

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 92000854 Date Listed: 6/2⁶/92

Michigan Bluff-Last Chance Trail
Property Name

Placer County CA State

N/A
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

fr *Antonio J. Rice*
Signature of the Keeper

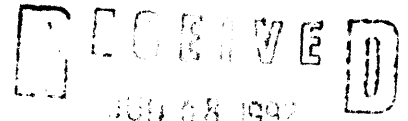
6/29/92
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

Classification: The Category of Property is amended to read "structure."

This information was confirmed with Evan DeBloois of the USDA Forest Service.

DISTRIBUTION:
National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)



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NATIONAL
REGISTER

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REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property:

historic name: MICHIGAN BLUFF / LAST CHANCE TRAIL

other name/site number: _____

2. Location:

street & number: _____

not for publication:

city/town: MICHIGAN BLUFF vicinity: X

state: CALIFORNIA county: PLACER code: 061 zip code: 95631

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: PUBLIC-FEDERAL/PRIVATE

Category of Property: DISTRICT

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing Noncontributing

_____	_____	buildings
<u>1</u>	_____	sites
<u>2</u>	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>3</u>	_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 2

Name of related multiple property listing: NONE

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. _____ See continuation sheet.

Wm J. DeBoni 5-19-92
Signature of certifying official Date

Forest Service
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property X meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. _____ See continuation sheet.

Hathyn Mualteri 11-12-91
Signature of commenting or other official Date

CALIFORNIA OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register. Autonietts of Ace 6/26/92
_____ See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. _____ See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register. _____
- removed from the National Register. _____
- other (explain): _____

for Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

TRANSPORTATION Sub: PEDESTRIAN RELATED

Current Functions:

TRANSPORTATION Sub: PEDESTRIAN RELATED

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Other Description: VERNACULAR ENGINEERING

Materials: foundation _____ roof _____
walls _____ other EARTH & STONE

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
_____.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A & C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : _____

Areas of Significance: EXPLORATION & SETTLEMENT
ENGINEERING
TRANSPORTATION
COMMERCE

Period(s) of Significance: 1850 - 1939

Significant Dates : _____

Significant Person(s): _____

Cultural Affiliation: _____

Architect/Builder: _____

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above. X See continuation sheet.

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9. Major Bibliographical References
=====

See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: _____

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreage of Property: 37.66

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

Michigan Bluff	<u>10 696080E</u>	<u>4323560N</u>
Deadwood	<u>10 699965E</u>	<u>4328100N</u>
Last Chance	<u>10 705200E</u>	<u>4331400N</u>

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

Name/Title: Hal V. Hall and Thomas Winter

Organization: Western States Trail Foundation

Date: July 10, 1991

Street & Number: 701 High Street

Telephone: (916) 823-7282 or
322-7557

City or Town: Auburn

State: California

ZIP: 95603

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DESCRIPTION

Summary: The Michigan Bluff-Last Chance Trail is an actively used dirt and rock bed trail beginning at the town of Michigan Bluff in Placer County, California, and traveling eastward into and out of the canyon of El Dorado Creek a measured distance of 6.09 miles to the town site of Deadwood on Deadwood Ridge. Traveling northeast along Deadwood Ridge on the Deadwood Road the measured distance is 1.45 miles, continuing 0.39 miles eastward to the edge of the ridge at Devils Basin (also known as Devils Thumb). From this point descending into the North Fork of the Middle Fork of the American River Canyon, and out to the town site of Last Chance, is a distance of 4.5 miles. (The distances recorded above are from measurements obtained in 1985 by the Course Certification Committee of The Athletics Congress). The trail is a portion of the Western States Trail beginning in Carson City, Nevada through Squaw Valley on the eastern side of the Sierras and continuing along historic roads and trails, and modern roads and trails through the town of Auburn, in Placer County, to Sacramento, California.

The Michigan Bluff-Last Chance Trail was described and mapped by John A. Shields, Placer County Surveyor, and assisted by Wendell Robie, C.J. Coquoz, and D.J. Dobbas as named by the Placer County Board of Supervisors in 1949. The description was publicly filed concurrently with Ordinance 312, Series B, on January 14, 1954. The trail, according to the public record, is shown on the Colfax Quadrangle Sheet of the United States Geological Survey surveyed in 1885 to 1887, Edition of 1902, as reprinted in November 1922. The public record indicates the following specific description of the trail as being the, "Trail starting at Michigan Bluff in Section 22, Township 14 North, Range 11 East, MDB&M, thence Northeasterly on the Michigan Bluff-Deadwood trail across El Dorado Canyon to Deadwood, thence Northeasterly to Last Chance (across the North Fork of the Middle Fork of the American River)." Last Chance is located in Section 34, Township 15 North, Range 12 East, MDB&M.

The mining towns of Michigan Bluff, Deadwood, and Last Chance are connected by a switch-back trail that descends 1900 feet from Michigan Bluff down the El Dorado Canyon, climbs 2000 feet up and over Deadwood Ridge, drops 2000 feet and crosses the North-Middle Fork of the American River and winds up the canyon 2100 feet to Last Chance.

Historic Account and Description of the Trail: Francis P. Farquhar provided an edited version of explorer, surveyor, William H. Brewer's account of his expedition through California between 1860-1864. Brewer was chosen by Professor Josiah Dwight Whitney, to head a field party to map geological, botanical, and zoological resources. Brewer's expedition occurred at the height of the Nevada Silver Boom, and during a period when California's economy was beginning to shift from mining to agriculture. Of particular importance for this report is Brewer's account of his journey over the Sierra along the Placer County Emigrant Road to a point where the road divided (at Robinson Flat) and one branch continued along the Foresthill Divide to Secret House and down to Foresthill, and the other into Last Chance. The excerpt describes the trail section of interest in this nomination.

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August 29, 1863. We were off early, but were directed on the wrong trail and it cost us much labor. We followed on down the volcanic table, with a deep canyon on the south, the air very hazy and thick, the foothills becoming lost in the haze in a few miles. We were rapidly getting into a warmer climate. At noon we struck a mining town, Last Chance-hot, dusty in the extreme. Here we found we were on the wrong trail and had to cross three deep canyons. A trail is cut down the steep sides. We descended some 1,500 feet, then rose another volcanic table as high as the first-the top of this canyon, from table to table, is not over three-quarters of a mile to a mile, its depth about 1,500 feet. We crossed this table, passed the little place called Deadwood, and then we had the El Dorado Canyon to cross-still worse-nearly or quite two thousand feet deep, its sides still steeper. Here is a toll trail, very narrow-often a misstep on the narrow way would send the horse and rider, or mule and pack, down hundreds of feet, to swift and certain destruction. It was fearful, yet we had to \$1.50 for the privilege of passing it. There is a cluster of mining cabins in the canyon. A nugget has just been taken out that weighs seventy-eight ounces (over eight pounds) and worth some \$1,500.

Well, we came out of that and stopped last night at Michigan Bluffs, a mining town. The town is supported by claims in "washed gravels" that from bluffs nearly two thousand feet above the bottom of the canyon, yet stratified by water. Our horses cost us two dollars each for keep over night. I was anxious to get on, so came to Forest Hill this morning, six miles, once more on a wagon road, but hot and dusty-temperature over 90. (Farquhar 1966: 446-448).

Gold Rush Towns Along the Route: Michigan City (later named Michigan Bluff), Deadwood and Last Chance were described in various sources, including a federal survey in 1853 and directories from 1861, 1879-80, and 1875. These descriptions provide a very visual image of life in remote mining towns of this region.

Michigan City/Michigan Bluff

Lieutenant R. S. Williamson, Corps of Topographical Engineers described Michigan City on August 14th 1853.

The road from Forest Hill to Michigan City winds about the elevated plateau of the divide, among the tall pines and firs, and skirts the deep canyon valley of the Middle Fork (of the American River). The stream was flowing nearly three thousand feet below us for most of the distance. These canyons are like great furrows in a vast slope or plateau. Before reaching Sarahville we stopped at Baker's Rancho, a house beautifully located among the tall pines. There is a fine stream of pure cold water a short distance above, and a pipe from it delivers a constant stream into a large trough at the foot of a towering pine. This trough is a giant of its kind, being twenty feet long, three wide, and two deep. It is cut from a single log, and the bottom is strewn with quartz crystals and pebbles, which show distinctly through the transparent water.

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Michigan City - This thriving mining town is on the north side of the Middle Fork, and about 2,000 feet above the stream. The surface was originally covered with pine forest; but most of the trees have been cut away, and those that remain near the town are trimmed up to the very top, so that they more resemble liberty poles than trees. In June, 1852, the site was marked by but one little log cabin, and today it is one of the largest towns in the country. There is here a deep and widely-extended deposit of auriferous drift, covering the underlying slate from view. Whole acres of this drift have been swept away by the miners to a depth of from ten to sixty feet, or down to the "bed-rock" of slate.

All this drift is washed by what is called the "hydraulic method," an improvement in the art of placer mining and washing which originated among the miners of California, and which enables them to mine and wash nearly ten tons of earth where, under the old methods, they could scarcely wash one.

The operation, as in the case of washing down the bank, is a continuous one, and requires little labor or attention, except to keep the sluice from clogging. This is done by one or two men, who walk up and down and throw out the large stones with forks.

The following description is from the 1861 Directory. The description is of the period when the hydraulic mining was undermining the very town. Michigan City was in the process of being moved up to higher ground in the spring of 1861. The later site was called Michigan Bluff. The writer described the businesses in town.

2 stone fireproof stores, 2 clothing stores, 5 provisions stores, 3 hotels, 2 restaurants, 2 expressmen, 4 barbers, 2 limbs of the law, 3 doctors, 2 bankers, 14 grog sellers, 5 shoemakers, 2 German tailors, 6 sons of Vulcan, 1 watchmaker, 5 billiard/gambling saloons, 2 livery stables, 2 tin men, 2 druggists, 40 free masons, 60 odd fellows, 100 Sons of Temperance, 1 Methodist preacher, congregation of 50, 1 school teacher, 1 musician, 2 justices, 1 sheriff, 2 constables, and 1 auctioneer.

Deadwood

The 1861 directory describes Deadwood as follows. The date is "Christmas of the present winter (1860)".

Town is isolated, the country surrounding it not admitting any settlements nearer than El Dorado Canyon and Michigan Bluff on the one side, and Devils basin and Last Chance, on the other. There is no wagon road leading to the town from the valleys and settlements below, except that leading up the main divide by the Forks House and Secret Springs, and around the head of El Dorado Canyon, and down the narrow ridge, to the town, making a circuit of some seventy miles from Michigan Bluff to reach the town, seven miles distant. There is good trail leading across the canyon from Michigan Bluff to Deadwood and Last Chance, over which the supplies of settlers are transported on the backs of mules.

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The number of inhabitants is stated at 160 to 175.

The sides of the ridge upon which it (Deadwood) stands are so steep, that rocks rolled from the top in some places would continue their motion until they reached the bed of El Dorado Creek on the other side, or the north fork of the Middle Fork of the American River on the other, a mile distant from the place where they were set in motion.

Tunnel mines are listed by name in the 1861 directory; by number, there were 5 tunnels in El Dorado Canyon, 29 in Deadwood, five of which were over 500 feet in length. 16 tunnels in Last Chance, 5 over 500 feet long.

