*, a geologic guidebook to State Route 49. It was a travelers' guide, commemorating the Gold Rush centennial. It included an inventory of historic buildings constructed between 1848 and 1870, referring to them as "enduring monuments raised by men who came in answer to the call of gold." It noted that each passing year saw more of them disappearing, intentionally or from neglect. The ruins of two stone houses were found on a "little flat" near the site of Logtown. They were interesting because "laid in the mortared walls are a number of beautifully polished, mottled granodiorite millstones from an old arrastra." Other similar stones, too large to use in construction, were scattered at random in the area.

Did the people who used the arrastra stones in their buildings have any memories of the Logtown mills? They might have remembered quite well, but by 1948, even their homes were in ruins, and the memories of life within those walls were gone. In the same year, an article on the Gold Rush centennial in the *Oakland Tribune* included a photograph of a Pocahontas Mine sign. It was mounted over a pair of crumbling concrete machinery mounts. It was not original—someone put it there to mark the memory of the Pocahontas Mine, and offer that memory to everyone who drove by on Highway 49.

The evidence of the past can be hidden, or even wiped away by the present. But it can be found, even in ordinary places. It may take a sign to remind us, but sometimes these ordinary places require nothing more than a closer look—an exploration of people and their stories—to take their place in our history and our legacy.

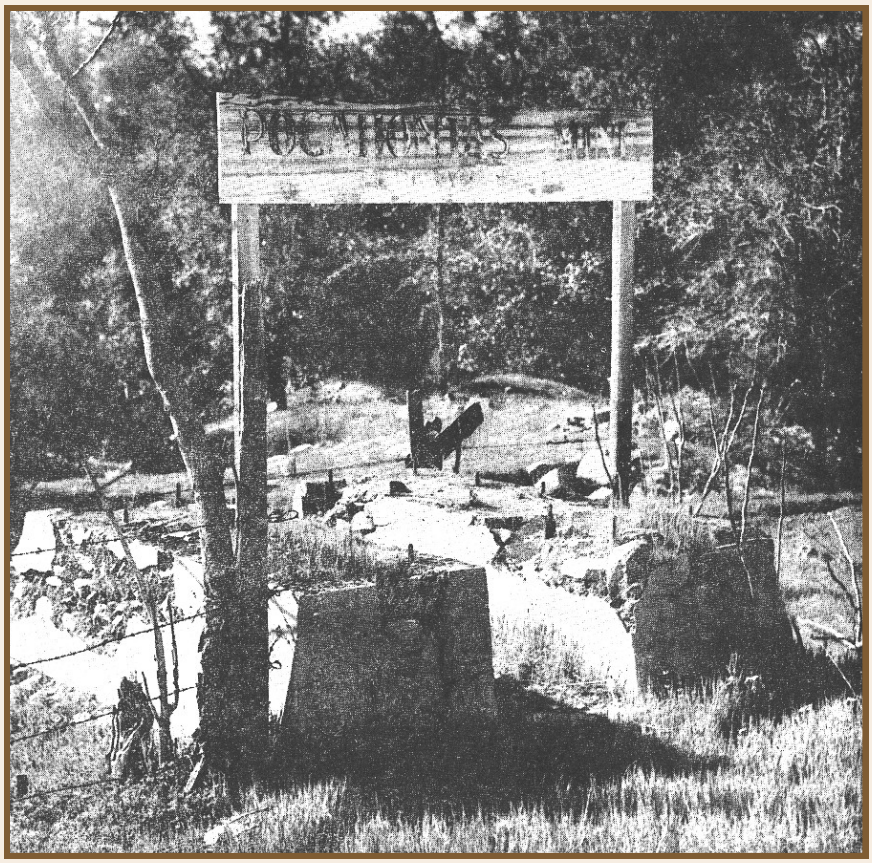


Photo by Robert Stinnett, Oakland Tribune
Courtesy of the Bancroft Library University
of California, Berkeley

Figure 9-1: "Pocahontas Mine" in 1948.

CHAPTER 10 — SUGGESTED READING

People began writing journals, articles, and books about the California Gold Rush even as it was happening. This has continued, non-stop, to the present day. The Gold Rush is a basic element of American history, and it has been explored from every conceivable angle in literally thousands of publications and, more recently, in film and on the internet.

It would be impossible to list even a fraction of the titles available. Any library or bookstore will have enough books on hand to keep the most voracious reader busy for quite some time. The first three books listed below are included because they each view the Gold Rush from a different perspective, and offer three different gateways to further exploration.

Rush for Riches by J. S. Holliday
1999 Oakland Museum of California and the University of California Press

> If you only read one book about the Gold Rush, this is the one. It covers the story from before the first discoveries in 1849 through the 1880s, when gold mining lost its privileged position in California history. The book is very well written, profusely illustrated, and beautifully designed.

