**Madera County** 

The historic Madera County Courthouse in Madera. Madera, Chowchilla, Oakhurst, San Joaquin River, North Fork, Ahwahnee, Wassama State Historical Park, Raymond.



## **Madera County**

**Madera County Data** 

Population: 123,109 (Rank: 35)

Land Area (square miles): 2,136 (Rank: 24)

Madera did not become a county until 1893. Originally it was part of Mariposa County and in 1855 it became part of Fresno County. Madera is the Spanish word for "lumber" which was the first major industry.

The county extends from the San Joaquin River, which runs down the middle of the valley to the crest of the Sierras. The eastern half of the county includes the foothills and the Sierra Mountains. The southern part of Yosemite National Park is located in the county as well as the Devil's Postpile National Monument. The latter is a unique rock formation. Molten lava extruded from a fissure at a temperature that caused it to crystallize into hexagonal shapes. The national monument cannot be reached from the western side of the Sierras. The entrance is from Mammoth Lakes in Mono County.

Today, as with nearly all valley counties, Highway 99 is the main route. Highway 41 also cuts through the county from Fresno on its way to Yosemite. In 1919 a group called the Gold Chain Club was formed to lobby the state to pave what was then called Bootjack Road. In 1921 the state legislature declared Highway 49 the Mother Lode Highway but it stopped at Mariposa. In 1962 Bootjack Road became Highway 49 and 49's southern end became Oakhurst.

The Gold Rush of '49 was the driving force for settlement in the Mother Lode, and farming was for settlement in the valley. Madera was slow to develop on both counts.

#### Introduction

California is comprised of 58 counties. The state, the third largest in the U.S., has the greatest diversity of geography of any of the states. It has huge deserts, high mountain ranges, fertile valleys and a 1000 mile coastline. Beginning in 2001 my wife and I began to travel and photograph the state as a retirement hobby.

In 2009 we published a CD containing about 4,000 photos of the regions of the state. Since that time we have added about 10,000 more photos to our collection. It was also at this time (December 2008) I began to send a photographic diary of our trips to friends and people with an interest in California geography.

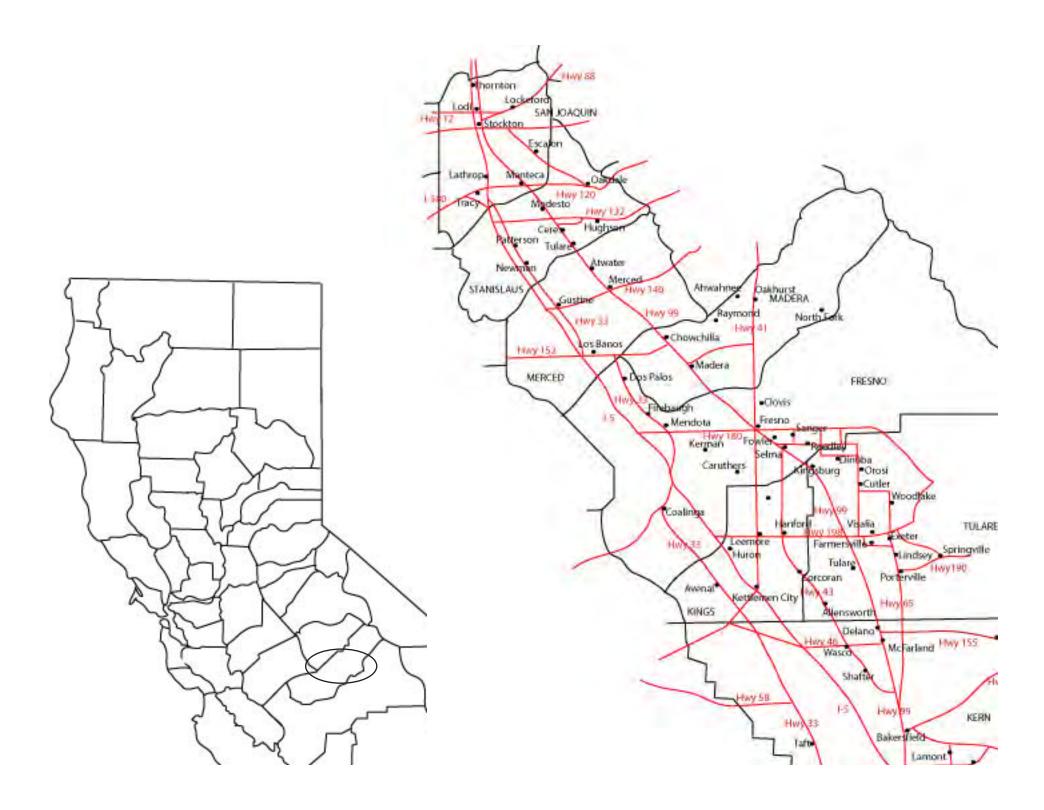
# © 2012 by Larry Stevens stevens.lawrence@comcast.net

