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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Davis Mill

other names/site number Randolph Quartz Mine Millsite, BLM# CA-018-YN-26

2. Location

street & number \_\_\_\_\_  not for publication N/A

city or town Nevada City  vicinity

state California code CA county Nevada code 057 zip code 95959

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
Robin L. Burgen, FPO February 12, 2010  
Signature of certifying official Title Date  
California Office of Historic Preservation Bureau of Land Management  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
Steph D. Nickell 9/23/09  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
California Office of Historic Preservation  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  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): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper  
[Signature]

Date of Action  
4/1/2010

Davis Mill  
Name of Property

Nevada, CA  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Industry

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**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Processing site

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**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

No style

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**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

roof wood and corrugated metal paneling

walls wood and corrugated metal paneling

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other

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**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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### Description

#### Summary

Located on BLM-administered federal land three miles northeast of Nevada City, California, the Davis Mill was built between 1915 and 1920 for processing gold ore from the Randolph Mine. The mill was built under the auspices of the mine's owner and operator, the Davis family, including mother Eliza and sons William, Arthur, and Harry. The mill appears to have seen its most extensive period of use during the late 1910s and early 1920s. By the late 1920s the family was leasing the mine to the Western Merger Mines Company. In 1931 the company pulled out and the mine and mill came back under the control of the Davis family. Out of work, the brothers gave hardrock mining at the Randolph another try but their efforts proved unprofitable and they were forced to earn a living by other means. Harry, who lived with his wife and mother at the mine, may have operated the Davis Mill intermittently to treat ore from other mines during the 1930s, and possibly during the early 1940s. The mill was completely shut down by the end of the World War II. Remarkably well-preserved, the mill is today a testament to the work of a small family-run mining operation. The mill is also an outstanding example of stampmill vernacular. It exhibits distinctive characteristics of its type, period, and method of construction. The mill has an impressive multistory frame superstructure entirely clad in corrugated metal. The mill was equipped with a typical array of equipment: an ore bin, rock crusher, a five-stamp battery, an amalgamation table, a retort room, and concentrators. Much of this equipment remains in place, providing valuable insight on how the Davis family configured their mill.

#### Environmental Setting

The Davis Mill is in its original location on public land on Harmony Ridge, near the South Fork of the Yuba River. Specifically, the mill is situated at 2860 ft above sea level, in a small flat along a tributary of Rock Creek. The flat's immediate surroundings are forested with live oak, black oak, incense cedar, ponderosa pine, dogwood, and madrone. Manzanita, scotchbroom, and mountain misery are the dominant understory plants. The current vegetation is mostly native and, based on photos taken in the late 1920s and early 1930s, appears to resemble the environment that existed at the millsite during early 1900s. The photos suggest that area may have had more ponderosa pine in the past. The pine was probably sold by the Davis family to loggers in the 1930s and 1940s to help pay the bills. The house and other mine buildings associated with the

Davis Mill are located on private land just to the south of the mill and are not included in this nomination. They appear, however, to have a high level of integrity. There has been recent residential development in the surrounding area, but it has not encroached on the Davis Mill and its setting.

#### Narrative Description

The Davis Mill was built with post and beam construction, with 6 by 6 inch posts at each corner, interspersed by 4 by 6 inch posts. The entire building is clad in corrugated metal in 3 by 8 foot sections. Many panels were cut to fit the exterior dimensions of the building.

The roof of the building is of side-gable and shed-roof construction, which steps down the hillside, and is covered with corrugated sheet metal. The uppermost level, into which the ore was dumped, is gabled, with a small shed roof over the crusher platform. A long shed roof covers the bull wheel and stamp battery levels, and an end-gable truss roof covers the concentrating floor. The roof is supported with 2 by 6 inch rafters on 24 inch centers, with exposed rafter tails. The trusses on the lower floor are constructed of 4 by 6 inch timbers. A small shed roofed addition (retort room) is located on the west elevation, and a shed-roofed extension covers the stairway on the east elevation.

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Fenestration in the mill consists of 6 over 6 light frame windows, double and single hung. Primary access is located on the south elevation, via a 70 inch wide by 7 foot high corrugated metal door, which slides on a track. A pedestrian door, also on the south elevation, is 3 feet wide by 7 feet high and is clad in corrugated metal. An opening, 45 inches wide by 7 feet high, once provided access to a privy but is now boarded over. Other openings include a door on the north elevation of the upper crusher platform level and a door on the west elevation at the battery level; both are of frame construction clad in corrugated metal.

