

COULDN'T SEE THE TOWN FOR THE FOREST: EUREKA MILLS, PLUMAS EUREKA STATE PARK

DENISE JAFFKE
CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

MARK SELVERSTON
SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

On a high, forested slope below Eureka Peak sit the remains of Eureka Mills, a substantial late-nineteenth-century mining community boasting a boarding house, hotel, stores, livery stable, school, church, mining offices, and homes. Although the town is unquestionably a critical component of regional mining history and a contributing element to the Plumas Eureka-Jamison Mine National Register-listed historic property, the town site had never been recorded or mapped—until now. Our discussion focuses on our recent efforts to correct this oversight through forestry management, archaeological investigation, and public outreach. The Eureka Mills project showcases California State Parks' efforts to balance preservation with interpretation.

After visiting an area known as “Eureka Bowl” in 1953, Robert Hatch, Land Planner for the California Division of Beaches and Parks, began his report with the following: “Close to the crest of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in southern Plumas County is a region ideally suited for recreation. It is pleasantly timbered with mixed species, has open slopes, meadow lands, abundant water, and mountains with scenic grandeur that is outstanding within the State” (Hatch 1953). The Eureka Bowl project was originally suggested for state acquisition by a local landowner in 1953, parcels were purchased between 1959 and 1960, and Plumas Eureka State Park was dedicated on June 3, 1961 (Kolb 1970). From the beginning, park staff recognized the historical and interpretative value of the park, noting old placer mining features and the degrading flumes, mills, tunnels, and dumps of the hard rock mines scattered over Eureka Peak and along Jamison Creek. They even went so far as to suggest leasing parts of the property to continue exploration and extraction to enhance visitors' experience and appreciation of mining and Plumas Eureka's mining legacy. While much of the emphasis on the unit relates to recreation and camping, there are many historical features within the park and its immediate surroundings that speak to the area's mining past. Since dedication, Parks has focused much of its attention toward stabilizing and rehabilitating the buildings east of Johnsville, at what is known as the Plumas Eureka Day Use Area, which includes the Mohawk Mill, boarding house, assay office, and blacksmith shop. While maps and Parks reports noted the abandoned town of Eureka Mills located above the Mohawk Mill complex, little had been done to record or interpret the town. The primary objective of the Eureka Mills project was to inventory and map the site, but the work has inspired park managers and volunteers to become involved in monitoring and interpreting this newly appreciated resource.

PLUMAS EUREKA: AN ABBREVIATED HISTORY

Eureka Mills sits on an east-facing slope below Eureka Lake, just below the 6,000-ft. contour and above the park's visitor center. The area is situated on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada, on the southern boundary of Plumas County, which is on a splendidly scenic mountain ridge separating the drainages of the Yuba and Feather Rivers. Eureka Lake lies in a basin scooped out of Eureka Peak by glacial action at an elevation of 6,300 ft. (Figure 1). This is the source of Eureka Creek, one of Jamison Creek's strongest tributaries to the north.