Last Chance

The village of Last Chance (is) situated up in the mountains, on a ridge.....at nearly elevation of 5000'.

Diggings were discovered in the canyons and gulches in the section of country in which Last Chanced is situated, in the spring of 1850, but there was no permanent settlement made there until 1852. On the ridge commencing immediately above the village, an open glade commences, and extends for several miles to the eastward; but on both sides of this bald spot is growing the finest kind of timber, reaching far down upon the mountain sides towards the canyon.

Village is composed of about 25 houses upon the main street, and contains about seventy-five inhabitants, all of whom are industrious and steady miners, or careful and money-making traders. In 1859, Messrs. Parkinson & McCoy succeeded in bringing water into the diggins from the main prong of the American River.

1858...A Division of the Sons of Temperance was organized,at the end of the first year of its existence a splendid hall had been built....Voting population of about 70.

The greatest back set to the rapid development... is the great depth which the snow falls in the winter. During the winter season it is sometimes impossible for miners to obtain supplies, except by packing themselves over the snow from Deadwood, a distance of seven miles. After the snows fall at the beginning of the winter season, it is sometimes months that the inhabitants have no intercourse with the lower world, except occasionally when an expressman travels over the snow to Michigan Bluff to procure letters and papers, which he takes to the people at the moderate charge of 25 cents for each letter and paper.

The 1875 Placer County Directory reveals the changing fortunes of the mining camps along the trail.

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Last Chance

(A) mining village, once of considerable importance....1860, 79 votes; 1873 total vote 30.... V. Wonn & Co., General Merchandise. M. Jansen, Boarding House

Deadwood

Once a thriving mining town, is now a place of small importance. It is situated on a high, narrow ridge, seven miles east of Michigan Bluff, and is reached by a pack-trail from that place to Last Chance.

Michigan Bluff

Town is connected to Auburn by good road. Powells' Stage Line; Bunker, George - Toll Gate keeper (assumed to be the toll trail to Deadwood); Freitag, Charles - Postmaster; Willey, Walter - General Merchandise and Wells Fargo agent.

By the 1879-80 Placer County Directory, only Michigan Bluff is listed. It is likely that the inhabitants of other local towns such as Deadwood and Last Chance have been lumped in with Michigan Bluff.

Michigan Bluff - place of 300 inhabitants,... Termini of Powells' stage line....principal Hotel is the Phoenix....P. Powell prop. alt. 3456'

River Canyon: The rivers in both El Dorado Canyon and North-Middle Fork of the American River Canyon ("river canyons") are representative of the drainage of the central and northwestern Sierra Nevada mountain range slope. It has a sharply incised, deep, nearly straight river canyon with a low stream gradient and a smooth, gentle regional slope on the ridge lines. The upper portions of the drainage have increased stream gradients and more irregular ridge topography. The rivers flow through long, narrow valleys, being confined by the steep canyon walls that extend some 1,200 to 2,500 feet above the river.

The river canyons are generally accessible only by trail. The only bridges across each of the rivers are Forest Service trail bridges located near the Rainbow Land Mine in El Dorado canyon and in the bottom of the North Middle Fork of the American River canyon where the trail crosses. There are unimproved roads to both town site of Last Chance and Deadwood along ridge lines and from different directions than the trail. Also, there is a rugged jeep trail to the vicinity of the trail bridge in El Dorado Canyon that is derived from the Foresthill Divide near Chicken Hawk Road. There are no road crossings of either river within this area.

Characteristics: The canyon walls move in so that the river canyon becomes a mere slot with the riverbed varying from a few feet to 50 feet in width.

Vegetation species and density change with almost each bend in the river, with mixtures from small stands of mixed conifer to extensive stands of hardwoods (oak, maple, and bay).

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The only evidence of man's presence is the remains of the mining location of the Rainbow Land and Pacific mines and some related water ditches, collection ponds, and equipment. The remaining portions of the area, like Devil's Basin near Devil's Thumb, contains a variety of historical type activities which took place during the California gold rush era.

The north-facing slopes are vegetated with mixed conifer and hardwoods while the south-facing slopes support mixed hardwood and brush species.

Landforms: Canyon lands are the deep, middle reaches of the major Sierra Nevada streams including the El Dorado Canyon and North Middle Fork of the American Rivers, that were formed during the period of erosion that followed the overlying of the range by deposits from volcanic material. This material included ash, andesite mud-flows and other rock flows. Slopes of this area steep, varying from 30 per cent to vertical. The stream gradients are generally low to moderate, and the character of the river canyon faces and slopes vary. In the steeper portions where the exposed rock faces are viewed from the river bottom, it gives an enclosed feeling; when viewed from the canyon rim, it provides a perception of great depth and height.

Minerals: Metallic mineral resources of the two canyons consist mainly of gold, silver and chrome. Minor amounts of copper, lead and zinc occur in some gold-silver deposits. Most of the gold and silver lode deposits are quartz veins. Placer gold deposits occur in late Tertiary, Pleistocene and Recent gravels. The chrome deposits are pods and lenses in ultramafic rock. (U.S. Bureau of Mines 1977).

Climate: The river canyons have a Mediterranean-type climate marked by warm, dry summers; colder, wet winters; with a fairly large range in daily and seasonal temperatures. Weather varies considerably by elevation and season.

Air: Air quality within the river canyons is excellent although there are times when pollutants which drift in from the Sacramento valley with the prevailing westerly and southwesterly winds. These winds are also a major influence which minimize drift of emissions from I-80 to the north into the river canyons.

The diurnal windflow pattern typical of mountainous regions in which winds flow up drainages during the daylight hours and down in the night-time hours along with prevailing winds being parallel to the drainage helps to "flush" out the river canyon.

Vegetation: The flora in the two canyons is diverse, interesting and to some extent complex. Geologic variability and climate have combined forces to make the river canyons an interesting mosaic of plant communities.

The river canyons are considered to be well covered with vegetative types that normally occur in the range of thermic and mesic soil temperature classes and that can also be correlated with aspect

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and soil types. There are considerable areas of rock and rock outcrops on which little to no vegetation grows. These areas are more extensive on the north canyon walls except where rock slopes and cliffs are predominate on both the north and south sides of the canyons.

The conifers consist of: digger pine, Douglas fir, incense cedar, jeffery pine, ponderosa pine, sugar pine, California nutmeg, red and white fir. Hardwood species include alder, willow, aspen, big leaf maple, interior and canyon live oak, black oak, California Bay and associated shrubs. Meadows are not common to the river canyon area.

Except for mining, past uses and activities in and along the river have been minimal and have not contributed in any noticeable alteration of the vegetation. Mining may have had some impact in very small local areas; however, this activity took place 40 to 100 years ago and what impact it had on the vegetative composition is not apparent to the average river canyon user at this time.

Poison oak is common to much of the river canyon area below 4,000-foot elevation.

There are no known findings of threatened or endangered plant species within the river canyons. However, this does not mean that there are none, since the river canyons are within the range of several species on the list.

Timber: Very little or no timber harvesting has occurred within the immediate river canyons. Most of the timber that has been removed has been along the upper edges of the canyon near Last Chance and Deadwood.

The steep canyon slopes, inaccessibility, small volumes and scattered timber have all been important reasons for the lack of timber harvest activities within the river canyons in the past. The federal lands within the river canyon will continue to be managed for values other than their timber resource.

Most of the trail district's productivity is rated as non-commercial.

Therefore, in consideration of the above, with the timber in the river canyons not being a part of a standard timber management component and not expected to be included as such in the future, the average annual potential yield from National Forest lands is considered to be insignificant.

Noise: Noise associated with man's activities is limited within the river canyons. It is mainly associated mostly with motorbikes, and, to a lesser extent, suction dredges.

Recreation: The mountains, forests, rivers, streams and lakes of the Sierra Nevada provide a wide choice of recreational opportunities in northeastern California that contribute substantially to the economy of the area.

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Lake Tahoe, Granite Chief Wilderness, Desolation Wilderness, North Fork American Wild and Scenic River, Auburn and Folsom State Parks, and the Middle Fork Feather Wild and Scenic River, are recreation attractions of national significance that exist near the vicinity of the Michigan Bluff-Last Chance trail.

There are no developed recreation sites within the Michigan Bluff-Last Chance trail except for a designated motorbike trail course along Deadwood ridge between Devil's Thumb and the town site of Deadwood. All recreation use is in a dispersed form. This use is almost completely dependent upon the existing trail access into the canyons. Every person visiting the river canyons uses the existing Michigan Bluff-Last Chance trail during the course of their visit.

The limited access restricts the types of use, as well as the levels of use in the river canyons.

Although the area has never been sampled for recreation use, the following is a general estimate of existing activities within the river canyons:

1. Fishing
2. Recreational Mining
3. Motorcycle Use
4. Hiking-Backpacking
5. Hunting
6. Horseback Riding
7. Overnight Camping
8. Swimming
9. Viewing Scenery
10. Nature Study
11. Enjoying Unusual Environment
12. General Knowledge and Understanding

Use is generally is to be found only in a narrow corridor on each side of the two rivers in the bottom of the canyons and along the Michigan Bluff-Last Chance trail leading into and out of the canyons. The steep slopes above the rivers are seldom used for recreation.

Activities vary depending upon accessibility and the character of the rivers themselves. Use in the rugged gorges is limited to gorge scramblers and a few hardy fishermen enjoying this unique environment. In portions of the river canyons with gentler terrain and better trail access, a wider variety of uses are found.

This same trail is a grueling portion of the historic Tevis Cup Western States 100 Mile One Day Trail ride and the Western States 100 Mile Endurance Run, held annually from Squaw Valley, California to Auburn, California.

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It is recognized that many factors could affect use in the future; a continuing drought or increasing fuel shortages would undoubtedly tend to decrease future use. On the other hand, increases in the local population, improved access, additional trails or increased publicity may increase the use in the area.

The proposed National Recreational Trail designation of the Western States Trail within the Tahoe National Forest from the Nevada State line to Foresthill, California, as contemplated by the United States Forest Service would undoubtedly provide additional attention and potential use along this portion of the trail. Undoubtedly this designation would provide future trail-head type facilities with improved trail access along the Western States Trail, and more specifically to the Michigan Bluff-Last Chance trail.

Presently, there exists a level of conflict existing between motorcycle users and non-motorcycles users of the trail. While this has created some controversy, the extent of the problem has not been determined at this time. A conflict between some motorcycle, hikers and horsemen is normal.

Other Opportunities: A number of historic sites associated with mining (Big Gun Diggings, Burns Mine, Rainbow Land Mine, Lloyd Mine, Peters Mine, (Devil's) Basin Mine, Sourdough Pit, Pacific Slab Mine and the Pacific Mine), as well as a number of archaeological sites (Deadwood, and Last Chance town site and cemeteries) have been identified along or near the Michigan Bluff-Last Chance trail area. These sites are currently providing opportunities for visitors to gain an understanding of man's activities, especially during the Gold Rush era.

These sites provide opportunities for interpretation to future visitors into the river canyons and should be considered in any alternatives developed for future management of the area.

