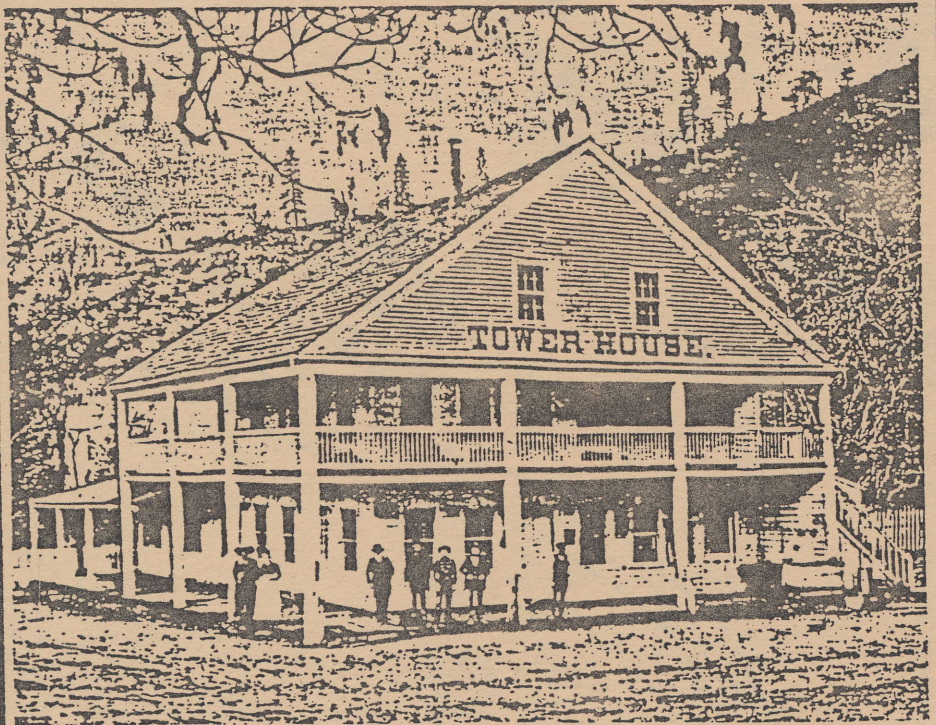
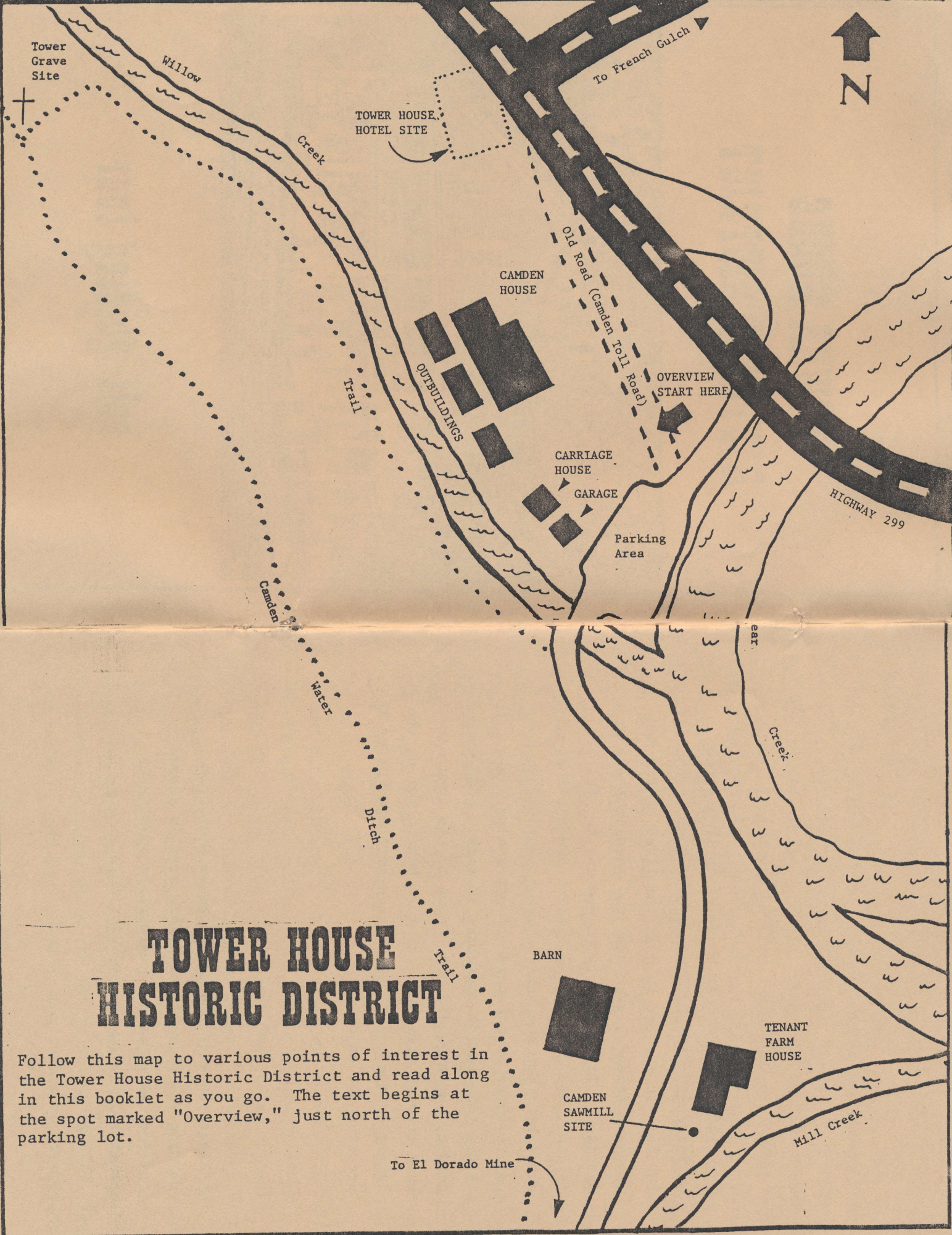


