



Suspension Bridge over Deer Creek, Nevada City, 1860s.

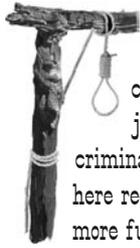
Chapter 10: Nevada City, Grass Valley, Auburn

NEVADA CITY. The county seat and chief city of the county, and for many years the largest and most populous, is Nevada City. Tho' still retaining its prestige as the chief city it has had to give way to Grass Valley in the matter of size and population. It is the terminus of the railroad and in consequence continues to be as it has been for years, the distributing point of supplies for large extent of territory. Upon it the mining camps north and east draw for their supplies and sustenance. From it stages run in all directions and many heavily loaded freight wagons toil

"...as at all these 'diggings,' it isn't the diggers who get the bulk of the gold, but the traders. Think of twelve dollars a dozen, eh! Her husband remained absent about four weeks; and, though he came back with a pretty good 'find,' she, laughed outright at his gold-washing, for her shirt-washing had realized, during the same period, nearly double the value in dollars of the ore he had found."



William Redmond Ryan, 1848-9



One of the most curious instances of juvenile depravity and criminal cunning occurred here recently, worthy of being more fully recorded than this work admits of. For a long time prior to April, 1879, many persons in the city, both male and female, were annoyed by receiving anonymous communications of an obscene character. These were so skillfully delivered that the bearer could not be seen, were shoved under doors, dropped on sidewalks, scattered on the floor during dancing parties, and circulated at public entertainments. Efforts were made to find the perpetrators, but for months they remained undetected. The paper, ink and other materials used were unlike any other to be found, and the handwriting was always the same. The composition showed the author to be possessed of sufficient education to write grammatically. At Hunt's Hall these missives would fly about the room, and the sharpest eyed detectives failed to see from whence they came. Finally it was surmised that they were thrown through the ventilation registers, and an officer secreted himself in the basement during one of these affairs, and while there, a man entered and stepped up to the register. The officer seized him and after a severe struggle succeeded in overpowering him. Upon being brought to a light he proved to be a young man named E. H. Moore



Stage Coach crossing the Sierras, late 1800s.

laboriously over the hills, carrying supplies to the mining camps that lie hidden in the recesses of the mountains.

The first time that the eye of a white man ever rested upon or his foot pressed the soil of Nevada City, so far as we can learn, was in the summer of 1848, when James W. Marshall, so widely celebrated as the discoverer of gold at Coloma, while conducting a party of immigrants over the mountain encamped on the banks of Deer creek to spend the night. As was customary upon reaching a stream, after the discovery of gold, Marshall panned out some of the dirt on the bank of the stream and found good "color." What he found, however, did not impress him with the phenomenal richness the stream was afterwards found to contain, and that two years later, within three miles of the spot that witnessed this infant effort, more than ten thousand miners would be at work.

For a number of years ladies, especially of a desirable kind, were in a woeful minority, but now their sweet presence and refining influence are a power in the city for good. Madame Penn came in the fall of 1849; she was an indefatigable worker, taking her turn with her husband in carrying dirt and agitating the rocker.

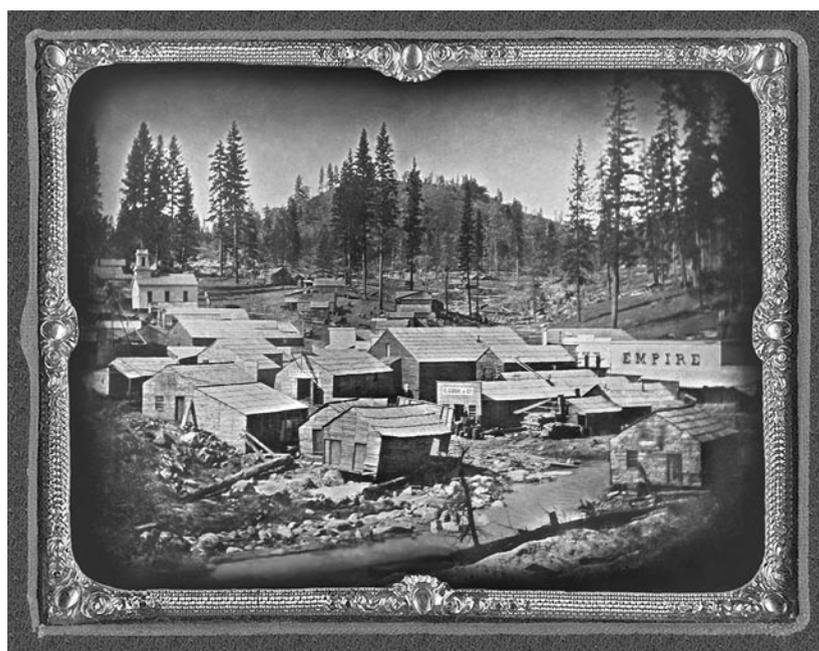
About the time Caldwell's store was opened John Truesdale built a cabin on Broad street, and, later, a few other cabins were built, and early in the winter canvas tents and brush shanties were erected in great numbers by the miners who were attracted