Cultural Features/Archaeological and Historic Sites: According to ethnographic accounts, the southern Maidu inhabited the American River area. Before the Europeans arrived, there were several thousand southern Maidu occupying the grasslands and foothills of this region. Like other foothill Sierra groups, they migrated on a seasonal basis from west to east. In the spring and continuing through the summer, they would move up into higher elevations, where they built temporary encampments. During this time, they gathered a variety of seasonal plants, fished, and hunted game that was not available to them at lower elevations (Sanborn 1974).

The geographic distribution and frequency of sites shows a pattern of limited or temporary settlement of the river canyons. This pattern coincides with other accounts that indicate that the peoples of the western Sierra foothills migrated to the higher elevations during the summer months and occupied the ridges instead of the canyons.

During the heyday of the Gold Rush era, there were several thousand people living in the river canyons. Evidence of this activity is found in the remnants of old flume benches and ditches that carried the water from tributary streams. In places where the rivers may have been diverted for this purpose, the heavy spring runoff and floods have obliterated most, if not all, of the evidence.

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The historic sites along the Michigan Bluff-Last Chance trail are related in some way to the various periods of gold mining in the respective river canyons. Evidence of past mining operations may consist of stamp mills, compressors, adits and related items used by miners in that era. All of this equipment was brought down into the canyon in pieces by animal (mule, oxen or by horseback) or skidded and then assembled.

Bridges: There are two bridges over the two river/creek crossings which were constructed after 1900 by the Forest Service. These bridges are contributing structures to the trail since they fall within the period of significance and are in keeping with the character of the trail.

Scenic Quality: The area surrounding the Michigan Bluff-Last Chance trail comprises some of the most spectacular and distinctive gorges and canyon lands found within the middle Sierra Nevada Region. The high scenic quality of the river canyons are derived from an unusual diversity of land forms, rock formations, vegetative patterns and water characteristics. The arrangement of natural features within the river canyons creates a variety of unusual landscape settings.

The canyon bottom, moderately narrow and mildly curving, permits open views of the large-scale, steep canyon walls composed of olive green patches of brush and oak interspersed with gray rock outcrops. Major lateral canyons and ridge lines form dramatic diagonal lines that descend to the canyons bottom and create additional visual interest and a primary focus of attention.

The canyons become nearly linear in configuration, with the viewer observing broad-scale open vistas of the river and canyon walls that show broad, uniform slopes. Vegetation patterns show a degree of landscape variety that is common to much of the Sierra Nevada region. The river canyons bottom offers considerable variation in width, shoreline and waterflow characteristics.

Evidences of man's past activities are generally not apparent to viewers from the river. Except for the trail bridges at the bottom of both river canyons and occasional glimpses of the old trails that parallel the river or canyon wall (Bake Oven and Bogus Thunder trails) virtually all of the structures, and some of the mining machinery and other past disturbances have been grown over and/or screened by dense vegetation.

The scenic value of the two river canyons crossed by the Michigan Bluff-Last Chance trail can be realized by considering the variety of vegetation; the numerous, deep, blue-green pools separated by the rapids and riffles of white water; the gorges and bluffs; and, the occasional view of the higher mountains in the background. These all combine to create the unique scenery along the trail.

Transportation: All transportation in the river canyons is confined to the Michigan Bluff-Last Chance trail. However, there is a jeep trail leading into the El Dorado canyon and crosses the toll trail near the bottom. Terrain has been the major deterrent in limiting existing access within the

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river canyons to trails and the one low-standard jeep road that goes to the vicinity of the river in El Dorado canyon.

There are unimproved dirt roads in the vicinity of Deadwood and Last Chance that the Michigan Bluff-Last Chance trail either crosses or parallels for very short distances.

Other trails within the river canyons are: Bake Oven, Bogus Thunder, and Grouse Creek trails. These trails penetrate the two un-roaded river canyons and are used by hikers, horse riders, fishermen, hunters, and trail bikers.

Landownership and Uses: Approximately 95 per cent of the Michigan Bluff-Last Chance trail is in federal ownership. The remaining private land is patented mineral claims, homesteads, or mines. Only at Michigan Bluff are there several year-round residences.

There are no telephone, electric, gas or oil lines within or along Michigan Bluff-Last Chance trail area.

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The town of Michigan Bluff lies at the end of Placer County road 3004, which is three miles off of the Forest Hill Divide Road (0088). The town of Michigan Bluff has retained little of its identity as a commercial center of a profitable mining district. Little remains of the commercial district, only the Wells Fargo building, now turned into a residence, and the ruins of another commercial structure across the street remain. Several 19th century residences remain facing the road, and most of the original trees line Main Street. The present town of Michigan Bluff sits back from the peninsula of land jutting out into the canyon of the Middle Fork of the American River which gave the town its name. The large flat area of the original town of Michigan City is visible from the end of the road as a jumble of red earth mounds and tufts of vegetation clearly the work of hydraulic mining over 100 years ago. Near the end of the county road a dirt road turns to the northeast, between several newer residences and fenced yards. This inconspicuous road is the trail head to the town of Last Chance. A hundred yards up the road, on the right is the former residence of one of Leland Stanfords brothers, now in ruins and quickly disappearing altogether. That structure and a cabin of later vintage delineate the edge of town. Another hundred yards along the road to the east is a turn around loop where all but the most adventurous four wheelers stop and change modes of transportation. The dirt road continues along the edge of the canyon which services several mines.

Using a recent USFS survey, the following trail description was made and is identified by station points from point 0+00 set at the end of the loop turn around. Identifiable station points have been marked on the map. Elevations have been estimated from the USGS quad sheet. The corner of Main Street and Turkey Hill Road serves as the starting point for the Michigan Bluff/Last Chance trail at elevation 3,400 feet.

- 0+00 Turkey Hill Road is not maintained and overhanging manzanita and trees are encroaching on the road width. The road climbs to 3,560 feet in elevation from the townsite. USGS surveys from the 1880's show the trail coming into the town along the same route. It is not evident where the trail entered the former townsite.
- 2+30 The trail departs from the dirt road at this location. The "Big Gun Diggins" is visible a quarter mile to the right and several hundred feet lower in elevation.
- 4+40 The trail descends along a narrow ridge at a steep grade of up to 30%. The vegetation is mostly manzanita with a few pines of not more than 30" caliper suggesting less than 75 years in age.
- 13+45 The trail location is deeply eroded into the terrain from the original grade in places. The depth of the erosion gives some sense of the age of the trail.
- 17+70 Near this location the trail begins to descend into the steepest portion of the canyon. Below elevation 3200, the canyon becomes extremely steep. After this point the trail is cut for the most part, into the side slope of the canyon, which has gradients of up to 2:1.
- 24+00 Switchback. These trail elements have been rehabilitated numerous times since the beginning of the modern use of the trail. They have retained their character since the modern methods of construction have remained as the old due to inaccessibility and difficulty of getting to the locations. Cuts in the hillside for the

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turns are unreinforced and erode over a few years requiring the removal of the slumped earth. Steep banks between the trail segments have been bolstered with logs or stone work. Unless the stone work appears to have been an integral part of the original construction of the trail it has not been noted.

25+10

Switchback

27+00

Some portions of the trail are up to four feet below the original level of the terrain. Much of this depth must no doubt be attributed to modern use of the trail. It is apparent that historic use of the trail started the erosion and made identifying the trail location easy for the modern "trail historians" such as Watson and Robie.

29+00

Rock cuts and rock retaining walls. These features clearly identify the character of the construction of the trail. The rock work for the gully crossing is constructed of dry laid rock in a very careful manner, and is similar in numerous locations. Records of the modern era contain no mention of this level of rehabilitation or trail construction. These features have survived since the historic period of the trail. Certainly the effort required to remove rock outcroppings for the purpose of creating trail has not been a modern occurrence.

36+20

Switchback

38+50

The side slope at this point reaches 1:1, the trail cannot follow a line down that slope, but following a constant declination into Poor Mans Canyon would mean extending the length of the trail considerably. The switchbacks were created to drop down the steep slope to the creek crossing level. As the trail turns to the northern side of the ridge the plant zone turns from manzanita to pine, maple and oak forest, despite going into ever lower elevations.

40+10

Switchback

45+35

The rock is deeply cut in this location to reach the creek crossing. There is evidence that there are springs in the rock, evidenced by ferns and plants growing abundantly despite draught conditions and the fall season of the year at which this inventory was done.

45+75

The creek crossing at Poor Mans Canyon. Water is of prime importance to riders and hikers since it provides water for both stock and travelers. This creek continues to run even in this period of draught. It is not by chance that the trail meets the creek at this point. Because of the springs, the creek at this location tends to have water all year, and not be just run off generated.

49+30

The gully crossing has been created by the use of a dry laid rock retaining wall.

59+00

The side slope in this section is up to 2:1. The trail is constructed along the topo lines at a reasonable grade of no more than 1:10. To make the trail on the steep side slope however, the trail is cut into the slope. This is augmented in places with rocks set along the edge of the trail as retaining walls. The plant zone changes back to Manzanita.

63+00

A large outcropping of shale has been cut for construction of the trail. The rock is shale, some tending to slate in hardness.

65+50

Rock cut.

73+30

This rock outcropping is not shale, being some sort of basalt. The hole drilled to blast the rock was 8" longer than what was removed by the blast and remains as evidence of the type of construction very prevalent in the gold rush era.

83+10

Gully crossing with dry laid rock retaining walls.

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- 87+00 The trail turns onto the east facing wall of El Dorado Canyon at this point and the climate/plant zone turns back into that of the higher elevation pine, maple, and oak forest. This gives the trail a shady and cool climate for the decent to the bottom of the canyon. As can be seen on the map, the trail descends at a greater angle across the topo lines. Some sections are over 15% and numerous switchbacks are needed to overcome the grades to reach the point at the creed where the Rainbow Mine was operated in the late 19th and early 20th century.
- 108+75 The trail crosses a road which serviced the Rainbow Mine. The construction date of this road is unknown. The road is still useable by four wheel vehicle.
- 111+10 Switchback
- 115+85 Switchback
- 122+45 The current trail has been realigned between this location and 128+30. This realignment avoided an extremely steep section and two close switchbacks. The scar of the earlier trail is clearly visible as a depression in the forest "duff". This is one of two short realignments which were found. (The other moved the trail over approximately 5 feet for 50 yards.)
- 124+05 Switchback
- 125+20 The trail crosses the access road again as it switchbacks alternating with the trail. The road is not visible beyond the immediate crossing point of the trail and has no visual affect on the trail.
- 126+65 Switchback
- 1133+85 The Rainbow Mine used hydraulic mining techniques which required water at pressure. The trail crosses a 6" steel water line which disappears into the hillside running to the north along the canyon wall.
- 135+20 This feature is typical of sections on the lower portion of the trail in North Fork of the Middle Fork of the American River Canyon (below Devils Thumb). Rocks have been thrown up onto the edge of the trail making a berm. The reason for this is unclear, unless it is simply rocks being unearthed by the process of erosion being cleared from the trail by piling them along the side.
- 136+00 A dry laid retaining wall supports the trail above the dirt road below it.
- 136+80 Access road.
- 138+85 Edge of footbridge, El Dorado Creek.

