

## “In the Beginning”

By Ed Tyson

Not long after Roses’s Corral was established at a point between Anthony House (Lake Wildwood) and Bridgeport in the summer of 1848, Dr. A.B. Caldwell, aware that exploratory mining was occurring along rivers and creeks in this part of California, opened several stores along Deer Creek.

In September, 1849, a party led by Captain John Pennington and including Thomas Cross and William McCaig, while working their way up Deer Creek from Roses’s Corral found rich placer deposits in the small tributary to Deer Creek which they named Gold Run. Here they settled and built a cabin on a site near the present Pine Street bridge.

Then Penington group became regular customers at Caldwell’s Store at Beckville about four miles downstream from their location. Their trade made Caldwell curious as to their exact mining activity. Accordingly, he decided to explore the creek upstream from his store. As he moved up the creek he reached a point where the water became muddied by the tailings from a sluice box. As he drew near the working men, they at first made an attempt to conceal the amount of gold in their pans, but aware that he had been observing them for sometime, they greeted him cordially and showed him the true richness of their strike.

Caldwell knew that the news of such a find could not be kept secret, and he realized that this would soon be a teeming mining town and a good location for another store. So that same day, he selected a place for his building a few hundred yards above the Pennington cabin approximately where the Charles Marsh house stands today at the corner of High and Nevada Streets. Caldwell’s Upper Store became the name of his latest enterprise and also served as one of the names for the new settlement.

By early October, 1849, Caldwell’s Upper Store was open for business. Shortly thereafter, John Truesdale built a cabin on Broad Street, and later a few other cabins were built. By far most of the housing was provided by canvas tents and brush shanties that were erected in great numbers by those miners who rushed to the vicinity because of reports of the fabulous richness of the diggings. The place became know, besides the name previously given, as Deer Creek Dry Diggings.

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By mid-October, 1849, miners were working on both sides of Deer Creek. A man named Stamps arrived with his wife, her sister, and several children and built a cabin on the Coyote Trail just off Main Street. Madam Penn was another woman with his wintered here during the worst of all winters, 1849-1850. In the spring of 1850, she built a boarding house on lower Main Street. Quite a number of buildings were erected that spring. Truex and Blackman put up one about

where the Nevada City Chamber of Commerce is today. Womack & Kenzie built a hotel of cloth, the first hotel ever opened in the place. J.N. Turner established a hotel on Main Street just below the building referred to as Ott's Assay Office.

By the spring of 1850, the townspeople recognized the need for some sort of government. A public meeting was held and Mr. Stamps was elected Alcalde (mayor) since California was still under Mexican law. At the same time the wish for a better name for the town was expressed which led to a meeting of the leading citizens at the store of Truex and Blackman. All participants at the meeting were invited to submit their suggestions for a suitable name. O.P. Blackman's suggested name of Nevada was unanimously adopted on April 17, 1850.

The population of Nevada continued to increase steadily during the year 1850, and several hundred stores, saloons and dwellings were erected. A vast impetus was given to the place in May by the discover of the Coyote Lead to the northeast of town. The discovery caused great excitement and brought many new miners to the area. the yield was immense. A new camp sprang up and was named Coyoteville, after the method of mining likened to the burrowing of the coyote.

The population of Nevada City as given in the U.S. Census of 1850 was 1,067. By the winter of that same year the population of the town and outlying areas has been estimated at 10,000 to 12,000. California was admitted as a state on September 9, 1850, and on December 12 of that year the local U.S. Post Office was established under the name Nevada City. when the county was formed in 1851 it was called Nevada County and Nevada City was named the county seat. The name Nevada City appears prominently on the 1851 maps of Butler and of Milleson and Adams. However, there are some maps of the 1850's that show the name Nevada without the appellation "city".

There is a myth created by the local chapter of E Clampus Vitus about the addition of "City". They believe it was added after the state of Nevada was admitted to The Union. Anyone interested in that story may read it in the Grass Valley Union beginning on January 4, 1964.