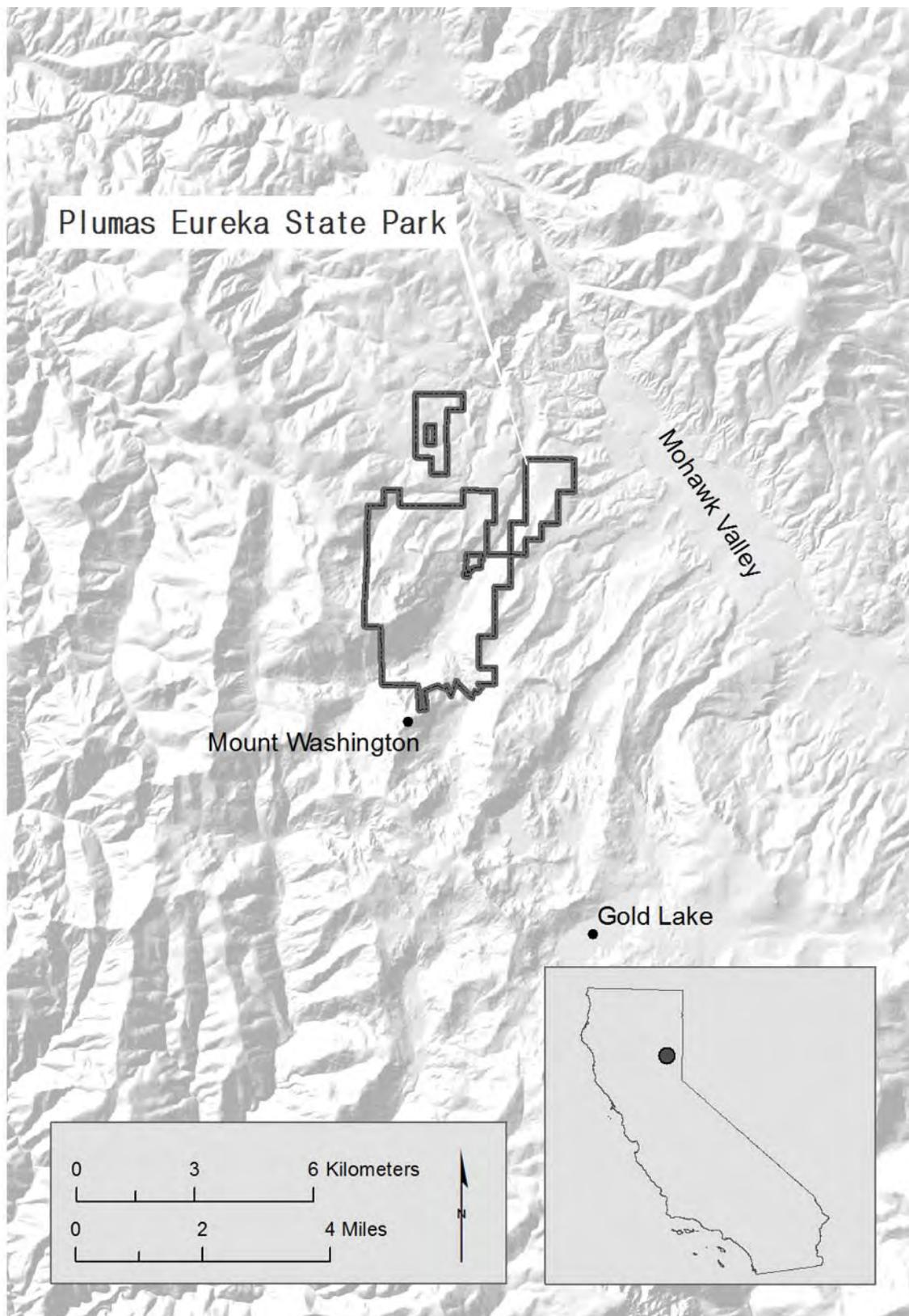


Figure 1. Plumas Eureka State Park location map.

The complex of gold-bearing quartz veins in igneous and metamorphic rocks on Eureka Mountain was first discovered in 1850 by placer miners who had been active along Jamison Creek. Several systems of veins of different attitudes and ranging in width from 2 to 80 ft. were mined at various times in different parts of the mountain by competing companies. Initially, ore was milled in arrastras along Jamison Creek, but in the 1850s two small stamp mills were erected. Several ventures mined different portions of the property with undetermined results until 1871, when Sierra Buttes Gold Mining Co., Ltd., a London-based company, purchased and consolidated all the claims into one holding. The new enterprise bought the Plumas Eureka Company for \$1,000,000. It then acquired the Mammoth, thereby consolidating the remaining claims on Gold Mountain, and by 1872 was employing 70 men (Hartman et al. 2004). Work began on the new 40-stamp Mammoth Mill near the Mammoth Mine portal, which until then had been used as a drain tunnel for workings higher up the mountain. The new mill ran on water power and was outfitted with steam power for when the water supply failed. The company also built a boarding house to accommodate over 200 men, a mess house, and a blacksmith shop, followed by a building for an office and storehouse, a stable, a car house, snow sheds, and a huge cordwood stockpile by the mill to power the steam engines through the winter (Jackson 1960).

Jamison City, located along the banks of Jamison Creek, was the only town in the area until Sierra Buttes Company developed Eureka Mills in 1873, a new settlement adjacent to Eureka Lake, near their operation high on the peak. By November of the same year, the town contained two stores, a hotel with a saloon, two other saloons, a boot-making shop, a livery stable, and other dwellings. The third major community, Johnsville—originally Johnstown, named for the company's manager, William Johns—was laid out on the flat piece of ground above Jamison Creek and Jamison City, and building began by 1879 (Jackson 1960). Johnsville and Eureka Mills were company towns and more family-oriented than the generally more raucous town of Jamison City. The names on headstones in the Johnsville cemetery reveal a strong European connection. Many of the miners who brought their families were of English, Scottish, German, Italian, or Greek descent. Although not well-represented in the historical records, Chinese workers were also employed at the mines and lived in the company towns. In fact, of the 326 men on the company payroll, 95 were Chinese (Hartman et al. 2004).