Footbridge

The span of this bridge is 37 feet, the width 6 feet. The construction is of two 12" deep steel wide flange beams, with a wood deck and concrete abutments. The east abutment is supported by a large rock outcropping which juts straight up from the creek edge. The west abutment is taller, coming up from a lower rocky ledge. Dry laid stone retains the approach ramps to the level of the bridge. The handrails are recent additions, the decking has been replaced on a regular basis. No identifying marks on the concrete or steel were seen by which to date the construction.

Rainbow Mine

The area along the west bank of the creek is flat and extends along to the north two hundred yards, to the south perhaps half a mile. This area is strewn with rocks, piled from placer mining. There are numerous discernable foundations,

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walls and other dry laid rock features. On the northern most edge of the area is what appears to be a dredger pond, a depression along the edge of the river with rock piles all around. It is one of several mines along the route to Last Chance. The features of the mine extent up the opposite canyon wall and are described in the following text.

- 141+60 An alternate trail exits to the left. This trail reconnects at st. pt. 142+90. The alternate trail actually crosses the WS trail and continues on as the Bake Oven Trail which extents down El Dorado Canyon and up the Middle Fork of the American River to the site of the Bake Ovens. The Bake Oven trail starts with a section of beautiful retaining walls. Standing on the bridge and looking up straight ahead several sections of dry laid rock wall are seen. The alternate trail has several rock retaining walls, one which crosses a mining feature. The trail passes the entrance of an old shaft, the avoidance of which was no doubt the reason the rerouting of the trail. The trail switchbacks within a short distance to rejoin the WS trail just below the feature at 143+20
- 143+20 An air shaft, or just a collapse of a tunnel has created a large depression right in the trail. Recent trail work has shifted the trail into the hillside by three feet to create sufficient clearance to fence the opening. This shaft connects with some larger underground mining portions of the Rainbow Mine.
- 145+65 Section of low rock retaining wall.
- 146+25 Rock retaining wall to st. pt. 146+65.
- 149+85 Just off the trail to the south is a small pond created by the hillside and two earthen dams of 8 to 10 feet in height. This could have been the penstock for an hydraulic operation although no gate/headstock is discernable. Perhaps this feature was used for storage for other purposes. It lies perhaps 50 to 75 feet below the termination of the ditch (st.pt. 154+70) and therefore looses some of the potential head which might have been used. The pond lies perhaps two hundred feet above the river however, more than enough height for hydraulic mining purposes.
- 150+65 An alternate trail has been created to switchback up a steep bank above the pond, to the cabin sites above. It seems unlikely that the visible steep trail was the only route up this steep portion. Since this is the center of a mining operation it seems likely that the whole area was criss-crossed by trails from one feature to the next.
- 153+90 Cabin sites. Two cabins were constructed next to the trail. It seems likely that these were cabins since a stove and other artifacts are visible in and around the sites. Much of the lighter remains have been scattered or removed. The assumption would be that these structures served a function related to the ditch. A ditch keeper would be necessary to make sure that the water was being transmitted to the proper place and not allowed to back-up and overflow the ditch causing damaging erosion. A similar structure occurs below Devils Thumb.
- 154+70 Trail crosses a mining ditch that continues up the canyon towards the east. It is probable that this ditch is the same as that photographed from st.pt. 184+30.
- 159+60 A short section of alternate trail heads off to the right. This alternate section seems to have no obvious reason for having been abandoned.
- 160+60 Alternate trail ends.

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- 166+05 The trail parallels a deep ravine which is off the the south edge of the trail. The steepness of the ravine might be mining related.
- 166+05 This section of trail is one of the unusually flat sections, for perhaps 500 feet!
- 171+05 The side slope of the trail is steep, 2:1.
- 183+00 Typical of trail in this section.
- 185+50 Rock retaining wall, 10 feet long, 2 to 3 feet high.
From this st.pt. on to near the top the trail is mostly cut into the edge of the canyon wall which is from 2:1 to 3:1 side slope. It would be impossible to traverse this terrain without the trail. In the fall season when the leaves have fallen it would be like walking on ice. The trail has, for the most part, been cut into the hill with rock retaining walls holding up the downhill side.
- 191+30 Typical cut and fill section.
- 202+00 Rock retaining wall 20 feet long.
- 202+50 Short rock retaining wall 80 feet long, ends at 203+30.
- 203+30 Rock retaining wall.
- 204+35 The next section has steep side slope over 2:1. The trail is highly cut into the canyon wall.
- 208+30 Mounds and depressions indicate mining features along the trail.
- 211+25 Spring. As explained in the preceding section, this feature was essential to the location of the trail. Obstacles like terrain did not compare to lack of water. Steep sloped terrain was overcome to meet with springs like this, which run all year.
- 212+15 Rock retaining wall at crossing of gully.
- 217+00 The terrain in this section on to st.pt. 226+05 is remarkably gently sloped and filled with large Douglas Firs.
- 229+05 Alternate trail segment.
- 230+30 A drilled hole in the trail indicates a blasted rock portion. The terrain gives no indication of why a blast would be needed since little rock outcropping is evident in this location.
- 231+50 Alternate trail re-enters the current trail.
- 232+55 The climatic zone changes with every undulation along the traverse of the canyon wall. This point features a sunny southwest facing slope covered with manzanita.
- 233+00 Rock retaining wall 35 feet long. The side slope is near vertical at this point. This is the type of trail that William H. Brewer remarked about in his 1863 description. "It was fearful, yet we had to pay \$1.50 for the privilege of passing it." Made even more ironic that now people submit to lotteries, pay hundreds of dollars, and run or ride over 50 miles to reach this spectacle of man and nature.
- 237+20 Steep side slope of 3:1, trail is cut steeply into the rocky face around an outcropping which juts straight out into the canyon.
- 240+40 Side slope abates to 2:1.
- 242+50 Rocks area pile along the edge of the trail, including two very large boulders. The trail is cut into the bedrock.
- 243+75 Rock retaining walls and deep cuts into the canyon side.
- 245+50 Short section of retaining wall between rock outcrops.
- 250+10 Rock cuts and retaining walls continue to st.pt. 250+60.
- 252+25 Retaining wall 40 feet long.
- 252+65 End of retaining wall.

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- 253+10 Retaining wall 5 feet long and two feet high.
- 256+10 Retaining wall 10 feet long. This section is cut deeply into the canyon wall.
- 258+00 Retaining wall forty feet long and 3 to 5 feet high.
- 259+00 Retaining wall 20 feet long.
- 262+50 Retaining walls along to 263+95. Some damage done to wall at 263+30 from erosion.
- 264+46 Retaining wall and rock cut section to st. pt. 265+00. This segment of the trail is surrounded in California Bay trees.
- 265+40 Steep side slope of 3:1.
- 268+05 The trail starts to switchback up this portion of the canyon wall.
- 270+00 Retaining wall 20 feet long three feet high.
- 270+20 Retaining wall between upper and lower portions of trail at switcher.
- 271+45 Retaining wall above trail.
- 273+45 Indication of steepness of side slope and alternate trail running up slope. This trail was walked for appropriately a quarter mile and continued on to some unknown point, perhaps a mine or it returned to the main trail.
- 274+00 Cuts into side slope include rock cuts.
- 275+00 Large rock outcrops are cut for trail.
- 276+60 Rock cuts in in shale material.
- 277+40 Rock work along trail to st. pt. 277+75.
- 291+10 Side slope of hill lessens to 1:1.
- 294+10 Modern blaze on oak tree. Assumed to be Tevis Trail blaze.
- 296+25 Trail changes to what once was a road of some type.
- 297+80 Road width cut with oaks and open forest floor all around.
- 304+50 Trail crosses recently constructed motorcycle trail. To the north the motorcycle trail cuts down into the canyon. To the south the motorcycle trail uses a historic mining ditch which winds around the bluff heading on the east, running below the townsite of Deadwood. The mining ditch continues on the north side as well, but undisturbed.
- 316+20 Trail connects with Deadwood Road just below cemetery.

Deadwood

No visible evidence exists of the town of Deadwood. There are several depressions along the road, but these are not readily identifiable as belonging to structures. The trail presently continues along the side of the road which has been in existence since the earliest days to a point where it turns off the the east, this is approximately a half mile from Devils Thumb

- 0+00 Devils Thumb
The next portion of the trail drops from elevation 4360 to elevation 2760, a 1600 foot drop in 1.679 miles, which is an overall 1:5.5 or an 18% grade average!

There is a 20 to 30 foot high volcanic rock protruding from the slope of Devils Basin. This object has been known as "Devils Thumb". There is no recorded "site" at Devils Thumb, the area above the decent into the canyon is flat and shaded by fir and cedar forest. The edge of the canyon starts abruptly and the edge, except where the trail starts, presents a 2:1 drop off. The trail begins at a

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- grade of 33% down a ridge that protrudes from the canyon edge, giving the route down somewhat of a gentler start.
- 2+65 An abandoned trail segment turns to the right down the slope to a pair of switchbacks and a route that parallels the present route to approximately st. pt. 9+00. Where it crosses the present trail to the other side and continues on to st. pt. 11+65.
- 4+10 The trail turns right onto a road grade run nearly straight down the hillside at a 30% grade. This "road" continues on to st. pt. 15+00 but could have continued on to st. pt. 20+00. Erosion has made the last 500 feet appear as trail, but sections of trail are apparent along the edge of the road/present trail suggesting that the road was constructed and the trail moved to the better grade of the road for this section.
- 9+00 Old trail section to left (north) of road/trail, runs to st. pt. 11+65.
- 11+65 Approximately at this location, but over the edge into Devils Basin is the Basin Mine, or Devils Basin Mine. There is a spring with minimal flow. A cabin site is marked by the wood ruins and household trash, a trash dump is also in the area. The cabin is constructed entirely of wire nails, suggesting 20th century.
- 14+75 To the left of the trail and encompassing a portion of the trail are the ruins of a shelter at the end of a ditch which runs off to the north along the top of the canyon. This is the apparent end of the road, but it is my assumption that the road, cabin, and ditch/shelter were part of a placer mining feature located at st. pt. 28+50.
- 17+00 Old trail visible 10 feet off present trail, to right (south). Ends 18+30.
- 19+30 Basalt rocky section.
- 21+90 This section to 24+00 has an extremely steep side slope. It appears to have been eroded by slip-outs in the past.
- 24+75 An old trail takes off up the steep slope to the left. This trail disappears into the brush back about at st. pt. 19+30. Two explanations are apparent for this segment. Either it was an earlier "original" portion or it could have been a detour around the slide area. See description at st. pt. 28+50.
- 25+50 Old trail segment visible below to 27+25 (right).
- 26+75 Old trail segment visible above trail (left). The last two "old" trails appear to have been abandoned due to the need to eliminate switchbacks and overly steep grade. There is no documentation on when they were abandoned, but it could have been early or to accommodate the placer mine at 28+50.
- 28+50 Golden Treasure Mine. This feature is an "active recorded" placer mine, although there doesn't appear to have been much recent mining activity. The ravine has been cut to a depth of over 50 feet at the back. The bottom of the bowl shaped feature is dammed with dirt and rock piles. Around the sides of the feature, along the bottom edges are piles of rock, placed there by the miners as they cleared their sluices. There appears to be an outlet below the level of the dam, and back 20 feet or more from the bottom edge. From the lower edge of the dam a 10 to 12 foot deep trench has been created, in rock, as the outlet for the placer mine. The effects of water flow is evident far down the hill from the bowl, and speaks to the fact that there was significant amounts of water involved.