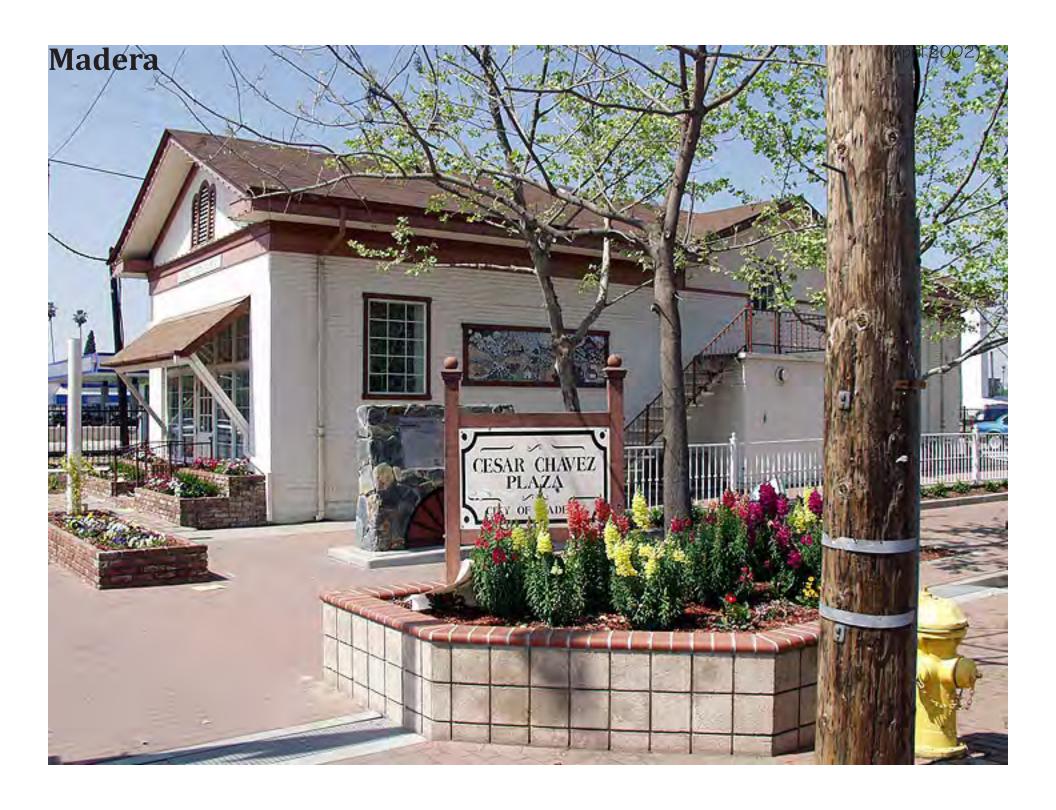
Early trappers, Mexican land grant holders, and gold seekers had little luck and most did not stay very long.

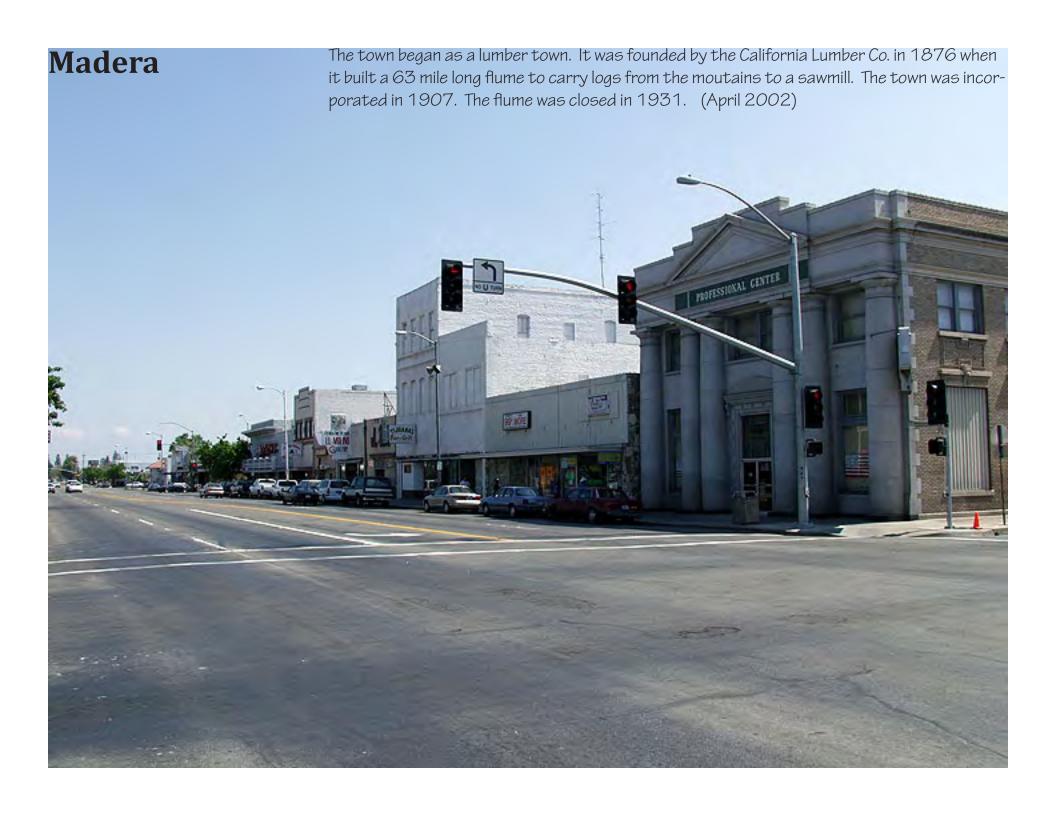
One who did was Jim Savage. Savage was an early settler of the area and employed Chinese workers to mine gold for him along the San Joaquin River. In his early years he fought the local Indians. Later he made peace with the five Indian tribes of the area by marrying a girl from each tribe. He is credited with being the first white man to see Yosemite.