The prosperity of the Sierra Buttes operation took a turn in 1882 when ore values dropped and dividends fell. During 1889-1890, most of the quartz being crushed came from the “outside works,” high up near the peak of the mountain over 1,000 ft. above the Mohawk Mill. Other miners and lessees worked the mines for years following, but by 1897, the boom was essentially over in Eureka. Anticipating the reduction, the company liquidated its holdings, which were then operated by a succession of small companies (Jackson 1960). The town of Eureka Mills was abandoned by 1900. Nearby Johnsville held on, and continues to be a charming little settlement within Plumas Eureka State Park.

From 1896 to 1906 lessees operated various parts of the mine, mainly removing known ore and doing a minimum of exploration or upkeep work. In 1906, Plumas Eureka Corporation took over the mine and operated it, with interruptions during World War I, until 1925, when economic pressures closed it down. By the time mining ended, miners had left a network of some 62 mi. of tunnels through the mountain (Jackson 1961). The property lay idle until 1931, when Colonel C. A. Lundy acquired it and leased it out for short periods to several operators. Colonel Lundy, a rancher, moved to Johnsville from Bodie in 1915 and began to purchase property in and around Plumas Eureka in the 1920s and 1930s. Some of the claims were still being mined at the time, but much of the area was abandoned by then. Colonel Lundy was the individual who brought the property to the State's attention in 1953 (Hatch 1954).

ROAD TO REDISCOVERY

The Abandoned Mine Lands Unit (AMLU), part of the Office of Mine Reclamation in the California Department of Conservation (DOC), completed an inventory of abandoned mines on State-owned lands in 2007-2008. AMLU and the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) then sampled and provided preliminary results on lands owned by California State Parks, including Plumas

Eureka State Park. Subsequently, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) surveyed and sampled various areas within Plumas Eureka State Park in 2010 and determined that six areas required treatment due to excessively high levels of arsenic and lead in public use areas.

Since remediation efforts were likely going to impact portions of the Plumas Eureka Mill (historically the Mohawk Mill), Jamison Mines Historic District, the Plumas Eureka Management Plan was drafted and submitted to the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). The plan outlined several areas of research and investigation which included a full inventory and evaluation of identified cultural resources located within the project area, including the Plumas Eureka Mill, Jamison Mines Historic District, a National Register of Historic Places property (NRHP 1973). The Historic District encompassed the entire park boundary, as it existed at that time, although the park has since expanded. The listed property is currently recognized under Criteria A and C for its association with the gold mining industry during the second half of the nineteenth century. Eligibility under Criterion D, however, was not adequately considered. In fact, the nomination did not identify any archaeological sites in the park, but this is not unusual for historic building, site, and district nominations made in the 1970s.

As part of EPA's toxic remediation effort, extensive archival research was conducted. The town of Eureka Mills was cursorily referenced in the literature and was often only mentioned and not fully described. The park museum displays several historic photos of the company town, but the park's interpretative materials merely hint at the town's existence. An important archival find was a topographic map of Plumas Eureka, including Eureka Mills, surveyed by Arthur W. Keddie in 1890, that depicts the Mammoth Mine and waste dump, old Mammoth Mill, blacksmith shop, office near two small buildings, boarding house, slaughter house, school, and 25 town buildings (Figure 2). Keddie was a Scotch Canadian engineer, surveyor, and cartographer who moved to Quincy in 1864 and produced numerous topographic maps for the area.

The Keddie map inspired us to take a hike up the mountain after work one day, and there we discovered the current state of Eureka Mills. Walking through the ruins for the first time evoked simultaneous feelings of delight and despair. Historic photos taken from high on a ridge near Eureka Peak (Figure 3) show that the entire lower ridge was clear-cut for lumber needed in the underground workings and to build the new mill, company offices, and support structures, as well as residential and ancillary buildings. Since the town was abandoned around the turn of the century, second-growth forest has been allowed to grow unchecked on the mountain, essentially swallowing the once-thriving town of Eureka Mills along with other mining-related landscape features. While a single-track trail follows the lower contour through town toward the old mill and to the collapsed mine portal, the majority of the site was a thicket of second- and third-growth conifers. Small and large trees were growing through and damaging building foundations, and large downed trees and brush were obscuring features and artifact deposits. Additionally, the area had been subject to energetic looting. Without baseline information, it was difficult to determine when these destructive activities occurred.