The floor of the concentrator level (the lowest level) is made of poured concrete, 4 to 5 inches in thickness, and badly buckled and cracked. The remainder of the floors is made of 2 by 12 inch boards or 1 by 12 inch boards, laid double. The walls of the concentrator level are supported by the concentrator level flooring, while the remainder of the floors is supported by posts set on square wood bases directly on earth. The stamp battery sits on a concrete mortar box which measures 8 feet long by 3 feet wide and 28 inches from ground to floor level and 22 inches to the battery box (a total of 42 inches in height).

The interior of the mill was so arranged that the ore entered it at a point that was higher than the concentrating floor. This permitted the ore's continual descent by gravity from each operation to the succeeding one, without the expenditure of large amounts of labor or power to move it. Stairways, ladders, and catwalks provided access to each level. The stairs were constructed of 2 by 8 inch lumber, 27 inches wide, with 7 1/2 inch risers. The levels include the Grizzly, ore bin, crusher platform, bull wheel and camshaft, stamp battery, and concentrator.

Grizzly level. The trestle and tram, which carried the ore to the mill from the shaft in mine cars, no longer exists, but several of the timbers are piled upon the ground below its former location. On reaching the mill in the mine car, the ore was unloaded onto an inclined screen called a grizzly, through which all the particles of the ore small enough to be fed to the stamp battery passed into the ore bin.

Ore bin level. The ore bin has an inclined bottom and a discharge chute through which the ore passed into the hoppers of the ore feeders, which were automatic in their operation, the ore being regulated by the supply of ore under the stamp. The ore bin was constructed of 2 by 12 inch decking on a 45 degree angle (some boards no longer exist). The ore bin is supported on 12 by 12 inch posts. The ore chute measures 21 inches wide by 2 feet high and its walls were constructed of 2 by 12 inch planks.

Crusher level. The rock breaker prepared the coarser ores for the battery by crushing them to the required maximum size or smaller. A Wheeling crusher was in use in the Davis Mill when it was visited by staff from the state Division of Mines in 1929 (Logan 1930:130), but it no longer exists. The opening in the floor below where it was located measures 19 inches by 4 feet 10 inches. The crusher was located on the "crusher platform," which measures 16 feet wide by 8 feet 6 inches long. From the platform, a 5 foot wide walkway extends south for 10 feet 6 inches to an exterior doorway. The remainder of the level was occupied by the ore bin, the top of which was accessed from a wood frame ladder from the walkway (and also by the exterior tram and trestle).

The south, or upper, wall of the platform (which forms the lower wall of the ore bin) was constructed of three 8 by 8 inch posts supporting the face of the 11 foot 6 inch high wall, with 4 by 8 inch posts on each side of the ore chute. The wall was constructed with 2 by 12 inch lumber. The lower, or north wall, of the platform measures 9 feet 8 inches high, with a 3 foot high railing constructed of three horizontal 1 by 12 inch boards. Fenestration at this level consisted of windows with 86 by 34 inch openings.

Camshaft or bull wheel level. The next lower level contained the bull wheel, cam shafts, and electric motor that operated the stamp battery. Posts on this level consist of 12 by 12 inch corner posts with 8 by 8 inch posts between. The floor of the bull wheel and cam shaft section was constructed of 2 by 12 inch boards, and measures 13 feet 2 inches long by 16 feet wide. Two windows, measuring 34

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by 48 inches, were located on the west elevation, with one 34 by 48 inch window on the east elevation. They were made of frame construction with 6/6 lights, most of which are no longer extant. The windows had 2 by 6 inch framing on each side, with 4 by 6 inch headers.

The bull wheel, operated by a belt from the line shaft (no longer extant), was 10 1/2 inches wide and 5 feet in diameter, made of 8 layers of laminated wood. The wheel was enclosed in a frame "box" with hinged doors on each end. A semicircular wood frame box, now located on the concentrator floor, evidently once covered the upper section.

The upper section of the stamp battery was also located on this level, with 23 by 12 inch posts on either side supporting the 11 by 15 inch beam that held the stamps. Metal bolts, eight with round flanges and two with rectangular, affixed the stems to the beam.

From the camshaft floor, a 5 foot wide hallway leads 20 feet south to the rear wall. The Westinghouse 15 horsepower motor, which operated the stamp battery, was located on the earthen floor of the 11 foot wide rear section of the level, to the east of the hallway, and near the exterior south door. A General Electric power switch and relay is affixed to the post between the hallway and the motor. Wiring was knob and tube, with most wire no longer extant.