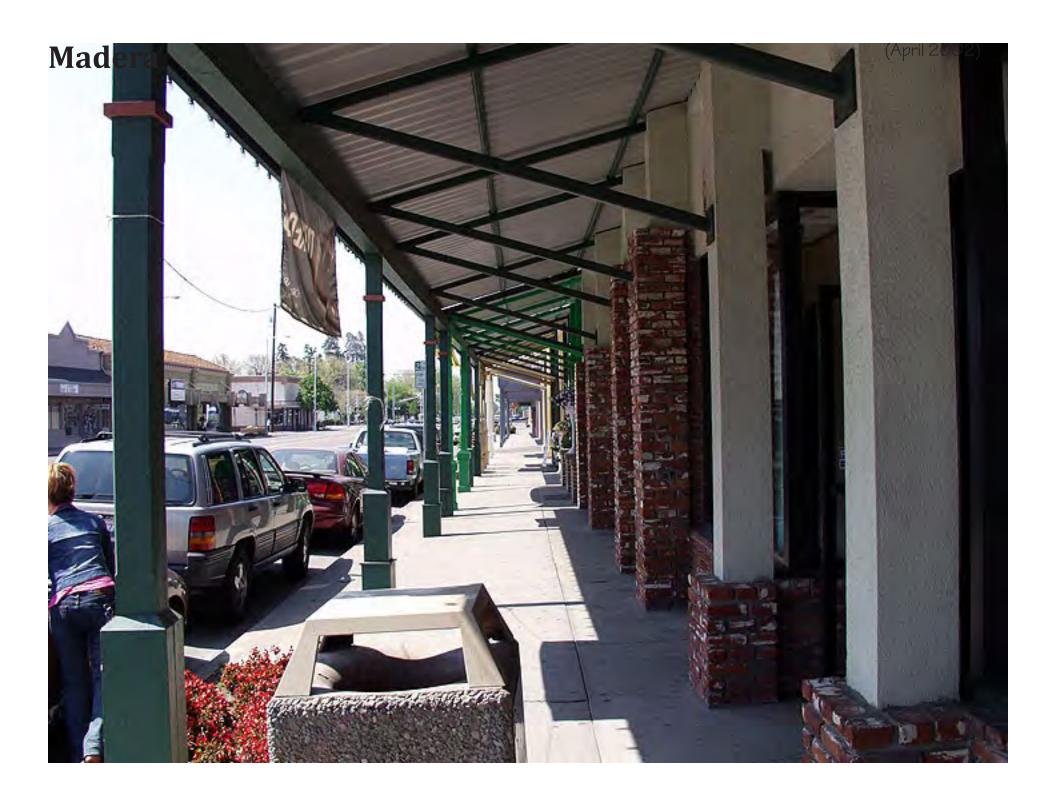
There was a gold rush in 1859. Coarsegold, Finegold, Grab Gulch, Ahwahnee, and Nippinawasee were gold mining communities founded during this time. Mining continued until the early part of the 20th Century. There is still a famous granite quarry operating at Raymond.

Cities: Chowchilla, Madera.