This feature appears to have been a part of a series of features which start at st. pt. 4+10, the road intersection. The road appears to service the ditch, and the

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structure which would have housed the valves/controls for the piping to the hydraulic monitor. This equipment would have needed service by a road where equipment could be brought in by vehicle. The cabin nearby to the southwest would have been the residence of the "gate keeper" for the system, it is also located by the spring. Below the "valve house", there are two trails. The current trail seems to be located in a manner which could have been the route for the pipe to the mine since it takes a more direct route, and easier grade than the abandoned trail.

The trail as currently used has been used for probably 100 years or more. The sections which have alternate routes, the alternates have been established in historic times and the trail retains a very high degree of integrity. The mining features along the trail add to the overall integrity of the trail, verifying the reason the trail was established and maintained over the historic period of its existence.

Below st. pt. 28+50 the trail has been modified very little, and no significant alternate routes were identified. The trail reaches a section which switchbacks straight down to the bridge at a very steep decent.

38+90

Rock Cut.

53+80

Recent trail work. Short realignment of trail eliminated two switchbacks.

56+30

Realignment of trail extents to 57+30, 100 feet of trail affected.

58+00

Trail at very steep angle of decent, 33% gradient generally from here to the bottom.

62+00

Rocks piled along edge of trail, indication of trail maintenance.

63+25

Large rocks have been relocated out of the trail.

71+40

Rock retaining wall along trail, retains side wall of trail where erosion has deepened trail into hill side.

72+15

Recent realignment of trail to st. pt. 72+75.

74+65

Recent trail realignment to st. pt. 76+30, eliminates two switchbacks.

76+90

40 feet of rock retaining wall similar to st. pt. 71+40.

78+00

18 feet of rock retaining wall as above.

88+70

Western edge of the suspension bridge over the North Fork of the Middle Fork of the American River.

The suspension bridge currently spanning the river dates to between 1913 and 1920, and is typical of the bridges constructed by the Forest Service in the early days of their management of public lands. The elevation of the surrounding ridges, on which the only wagon roads were built is at or over 4000 feet. The access to Last Chance by way of Robinson Flat goes over 6400 feet elevation. These roads were not passable during the heavy snow months. The elevation of the trail drops from the town sites down to below 3000 feet elevation and the warmer micro-climate of the canyons limits snow to only the heaviest storms.

A similar bridge is located on the North Fork of the Middle Fork below Forest Hill. The WS trail bridge spans approximately 110 feet. It is constructed of steel angle shapes riveted together to form tower bents at either end of the span, off which cables span the river to support additional steel under framing for the wood

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deck. In the 1970's the Forest Service rehabilitated the suspension system of the structure with new cables, tension blocks at the ends and replaced all of the wood parts of the deck and railings. This actions did not change the overall appearance of the bridge. The original wrought iron eyelets, sunk in bedrock, remain in place on the east end and the turnbuckles used to tension the original cables have been left hidden under the deck. The abutments are constructed of poured in place concrete, the towers are bolted into the concrete.

No evidence is apparent of any earlier bridges. Trails are visible which could have led to a ford crossing.

- 91+60 Modern trail blaze. Assumed to have been cut into tree for the Tevis ride.
95+80 This segment of the trail runs across a very steep side slope of 2:1.
98+00 Rock cut for trail.
105+05 Old trail segment runs on a lower alignment (compared to current trail segment). This trail has been covered with brush to attempt to obliterate it. The older trail segment disappears into the next feature.
105+45 This is the edge of the "slide". This feature is a recurring slide area of the hillside. The last time it "slid" was the winter of 1986 when the trail was totally obliterated and a new route was picked out by runners and riders "ad hock". The latest trail work has refined this latest location. No doubt the slide is an historic feature of the trail and the crossing locations numerous.
111+80 End of slide area, trail appears typical of other sections and no other alternate trails are visible. Over this section enough height has been gained that no alternate trail could possibly catch up with the current route, it is assumed that the lower abandoned segment switchbacked across the face of the slide to make up this altitude gain.
117+00 The trail is eroded into the surrounding terrain 24" or more.
119+00 Short low rock retaining wall approx 20 feet long.
120+10 The trail crosses the ravine outflow of the Pacific Slab Mine on a wooden bridge approximately 20 feet long. The remains of an earlier wooden bridge have been tossed nearby. Side slope along route of trail approximately 1:1 for the next half mile. See description of Pacific Slab Mine for description of outflow.
138+15 Mining features. The southern outlet ravine of the Pacific Slab Mine seems to have been worked at this point. Piles of rock and the general filling around the bases of the trees attest to the debris of the operation above being dumped here by the water. It seems likely that the debris were deposited and later reworked for remaining gold content.
137+00 Rocks have be piled along the side of the trails similar feature to those described on the other side of the bridge, to 138+60.
148+00 Oak trees and open forest floor describes the environment of this segment of the trail. The trail continues to switch back and forth between the two ravines.
159+50 Tevis ride tree blaze.
151+00 Rock retaining wall to 152+60, varies in height.
155+05 Rock retaining wall.

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- 158+05 Trail switchback at edge of ravine. Just above the trail and to the south, almost hidden is the southern outlet described in the Pacific Slab Mine.
- 161+80 Old abandoned trail runs up on the up-hill side towards the Pacific Slab site.
- 162+95 Rock tailings are visible above the trail in the shallow ravine. Above this is the deep depression of the southern outlet of the Pacific Slab Mine. Outlet of this depression runs under the trail approximately here.
- 165+45 Shallow depression, mining feature.
- 167+10 The trail crosses the bottom of the old road from the Pacific Slab Mine. At some earlier point the road/trail went straight up towards Last Chance right past the mine site.
- 168+90 Trail connects with current Last Chance Road location which runs to the south steeply up and curving around to the east. This alternate route eliminates view of the mine site and discourages visitation.

Pacific Slab Mine Site

This mine was the last operating hydraulic mine on the North American continent, stopping operations in 1978. The buildings and equipment of this operation are intact, in place, including the water canal, headstock, piping to the mine, valves, pressure releases, out flow canal, and sluices.

The main outflow from the "placer bowl" of the mine is cut into solid bedrock perhaps 20 feet deep. It flows out through a tunnel under the access road to the sluices, which are cut into the surrounding slopes as well. The sluices are at the very edge of the canyon and the outfall from the mine from the approximately two foot diameter supply pipe to the hydraulic monitor was discharged right over the edge of the cliff. This stream formed the northern limit of where the trail could traverse. Just to the south of this feature was another large depression from what may have been an earlier outflow. This large depression is approximately 30 to 40 feet deep vertically in a canyon edge which is itself at an angle of 1:1 and terminates in a tunnel of about 15 feet in depth straight down. The tunnel then turns 90 degrees towards the canyon wall and runs horizontally under the trail at about station point 162 +90, out for perhaps 30 feet, daylighting at the edge of the canyon in a ravine. This ravine is the southern limit of the trail which switchbacks down the steep side slope of the canyon for the first nine tenths of a mile. The question of whether the trail determined the location of the outflows or the the opposite is indeterminate, the symbiosis of the trail and the mine, mining in general is obvious.

The Last Chance Road continues up the ridge to the east. This portion of the road/trail system was not surveyed for work and therefore had no markers on which to pinpoint features. The road in reality has changed very little from the later part of the period of significance, in that it was a road at that time as well. Heavy mining equipment was transported by wagon from the time of establishment of the wagon route around Robinsons Flat.

The site of Last Chance is void of most of the visible remnants of the town of several hundred persons who lived there during the 1850's - 70's. Only a few apple trees, a cross road, and the spring mark the site. During the survey some other features were identified. On the south side of the Last Chance Road is a 15 to 20 foot tall bank down from which

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is a small intermittent stream, a meadow and the spring coming out of the hillside beyond. On the north side of the road is a steep bank perhaps 50 feet in height running into a canyon which eventually dumps into the North Fork Canyon. Numerous mounds which indicate mining features are located on the canyon slope and at the bottom of the canyon right behind the town site. Approximately 50 feet north of the road is another "street". This feature is assumed to be the access behind the buildings which once lined the road. The corner of the Last Chance road and the cross road (which was the access to the Missouri Flat Mine) was pointed out by a local as the site of the Hotel. A depression filled with debris and cut brush marks the spot. Along the "back street" are various trash dumps, the most of which look modern, but the remains of an early thirties type truck were spotted amongst cans and bottles.

The Last Chance Road is currently accessed from Mosquito Ridge Road which runs from the town of Forest Hill down into the Middle Fork canyon and up Mosquito Ridge heading to the east towards French Meadows. This access road was constructed in 1939 for access to timber and improved later for the construction off French Meadows Reservoir. It was paved in the 1970's up to French Meadows, having been done for recreation access to the lake. Forest Service road 44 is the access from Mosquito Ridge Road to where it meets the Last Chance Road at Dusty Corner. East from this corner the early road continues up to Robinsons Flat, some of that road is used in the trail system. It is not readily apparent when standing at Dusty Corner, where the old Last Chance road continues from Dusty Corner to Robinsons Flat, but it shows clearly on early USGS topos.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary: Based on the information obtained from various archival sources, and after assessing the historical significance of the various trails and roads in reference to the National Register of Historic Places eligibility criteria, the segment of trail from Michigan Bluff to Last Chance meets the eligibility criteria by virtue of its historical association and integrity. The route was built in the early 1850's and later became a maintained toll-trail, perhaps one of the few toll-trails in the state. Since wagons could not navigate the circuitous narrow trail, access was limited to pack trains and by foot. William H. Brewer, surveyor and explorer, who headed a field survey to map the geological, botanical, and zoological resources of California under Josiah Dwight Whitney, in 1863, indicates he and his party paid the necessary tolls, and described the narrow, steep trail and the crossing of the North Fork, El Dorado, and Volcano Canyons between Last Chance and Foresthill, California (detailed description is referenced in Section 8, page 2). Without the Michigan Bluff-Last Chance Trail access to the mining camps along its corridor would have been more difficult, and surely would have impeded their growth. Last Chance, Deadwood, and Michigan Bluff, together represent a significant period in the growth of Placer County during the early 1850's. Singularly, each of these communities was important to the local and regional mining economy.

Historic Context: The lands that encompass the Western States Trail corridor between Carson City, Nevada, and Sacramento, California, were first explored and settled by native Indian tribes; the Washoe to the east and the Nisenan/Maidu to the west. These natives utilized the abundant natural resources of the lower foothills and Sierra crest. While the lower elevations provided protected valleys for permanent habitation the upper elevations were used seasonally for hunting, gathering, and perhaps for spiritual reasons. Over hundreds, and perhaps thousands of years of trans-Sierra trading and migration, well-used trails appeared and formed many common interlocking routes to different areas of present-day California and Nevada. Into the late nineteenth century such trails and subsistence areas formed territorial boundaries.

The discovery of gold in Coloma in January 1848 resulted in an unprecedented mass migration of people into California. The impetus for such a migration were newspapers and verbal accounts of vast amounts of gold located in the foothills of California, free for the taking. As one writer has stated: "Environment and diversity-combined with technological innovation-thus were key elements in the stimulation of California's economic growth" (Nash 1972: 316).