Stamp battery level. The stamp battery room measures 16 feet wide by 20 feet long, with 2 by 12 inch plank flooring. Fenestration on this level consists of windows with 54 by 34 inch openings. An addition to the west elevation contained a landing (40 by 42 inches) and covered stairway to the concentrator (lower) floor. A walkway, constructed of two 2 by 12 inch boards, extends north from the battery level over the concentrating level.

The stamp battery is situated on a concrete mortar box, 22 inches high above the floor level, 8 feet long, and 3 feet deep. The supporting framework consists of 12 by 23 inch upright posts bolted together at the top of the framework on the level above. The battery was a Taylor Mill, built by Taylor's Foundry and Engineering Company, with five stamps weighing 1000 pounds each (Logan 1930:130). Taylor's Foundry was a local company.

Located just below the battery, the amalgamating table is supported on eight 4 by 4 inch posts, measures 51 inches wide by 103 inches long, and slopes away from the battery. Three threaded 1 1/2 inch pipes project from the lower end of the table, and once carried the pulp to the concentrating tables. The remainder of the pipes is no longer extant, nor is the silver-lined copper lining of the table.

Retort room. A 76 by 32 inch corrugated metal door from the battery level provides access to the retort room, which was built as an addition to the east elevation of the building. The room measures 8 feet 6 inches long by 7 feet 7 inches wide, with a 2 by 12 inch plank board floor. A work bench, constructed of two 2 by 12 inch boards and 40 inches high, extends along the north wall of the room and evidently once held the retort. A sloping table with a lip on each side, 43 inches long by 26 inches wide, extends south from the bench to a wooden tub and is separated from it by a 6 inch lip. The tub, constructed of 2 by 12 inch lumber, has sloped sides and is 24 inches deep. It measures 28 1/2 inches wide by 45 1/2 inches long and is supported on 8 by 8 inch posts. A 2 inch upright threaded pipe is located outside against the west wall, between the tub and the wall. The tub was presumably used for panning the concentrates once they had been liberated from the mercury.

Concentrator floor. A concrete slab, poured in place in four sections 4 to 5 inches thick and badly buckled and cracked, provides the floor for the lower level. This level measures 40 feet wide by 29 feet deep and has a gabled truss roof. Corner posts measure 6 by 6 inches, interspersed with three 6 by 6 inch posts on the primary north façade and two 4 by 6 inch posts on either side elevation. The rear, or north, wall is also constructed of 6 by 6 inch posts, four between the corner posts.

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Fenestration on this level consists of 6 over 6 light frame windows, 54 by 34 inches, double hung, with three on each side elevation, three in the primary façade, and one in the southwest rear elevation. Many of the lights are broken and the windows are in poor condition.

Primary access is located on the north elevation, via a 70 inch wide by 7 foot high corrugated metal door that slides on a track. A pedestrian door, also on the north elevation, is 3 feet wide by 7 feet high and clad in corrugated metal. An opening, 45 inches wide by 7 feet high, once provided access to a privy, but is now boarded over.

Five poured concrete footings with threaded bolts are located on the concentrator floor, and presumably once supported the two 1920s or earlier concentrators.

### Integrity

Stampmills were once commonplace in Nevada County. They were vital to the workings of the mine industry here as well as other gold-producing areas of California. As gold mining waned and mines closed, most mills were torn down; their architectural components and machinery were usually hauled off to be used elsewhere, often for non-mining purposes. Little remains at many old millsites. The Davis Mill is exceptional. It has been largely unaltered since its construction in the 1910s. The mill's forested setting has remained undeveloped and, based on photographic evidence, resembles its appearance between 1915 and 1940—the mill's period of significance. The mill itself retains most of its original architectural materials including doors, corrugated siding, framing, flooring, and staircases. As such, the mill's design, materials, and workmanship are evident, giving the visitor the opportunity to explore the various levels of an old stampmill and see firsthand how it was built and designed.

The Davis Mill's crusher, belts, belt wheels, lighting, amalgamating plate, and concentrators have been removed, probably during the 1940s and 1950s. However, most of the mill's key components like the electric motor, ore bin, stamp battery, amalgamating table, and retort room are intact and remain in their original location. Manufactured locally, the stamp battery is impressive. The stamps, dies, stems, tappets, and battery are rusted but otherwise are in good condition. With little guidance, the layperson can immediately see how the Davis Mill was designed with the intention of using gravity to help funnel gold ore through each step in the milling process: the grizzly, ore bin, rock crusher, stamps, amalgamating table, concentrators, etc. The Davis Mill provides valuable insight on stampmill vernacular. It reveals how the operators of small family-run mine chose to build and configure their stampmill.