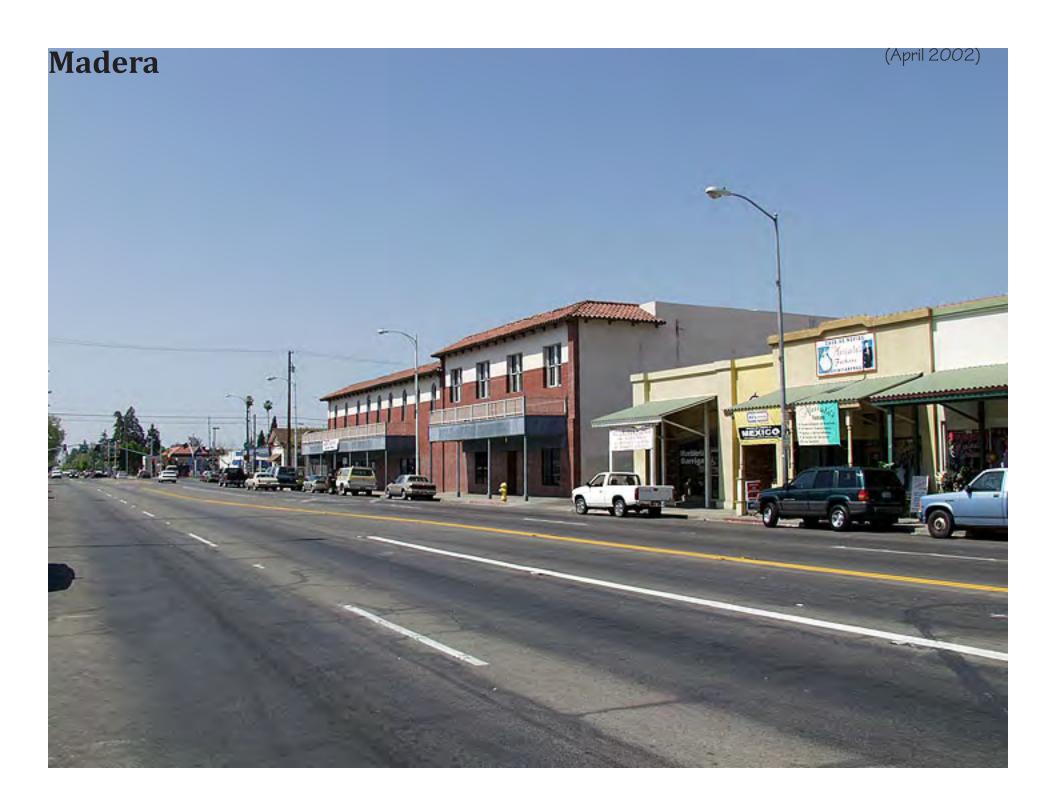






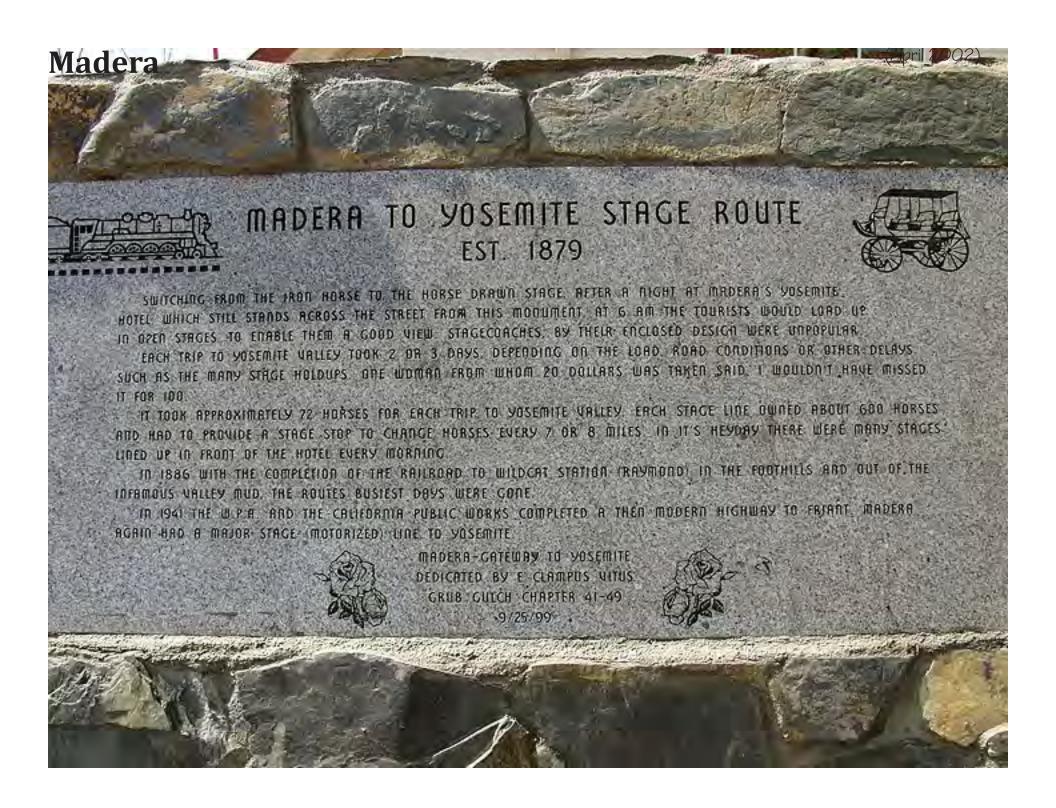
Madera (April 2002)