The route to the California gold country varied with an individual's time, location, and money. People residing along the Atlantic seaboard generally found it convenient to go by water, either around the tip of South America, by way of the Isthmus of Panama, or across Nicaragua. For many the ocean voyage proved to be an unsettling journey, followed by more disappointment after reaching the ports of San Francisco or Sacramento, where thousands of prospective miners gathered to find passage to the gold fields.

The overland route had its hazards as well. It followed the routes traversed by trappers, explorers, and later emigrant parties. Those who lived from Ohio westward chose the overland route, rather

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than the ocean voyage. Many mid-westerners had already experienced wagon travel, but had little experience in the open ocean.

An important consideration faced by all overland emigrants was the amount of food and provisions needed to carry them across the continent. A number of emigrant guides, published in 1849 and 1850, provided information on where to find food, water, and provisions along the route.

The majority of emigrants followed the Platte River Route, which passed through Fort Laramie, over South Pass, Wyoming, and followed the California Trail on to the west coast. The most popular routes during the first year of immigration into California were the Carson (Johnsons) and Truckee River (Emigrant) routes. In 1849-50, the northern mining communities of Auburn and Nevada City, and the adjacent mining camps were growing daily. Emigrants coming into Placer County, however, either came through Nevada County by way of the Truckee Route to the north, from El Dorado County and it's Carson Route to the South, or eastward from the Sacramento Valley. Prior to 1850 there was no direct, quick, safe route over the Sierra Nevada mountains from the east to Auburn. According to historian Edward B. Scott, as early as 1849 there was a shortcut over the Sierra from Carson City via Squaw Valley to Sacramento known as "Scott's Route" (Scott 1957:2). A minor reference is made in the Placer Herald in 1852 for Scott's Route.

Continued refinements were made to the system of California trails throughout the 1850's, as thousands of overland emigrants made their way to the gold fields. More and more alternative routes and cutoffs were developed by both emigrants and commercial promoters. For portions of Scott's Route, later named the Placer County Emigrant Road, improvements were made in 1852, serving as a variation that gold-rushers and emigrants sought, primarily as a short-cut to-and-from California's Northern Mines to the Nevada's Comstock Lode later in the decade. Despite attempts by Placer county officials and enterprising young men to develop a major alternate toll route by improving the existing trail for emigrant travel, it had a limited number of travelers, and portions gradually lapsed into disuse and decay.

In 1849-50, mining camps located along the present-day Foresthill Divide were difficult to reach by foot, or by wagon. By 1851, the business communities of Michigan City (later Michigan Bluff), Yankee Jim's, Deadwood, Iowa Hill and Last Chance, were doing well, and the population was increasing, as was gold production. Many of the camps such as Deadwood and Last Chance could only be reached by foot along precipitous trails constructed in the early 1850's. During the winter months, adequate provisions were critical for the survival of members of the mining communities. The winter of 1851-52 had unusually high precipitation, which resulted in the starvation of miners stranded in remote camps, the destruction of wagon roads and bridges, and a general lack of supplies throughout the mining regions of central California.

With the opening of mountain trails in this area of Placer County, the prospects for continued economic and population growth in the county seemed excellent. By the mid-1850's Auburn had become a thriving commercial center and many of the surrounding mining camps, including the northern mining communities of Michigan Bluff and Last Chance, were increasing in size and business.

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As new mining communities developed along the Divide, the need for mail and stage service grew. Express companies, such as Adams and Wells Fargo, initiated service to the new camps almost immediately after they had established a post office or temporary facility. Wagon and toll road construction helped facilitate the accessibility for express companies to deliver mail and products in a safe and timely manner.

While stages and mail service operated along the newly established roads, perhaps, of more importance were the freighters who supplied the camps with foodstuffs, clothing, mining tools, drugs, and many other supplies. During the early 1850's most camps were dependent upon the local freight companies, particularly during the winter months, when access in and out of the camps was more difficult. Supplies were brought in by large pack-trains of mules, rather than by wagons. Miners along the Foresthill Divide were particularly dependent upon the mules and the muleteers, because of the rugged access to many of the camps. As early as 1850 pack-trains carried supplies down what later became known as the Michigan Bluff-Last Chance Trail, which connected the mining camps of Michigan Bluff, Deadwood, and Last Chance together. Certainly by 1852-53 this trail was in full use and cut in half, the time it took to reach Deadwood and Last Chance by the Foresthill Divide and Placer County Emigrant Road route from the north. According to May Perry, this trail system "was the only way for these two and other settlements to receive their supplies. . . . the trail was one of the most important (in the area)" (Perry 1966).

The construction of trails between the mining camps presumably was built for the primary benefit by the miners searching for claims. This doesn't explain the difficulty or the amount of labor needed for the construction of trails like the Michigan Bluff/Last Chance trail. Most likely the trails were constructed after the mines were started and constructed by laborers paid for by the mine owners to get supplies in and the ore out. The fact that the Michigan Bluff to Deadwood portion of the trail was a toll trail indicates that it was paid for and a profit was expected back on the investment.

Mines often required sophisticated and heavy equipment be brought in to remote locations. Despite the fact that roads did get to almost everywhere in the gold country, these locations may not have been on the most direct route or were inaccessible due to difficult terrain. In the 1960s, May Perry indicates there were a number of these trails on the Foresthill Divide, "There were many of the early mining settlements that could only be reached by trails and these were manmade. All of the supplies were brought by pack train or on the miners back. Many of these trails are still in excellent traveling condition. Some of the most important ones were the Euchre Bar Trail, the Stevens Trail. One started at Michigan Bluff and went about seven miles to Deadwood and then seven miles more to Last Chance. Another started at Michigan Bluff called the Mosquito Ridge Trail that wound down...across the North Fork of the Middle Fork and up...and on with many side trails to various mines."

In 1850 gold was discovered in the neighboring State of Nevada by a group of Mormons camped near Dayton. Because of the gold excitement in California, however, few miners journeyed to

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Nevada to seek their fortunes, as most went on to the Northern Mines. Nine years later, purely by accident, silver was discovered in Nevada along with gold. Partners in the discovery, McLoughlin, O'Riley and Comstock sent the black sulphuret of silver to Nevada City for assay. News of the assay spread rapidly throughout the Mother Lode and Nevada (De Quille 1974:37-38).

In 1859 most of the easy placer diggings had been worked out in the Northern Mines and the Mother Lode of California. Miners were eager to move on as word of new discoveries spread. Many of these men were from Nevada and Placer counties and thoroughly understood all manners of underground work. By the early 1860's there was a steady exodus of people out of California to Nevada. Since the railroad was still in the conceptual stage, those wishing to go to Nevada followed the emigrant roads and trails opened by the 49'ers.

Two prospectors in June 1863 made their way from Yankee Jim's, near Foresthill, over the Squaw Valley summit pass along the present-day trail. John Keiser and Shannon Knox were vaguely headed in the direction of Carson City when near a flat across the Truckee River and northwest of the mouth of Squaw Creek they located outcroppings of rich-looking reddish ore. It was similar rock to that in which the Comstock silver was found in large quantities. A mile up river additional findings were discovered. The news spread and tales of wealth touched off a rush from the Northern Mines to the new discovered area over the short-cut route from the western slope of the Sierras. Men came rushing in from the mining towns of Placerville, Georgetown, Last Chance, Kentucky Flat, Michigan Bluff, Hayden Hill, Dutch Flat, Baker Divide, Yankee Jim's, Mayflower, Paradise, Yuba, Deadwood, Jackass Gulch and all the other camps whose locaters and residents had not been as fortunate financially as they were linguistically. This area of wilderness had been transformed into a bustling, thriving settlement of miners, merchants, mechanics, gamblers, saloon keepers and bummers, otherwise known as 'gentlemen at large'. Nearly six hundred frenzied miners searching for fortune traveled over "Scott's Route" to arrive at their new hope of destination. Some of these travelers routed their course over the Michigan Bluff/Last Chance trail to reach the new discovery site. However, with all of this haste came some bad news. The ore samples had failed to prove out. In almost six months, the settlements of Knoxville and Claraville which numbered several thousand went from boom to bust as the streets, shacks and mines were then deserted. By 1864 these camps along the Truckee were dead.

By April of 1864, the Prescott brothers of Squaw Valley had improved the trail from Squaw Valley to Foresthill particularly over the western summit (and including the Michigan Bluff/Last Chance trail section). It was considered "a usable thoroughfare" (Scott 1957). Lots in Knoxville and Claraville were purchased at bargain prices by the Prescotts, who hoped to build a permanent settlement with farming and lumbering. For nearly more than a half a century afterwards, Squaw Valley settled in as a quite, high Sierra farming settlement and secluded summer range for running cattle.

After 1900 the mining industry of the Northern Mines was marginal. In Placer and Nevada County, this downturn, was foremost a result of the unfavorable legislative decisions made in the

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1880's against the hydraulic mining industry. In 1882 the courts ruled such mining was causing great harm by dumping sediment far downstream. However, hydraulic mining was still carried out after 1900, but was severely limited by the need for carefully designed debris systems that prevented any sedimentation into the surrounding streams and rivers. Yet, miners and mining operations continued in many areas of the state. New technology created more efficient methods of gold recovery and enabled mining companies to explore areas of marginal and low mineral value.

Hydraulic mining occurred in several places from Michigan Bluff to Last Chance. Until very recently (1978) there was a small hydraulic operation at Last Chance, called the Pacific Mine, that can be seen from the trail prior to descending westward to the North Fork of the Middle Fork of the American River. At Devil's Thumb and the Devil's Basin Mine near the ridge top of Deadwood ridge was a large hydraulic mining operation. Below Michigan Bluff, the Big Gun hydraulic mining operation was also important to the area.

Primarily due to an expansive agriculture industry, growth in Placer County increased between 1900 and 1910, after which it fell off slightly, and again increased through the late 1930's. Nevada County, on the other hand steadily decreased in population after 1900 due to the county's reliance on the mining and lumber industry for jobs. By 1900 even the largest Gold Rush communities, such as Foresthill had dwindled down to 200 inhabitants, while others had only a handful of citizens left, or had vanished completely.

After returning to the Tahoe area in 1900 from his staked out claim in the Yukon Territory, Robert Montgomery Watson began a career as a guide and trail blazer for the growing tourism in hiking, fishing and hunting in the Tahoe region. He enjoyed talking about the old trails in the region that he had blazed or kept established. He remarked that the emigrant route that wound down the Middle Fork of the American River had almost disappeared from sight, except for the old blazes on the trees which marked the way to the California gold mines and camps (Pony Express, Placerville).

Having considered the consequences, a group of Native Sons of the Golden West, from Auburn Parlor no. 59, objected to letting the location and memory of the old road drift into oblivion and suggested that an organized party ride over the trail and mark it during the summer of 1932. It was agreed that Bob Watson would scout the trail carefully for the exact traces of location and those present would all meet to mark and sign the trail, including the Michigan Bluff/Last Chance trail section.