In recent years the integrity of the Davis Mill has suffered some from weathering, deterioration, and vandalism. In response BLM has taken steps to preserve the mill building, in accordance with the Secretary's standards for treating historic properties. Leaks in the roof have been patched. Broken windows have been covered to keep the rain out. Staircases and flooring have been repaired to prevent accidents. Metal-contaminated dust, a legacy of gold beneficiation at the mill, has been cleaned from the interior. As a result of these actions, the mill is in excellent condition and is accessible to the public.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
removed from its original location.
a birthplace or a grave.
a cemetery.
a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
a commemorative property.
less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 #

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Industry

Period of Significance

Circa 1915-1940

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Euro-American

Architect/Builder

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

Bureau of Land Management-Mother Lode Field Office

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### Statement of Significance

Built and operated between 1915 and 1940 the Davis Mill is a legacy of a small gold mining operation in Nevada County, California. Such operations were common during this period and are an important theme in local and regional history. In particular, the Davis Mill reflects the ambition and optimism of the Davis family including Eliza and her sons William, Arthur, and Harry. During the late 1910s the family invested considerable money and effort into building the mill. Their intent was to increase the profitability of their operations at the adjoining Randolph Mine—the mine the father William co-founded in the late 1890s. The family's investment in a large stampmill—the Davis Mill—appears to have panned out during the late 1910s and 1920s, but by the late 1930s their operation was no longer productive enough to support them. The Davis Mill is also a rare surviving example of an early 1900s stampmill. The mill is significant because it exhibits many distinctive characteristics of its type, period, and method of construction. The mill has a typical layout and array of machinery, most of which is intact. How the ore flowed through each step in the milling process is evident.

### Historic Context

The Blue Tent Mining District, where the Davis Mill is located, was one of many gold districts in Nevada County and the Sierra Nevada region. Like elsewhere in the west-central Sierra Nevada, mining began here shortly after the James Marshall's gold discovery on the South Fork of the American River in 1848. During the 1850s placer mining in Nevada County was a major industry. It quickly evolved from small-scale, independent, and low-capital efforts to highly sophisticated hydraulic operations, owned by formally organized companies, with CEOs, boards of directors, and stockholders. These operations were important regional employers, hiring scores of wage-laborers to do the day-to-day work of mining. Roads, towns, and other infrastructure were built around the major mines. As the intensity of hydraulic mining increased, so did the environmental havoc it created. Hydraulicking caused a voluminous amount of sediment to flow into Sierra Nevada waterways, and by end of the nineteenth century the industry was heavily regulated by the government, making it too costly for many companies to continue operations. The biggest blow was the Sawyer Decision of 1884, a court order, which effectively curtailed hydraulicking in the western Sierra for years. As a result, development in mining districts dominated by placer mining was on the wane after 1884. Blue Tent and other placer districts in the region were hit hard (Clark 1970:31).

Another form of gold mining—hardrock mining—took hold in Nevada County in the 1850s, about the same time that hydraulic mining was introduced. Hardrock mining also caused environmental damage but it was not as heavily regulated as hydraulic mining. The county's big mines, including the Idaho-Maryland and Empire, emerged as among California's longest lasting and most productive gold mines. Some of them stayed in operation almost continuously from the 1850s to the 1950s. For most of their productive lives these mines were almost exclusively the turf of "big business"—corporations with the capital to hire highly trained engineers, large workforces, and high-tech machinery necessary to overcome geologic challenges, conduct large-scale development, and net substantial returns for investors. The principal owners often lived out-of-state and were involved in a variety of other industrial ventures. The growth and prosperity of Grass Valley and other towns in Nevada County were closely tied to the productivity of the large-scale corporate mines (Comstock and Comstock 2000).

In the Blue Tent Mining District, and other regional mining districts wracked by the Sawyer Decision, residents with mining backgrounds continued to dabble in mining on a small scale, often to supplement their ventures in farming, ranching, logging, and other businesses. Some tried hardrock mining when new technologies became readily available, spikes in the price of gold occurred, and other favorable conditions emerged. By the early 1900s the county was peppered with "smalltime" hardrock miners (a family, a couple of men, etc.) often with the backing of a small corporation. These operators typically developed claims that were lower-paying



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and higher-risk, compared to the "proven" mining ground controlled by the big mining companies. The smalltime operators were also more sensitive to ups and downs in the gold market and the economy in general. Most were operated during revitalizations in the regional mining economy around the turn of the century, the World War I years, and the Depression. It was not uncommon for local, independent miners to go from one mine to next depending on which operation needed the help. Though their combined output was never terrific, the small mines are important in regional and county history (Logan 1930, 1941). It is what people did to help "get by" during tough times. It was within this context that the Davis Mill was built and used.

