

# History:

“This charming and prosperous village lies on the southern slope of the Divide, between the North and Middle Forks of the American River, on the line of road reaching to Forest Hill, and has a population of 226. Previous to the time that the country was overrun with gold seekers, and before they had begun to scarify the beautiful ridges and seam up the sloping vales that were occasionally found nestling upon the park-like plateaus, with the unsightly gashes necessary to the pursuit of their occupation, there were few more inviting places than Todd’s Valley.”

The first settler to the area was Dr. F. Walton Todd, in June 1849, and whose name the area has since borne. He built a log house, for a store and tavern less than a mile from the townsite, which existed in 1882, and “drove a lively trade with the miners,” according to the author. The store was on the main trail and in 1850 became a general stopping place for travelers as well as a trading point for the miners. Dr. Todd, in the early days, planted fruit trees and vines, and in 1865 made a large quantity of wine, which was regarded as “excellent quality.”

A few men had begun to work the shallow diggings upon the ravine, near the head of where Dr. Todd’s buildings stood. The ravine was found to pay well and it occurred to some of the men that a shaft sunk in the flat itself might develop into a well-paying venture. This fact caused Joseph Swasey, Mark Hubbel, and Joseph Simmons to begin work sinking the first shaft in Todd’s Valley, in the winter of 1850-51.

These three men were inexperienced in deep mining but were willing to attempt it anyway. They had their difficulties, to be sure. They had barely begun to dig when they hit clay. At a depth of twenty feet they encountered such a quantity of water, they abandoned their efforts and returned to their old claim, which continued to pay well.

The succeeding spring two brothers came into the valley from the lead mines of Illinois, and being experienced in deep mining, they decided to bail the water out of the abandoned shaft and explore it. They did so, and fortunately had just a little depth to go before penetrating the pipe-clay, under which the stratum of gravel was found. This prospected well and stimulated them to continue working until they reached the bed-rock. Here the stratum was found to be very rich. This is how deep mining began in Todd’s Valley. Before a year had passed, the two brothers owning the ground had made approximately \$20,000 each and satisfied with their wealth, abandoned their claim and

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Through the years many mines were worked in and near Todd's Valley. In the spring of 1850 Alfred A. Pond settled in the valley. He purchased most of the principal mines in the area and met with great success. He also owned the largest mercantile establishment in town. Until a wagon road was brought into the area, he had all of his goods packed in from Sacramento by mules. He married Miss Olive Constable in 1855, and they had eight children.

Another Todd's Valley store owner was Nicholas Quirolo. He came to the valley in 1861 and opened a store, in which he kept a full stock of miner's supplies.

Todd's Valley, like many other early communities in California, experienced a devastating fire. On September 25, 1859 the whole business section of town was destroyed by flames, leaving only the store of A. Pond, the Masonic Hall, the store of Read & Hall, and a butcher shop. The loss was estimated between \$150,000 to \$200,000. The fire was believed to have originated in the Pacific Saloon, in the center of town, and as the building was unoccupied at the time, arson was suspected. Rebuilding began immediately, and in December the burned district was reported as having been in "better condition than before the fire."

Todd's Valley was also a well-known stage coach stop, and an area of frequent attempted robberies. One such incident was recorded in the Criminal History of Placer County. It seems that two detectives of Sacramento had somehow become aware that robbers intended to hold-up the Forest Hill stage, so they proceeded to Forest Hill where they acquainted the Wells Fargo agent with the particulars, and took passage on the stage on November 7, 1859. Upon arriving at Todd's Valley the treasure box and passengers were left behind and the detectives, aboard the stage, continued to Smith's Ranch.

Shortly after leaving Todd's Valley four men stepped out from behind the trees, one approached the driver, one caught the horses, and the other two approached the coach from either side. This action resulted in the two becoming permanent residents of Todd's Valley as the detectives, who were prepared for such a move, killed them both instantly.

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The two slain would-be-robbers were identified as an American named White, who had recently been released from prison, and a Spaniard named Francisco Lunez, a famous desperado known as a "second Joaquin." Both men were buried in Todd's Valley. This aborted robbery attempt received much attention at the time as both White and Lunez were well known criminals. Considering the amount of gold that was transported from the Divide in the early days it is not surprising that the road between Todd's Valley and Auburn was a favorite location for highway robbers.

Todd's Valley was one of the pioneer public school districts. A.A. Pond and Thomas Dodds are recorded as the first trustees. The teacher, H. Miller, was the first teacher to receive public funds. The district reportedly had a "pretty good school house" but it lapsed into decay. For several years the district rented a room under the Odd Fellows Hall. In the fall of 1880 the citizens subscribed and built a new school house at the cost of \$500.00. Old records indicate there were approximately 100 volumes in the library, which was considered well-stocked for the times, and in 1882 twenty-four pupils attended school in the Todd's Valley School District. Total expenditures for the year 1881 was \$982.00, with total receipts of \$1,221.00.



*Drawn from nature and on stone by Karchel and Dressel*

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## TODD'S VALLEY, PLACER COUNTY

1857