# TOWER HOUSE HISTORIC DISTRICT



self-guiding tour



Tower  
Grave  
Site

Willow

Creek

TOWER HOUSE,  
HOTEL SITE

To French Gulch



CAMDEN  
HOUSE

OUTBUILDINGS

Old Road (Camden Toll Road)

OVERVIEW  
START HERE

CARRIAGE  
HOUSE

GARAGE

Parking  
Area

HIGHWAY 299

Camden  
Water

Ditch

Trail

# TOWER HOUSE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Follow this map to various points of interest in the Tower House Historic District and read along in this booklet as you go. The text begins at the spot marked "Overview," just north of the parking lot.

BARN

CAMDEN  
SAWMILL  
SITE

TENANT  
FARM  
HOUSE

Mill Creek

To El Dorado Mine

The story of the Tower House Historic District begins during the California Gold Rush of the early 1850's. It is best told in the lives of two men who were friends, partners, and then brothers by marriage. It is a story of success and failure for one, and dreams, speculation and the loss of everything for the other. Their stories are not unlike those of thousands of other miners who came to the gold fields to strike it rich. Some succeeded, but most did not. Some of the fortunate ones stayed, prospered and left behind for us the legacy of their success, a rich heritage for us to preserve and enjoy.

\*\*Please observe the Camden House area from outside the white fence. This area is closed for your safety while restoration work is in progress. Thank you.\*\*

## OVERVIEW

In the spring of 1850, two men set sail from San Francisco on the brig "Jacob M. Ryerson," bound for the mouth of the Trinity River. News of rich gold strikes on the Trinity was luring miners from Oregon and the Mother Lode along the western foothills of the Sierra Nevada to these "Northern Diggin's." Charles Camden and Levi Tower thought they could reach these gold fields by following the Klamath and Trinity Rivers up from the coast.

Some time in March they landed at what soon became Unionville (Arcata). Camden and Tower packed some biscuits, flour, salt, coffee, picks, shovels, blankets, and a rifle Tower had made and headed east to the diggin's. All that summer they mined for gold on the Trinity and Salmon Rivers. By fall they decided to try something new: Tower would return to Unionville, buy supplies and then resell them to the miners along the Trinity. Camden would head east to look for more prosperous diggin's and send for Tower if he found them.

About 12 miles west of the boom town of Shasta, where Clear Creek bends to the north and is joined by Willow Creek, Camden met John Schneider living in a log cabin and selling supplies to local miners. Camden moved on to try his luck in the mines below Shasta but found them disappointing. Returning to Clear Creek, he built a cabin about a mile below Schneider's. Tower joined him, and they began the hard work of mining with pan, rocker, and sluice. They apparently did well, for by the spring of 1852, Tower was ready to quit mining and invest in new opportunities.

He bought this land, Schneider's cabin, and the free bridge across Clear Creek. This was a perfect spot for a hotel. There was plenty of water and wood for building, cooking, and heating. It was a flat, fertile plain for growing fruits and vegetables. And it was at the junction of the trail from Shasta to Weaverville and the trail to Shasta Flats to the north, into the heart of the northern diggin's. With a little luck, success would surely follow.