Bob Watson and the group from Auburn, California, including Doctor Conrad Briner, Bill Patrick, Lavelle (Jack) Shields, Earl Lukens, and Wendell Robie, effectively signed and marked the trail from Auburn, California, all the way to the summit of the divide where Watson had previously gathered and packed enough bright colored rock and quartz from Squaw Valley and materials to build a monument to dedicate their accomplishment to the memory of emigrant travelers. Bob Watson was principally responsible for rescuing this emigrant route from loss identity. Thanks to the work and painstaking attention by Bob Watson in knowing the history and location of the route, horsemen and hikers today can enjoy a journey along a scenic and historic wilderness trail.

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Statement of Significance and Eligibility: The Michigan Bluff-Last Chance Trail meets the National Register test of eligibility under *Criterion A*, for state-wide significance as a toll fee pedestrian/equestrian trail connecting the 1850's mining towns of Michigan Bluff and Deadwood, and for local significance as a pedestrian/equestrian trail between Deadwood and Last Chance in the remote foothills of Placer County.

The entire Michigan Bluff-Last Chance Trail meets the National Register test of eligibility under *Criterion C* for distinctive engineering characteristics. The trail contains features of Gold Rush period engineering skills, as is demonstrated by the location of the trail requiring steep grades, narrow width, dry laid rock retaining walls, rock blasting, and side-hill cuts.

Thousands of prospectors flooded into California from 1849 to 1852. Exploration for easier and better routes to the goldfields lead the prospectors to push new trails and wagon roads through the Sierra Nevada. After the placers along the rivers and streams were panned out, the miners moved up the canyons and began drift and hydraulic mining. By the fall of 1849, \$10 million in gold had within one year been washed from its bars and banks making the area one of the richest mining regions in California. On average, \$100,000 in gold was once shipped out a month in the mining area of Michigan Bluff during this period.

Settlements of varied sizes developed in the major mining areas. These communities of tents and crude shanties were built overnight. If the mines in the area were rich a more permanent settlement with wood buildings was built, if the mines were poor the miners moved on. Most of the mining towns were located in remote, mountainous terrain along the canyons of the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. The hundreds of mining communities were connected with a web of narrow trails up and down the steep canyons.

The Michigan Bluff-Last Chance Trail went through the main street of the mining community of Deadwood. The portion of the trail between Michigan Bluff and Deadwood was a toll trail. Toll price for people walking the trail was 25 cents. In Michigan Bluff the toll gate keeper was A. Halliday in 1861 (Placer County Directory of 1861: 123). Duncan Ferguson, who owned and operated the only hotel in Deadwood, was that town's toll keeper (Auburn Journal, March 25, 1984). The trail was maintained by these authorized toll-keepers, whose authority was to use the moneys collected in fees to improve and maintain the trail. It was the responsibility of the county of Placer to regulate the toll trail and ensure users were not being charged unfair rates. In part, it was the toll-keepers who ensured that the trail remained open and freight and mail service were delivered in a timely manner.

Pack trains, consisting of mules and a man on horseback, carried supplies, including groceries and meat to Deadwood from Michigan Bluff and then the rest of the way to Last Chance. Alfred Dixon operated a General Store in Michigan Bluff for about 35 years, with the bulk of his business in supplying the mines between Michigan Bluff and Last Chance. Mr. Dixon also ran a pack train to deliver these supplies and the United States Mail.

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A toll road from Baker Ranch to Michigan Bluff connected the town by wagon roads to the larger town site of Foresthill and Auburn.

The Foresthill Divide was a primary artery for the express service carried out by both Wells Fargo, and Adams and Company. These two companies provided mail and supplies to many of the early gold camps, and their type of service, or transport was similar but should not be confused with the later "Pony Express" from St. Joseph Missouri to Sacramento. Mules were commonly used for transport in addition to horses and teams. Stages provided a daily service to the mining camps that were accessible by roads, while other more remote camps were serviced by pack trains that moved in and out of the steep canyons and narrow ridges.

Today, the route can be found much the same as it was over 100 years ago and used, for the most part, in traditional transportation means of horseback or by foot. While other historic trail routes became paved roads over time, this trail is unique in that it was maintained as a trail and as a result remains that today. The trail route retains its historic character by following the original route and has not been affected by modern development. The lack of changes to the route or character has not diminished its integrity and affected its historic value as so many trails have otherwise experienced. Physical indications of its past use is evident by the trail's original alignment, rock retaining walls, mining equipment and other artifacts in the area indicating miner settlements, water ditches, mining camp sites, and other improvements that establish clear association with the gold rush period of use.

Today this same trail is a grueling portion of the historic Tevis Cup Western States 100 Mile One Day Trail horseback ride (now in its 38th year) and the Western States 100 Mile Endurance Run, between Squaw Valley and Auburn, California.

The history of the development of this trail has served as an important means of gaining an understanding of the demographic, social, and economic change in Placer County as well as the rest of the state.

The Michigan Bluff-Last Chance Trail also represents distinctive engineering characteristics of the period, with portions of the trail and road systems that maintain features of engineering skills, such as rock retaining walls, and side-hill cuts.

The assessment of the trail's historical association and integrity is referenced to the following definitions: period of significance, integrity, location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, association, and uniqueness.

Period of Significance: The trail was the most important connection between Michigan Bluff, Deadwood and Last Chance until Mosquito Ridge Road was constructed in 1939. The last residents of the latter two towns left between 1920 and the late 1930's, respectively. There were residents in Last Chance during the early 1930's as evidenced by historic photographs. Deadwood was a "ghost-town" by then.

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Integrity: The overall historical and natural integrity of the region bounded by the North Fork of the American River and the Middle Fork of the American River is very high. The town of Iowa Hill, for example, still has not received electrification. Most of the roads remain dirt and unimproved. The area has not been developed to a great extent due to the severity of the terrain in the canyons which has resisted intrusions. The town of Foresthill has only recently started to develop and this trend will be greatly accelerated due to recent improvements in the road from Auburn. The tops of the ridges have been selectively logged from about Foresthill up to the higher country where logging has occurred sporadically. Views into the canyons have not changed since the Gold Rush mining period. Only the most severe of the mining operations still scar the canyons. The Big Gun Diggins at Michigan Bluff has started to re-forest but is still visible from the opposite canyon wall. The Devils Basin mining operation along Deadwood Ridge can also be viewed across the canyon from Last Chance.

The integrity of the trail remains virtually pristine or original, and the 5% or less (primarily between Deadwood and Devil's Thumb) that has been maintained or altered in recent times retains much of its original visual qualities. A detailed description is provided herewith in *Section 7 appendix* that notes where the trail has been realigned or modified. Where rehabilitation maintenance work has occurred, this work, perhaps like the routine maintenance of the nineteenth century, uses materials and labor similar to those during the historic period of the trail.

Location: The Michigan Bluff-Last Chance Trail is located along a rugged foothill corridor in southern Placer County, in the western portion of the Tahoe National Forest. Since its construction in the early 1850's to access the mining communities of Michigan City (Bluff), Deadwood, and Last Chance, it has undergone little if any changes to its original alignment, and today clearly retains its locational association with these gold rush mining camps.

Early trails were just paths worn into the forest by use, many following Indian trails which probably followed game trails. Game trails connect locations like rivers and ridges with springs and meadows. The benefit of the Indians using game trails was that they followed routes which would not run into cliffs or other obstructions that would be hard to avoid without a lot of survey work. They also ran to the locations where water and food were available for stock and travelers. Although the method of transportation in most locations has demanded the altering of the pathway, this trail has remained intact, complete with its original design, and the surrounding environment.

Design: The trail and its corridor evidence a quality of engineering design that is representative of nineteenth century road and trail construction. From the trails circuitous descent into each of the deep canyons, to its ascent up the ridges, it

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clearly represents a design that's purpose aimed to link each of the mining communities together in the shortest, and quickest means possible. Of the methods of trail construction financing (public subscription, government, mine owners, etc.) toll fee collection is very rare for trail construction. Presumably the cost of trail construction was inexpensive and there was no need to charge for passage. However, the problem with the trails in the river canyons between Michigan Bluff and Last Chance is the steepness of the terrain. Construction of a pack trail from the basis of a game trail in this terrain did take engineering, and required money and labor to construct. The most difficult section to construct of the 14 miles is from Deadwood to Michigan Bluff by the amount of earth cuts, the rock cuts with drilled blasting holes, and rock fills required.

Materials: Extant materials were purely functional to attain the best means possible to secure the stability of the trail against erosion. Rocks obtained locally were the principal means of side-hill stabilization. Evidence of these carefully arranged features demonstrates the engineering skills and importance of maintaining the trail as an important transportation corridor.

Workmanship: The alignment of the trail, features, and the overall original design, evidence the workmanship that went into its construction and maintenance. The integrity of the construction of the trail provides a unique source of information on nineteenth century trail construction.

Feeling: The trail corridor represents an area with virtually no major alterations to the natural setting since the Gold Rush. The most obvious changes are from wildfires, yet they may have been more common in the nineteenth century than they are today. The trail also exhibits the determination and strength of character of the nineteenth century miner and emigrant, to develop and maintain a transportation system that was the only link to other communities and the region.

Association: The trail today, linking the mining camps of Michigan Bluff, Deadwood and Last Chance, because of the lack of modern intrusions, provides a clear association between the trail corridor and Gold Rush history associated with the area.

Uniqueness: This section of trail is unique to this region as research has uncovered only one other toll trail anywhere in the State of California. The high degree of integrity both of the surrounding area and the trail, the early period of construction (1850), the fact that there was a toll charge for passage, the length of time that it has had continuous use, and the roughness of the terrain it traverses indicates that this trail is unique to the State.

Of the other trails that were constructed during the same period or earlier, most were quickly used for wagon travel and were upgraded to meet those requirements and have subsequently undergone transformation due to continual upgrading and

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development in the surrounding area. In this region many trails existed that connected small towns and mining villages, but with the modern age of transportation most have been abandoned and lost. (For example: Typical of this is the Stevens Trail previously mentioned as an important trail of the period connecting towns across the North Fork of the American River, and presently is being used as a hiking trail from the north bank of the river to the ridge near Colfax, California. The bridge connection was lost and never rebuilt after the road connection was completed early in the 1900's. The road to Last Chance by way of Mosquito Ridge was not completed until the late 1930's. The bridges on the Michigan Bluff/Last Chance Trail were upgraded after 1900).

In 1939, the Forest Service noted 924 miles of trail in the Tahoe National Forest, 854 miles of which were unsatisfactory for fire suppression use (their primary use). This plan noted that practically all of the trails were used by recreationalists. The plan also proposed to upgrade or reconstruct 760 miles of trail to provide for fire suppression. It is probable that many trails have had significant work done to them. There is no such record of work being done to the Michigan Bluff/Last Chance trail until the summer of 1990.

Rehabilitation work has occurred to certain portions of the trail over the last 30 years, however, this work, like the routine maintenance of the nineteenth century, uses materials and labor that are compatible with the trail and its related technology of materials and design.

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GEOGRAPHIC DATA

Verbal Boundary Description: The Michigan Bluff-Last Chance Trail is a linear corridor of approximately 12.43 miles in length (This recorded distance is from measurements obtained in 1985 by the Course Certification Committee of The Athletics Congress). The nomination boundary is described as being measured by the center line of the trail to the top of all cuts and the toe of all fills, a trail corridor approximately 25 feet wide. The general surface width of the trail is 4 feet. The trail boundary ends at the center of the townsite of Last Chance and at the intersection of the trail and county road in Michigan Bluff.

