

Shasta State Historic Park Southside Ruins  
Audio Tour, Interpretive Story  
FINAL MASTER SCRIPT August 17, 2010

**FILE:Shasta's Early Years**

***Woman's Voice...***Shasta's Early Years (1847 to 1850).

In the summer of eighteen forty seven, Shasta looked very different than it does today. There were no permanent buildings and no roads. The landscape was marked by trails and bark houses that belonged the Wintu people. Buildings made of brick lay several years into the future. However, change was in the air. In January, eighteen forty-eight, James Marshall discovered gold at Sutter's Mill. A local rancher, Pierson B. Reading, heard of the find at Sutter's Mill and traveled to Coloma to see the truth for himself. While there, Reading noticed the similarities between the Shasta area and Coloma. Both lay among rolling hills crossed by streams that flowed down from the mountains. Reading concluded that there must also be equally rich gold deposits near Shasta, and returned home to search for it. In July, eighteen forty eight, Reading made the second gold strike in California.

***Man's voice...***EUREKA!

***Woman's voice...***He found gold on Clear Creek, approximately five miles from what was to become the Shasta town site. Following his discovery, the town of Reading Springs, which would later be known as Shasta, sprang up almost overnight.

Within less than a year, hundreds of hopeful gold seekers had flocked to the region.

Reading Springs was a village of tents, with some rough log cabins scattered here and there. The new arrivals were overwhelmingly white and male. Many came from farms in Oregon's Willamette Valley, where they had arrived only a few months earlier. Additional gold seekers arrived soon after from the eastern states and from across the Atlantic.

In many ways, Shasta was an ideal place to create a miner's camp. Grasses and abundant freshwater springs as well as oaks, ponderosa pine, Manzanita and other trees provided for the miner's needs. And although there was little to no gold in the immediate vicinity, numerous placer gold deposits lay within just a few miles of the site.

The new arrivals concentrated their efforts on placer mining in the nearby creeks and streams. They wasted little time on anything else, such as constructing homes. Fifty years later Doctor Benjamin Shurtleff recalled,

***Man's Voice...*** "When the rainy season began, which was early on the second of November, Milton Magee was the only man who had a long house completely finished. All admired it and wished they had one like it."

***Woman's Voice...*** The winter of forty-nine was long, cold, wet and difficult. Heavy rains and flooding caused many miners to leave for San Francisco or Sacramento.

And yet, in the spring, when the rains stopped people returned, and in greater numbers. Other towns, such as Whiskeytown and Horsetown, sprang up nearby.

But Shasta was more than just another mining town. It was becoming the transportation and commercial center for Northern California.

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

***Woman's Voice...***To hear the story of Shasta's development into a commercial center, please go to the file **Shasta's Golden Years**