Since Eureka Mills had never been recorded or mapped, we knew this had to be our first course of action. It was going to be difficult to map this area, since GPS communication with satellites was often problematic due to aspect and dense tree canopy, and using a transit to map features was not feasible because of the short line-of-sight in the dense forest. We quickly realized that we needed a forestry reduction project prior to our inventory effort, which led us to work with the Redding California Conservation Corps (CCC) crew through an interagency agreement. The CCC crew (under Parks direction) began cutting and removing small and moderate-sized trees from the townsite in August 2014. The crews worked five 10-day rotations through the next few months. Since none of the vegetation could be burned on site, all biomass was chipped and hauled out and deposited in other areas of the park. With much of the problematic vegetation removed, we could begin to focus our attention on recording, photographing, and mapping identified features and artifact deposits.

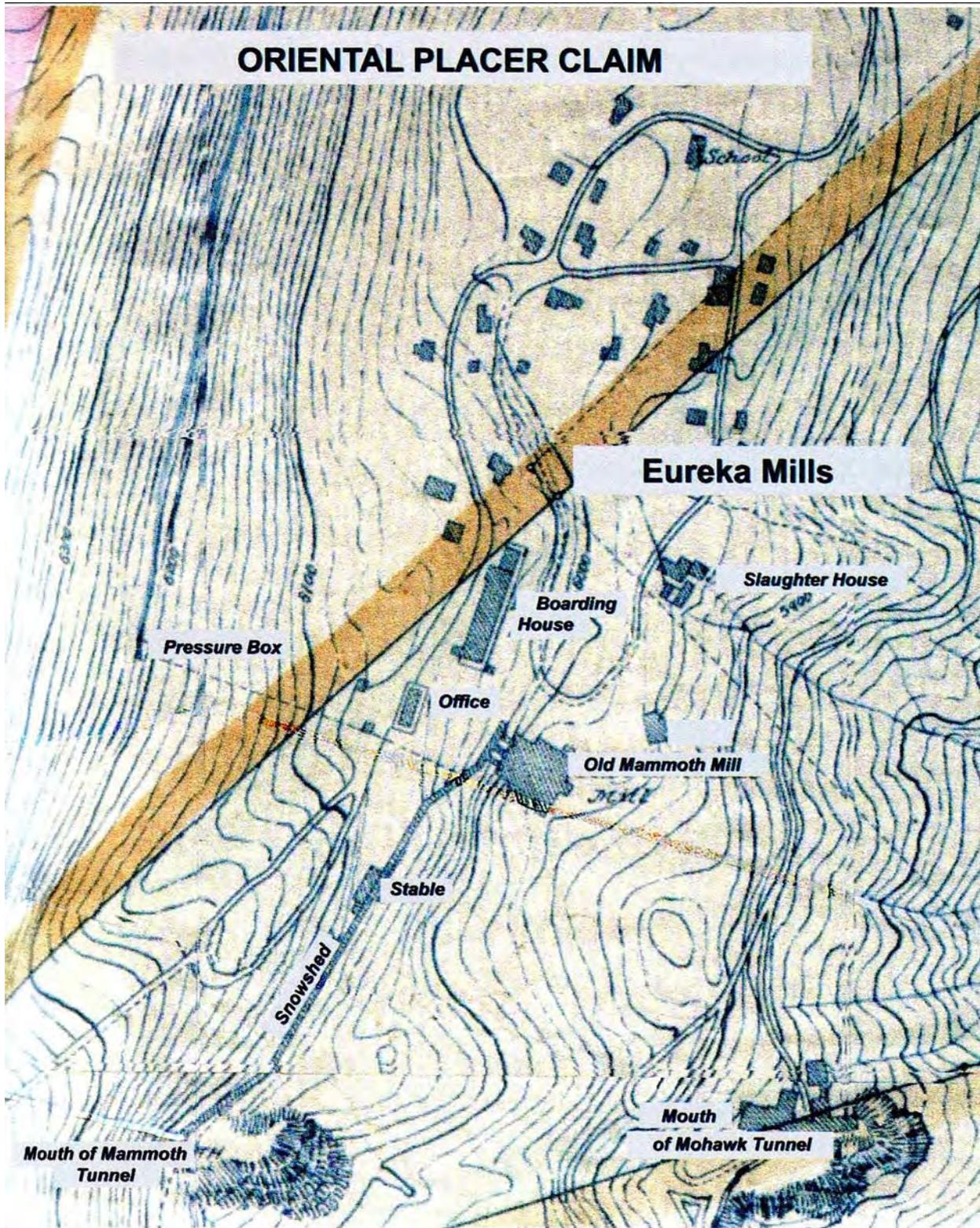


Figure 2. Topographic map produced by Arthur Keddie in 1890 that included the town of Eureka Mills.



