



# Cherokee's Pioneer Cemetery

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The town of Cherokee, California, was once a thriving and prosperous community. Founded by Welsh miners and engineers in the 1850s at the height of the gold rush era, its population of about 2,000 adventurous souls were mainly quarry operators and their families. In its heyday, Cherokee consisted of eight hotels, seventeen saloons, three churches, and three schools. The town's name was inspired by a small group of Cherokee Indians who had traveled there to pan for gold in the nearby streams and taken part in the initial frenzy to find rich veins of golden ore.

The Welsh, expert miners, organized three shifts working around the clock. Each had three hundred workers extracting gold with the advanced technique of hydraulic mining. By the 1890s the cost of hydraulic mining forced the closure

of the operation and the town's economic base collapsed—a fate suffered by foothill communities up and down the Sierra Nevada range in California.

I first came across the remains of the town during a trip to the nearby Covered Bridge, a local historic site. The little town of Cherokee, with a population of about 12 souls, now consists of a few homes, a cemetery, and a nearby museum. I had recently joined the Yolo and Beyond chapter of the Heritage Roses Group. On the

