Sierra County

The Sierra County Courthouse in Downieville (2002).

Sierra County Data
Population: 3,555 (Rank: 56)
Land Area (square miles): 953 Rank: 45)

Highway 49 wiggles its way through the middle of the county. 6,700 foot Yuba Pass separate the two halves to the county. Highway 49 connects with Highway 70 and Beckwourth Pass. Highway 89 connects the county with Lake Tahoe.

Sierra Nevada in Spanish means "snow saw." The county was created in 1852 when gold was discovered. Sierra County sits on the crest of the Sierras. The western half is mountainous and tree covered. The eastern half is the Sierra Valley, the largest alpine valley in North America. The 5,000 high foot valley is a center for cattle raising.

The valley was formed between 2 and 7 million years ago when massive granite blocks began to shift along faults. The valley lowered and the Sierras rose. A lake was later formed when volcanic debris dammed the valley. The Middle Fork of the Feather River eroded an outlet.

The first person to enter the valley was James Beckwourth in 1851. He was looking for a new pass across the Sierras. The valley supplied hay for livestock in Downieville and Sierra City. When gold and silver were found in the Comstock Lode in 1859 the valley produced hay, beef and dairy products for the miners. Swiss-Italian immigrants did much of the farming.

Cities: Loyalton. Towns: Downieville, Sierra City, Sierraville.

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.

Now we are organizing our collection by county using all of our photos dating back to 2001.

© 2011 by Larry Stevens
stevens.lawrence@comcast.net

Photo Trips

July 2002
We travelled through Sierra County on Highway 49. We stopped at Downieville and Sierra City to take pictures. It was Fourth of July.

August 2003
This was a quick trip I made to Loyalton after I dropped Nita off at Lake Tahoe.

October 2010
We photographed the Sierra Valley portion of Sierra County. This included Sattley, Loyalton and Sierraville.

Del Norte
Siskyou
Modoc
Shasta
Lassen
Trinity
Humboldt
Tehama
Plumas
Mendocino
Glenn
Butte
Sierra
Nevada
Colusa
Yuba
Placer
Lake
Sutter
Yolo
El Dorado
Sonoma
Napa
Sacramento
Amador
Alpine
Solano
Calaveras
Mono
Marin
San Joaquin
Tuolumne
Contra Costa

LASSEN
Hwy 36
Chester
Westwood
Susanville
Greenville
Taylorsville
Hwy 395
Quincy
Genesee
Belden
Bucks Lake
Hwy 70
Davis Lake
Frenchman's Lake
PLUMAS
Portola
Chilcoot
Beckwourth
Hwy 89
Sierra City
Sattley
Loyalton
Downieville
Sierraville
Hwy 49
Malakoff Diggings
NEVADA
Nevada City
Grass Valley
EL DORADO
Truckee
Interstate 80
Newcastle
Auburn
Tahoe City
Stateline
Penryn
Loomis
S. Lake Tahoe
Rocklin
PLACER
Hwy 50
Placerville

Yuba River

Yuba River

Downieville

Downieville is at the intersection of the Yuba and Downie rivers. (July 2002)

Downieville

The town has only 282 people. There are no street addresses. (July 2002)

Downieville

We have visited Downieville only once. It was on the Fourth of July in 2002.

Downieville

Downieville

Downieville

(July 2002)

Downieville

The main street of Downieville. (July 2002)

Downieville

This Gold Rush town was founded by Colonel William Downie in 1849. (July 2002)

Downieville

The Mountain Messenger is the oldest operating weekly newspaper in the state. (July 2002)

Sierra City

Highway 49 is the main street of Sierra City. It has a population of 221. (July 2002)

Sierra City

(July 2002)

©2002 by Lawrence Stevens

Sierra City

The town dates back to the Gold Rush.

Sierra City

(July 2002)

Sierra City

(July 2002)

Sierra City

(July 2002)

YUBA PASS
ELEV 6701 FT
EMERGENCY
CALL 9-1-1

Sierra Valley

Looking down at Sierra Valley from Yuba Pass. This is the largest alpine valley in North America. It developed in the 1860's to provide supplies to the Comstock Lode mines in Nevada. (July 2002)

Sattley

Sattley was founded in 1860 by Isaac Sattley Church. The original house is still there. (October 2010)

Sierraville

Sierraville is at the intersection of Highway 49 coming from Downieville and Highway 89 coming from Truckee and Lake Tahoe. The only traffic light in the county is here. (October 2010)

Sierraville

The old hotel has been refurbished and is open for business. The town has a population of 200. (October 2010)

Sierraville

(August 2003

Sierraville

A little Halloween humor on our last trip in through the valley in 2010.

Sierra Valley

August 2003

Loyalton

Loyalton is the largest town in the county with a population of 769. The old hotel is closed. We have visited this town twice (2003 and 2010). This is the only incorporated city in the county. Nita and I stayed in this hotel in 1976. The photo is from 2003.

Loyalton

August 2003

Loyalton

August 2003

Loyalton

October 2010

Loyalton

October 2010

Loyalton

August 2003

Loyalton

August 2003