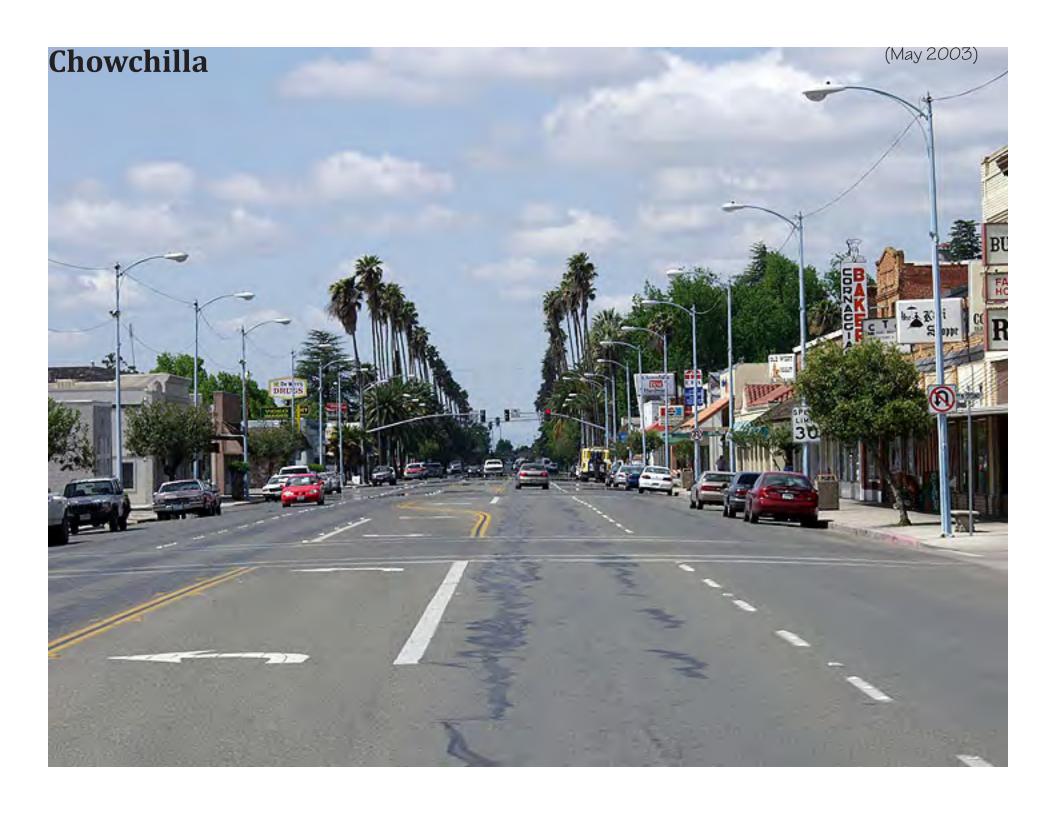


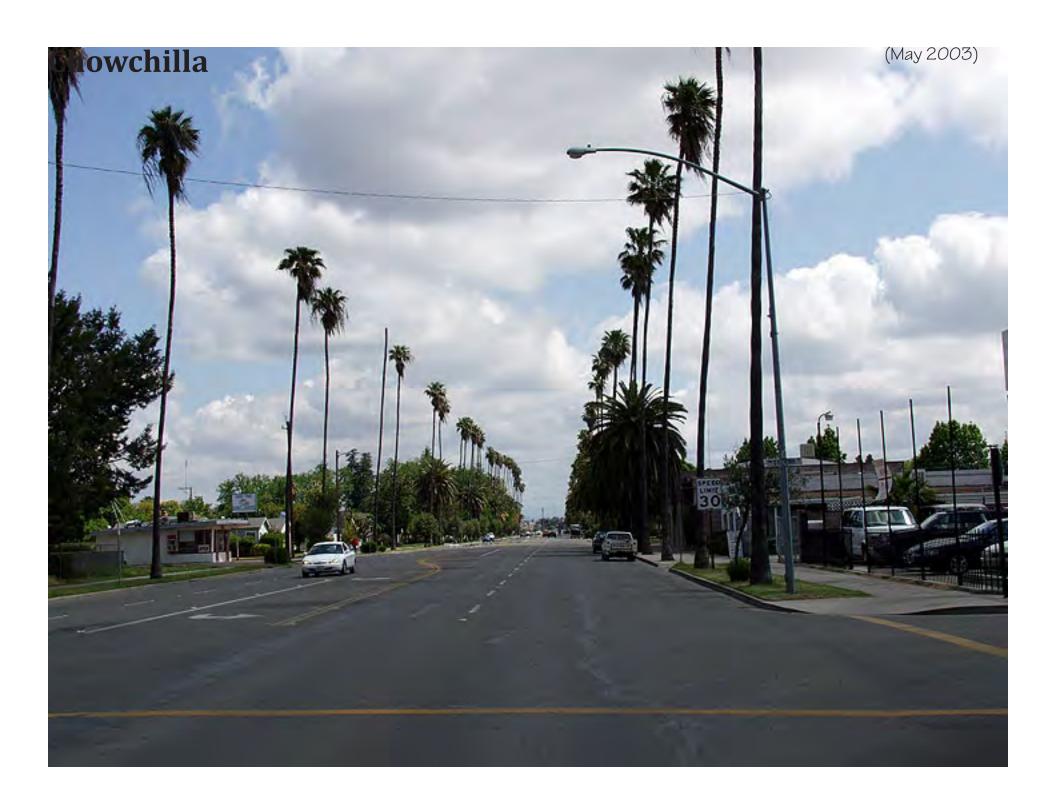
















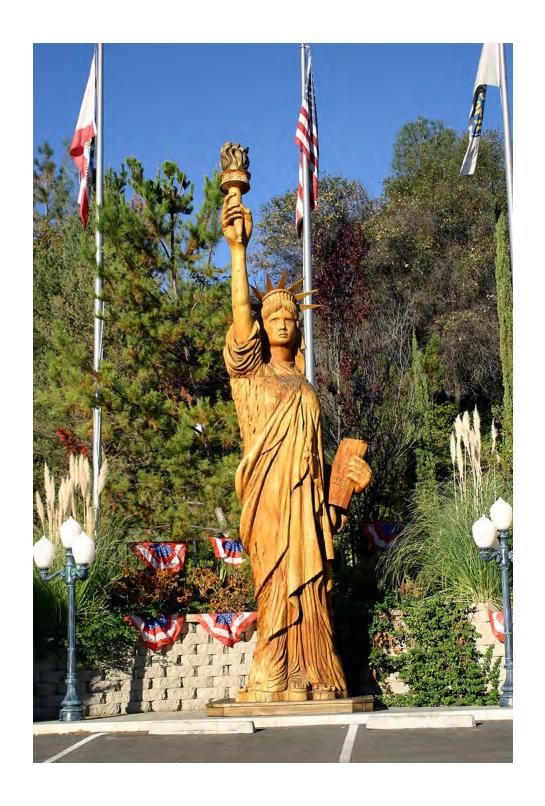
## **Oakhurst**

Oakhurst received a post office in 1873 when it was known as Fresno Flats. The name was changed in 1912. The population is 2,829. (November 2003)



## **Oakhurst**

(November 2003)



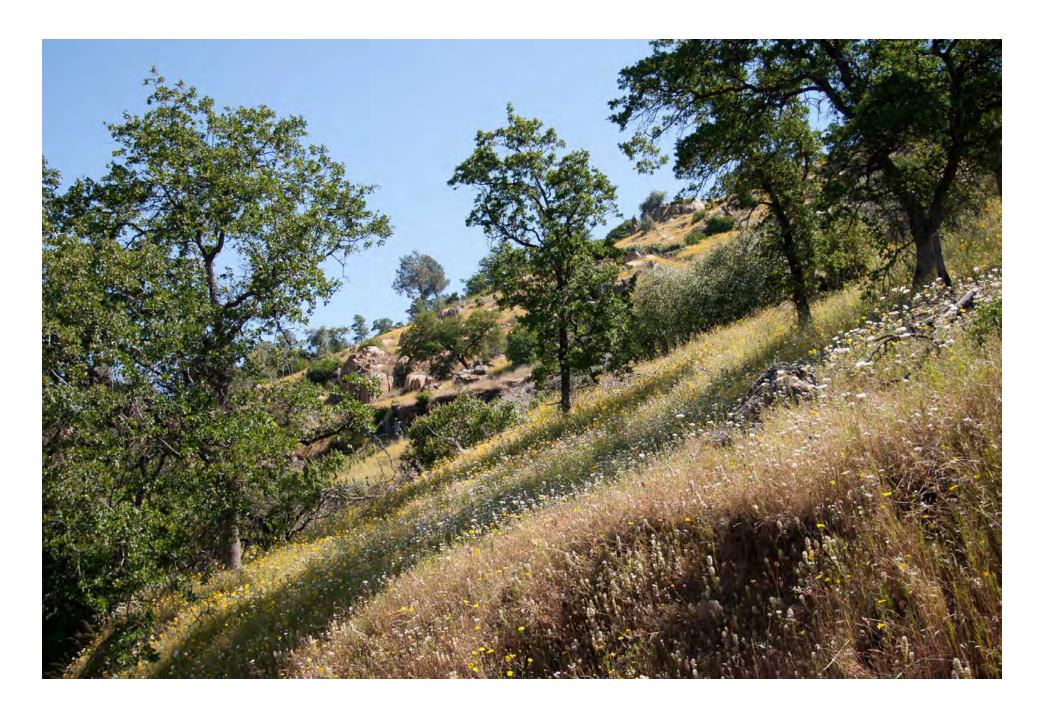
Oakhurst (November 2003)



# San Joaquin River



Power House Road which goes down into the San Joaquin River Canyon on the way to North Fork. (May 2005)