The approximate acreage of the trail corridor is 37.66

The trail was first shown on the Colfax Quadrangle Sheet of the United States Geological Survey ("USGS"), surveyed in 1885 to 1887, Edition of 1902, as reprinted in November 1922. The public record indicates the following specific description of the trail as being the, "Trail starting at Michigan Bluff in Section 22, Township 14 North, Range 11 East, MDB&M, thence Northeasterly on the Michigan Bluff-Deadwood trail across El Dorado Canyon to Deadwood, thence Northeasterly to Last Chance (across the North Fork of the Middle Fork of the American River)." Last Chance is located in Section 34, Township 15 North, Range 12 East, MDB&M.

From the attached USGS map (Michigan Bluff Quadrangle, 1978), the UTM References are:

Michigan Bluff	A	<u>10 696080E</u>	<u>4323560N</u>
Deadwood	B	<u>10 699965E</u>	<u>4328100N</u>
Last Chance	C	<u>10 705200E</u>	<u>4331400N</u>

As indicated on the attached USGS map, the mining towns of Michigan Bluff, Deadwood, and Last Chance are connected by a switch-back trail that descends 1900 feet from Michigan Bluff down the El Dorado Canyon, climbs 2000 feet up and over Deadwood Ridge, drops 2000 feet and crosses the North-Middle Fork of the American River and winds up the canyon 2100 feet to Last Chance. Most of the lands that the Michigan Bluff/Last Chance trail traverses are held under public ownership and administration by the United States Forest Service, except for:

A privately owned parcel near Last Chance at the Pacific Slab Mine, Assessor Parcel Number 067-07-010, 213.85 acres within Section 33, Township 15 North, Range 12 East, MDB&M, belonging to Mr. Richard B. Brown, 671 Newcastle Road, Suite 4, Newcastle, California 95658.

A privately owned parcel near Deadwood, Assessor Parcel Number 067-07-005, 413.86 acres within Section 31, Township 15 North, Range 12 East, MDB&M, belonging to Bohemia, Inc., P.O. Box 2077, Grass Valley, California.

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A privately owned parcel near Michigan Bluff, Assessor Parcel Number 64-220-04, 19.5 acres within Section 22, Township 14 North, Range 11 East, MDB&M, belonging to Donald Wayne Epperson, Post Office Box 1267, 5255 Pacific Street, Rocklin, California 95677.

A privately owned parcel near Michigan Bluff, Assessor Parcel Number APN 64-220-, 21 & 22, 29900 & 30055 Turkey Hill Road, within Section 22, Township 14 North, Range 11 East, MDB&M, belonging to Wells Fargo Bank as Trustee for the Winniefred Codman Trust, NA-P #20905 & 8, San Francisco, California 94163.

A privately owned parcel near Michigan Bluff, Assessor Parcel Number 64-220-03, within Section 22, Township 14 North, Range 11 East, MDB&M, belonging to the University of California (66.6%) and That Man May See Inc. (33.3%), 374 Parnassus Avenue, #312, San Francisco, California 94143.

A privately owned parcel near Michigan Bluff, Assessor Parcel Number 64-220-44, within Section 22, Township 14 North, Range 11 East, MDB&M, belonging to Jack and Dorothy Weaver, 29895 Turkey Hill Road, Foresthill, California 95631.

A privately owned parcel near Michigan Bluff, Assessor Parcel Number 64-200-57, within Section 22, Township 14 North, Range 11 East, MDB&M, belonging to Amel and Betty Glaser, 8425 Michigan Bluff Road, Foresthill, California 95631.

A privately owned parcel near Michigan Bluff, Assessor Parcel Number 64-220-45 & 64-200-33, within Section 22, Township 14 North, Range 11 East, MDB&M, belonging to Richard H. Shields and Carol M. Hewitt, 8375 Michigan Bluff Road, Foresthill, California 95631.

JUSTIFICATION: The boundaries encompass the historic resource.

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Name: Western States Trail
Location: Michigan Bluff (town) to Last Chance (townsite)
California
Photographer: Thomas A. Winter, unless otherwise noted
Date taken: October thru December 1990
Negatives: Western States Trail Foundation
Livingston Building
701 High Street
Auburn, CA 95603

Location: Michigan Bluff to Deadwood, station points are as noted in appendix continuation sheets.

- Photo 1 Dry laid rock retaining wall and gully protection. Rock was used typically as a spillway at gullies to protect against washouts in heavy rains. Looking east down the trail. Station Point (st. pt.) 29+00
- Photo 2 Dry laid rock retaining wall used as a side hill fill. Note that the side hill has been cut as well. Looking west up the trail. st. pt. 49+30
- Photo 3 Typical side hill cut with minimal rock retaining wall. Looking down the trail. Looking down the trail. st. pt. 61+25
- Photo 4 Rock outcropping which has been removed by blasting. Looking down the trail. st. pt. 73+30
- Photo 5 Close up of rock outcropping from photo 4 showing the remnant of drilled hole for blasting which remains in the rock. st. pt. 73+30
- Photo 6 Large dry laid retaining wall at gully crossing. This wall is 3 to 4 feet tall, tapering at the ends, and 40 feet long. Looking east down the trail. st. pt. 83+10
- Photo 7 The lump running across the bank towards the legs of the hiker indicates the location of a 6 inch steel pipe crossing the trail. Water piped under pressure to monitor heads was used extensively in hydraulic mining. Looking west up the trail. st. pt. 133+85
- Photo 8 Rocks piled along the edges is a typical feature along the trail. The rocks appear to have been unearthed in the process of erosion and then thrown out of the way. This feature differs from retaining walls in that the rocks are just piled. Looking east down the trail. st. pt. 135+20

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- =====
- Photo 9 East end of bridge over El Dorado Creek. Note stone behind concrete abutment. st. pt. 135 +85
- Photo 10 West end of bridge over El Dorado Creek. Note stone behind concrete abutment. st. pt.135+85
- Photo 11 Overall photo of bridge and El Dorado Creek. 135+85
- Photo 12 Photographer H. Hall.
View of eastern side of El Dorado Canyon from bridge. Note dry laid retaining walls of the switchback of the trail, and the crossing of the trail to Bake Oven Trail. 135+85
- Photo 13 View of El Dorado Canyon from Mosquito Ridge road. The creek crossing is behind the first ridge in the picture.
- Photo 14 Bake Oven Trail looking south, standing on the WS Trail. Bake Oven Trail runs south to the Middle Fork of the American River and east to the bake oven site. st. pt. 141+60
- Photo 15 Close up of the dry laid rock in one of the retaining wall along the section at the crossing of Bake Oven Trail pictured in Photo 14.
- Photo 16 Close up of the dry laid rock in one of the retaining wall along the section at the crossing of Bake Oven Trail pictured in Photo 14.
- Photo 17 Entrance to mine shaft taken from a section of alternate trail at the bottom of El Dorado Canyon at the Rainbow Mine. 20 feet above this hole the trail has collapsed into this shaft and was rerouted around the hole.
- Photo 18 Typical dry laid rock retaining wall. The trail is the slight bench above the wall. st. pt. 146+25.
- Photo 19 The trail skirts this feature, a pond created by digging into the hillside and berming along the other edges. Looking west standing on the trail which runs behind the photographer and to the right back down the trail. st. pt. 149+85
- Photo 20 19th century cabin site next to trail. Note stone foundation/walls similar in construction to trail work. Looking southeast standing on the trail. st. pt. 153+90
- Photo 21 Typical trail. Standing at corner of a switchback looking at trail going up and down. st. pt. 184+30

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- Photo 22 One of the steepest portions of the trail, an almost sheer rock face with the trail ledge cut into the stone. Looking east up the trail. st. pt. 184+30
- Photo 23 Steep side slope portion with rock hillside cut and rock retaining walls holding trail ledge. Looking down the trail. st pt. 193+35
- Photo 24 This photo indicates the steepness of the canyon walls, close to 45 degrees from vertical. Rock retaining wall. Looking west down the trail. st. pt. 202+50
- Photo 25 The dark spot on the right (in front of the ferns) is a pool created to hold water from a spring. The water runs across the trail to the left and down the hill. Looking east up the trail (although the trail is sloping down at this point for a few feet). st.pt. 211+25
- Photo 26 One of the few gently sloped sections of the trail. Note large Douglas firs and lack of undergrowth. Looking west back down the trail. st.pt. 217+00
- Photo 27 Blasting hole remnant in middle of trail. st. pt. 230+30
- Photo 28 Extremely rocky section of trail showing cuts and retained fills. Looking west back down the trail. Looking west. st. pt. 246+00
- Photo 29 Cuts and retained fills. Looking down the trail. st. pt. 252+25
- Photo 30 Looking down trail. st. pt. 253+75
- Photo 31 Typical side slope on trail. Faint indication of trail running across the slope was in fact another trail which was explored for several hundred yards. Looking west. st. pt. 273+45
- Photo 32 Photo looking west, back towards Michigan Bluff which is situated just below the knoll in the center of the last ridge.
- Photo 33 Trail widens to road width just below Deadwood site. Looking east up the trail. st. pt. 297+80
- Photo 34 Deadwood Road at Deadwood townsite. Looking towards the center of the town and to the northeast. st. pt. 316+20
- Location: Devils Thumb site to Last Chance townsite, station points are as noted in appendix continuation sheets.
- Photo 35 Photographer H. Hall

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- The Devils Thumb, a natural basalt outcrop which is situated in a steeply eroded basin. The trail skirts the edge of this basin. Taken 10 yards south of the trail looking south. st. pt. 00+25
- Photo 36 Photo looking out over the canyon towards the confluence of the North Fork and Grouse Creek (the canyon to the left in the photo). st. pt. 46+30
- Photo 37 Photo taken standing on trail looking over down into the canyon at two switchbacks of the trail below. st.pt. 61+00
- Photo 38 Rock retaining wall on the up-hill side of the trail. Rocks piled along the other side created a gully effect that one runner likened to a "marble in a groove". st. pt. 71+40
- Photo 39 Rocks piled along the outside edge of the trail. st. pt. 74+40
- Photo 40 North Fork Bridge taken from the western side. st. pt. 88+70
- Photo 41 Abandoned section of trail leads lower along the slope. This section was abandoned because of the slide. st. pt. 05+05
- Photo 42 "The slide" taken from across the canyon looking east from the trail at st. pt. 46+30. The trail is the faint line running across the lower portion of the slide area. st. pt. 105+45 to 111+80
- Photo 43 Rock retaining wall. st. pt. 155+05
- Photo 44 Townsite of Last Chance, "the meadow". The two trees in the foreground are very old apple trees.
- Photo 45 Photographer H. Hall
Typical section of trail on the Michigan Bluff to El Dorado Creek section. Mosquito Ridge Road can be seen in the background cut into the slope of the canyon.
- Photo 46 Photographer H. Hall
Typical view out into upper El Dorado Canyon from the Deadwood to El Dorado Creek trail section.
- Photo 47 Photographer Unknown
19th century photograph of a typical pack mule trail on the trail below Michigan Bluff. Photograph appears to have been taken between station points 4+00 and 17+00 on that section of trail.