here by the reports of the fabulous richness of the diggings along Deer creek and Gold Run. The place became known, besides the name previously given, as Deer Creek Dry Diggings. The number of miners who wintered here, driven from the rivers by the high water, and awaiting the return of spring to commence operations here in earnest, is not certain, but it was probably in the neighborhood of one thousand. All the winter they kept coming in and as spring began to open they came in large numbers.

By this time several hotels and boarding houses, saloons and stores had been opened. Madame Penn had built a boarding house on the site of the present Union Hotel, John Truesdale had built his board building on Broad street the previous fall. Truex & Blackman had built a log store on Main street. Robert Gordon a large store on Commercial street, and Womack & Kenzie a cloth hotel at the junction of Main and Commercial streets. Besides these there were several cabins and canvas housed, chiefly on Main street, which was the principal and almost the only street in town.

Several small ditches were dug during the year, small now but for those times large enterprises. The Coyote diggings were discovered and the town of Coyoteville sprang up on the lead, just back of Nevada City. As winter approached the merchants

Nevada City, 1852.



Courtesy of the California History Room, California State Library, Sacramento, CA

The rain came on again last evening, and it has literally poured through the night. The stage—a long wagon came at seven o'clock, and, ourselves included, there were twelve inside. We took a different road through the country, from that by which we came, traversing the side of the mountains and directing our course towards Sacramento. The mountain streams had been swollen by the rains, and in several through which we passed, the water came up to the body of the carriage. Then, too, we were constantly kept on the *qui vive* by the directions of the driver,—“To the right, or the stage will be over!”—“To the left!” etc.—obliging us continually to “trim ship,” to the manifest terror of the two ladies within. We passed, every few miles, traces of mining and excavations, or saw long flumes stretching across the landscape. The country is what at the West they call “oak openings,” covered with large trees without any under-brush. Occasionally there were large fields under cultivation, where the settler had devoted himself to the certainty of agriculture instead of the lottery of mining.



Right Rev. William Ingraham Kip
Tuesday, 25th. 1852



One of the many devious ways in which the course of true love can be made to run was illustrated in Grass Valley in 1867-8, showing how by a chance buggy ride a man saved \$2,000 and gained a wife. A certain young bachelor of Grass Valley paid his "distresses" to one of the beautiful young ladies so numerous in that grassy vale, and matters were rapidly progressing towards a matrimonial entanglement, when for some reason best known to himself the wooing swain "flew the track." The deserted maiden was a girl of spirit, and she immediately commenced suit for breach of promise to marry. The trial commenced January 11, 1868, and the contest waxed hot for three days, resulting in a verdict for the fair plaintiff, with \$2,000 damages.



Coyote and Deer Creek Water Company Office near Nevada City, 1850s

Courtesy of the California History Room, California State Library, Sacramento, CA

began to lay in enormous stocks of goods. The winter before had been so severe that transportation was impossible, and goods had been extremely high priced. The population to be supplied being now eight or ten times as great as during the previous winter.

Marriageable young ladies have increased to double the number published in the Golden Era some six months ago, and there is still room for more."

On February 23, 1855, in consequence of the suspension of Adams & Co., there was a run upon Wells, Fargo & Co. The agent paid out all the coin and at two o'clock P. M. closed the doors. The excitement was great but as soon as it was allayed Wells, Fargo & Co. were found to be in good condition.

Although the prediction of the editor was not fully realized, still Nevada took a great stride forward during the year. Telegraphic communication was established with Downieville, mining industries were increased, and the city continued to advance in prosperity until the summer of 1856, when it was almost blotted from existence by the conflagration of July 19, 1856.

On the morning of November 8, 1863, the city was again laid in ruins by flames, but it quickly recuperated. Companies were formed who immediately built the Union Hotel and National Exchange Hotel, new business houses were erected and a