Figure 3. Historic image of Eureka Mills from the schoolhouse (left) to boarding house and office (right).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNATURE OF EUREKA MILLS

Eureka Mills, defined by the Mammoth Mine and Mill in the southern portion of the site and the residential neighborhood and school to the north, encompasses an area of about 0.15 km² (37 acres). The arrangement has been captured in historic photographs and the 1890 Keddie topographic map. The site contains both industrial and domestic features across a natural mid-slope terrace stretching northward from the Mammoth portal and waste dump. Each identified tangible remain was assigned a sequential context designation. The industrial town site consists of 123 distinct features composed of 226 individual context elements. The most common features are building remains, with 44 town buildings (40 dwellings, a school house, a slaughter house, a barn, and a shed) and nine buildings directly associated with the gold mine (stamp mill, office, boarding house, and six other ancillary company buildings). While historic-era artifacts are scattered across much of the site, 18 discrete concentrations were recorded and given context designations. Most of them appear to be associated with one or two dwellings. Additional discrete deposits likely exist on the margins of the site in areas that were not cleared of vegetation.

The industrial complex of Mammoth Mine and Mill, located in the south half of the site, consists of a collapsed adit portal, a waste dump, a partially intact powder house, stamp mill ruins, and remains of a boarding house, an office, water works, and other ancillary buildings. The most prominent features at the site are obviously related to the mining operations, most notably the ruins of the 1872-era Mammoth Mill. What remains of the mill consists of massive walled cuts and sunken rooms, red brick piles, stamp battery foundations along the west side, and the boiler room with intact penstock and in situ clean-out pan. The structure measures about 120 ft. long by 115 ft. wide and extends to a depth of 12 ft. The collapsed adit portal, with intact masonry walls and associated brick powder house, is located a short distance from the mill, just over 700 ft. southwest of the mill on an upper contour. According to the Keddie map, a snow shed was constructed to connect the adit to the mill, with a stable located midway. This allowed mining operations to continue unabated through the winter. A single-track trail and earthen



Figure 4. Eureka Mills boarding house.

pad are the only components left of the wooden structure. Located less than 100 ft. north of the mill and directly below the boarding house is a series of terraces indicating the remains of a massive structure. It appears as a large rock-and-concrete pad in one of the earliest photographs of the town (ca. 1873-1880). Presently we are unclear about the function of this structure, but it may represent an earlier mill. The footprint of the structure is comparable to the Mammoth Mill, measuring 170 ft. long by 115 ft., and angular quartz cobbles are present, suggesting ore processing.

The boarding house (Figure 4) is located a short distance from the mill and mine office, separating the industrial portion of the site from the residential/commercial neighborhood to the north. What remains of the building is a large flat with discrete cuts along the west side, measuring about 200 ft. by 40 ft. The 1880 census gives us a demographic snapshot of the men and women who called Eureka Mills home. The boarding house provided food and shelter for just under 170 individuals, with the vast majority representing single men (Figure 5). Not surprisingly, 147 (87 percent) of the boarding house residents were registered as miners, but there were also three blacksmiths, three engineers, and one mine clerk listed, along with nine boarding house cooks (one 43-year-old Irishman and eight Chinese men). Most of the men (73 percent) were between 19 and 35 years of age, followed by the 36 to 57 age cohort (22 percent), with two younger boys, age 7 and 16, and one 63-year-old miner representing outliers. The youngest lived next to the only family in the building. Since Sierra Buttes Company was a London-based company, it is not surprising that a large percentage (71 percent) of the miners were from England. The balance were from Austria (12 percent), the United States (6 percent), Ireland (5 percent), Mexico (1



Figure 5. Miners employed by the Sierra Buttes Gold Mining Company, Ltd.

percent), Portugal (1 percent), Scotland (1 percent), Nova Scotia (<1 percent), France (<1 percent), Greece (<1 percent), and Canada (<1 percent).