Days of Gold
The California Gold Rush and the American Nation by Malcolm J. Rohbrough
1997 University of California Press

> This book takes a very personal approach. It uses diaries, letters, and personal accounts to tell the story of the Gold Rush from the point of view of families and communities. It explores the way people adjusted and coped with what was not only a great migration, but a great change in everyday life—for those who left in search of gold and those who remained behind.

The Age of Gold by H. W. Brands
2002 Anchor Books

> *The Age of Gold* is a dramatized telling of the Gold Rush story, from the point of view of a cross-section of historical figures. It follows a number of characters—both well known and obscure—as they make their way to California, and either succeed or fail in making careers and fortunes for themselves.

The Automobile Gold Rushes and Depression Era Mining by Charles W. Miller
1998 University of Idaho Press

> The Depression Era "Automobile Gold Rush" was a unique but little-known event in American history. This book takes a look at America in the Great Depression by examining the gold rush of the 1930s, the reasons for it, and its effects on peoples' lives.

Until now, no books have focused strictly on Logtown; however several publications either touch briefly on Logtown, or present the historic context of surrounding El Dorado County.

El Dorado and Diamond Springs California by Alan Patera
2001 Western Places

> This book recounts the history of the El Dorado and Diamond Springs area. It uses census figures to describe the population, and tells the story of various individuals and the economic development of the region. It includes a short section on Logtown.

Spanish Hill by Norman Wilson, Charles Blanchard and Susan Lindström and
Gold Hill: Bonds of Time, Families, and Land by Jean Starns.
1994 and 2001 James Stevenson Publisher

> This double volume is interesting because it began as historical and archaeological investigations of Spanish Hill and Gold Hill. Both of these El Dorado County communities developed from mining camps to settled towns, with Gold Hill becoming a tight-knit farming community while Spanish Hill continued as a rich mining locale until it was absorbed by the growing community of Placerville.

"*I Remember . . . " Stories and Pictures of El Dorado County Pioneer Families*
By Betty Yohalem
1977 El Dorado County Chamber of Commerce

> This is an amazingly wide-ranging assembly of memories from numerous pioneers and their families. It includes multiple family photographs and is a very personal look at the early settlement of El Dorado County. It was published in 1977, and includes accounts from some of the area's early settlers, or stories passed directly to their immediate descendents.

Geologic Guidebook Along Highway 49, Sierran Gold Belt Bulletin 141: The Mother Lode Country
1948 State of California Department of Natural Resources Division of Mines

> This very interesting book was published on the occasion of the Gold Rush centennial in 1948. It is a mining and geologic travel guide along State Route 49, through Mother Lode country. The final chapter is a survey of historic buildings along the highway, that presents numerous opportunities for "then and now" comparisons—at least between 1948 and the present.

Along with written publications, there are many internet sites dealing with different aspects of the California Gold Rush. A selection of these includes:

http://museumca.org/goldrush/
Oakland Museum of California, *Gold Rush!* Online exhibit.

http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/timeline/chapter6/index.html
California History Online, comprehensive selection of Gold Rush topics.

http://www.ceres.ca.gov/ceres/calweb/geology/goldrush.html
California's Natural Resources, *The California Gold Rush*; short, generalized account of the Gold Rush with numerous links to other online resources.

http://www.sfmuseum.org/hist1/index2.html
The Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco; includes links to a wide selection of short articles on different aspects of Gold Rush-era history.

http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/Exhibits/Goldrush/introduction.html
Online version of a Bancroft Gold Rush exhibit.

http://www.calgoldrush.com/
Sacramento Bee series on the Gold Rush; produced in conjunction with the 1998 California Gold Rush Sesquicentennial.

http://www.goldrush.com/~joann/
Women in the Gold Rush

http://www.ncgold.com/History/california-gold-rush.html
The California Gold Rush; 85 informative California gold rush articles by Don Baumgart.

http://www.calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/calcultures/eras/era4.html
University of California public gateway to primary sources; includes the Gold Rush, Statehood, and the Western Movement.

http://www.huntington.org/Education/GoldRush/advent/ad_a.html
Online exhibit from the Huntington Museum, including Gold Rush articles and original documents.

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/goldrush/filmmore/index.html
Online supplement to a 2006 two hour PBS documentary, *The Gold Rush*; part of the American Experience series.

Finally, several of the many Gold Rush museums and historic sites are located in the immediate Logtown region. These include:

El Dorado County Historical Museum (Placerville)
http://www.co.el-dorado.ca.us/Museum/

El Dorado County Historical Society Placerville Historical Museum (Placerville)
http://www.eldoradocountyhistoricalsociety.org/

Gold Bug Park and Mine (Placerville)
http://www.goldbugpark.org/

Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park (Coloma)
http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=484