# San Joaquin River



# San Joaquin River

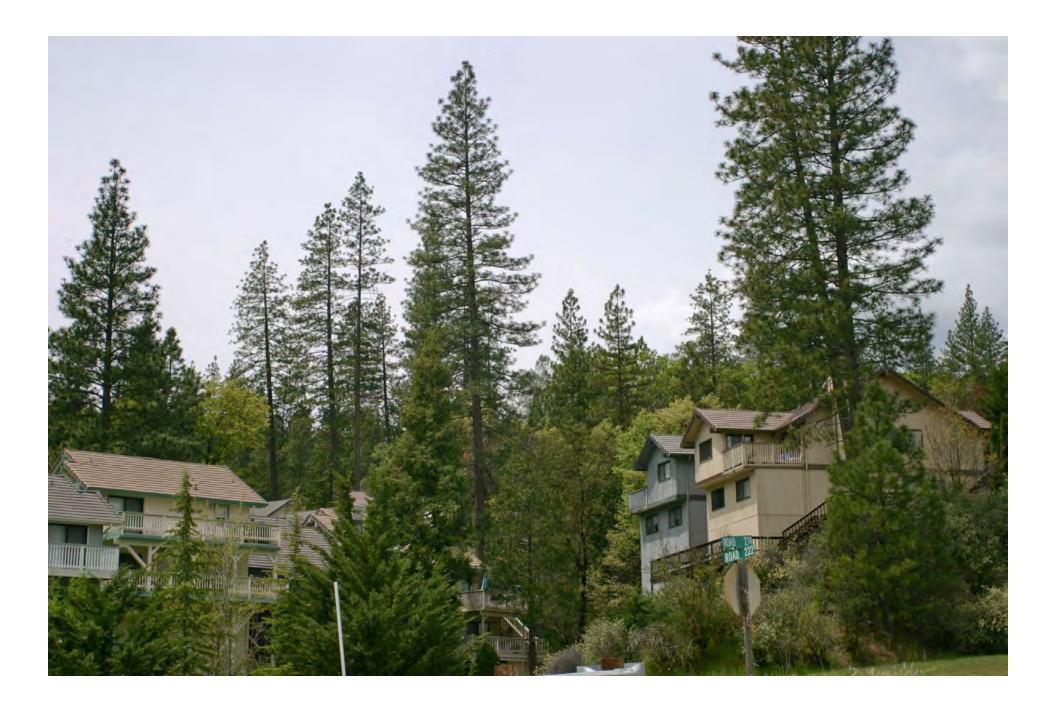


## **North Fork**

The population is 3,360 and received its first post office in 1888. Timber was the chief industry until the lumber mill closed in the 1990's. (May 2005)



















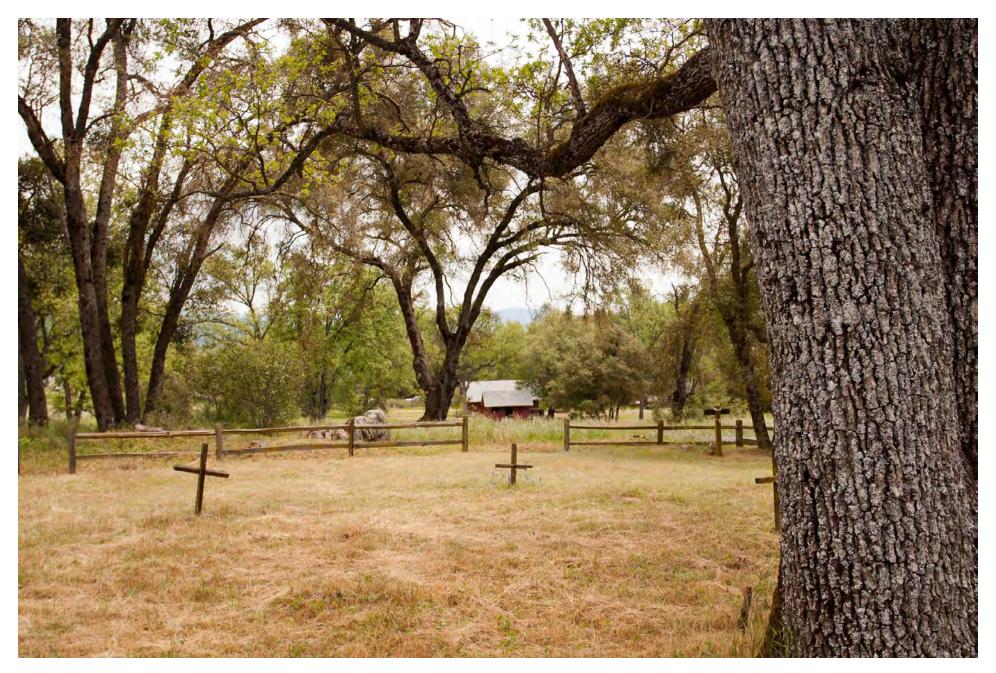
North Fork (May 2005)



North Fork (May 2005)



This former Indian village is still used by Native Americans for ceremonies. (May 2005)



Ahwahnee (May 2005)