The town north of the mine and mill contains ruins of numerous buildings that are now reduced to dugout cellars and foundations, with associated artifact deposits and privy depressions. They line three main roads that traverse the town north to south. Two smaller residential areas are northeast and north of the portal; these were not depicted on Keddie's 1890 map and are probably from an earlier time. A typical dwelling has a cellar depression, cut flat, and foundation. The most common features are building remains, with 44 town buildings currently categorized as 40 dwellings, a school house, a slaughter house, and a possible barn/shed. While historic-era artifacts are scattered across much of the site, 18 discrete concentrations were recorded and given context designations. Most of these concentrations, along with

numerous privy depressions, appear to be associated with one or two dwellings, which affords us a unique opportunity to investigate the experiences of individual families and merchants.

Again, the 1880 census provides us with a glimpse of the Eureka Mills demographic profile. The 42 households enumerated include 41 single-family residences and one hotel/boarding house, totaling 199 men, women, and children, or 54 percent of town residents. Households were mostly composed of nuclear families, but also included variations of the extended family, with size ranging between two (husband and wife) and nine (husband, wife, and seven children). Somewhat surprising, the ratio between men and women in this part of town is nearly 1:1 (96 females, 103 males). Like the company boardinghouse, most of the men list their occupation as miners (n = 45), but there are engineers (n = 3), mine clerks (n = 2), general store operators/clerks (n = 3), hoteliers (n = 2), carpenters (n = 5), a shoemaker, a blacksmith, a cook, and a physician.

While parts of the site have been extensively disturbed, overall the site retains excellent data potential. Artifact deposits and privies associated with distinct households and businesses can provide extensive information on many facets of working class life in this late-nineteenth-century company town, and the site is sufficiently intact to provide information on industrial processes, particularly milling and management.

FUTURE RESEARCH AND INTERPRETATION OPPORTUNITIES

The Eureka Mills–Mohawk Mine and Mill complex contains well-preserved archaeological remains of a heavily capitalized hard rock mine, mill, and town dating to the last three decades of the nineteenth century, 1872-1900. The Gold Rush was over by this time, but the quest endured. Attention turned from the streams already exhausted of their riches to experimenting with techniques to extract ore from deep hard rock deposits. The Eureka Peak venture was financed by an English company that generally hired English labor, though some other nationalities were present. The remoteness of the operation necessitated not just a work force, but an entire community. The remains offer fertile research ground for inspecting how this California frontier required a commitment by households and businesses to form a colony to sustain the parent company's ambitions.

A research design addressing the research potential of mining properties was developed in 2008 for the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) by a team of historical archaeologists and historians. The document lists six research themes important to historians and archaeologists, providing a model for assessing the information potential of Eureka Mills (Caltrans 2008:113):

1. Technology: mining and technological developments.
2. Historical ethnography/cultural history: stories of mining sites and their populations.
3. Ethnicity: studies of distinctive cultural groups associated with mining and cross-cultural interactions.
4. Gender and family: the roles of women and children.
5. Economy: market development, consumption, and class.
6. Policy: law, regulation, and self-governance.

The mine, mill, and town site of Eureka Mills can contribute particularly to popular research themes of mining and milling technology and historical ethnography, as well as to the study of gender and ethnicity—the top four research topics for this type of property. The resource is also well-suited for examining class and economic spheres within local, Western, and World System contexts. Similarly, elements of self-governance can also be examined. Simply put, this class of property, a complex with interrelated mining and domestic elements, contributes to all six of the themes identified in the Caltrans (2008) research design. Eureka Mills can address the broadest range of research issues with the most focus.

The large number of households offers a great opportunity for intrasite comparisons of assemblages that can be cross-referenced with the organization of the town. Locations of business and various classes of individuals lend themselves to the study, from laborer to supervisor, from doctor to

store owner, and from the English majority to the various other groups present. The scale of contrasts across the site will provide a fine-grained understanding of this community. The comparative values of these datasets can be further enhanced when contrasted with similar nearby complex properties. The male-dominated Gold Rush town of Jamison City that thrived during the 1850s-1870s is also located within Plumas Eureka State Park, offering an excellent intersite opportunity to explore California's gold mining legacy.

Parks is committed to protecting this valuable resource. With baseline information in hand, the town site will be continually monitored. Already the park association is developing programs to keep an eye on the site as well as to interpret it to park visitors. Given the site's importance to understanding the park's history at such a deep level, Parks will be actively seeking collaborative research efforts.

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