

Shasta State Historic Park Southside Ruins
Audio Tour, Descriptive Narrative
FINAL MASTER SCRIPT, August 17, 2010

FILE: Shasta's Main Street

Man's Voice...Shasta's Main Street. At one time, Shasta's Main Street was home to over forty businesses. All were painted white. Imagine how this row of white buildings must have shone in the summer sun. In addition to the paint, the fronts of many buildings were decorated. Pilasters – columns built into the walls – framed doorways. Many of the pilasters had intricately carved caps. Decorative and functional cornices - horizontal moldings above the doors – helped keep rainwater from running down the sides of the buildings.

Store fronts were narrow, supposedly for tax reasons. The wider the building, the more taxes the owner had to pay. On average, the buildings were eighty-five feet long and twenty-three feet wide. While most were only one story tall, a few had a second story. Some buildings had wooden awnings that provided shoppers with shade in the summer and protection from the rain in the winter. Most had at least one wooden sign out front advertising their goods and services. A wood walkway ran in front of the buildings. Trees grew alongside the walkway. Although you could not see them from the street, metal roofs covered with sand or dirt topped each building.

Today, however, the buildings bear little resemblance to the proud structures they once were. Only the foundations and a few walls of about a dozen buildings remain. The white paint is gone, exposing the brick the buildings were built of. Most bricks are a dull red color although the occasional light brown brick can be seen. The roofs are gone;

some collapsed over the years, others may have been removed during the scrap drives of the World Wars.

Shasta's business community used cast iron shutters as the front doors. These shutters were often the most expensive aspect of the building's construction. However, their importance could not be overstated. They served two critical roles, theft prevention and protection from fire.

The shutters were similar to iron doors used in the eastern United States since the eighteen-twenties. In fact, many of the shutters used in Shasta and other gold rush towns were manufactured in New York. They were shipped to San Francisco and carried by wagon to their final destinations.

Some of the doors still hang in the doorways. Although each door was unique, they followed a similar design. Each door consisted of four plates or panels of iron. The iron panels were painted green, and bolted together to form leaves. The leaves were then hinged together, allowing the shutters to fold open and shut. Although they appear smooth from far away, if you examine them up close you'll notice a bumpy, textured surface.

When the stores were in use, customers walked across wooden floors. The walls were usually painted or plastered although at least one store used wallpaper. Shelves and furniture filled the store, displaying items for sale. Everyday goods, such as canned food or clothing, were stacked on shelves behind the counters or hung from the walls. Pricier items such as watches or other jewelry were held safely in glass display cases. While some buildings used lamps inside, most relied on natural light that entered through skylights and the tall doors. The wooden floors, beams, signs, awnings, and shelves

that once filled the buildings are long gone. Instead, a grassy carpet lies between the walls of each building, under the open sky.

Woman's Voice...To hear the story of how Shasta became a Gold Rush town, please go to the file **Shasta's Early Years**

Man's Voice...To hear a description of the eastern-most four buildings, please go to the file **Lots 9-12**