#### TOWER HOUSE

Near this spot Tower built his hotel. That summer he had the lumber hewed and split, and in the fall he put up the kitchen and dining room. By spring he was ready to open. In his Shasta Courier advertisement, he invited everyone to stay at the Tower House to be entertained in a style unsurpassed by any hotel in Northern California.

Tower worked hard to keep his promise. He cared for a 21-room, 3-story hotel, a corral supplied with abundant barley and hay, a garden filled with a variety of vegetables, musk melons, and watermelons, as well as hundreds of chickens and pigs with which to feed his guests. Surrounding the Tower House were orchards of fruit trees: peach, cherry, apple and pear. To keep the gardens and orchards thriving in the hot summer months, he brought water in from Crystal Creek via an irrigation system that is still in use today.

Over the next several years the Tower House became widely known throughout the region as one of California's finest hotels, and Levi Tower as a congenial host who made every guest feel welcome. For the miners in the region, the Tower House also served as a social center where they could get a good meal, a drink, and companionship. For a short time, too, it served as a polling place, where they could vote for the candidates and issues of their choice.

In January, 1919, the great hotel burned to the ground. Since then, all visible traces have vanished. Today, photographs, news articles, and the recorded memories of travelers through the area remain to tell us the story of Levi Tower and his hotel, but the exact location of the building remains a mystery.

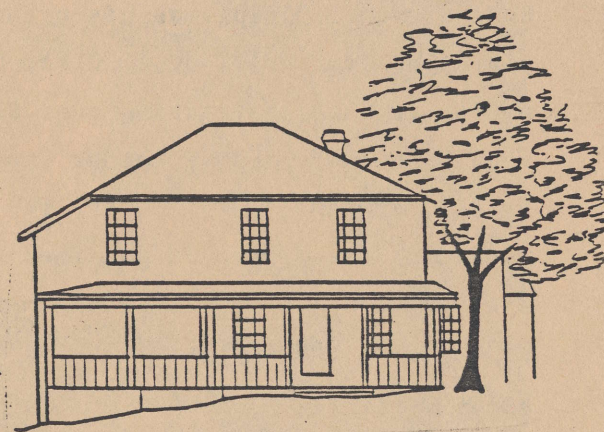
#### CAMDEN HOUSE

Most of the miners who came to the gold fields to strike it rich never did.

Charles Camden was an exception. He arrived in California with many different skills and qualities

that helped him during his life here. He

thought of himself as hardworking with sound judgment. In his autobiography he stated that "Hard and continuous work and prudent habits gave me what I have."



In 1852 Camden began building this home, his "cottage in the garden," close to Levi's hotel. That same year, Levi brought his sister Philena out from Rhode Island to help him run the Tower House. She and Charles fell in love. On November 11, in a double ceremony, Philena married Charles, and Levi married Mary Shuffleton. As a wedding present, Levi gave Philena the land where her new home stood.

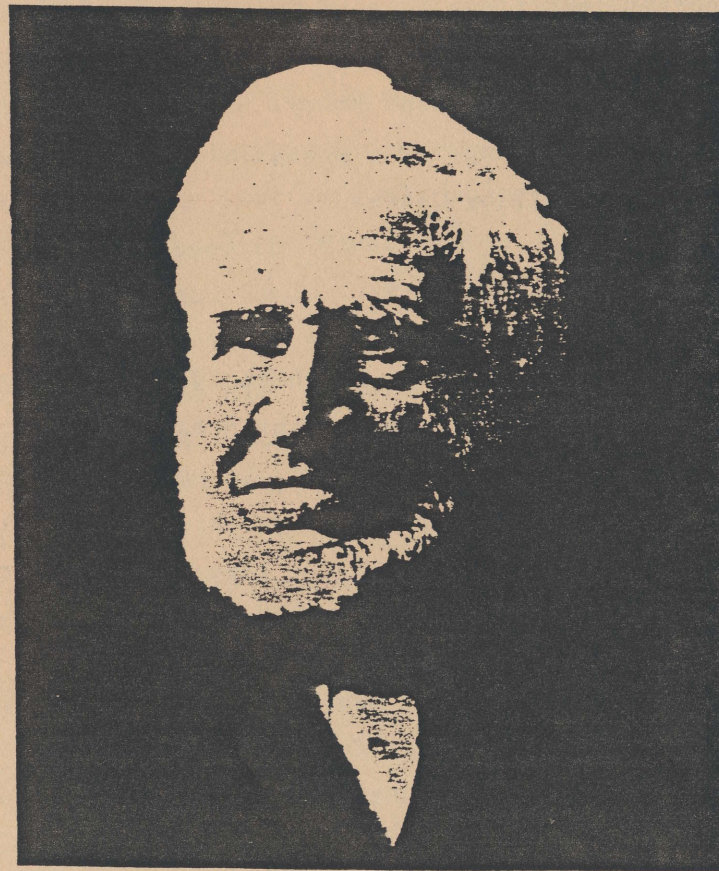
As Charles and Philena's wealth and family grew, so did their home. At first it was a one-room cottage, facing the road to Shasta, its doors flanked by two windows. By 1867, Camden had added two rooms and a second story to the east side. Later, he continued the second story across the length of the house.

