



This grandiose three-story Classic Revival building was completed in 1898 and constructed with local materials. The county's first courthouse on Court Street was built of wood and cloth with an adjacent log jail. A two story wooden courthouse with a bell tower was built on the hill in 1853. The log jail burned in 1855. In 1857, a new two story brick jail was built to the east of the courthouse on the hill. The two buildings were connected via an iron bridge running from the jail to a second story courtroom. This building is now listed on The National Register of Historic Places.

Chapter 2: Placer County — Auburn, Colfax and vicinity

In the general history of the county, the early discovery, the movements of individuals, the incidents of settlement, the success of miners, and in other references, nearly every town, river bar, and mining camp, of old and of modern times, have been mentioned, and in some instances quite full histories given. There are many localities whose history is full of interest, and upon which memory loves to linger in commune with the recollection of scenes of those bright and hopeful days when time seemed so laggard and the future at command. Then

The vices of gambling, drunkenness, and obscene oaths, were as prevalent here as elsewhere. Monte tables were constantly in operation about the little tent-stores and groggeries seated on the hill-side.

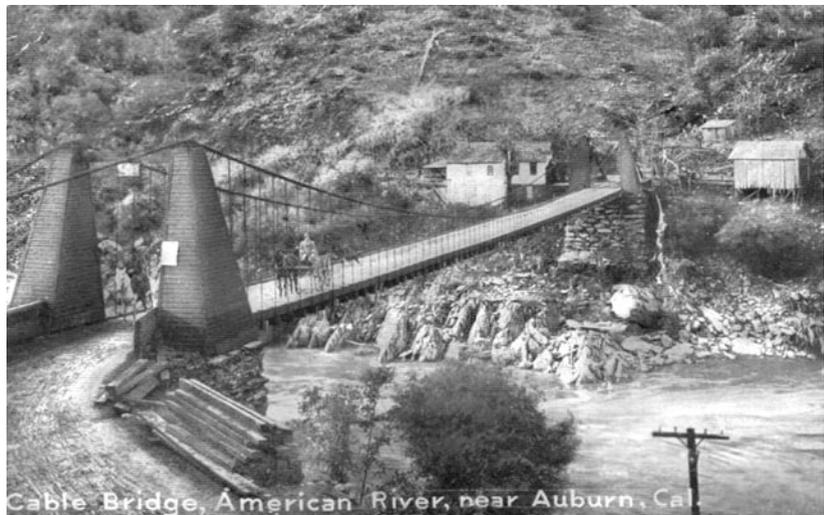


James L. Tyson, 1849



The scarcity of ladies in California, is the theme of much conversation. There is an anecdote almost universally told in connection with the subject; it is as follows: At a certain point in the mineral regions, part of a lady's hat was discovered, which caused so much excitement and joy, that it was immediately decided to have a ball on the spot, in honor of the event. Invitations were immediately distributed throughout the country, and, on the appointed day, three hundred miners assembled, each dressed in a red flannel shirt, and accompanied by a bottle of brandy. In the exact spot was driven a stick, five feet high, on the top of which was placed the hat, and around it was wrapped a flannel blanket. It was made to represent, as nearly as possible, a female form. By the side of this was placed a miner's cradle, or machine, in which was placed a smoked ham, also wrapped in a flannel blanket. At the close of each dance the president of the meeting would rock the cradle, while the secretary would pour a bottle of brandy down the back of the lady's neck. The ball lasted two days, at the end of which time the ground was surveyed into town-lots, and called Auburn.

John M. Letts, 1849



This cable bridge was built in 1865 and had a span of 85 yards, swinging across the North Fork of the American River just below the confluence of the North (on the left) and Middle Forks. It was a toll bridge, originally built by William Lyon who had erected a suspension bridge across the same stream at Condemned Bar. When the travel at the latter place began to slack off, he took the bridge down and moved it to the site shown. It was known as Lyon's Bridge for many years. It was ultimately taken over by the state and replaced with a modern bridge in 1951.

conventionalities and classes were unknown. Equality reigned supreme, and toil had no terrors, so that hope spread the inaccessible bed-rock with gold or directed the impracticable tunnel to the auriferous channel. These recollections may be preserved in the legends of the pioneers; aborted and exaggerated in the stories of the magazine and novel writers; or found in occasional sketches in the newspapers. Their aggregate would burst the volume covers.

AUBURN. Auburn the county seat and principal town of Placer County, is on the line of the Central Pacific Railroad, thirty-six miles northeast of Sacramento, the depot having an elevation of 1,360 feet above tide water, the principal portion of the village being forty or fifty feet lower.

The history of Placer County is so much the history of Auburn that a special reference may appear superfluous. The town antedates the county some years, the gold-digger having sought its hidden wealth as early as 1848. The first, however, that it bore a habitation and a name was early in 1849, when it was called the "North Fork Dry Diggings," the name of Auburn being given in the fall. Some have referred to Auburn as formerly bearing the name of "Wood's Dry Diggings," but of

this we have no recollection nor contemporaneous record, and conclude that such appellation was not generally applied.

The existence of gold in the ravines had been proven in 1848, and the centrality of Auburn, its accessibility, and its proximity to the North Fork, pointed it out as a good trading-point and a good place to pass the winter.

The first stores were established about the middle of July, 1849, by Wm. Gwynn and H. M. House. Shortly after, Julius Wetzler, in company with Capt. John A. Sutter, started II. trading-post under the firm name of Wetzler & Co. George Willment and W. B. Disbrow, Joseph Walkup and Samuel B. Wyman, Wm. H. Parkinson and Wm. Leet, Bailey & Kerr, and Post & Ripley, were also store-keepers in 1849.

GREAT FIRES. The first and most destructive occurred on June 4, 1855. The fire originated in one of the Chinese houses on the side of the hill below the Methodist Church, spreading with fearful rapidity, and seeming fairly to lick up the buildings as it went. Those residing on the south side of the town were unable to secure much from the devouring element. The time occupied in the burning was one hour and twenty-five minutes.

From the American Hotel to Russel's orchard, on the west side of the street, and from the residence of Wm. McDaniel

The Auburn Volunteer Fire Department is testing water pressure at the firehouse on Railroad Street (later Lincoln Way). The building to the right is a bowling alley, next the Kennedy Hotel, and then the Union Stable (later Louie Armbruster's)



Courtesy Placer County Historical Society



On Monday, the 6th of October, 1856, [Tom] Bell's career was brought to a sudden termination by the noose of self-constituted hangmen. A few days before, he had been engaged in a terrible fight with Sheriff Henson, of Placer county, and a posse at the Franklin House, near Auburn. Bell was assisted by Texas and Ned Connor. On the fatal Monday, a party of nine men were scouring the country in search of the outlaw, and suddenly came upon him near the Merced River. Bell, unaware that he was being pursued, was sitting carelessly on his horse, his leg thrown over the pommel of his saddle, conversing with a Mexican. The first intimation he received that an enemy was near, was the summons to surrender, to which, backed as it was by nine rifles, he gracefully acceded. He was told to prepare for his final end, and after consuming four hours in writing two farewell letters to his family in Tennessee, he said he was ready to meet his doom. The night shades had gathered darkly around the forest trees that skirted the rushing waters of the Cowchilla and Merced; and there, with none but the omnipresent stars to witness the swift justice of his captors, his lamp of life went out forever. How many scenes of blood and pillage he had enacted, witnessed by the silent sentinels of the night, will never be known. They departed, and the sad winds sobbed a requiem over the last resting-place of Thomas J. Hodges.