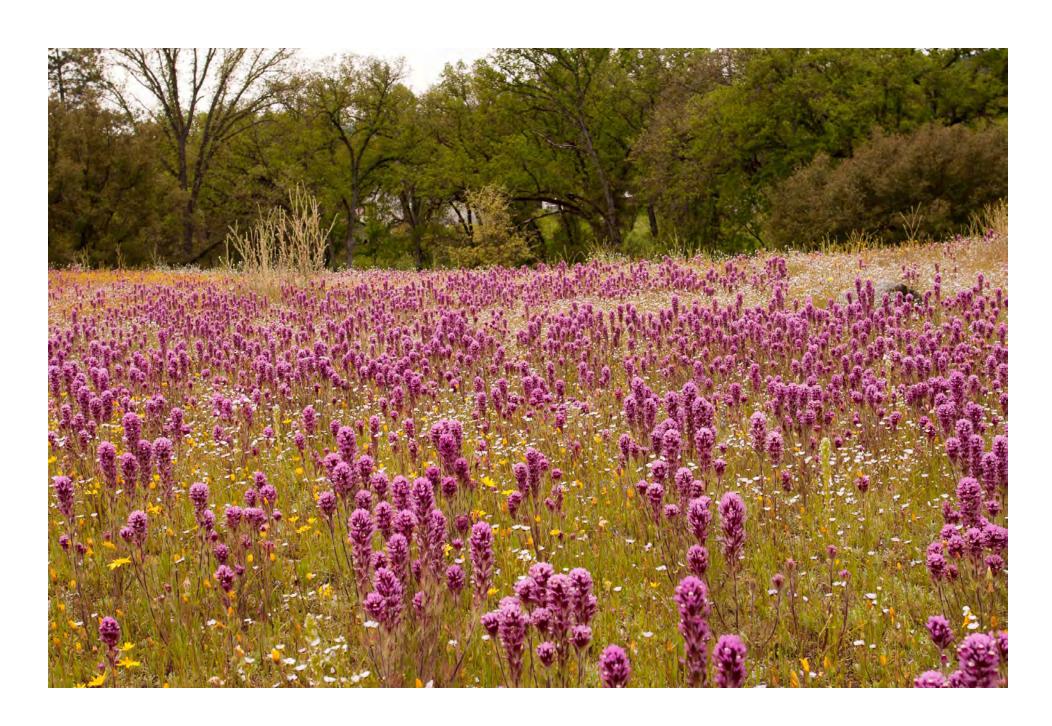
Ahwahnee (May 2005)



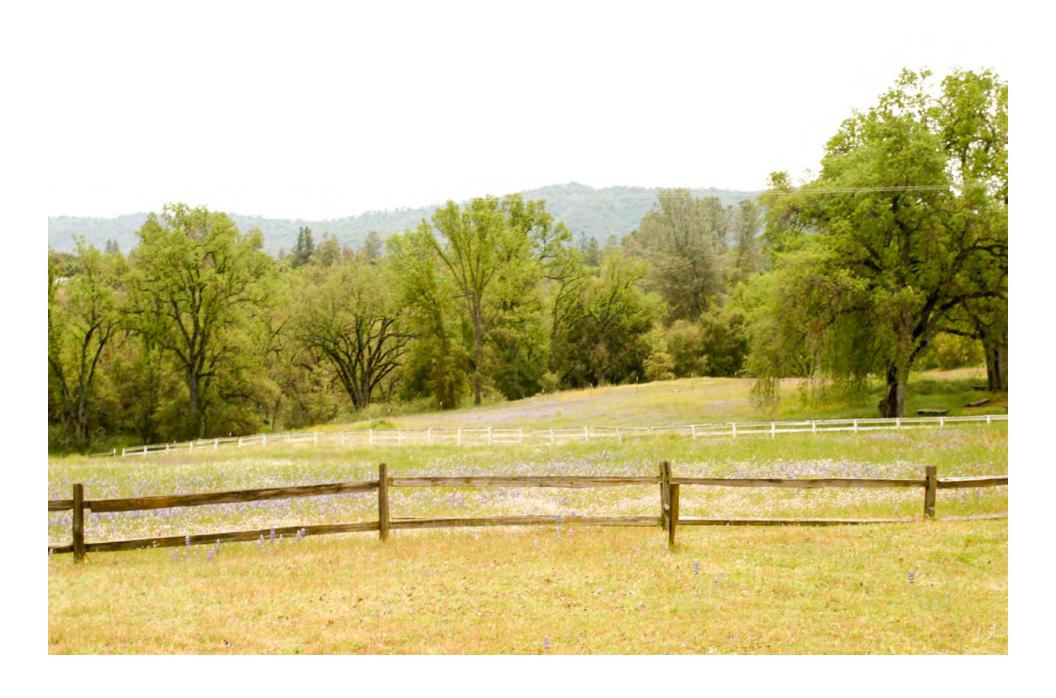
Ahwahnee (May 2005)



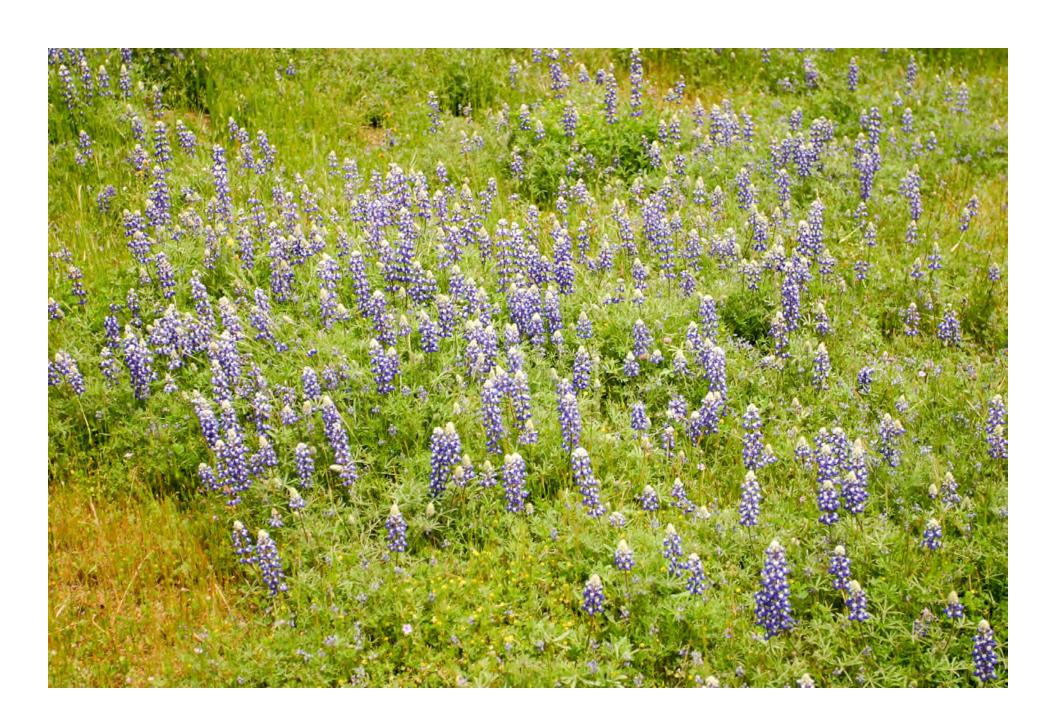












## Raymond

The first post office was built in 1886. Its name originally Wildcat Station. (February 2011)