A busy family man, he was also a shrewd and industrious businessman. Mining was his primary occupation. For 18 years he mined gold out of Clear Creek and his claims on nearby streams, extracting over \$80,000. He invested some of his earnings in other profitable enterprises. He dug ditches to take water, for a price, to other miners in the area. He obtained a 25-year franchise to operate the toll road between the Tower House and Shasta. He invested \$20,000 to widen it, build a bridge over Whiskey Creek and rebuild the covered bridge over Clear Creek, giving it the stone piers you see today. He charged 10¢ per person on foot, 25¢ for a horse and buggy, and \$1.25 for a wagon to cross the bridge.

By 1868, the Camdens were spending their winters in Oakland so the girls could go to school. Around the turn of the century they moved permanently to Oakland. In

1899, Charles gave the property here to his daughter, Grace Richards, and 13 years later he died at the age of 95.

He had lived a long, full and respected life. The Redding Courier Free Press told its readers that "The pioneer (Camden) was easily the most prominent man in the business affairs of Shasta County from the earliest days. He was a man of the strictest integrity..."



CHARLES CAMDEN

## CAMDEN HOUSE OUTBUILDINGS

As Charles Camden's prosperity grew, he was able to afford a number of luxuries. The building on the west was a summer kitchen, to keep heat out of the house on those 100° days. At different times, this and the other outbuildings served as servants' and caretakers' quarters, and as storage for tools and wood. No matter how wealthy Charles Camden became, he was always a man to work with his hands.

Another luxury can be seen on the back of the main house: one of Shasta county's first indoor toilets protrudes from the second story. It was added without concern for plumbing. The sewage simply drained down the pipe and into Willow Creek!

## CARRIAGE HOUSE AND GARAGE

After Charles Camden's death in 1912, his daughter made a number of additions to the area. This carriage house was constructed about 1913 to house the family buggy. Some time after 1920, Mrs. Richards acquired an automobile, and constructed the larger garage for its storage.

\*\*At this point, you may take the 0.9-mile loop trail to the El Dorado Mine via Tower's grave. For a shorter walk to the mine, continue down the dirt road, past the Tenant House and Barn, for about one-quarter mile.\*\*

## TOWER GRAVE SITE

Tower's early success with the Tower House and other investments did not last, and his later years were shadowed with failure. A fire in Shasta in 1852 destroyed his Globe Hotel and a barn, amounting to a loss of \$10,000. He lost another \$3000 in a fire the next year. To recover his losses he mortgaged property and began to borrow heavily. Five years later, he sold his ranch on the Sacramento River to pay his debts. But even that did not solve his problems. By 1859, the court declared him insolvent at his request. His brother-in-law, Charles, came quickly to his aid by buying the Tower House and leasing it back to him. Poor luck reigned, however. By 1861, Tower no longer managed the Tower House.

In November of 1865 Tower traveled to San Francisco to see a doctor about a lingering illness. There, on the 13th, he unexpectedly died of typhoid fever. His friends in the Masonic Lodge brought his body home and buried him here, overlooking the Tower House and its beautiful orchards. The obituary in the Shasta Courier read:

The friends of the deceased are many. His genial nature made him welcome everywhere, and his pleasant smile and cordial shake of the hand welcomed all visitors to the Tower House, and made his guests feel at home.

## TENANT HOUSE AND BARN

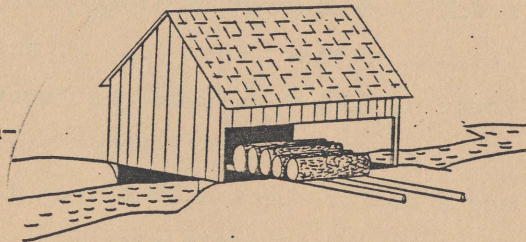
As the Camden family spent less and less time on the banks of Clear Creek, they realized the need for a caretaker. Not only did the buildings need maintenance, but

the land needed care as well. By 1913, and perhaps as early as 1909, this tenant farm house and barn had been built to accommodate a caretaker who, in exchange for his services, was given the right to work and profit from the rich agricultural land.

