**Life in Paradise**

**Name**

There are two legends on how the town earned its name. The most common tale credits a mill worker, William Leonard. The story goes that Leonard and his mill crew were returning from taking a load of lumber into the valley. When they returned into the cool shade of the pine trees, he is said to have declared, “Boys, this is paradise!”

Another explanation dates back to the town’s early mining days when there were many gambling halls and saloons. The most notorious of these was called “Pair-O-Dice,” which eventually evolved to Paradise.

**Before White Settlement**

Before prospectors settled in Paradise Ridge in 1848, diverse groups of Native Americans lived in the area. Three main tribes occupied the area lived here: the Konkow, Nisenan, and the Mechoopda, known collectively as the Maidu. Estimates of pre-contact population as around 9,000 to 9,500. By 1910, the population was barely over 1,000, decimated by disease, social disorder, and genocide. By 1930, the population had decreased even further to just under a hundred people. Today, the Maidu number about 3,500 people and live in separate valleys, foothills, and mountains of Northeaster Central California.

- **1848**: Gold was discovered on the American River, attracting prospectors to Paradise Ridge.
- **1857**: The first post office was built in the expanding trading post of Dogtown. It operated out of the Strong House.
- **1861**: The Delaplain School opened. During the 1850’s and 1860’s, lumber mills caused a steady increase in the population.
- **1879**: On November 27, Paradise became a town.
- **1889**: The Paridise Irrigation District formed, causing a drastic growth in the farming industry.
- **1890**: The first church, Union Congregational Church, was established in Paradise. This lead to the formation of four more churches.
- **1904**: The railroad was established, resulting in many new settlers. The Delaplain School opened. During the 1850’s and 1860’s, lumber mills caused a steady increase in the population.
- **1916**: The population reached 20,000 as a result of the post-war “baby boom.”
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- **1979**: The first Paradise Festival was held to celebrate the winter harvest. This later became the Johnny Appleseed Days.
- **1989**: The first Paradise Festival was held to celebrate the winter harvest. This later became the Johnny Appleseed Days.
- **2000**: The Humboldt fire burned across the southern end of Paradise, eventually cutting off two of the town’s three escape routes. A third of the population was ordered to evacuate and in the ensuing panic one person died of a heart attack. In the end, 23,000 acres were burned and 74 homes were lost.
- **2008**: The Camp Fire completely destroyed Paradise.
- **2018**: The Camp Fire completely destroyed Paradise.