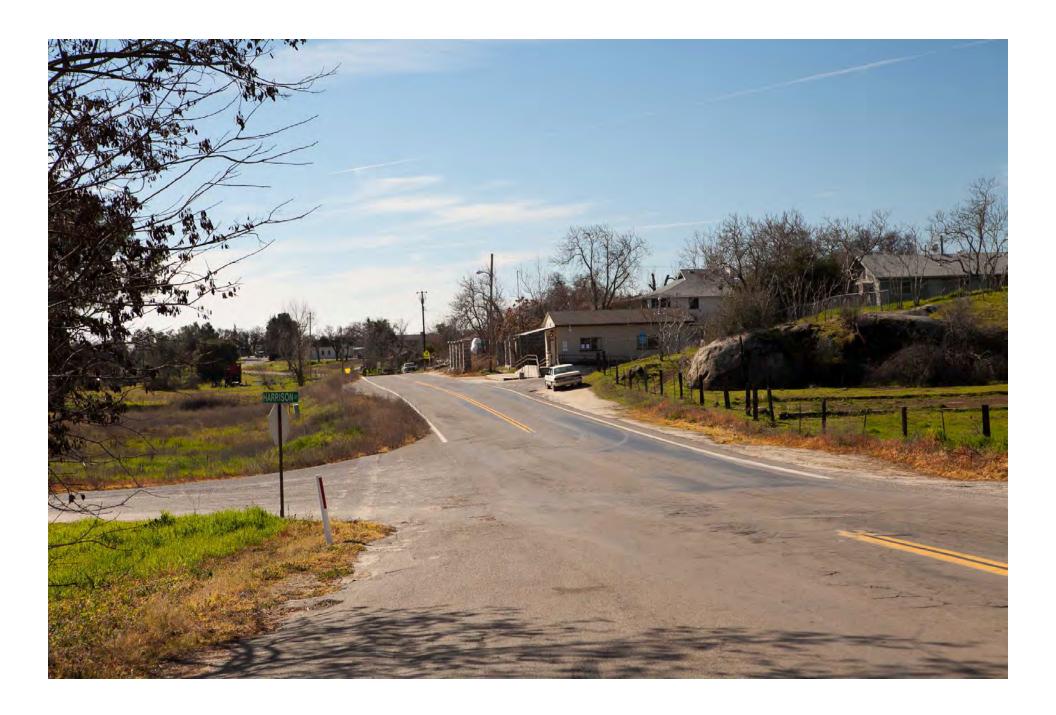
## Raymond

The town is the site of a large granite quarry that is still in operation. (February 2011)

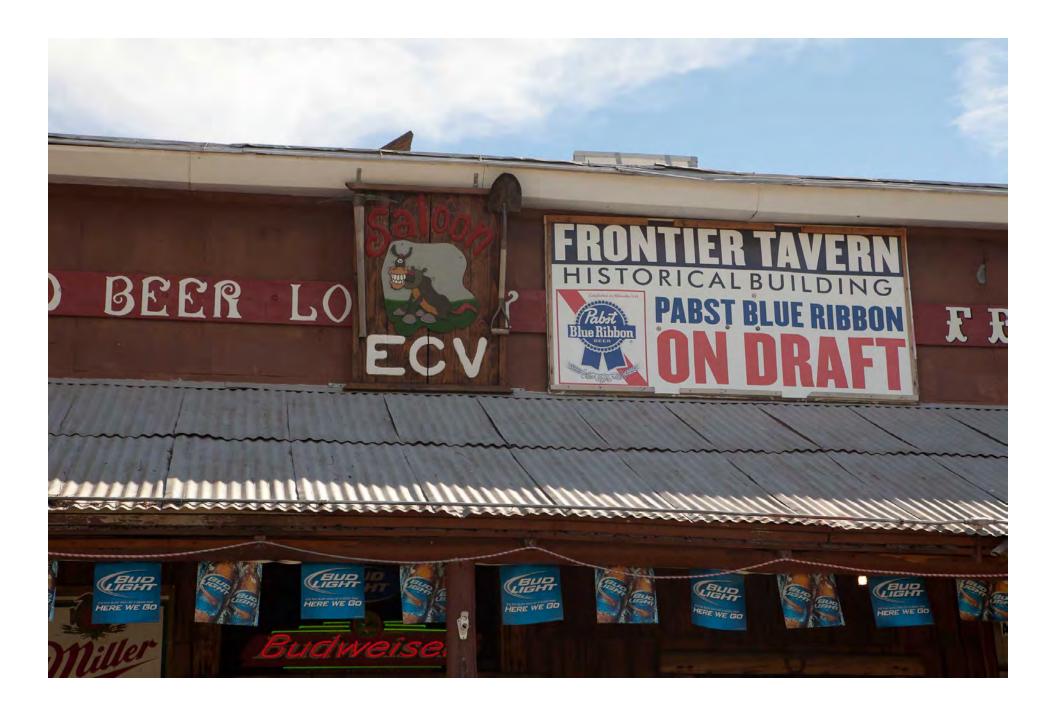
















## Raymond

This is a former school which now serves as a church. It is across the road from the quarry. (February 2011)



# Raymond



