

Sacramento Regional Research Institute

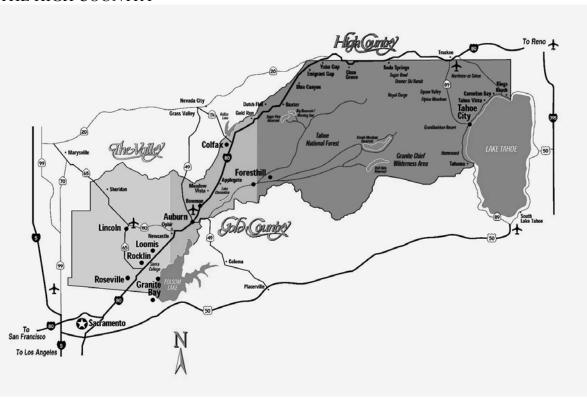
Introduction

This section includes a description of location, a map of Placer County and its three distinct regions (The Valley, The Gold Country and The High Country) and a brief history of Placer County.

Location

Placer County is located 80 miles northeast of San Francisco. The City of Auburn and the government center of Placer County, is located 120 miles southwest of Reno. The county encompasses 1,506 square miles (including 82 square miles of water) or 964,140 acres (including 52,780 acres of water). Placer County is bounded by Nevada County to the north, the State of Nevada to the east, El Dorado and Sacramento counties to the south, and Sutter and Yuba counties to the west.

FIRGURE 1
PLACER COUNTY MAP—THE VALLEY, THE GOLD COUNTRY AND
THE HIGH COUNTRY



Sacramento Regional Research Institute, December 2003 Source: Placer County Office of Economic Development

History

Placer County's history is steeped in richness and adventure. The County took its name from the Spanish word for sand or gravel deposits that contain gold¹. In search of a new life across the Sierra Nevada Mountains, the ill-fated Donner Party spent the winter of 1846 trapped by heavy snows on the banks of Alder Creek. This tragic site, where only 45 of the original 89 member party survived, became known as the Donner State Historic Park site and is located on the east side of Donner Lake.

Gold was discovered on the American River in 1846 by James W. Marshall at Sutter's Mill in Coloma. One of the first parties to capitalize on Marshall's success was organized by Claude Chana. With three fellow Frenchmen, 25 Native Americans and 35 horses, the Chana party started across the foothills for Sutter's Mill. On the first night of their journey, the party camped by a stream at the Auburn Ravine. Chana panned three large nuggets from the Ravine, enough to establish a new mining site. On May 16, 1848, the town of Auburn was founded. In 1851, the County of Placer was formed, and Auburn was designated as the county seat.

In 1864, a Central Pacific track-laying crew, building the western half of the nation's first transcontinental railroad, crossed a small rail line linking the towns of Lincoln and Folsom. The crew named the area Junction. Forty years later, Junction became Roseville, a popular trading center for local farmers. In 1906, the Southern Pacific Railroad, wishing to expand, moved its facilities to Roseville, establishing the City as a major railroad center.

Part of Placer County's history is tied to the abundance of agricultural products harvested from the County's fields and orchards. In 1913, the largest ice manufacturing plant in the world was built in Roseville, supplying ice to the railroad to refrigerate fruits and vegetables being shipped to other parts of the country. SureWest Communications and Wireless (formerly the Roseville Telephone Company), established in 1914, is one of the largest independently owned telephone companies in the country today.

After the First World War, Placer County continued to grow. By 1929, the railroad employed 1,225 people at the Roseville facility. As the effects of the Great Depression became severe, much of Placer County's unemployed population built storm sewers, paved streets and poured sidewalks in Roseville under the Federal Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.). The rail yards in Roseville prospered again during World War II and the post-war building boom that followed. Between 1948 and 1950, the Washington Street underpass was built to carry traffic under Vernon Street and the Southern Pacific railroad tracks. Upgrades to the city-owned electric system and construction of a new city hospital were also accomplished during this time.

During the 1950s, the highway that was to become Interstate 80 linked Roseville, Rocklin, Loomis, and Auburn to points West and East. The completion of Folsom Dam

_

¹ Placer: alluvial, marine, or glacial deposit containing valuable materials, especially gold. *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*.

provided the region with dependable domestic water and the benefits of a recreational facility for swimming, picnicking and boating.

The Valley Cities

Roseville, once a small agricultural center, became a major railroad center and grew to the County's most populous city after Southern Pacific Railroad moved its railroad switching yards there in 1908. Rocklin began as a railroad town and became home to a number of granite quarries.

Loomis and Newcastle began as mining towns, but soon became centers of a booming fruit-growing industry, supporting many local packing houses. Penryn was founded by a Welsh miner, Griffith, who turned from mining to establish a large granite quarry.

Lincoln and Sheridan continue to support ranching and farming. Lincoln is also the home of one of the County's oldest businesses, the Gladding McBean terra cotta clay manufacturing plant established in 1875. Lincoln is presently the third fastest growing town in Placer County, after Rocklin and Roseville.

The Gold Country

As discussed above, Auburn was settled when Claude Chana discovered gold in Auburn Ravine in 1848 and later became a shipping and supply center for the surrounding gold camps. Colfax was established as railroad construction camp in 1865. The following year gold was discovered.

The High Country Cities

Foresthill and South Lake Tahoe were gold and silver mining towns for many years, but gradually the timber industry grew, and was, until recently, the major employment sector in the area. Recreation has recently become the major industry in this area of sparkling reservoirs, pristine trails and ample camping facilities.

Recent History

Placer County's strong growth and development in more recent times can, in large numbers, be attributed to the relocation of Hewlett-Packard from the San Francisco Bay Area to Roseville in the beginning of 1980s. The interest shown by new, expanding and relocating companies to Placer County developed into a demand for substantial expansion of the available non-residential and residential space. The resulting expansion initiated a pattern for growth and development being experienced in Placer County. Today's Placer County represents a rapidly growing and prospering community

characterized by a healthy and mature economy, attractive business environment, and residents who benefit from a developed educational, safety, and healthcare infrastructure as well as abundant recreational opportunities.