



Block print of Stage Drivers' Retreat by Charles Surendorf.

California has embarked upon the project of restoring Columbia, famous "gem of the southern mines" during the early gold-mining days in the mother lode country on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada.

The restoration is one of the major projects of the State in conjunction with the California centennial period of 1948-50—the finding of gold in '48, the gold rush of '49, and statehood in 1850.

The State park commission has authorized a historical survey of Columbia, with recommendations for a master plan of restoration. The survey is complete. Work is progressing on the plan, and on organizing a "restoration" staff in the State division of beaches and parks, administrators of the area.

Columbia came into being when a rich gold strike was made at its site by Dr. Thaddeus Hildreth on March 27, 1850. It boomed to national prominence in the 1850's, roaring with trade as well as the usual saloons, sporting houses, fandango halls, and theaters typical of a thriving gold town—then slipped into near oblivion in the late 1860's after two disastrous fires and a shortage of water necessary to work the "diggin's".

In 1928 Frederick Law Olmsted, retained by the newly created California State Park Commission to make a survey of areas to be included in a State park system, recommended that Columbia be preserved as the outstanding example of an early-day mining town.

In 1945 the California Legislature appropriated \$50,000 for the acquisition of the town, with the provision that this amount be matched through public subscriptions.

Restoration of Gold-Rush Columbia

Edward F. Dolder

*Supervisor, Conservation Education
California Department of Natural Resources*

The task of raising the matching \$50,000 was taken up by the Columbia Historic Park Association.

Governor Earl Warren signed the appropriation bill at a public ceremony July 15, 1945.

Today most of the property set up for purchase has been acquired and the area is officially known as Columbia Historic State Park.

A staff of State park rangers and a curator are stationed at the new park to protect the property and conduct research into old records of the town; a new water system is being developed for fire protection, and—pending completion of the master restoration plan—the park staff is arresting further deterioration of the old buildings.

Upon completion of the restoration, which will take from five to ten years, State park officials plan to make Columbia a living mining town by encouraging activities consistent with the atmosphere of the town during its golden days.

Old-timer with his model T Ford in front of Stage Drivers' Retreat, Columbia, Calif.