Today, this house has been restored and serves as quarters for a National Park Service ranger to provide protection by living here, much as the caretaker himself once did.

#### CAMDEN SAWMILL

In the summer of 1852, Camden decided to expand his mining operations. To do that, he needed lumber for sluices to carry the water to his claims. Camden thought it would be more economical to build his own sawmill



than to buy lumber in Shasta, 12 miles away. By February, 1853 he had finished the mill and begun operations. Lumber he did not need for himself, he sold for \$50 per thousand feet. Now, in addition to being a miner, Camden was in the lumber business.

Even though he only operated it part-time, he had frequent problems with mill hands. "Often they would go off on Saturday," he wrote, "and not come back for several days; orders would come in for sizes not cut and

it was imperative for me to take their places and cut the logs in the woods, haul them into the mill and saw them into lumber."

Camden operated the mill until 1860 when he shut it down and offered it for sale. By the 1950's the mill had fallen into disrepair, and Camden's granddaughter had it torn down.

#### EL DORADO MINE

When Camden and Tower mined the area, they were after the placer gold--the nuggets and flakes that had been washed down out of the primary deposits in the hills and into the streams. By the mid-1860's, most of this placer gold had been collected by the thousands of miners who had scoured the creeks.

Gold mining changed after the placer deposits played out. The miners turned their attention to the hills that held the gold in veins beneath the surface. To get this gold out, they would have to tunnel into the hills, haul out tons of ore, and then process it to get the gold. This took capital--to purchase hammers, drills, dynamite, ore carts, rails, and timbers--as well as expertise in geology, engineering, and hard-rock mining and milling. If a miner did not have the money or the knowledge to do it himself, he often simply became a hired hand working for a large mining company for \$2 - \$4 per day.

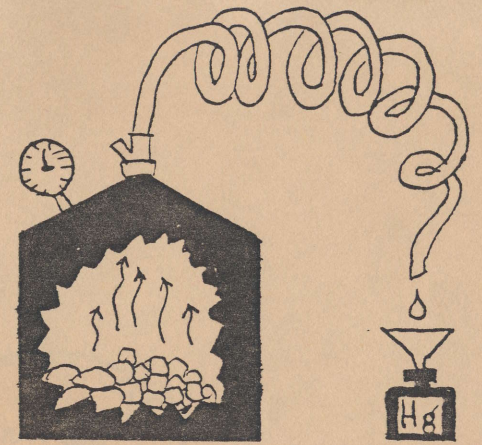
Some miners, though, had the knowledge and could get enough money to mine on a small scale. One day in 1885,

William Paul's experienced eye noticed where slate and porphyry met. He thought gold might be found along this seam, and he was right. A number of different owners tunneled into this hillside over the years trying to follow the veins of gold. The original shaft was up the hill to the northwest, and eventually reached 500 feet in length. Over the years, several thousand dollars worth of gold was removed, but it was never a big operation. The mine was actively worked until 1967, when it was acquired by the National Park Service. At that time, for safety reasons, the shaft was closed off. But today, you can still see some of the equipment used in the difficult and dangerous occupation of gold miner.

#### STAMP MILL

Once ore was blasted out of the mine tunnel, it was hauled in these ore carts to the stamp mill. Then, it was emptied into the trough, or "grizzly," leading to the inside. There, the large iron pestle, weighing over a ton, was lifted by use of a machine with pulleys, and then smashed the rock until it was powder. This stamp would pound about 90 times per minute, rattling the whole building and deafening the miners. Water was mixed with the powdered ore, and it washed along the metal apron at the base of the mill. This metal sheet was treated with mercury which attracted the gold, pulling it out from the worthless rock. At the end of the day, the mercury and gold

were scraped up and retorted--heated to drive off the mercury and leave just the gold. The poisonous mercury vapors were trapped in a tube, condensed, and used over again. All the worthless rock dug out of the tunnel and left over from the processing was dumped around the area as "tailings."



#### THE STORY CONTINUES

The land at the Tower House Historic District was developed over the years by many different people, each a unique individual with his or her own strengths and weaknesses. Both luck and personality played important roles in those people's lives and in the life of the District itself. Today, the work of National Park Service managers is also influenced by luck to some extent as they diligently strive to preserve the story of the area, the structures, and the land, while at the same time helping you to enjoy and learn from this special spot in Northern California.





National Park Service  
Whiskeytown Unit  
Whiskeytown-Shasta-Trinity  
National Recreation Area

This booklet is provided to you free of charge. If you do not wish to keep it, please return it to the box so it may be recycled for others to use. Thank you.

Photos courtesy Shasta Historical Society.