### History of the Davis Mill

In 1897 Alexander Berg and William B. Davies (later spelled Davis) discovered gold-laden quartz outcroppings in the general area where the Davis Mill would be built. It should be noted that the area was probably mined, or at least prospected, before Berg and Davies made the discovery. An 1894 State Mining Bureau report contains a map depicting a "quartz tunnel," "quartz incline," and a hydraulic mining scar in the vicinity (Crawford 1894). The area is also traversed by the Rock Creek Ditch, which is also shown on an 1874 General Land Office township plat. The ditch appears to have carried water from Rock Creek to hydraulic mines just north of Nevada City.

Berg and Davies proceeded to develop the outcroppings. They located a claim called the Randolph Quartz Mine, possibly named after Davies's father (Notice of Location, October 7, 1897), and set up a two-stamp in the flat across from the present millsite. The two-stamp mill is now located on the adjoining Arbogast Ranch on Little Rock Creek (Easley 2002). In their Proof of Labor filed in December 1899 Berg and Davies stated that their work for the year consisted of draining the "old tunnel", putting in "drain boxes", and other work (Proof of Labor 1899). The following year the two appeared to have increased the pace of mine development, spending over \$100 worth of labor driving a tunnel (Proof of Labor 1900).

The federal census indicates that in 1900 Alexander Berg was working as a day laborer, presumably at the Randolph Mine, and was living in the Benson house, located nearby. Berg was about 60 years old and was a native of Sweden. His partner William Davies was about 38 years old. He was born to Welsh parents at Douglas Flat, Calaveras County, California. Around 1888 Davies married Elizabeth (Eliza) Keturah Arbogast whose father, a Pennsylvanian, had come to Nevada County in 1852. William and Eliza had five sons in Nevada County including William Jr., born 1889; Arthur, born 1891; Harry, born 1894; Gilbert, born 1896; and Thomas, born 1898. Davies owned a farm but was a miner by trade. He superintended the Texas Mine in Willow Valley, Nevada County just before his death in 1901. The family home was located at Blue Tent, not far from Willow Valley and the Randolph Mine. Eliza was a homemaker who cared for their five boys; only the eldest son William was in school at that time (U.S. Federal Census 1900; Davis n.d.:1-2).

After the death of her husband in 1901, Eliza managed a restaurant on Broad Street in Nevada City. Later she managed the boarding house at the Blue Tent Mine, not far from the Randolph Mine. In 1905 Eliza and her sons moved to San Francisco where she managed a flat rental on Leavenworth Street for her sister. After the 1906 earthquake and fire, the family returned by train to Nevada County. The sons went back to the one-room school at Blue Tent. They then attended high school in Nevada City where Harry changed the spelling of his last name from Davies to Davis, eliminating the "e". With the exception of William, all of the brothers changed the spelling of their last name to Davis (Davis n.d.:2-5).

Gilbert elected to complete the four-year high school course while Harry took the two-year commercial course. By the mid-1910s Harry and his brothers William and Arthur went to work together making lags and delivering them to local mines. The brothers also began developing the Randolph Mine, inherited from their father (Davis n.d.:5). According to one account, William, Arthur, and Harry were the miners but Gilbert and Tom were also involved, sending funds to the other brothers to run the mine (Nelson 2002).

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In 1912 Eliza Davies and Alexander Berg filed a claim for a millsite and drainage outlet for the Randolph Mine. The claim, called the Randolph Quartz Mine Millsite, adjoined the Randolph Quartz Mine, with a tributary of Rock Creek running east to west through the strip. The claim was located close to the road from Nevada City to Blue Tent. They also claimed 150 inches of water at the east boundary of the claim for the mine, as well as the timber on the land (Location Notice, filed January 10, 1912). The Davis family eventually bought out their father's partner Alexander Berg for \$25 in gold (Nelson 2002).

Art and Harry hired Raemah Arbogast (presumably a close relative of Eliza) to mill lumber for the present mill building, the Davis Mill, which was erected between 1915 and 1920. Electricity was brought in to run the motor which drove the air compressor and the stamp battery. A Cornish pump was installed to dewater the mine (Nelson 2002).

The Davis brothers developed the Randolph Mine until being interrupted by the World War I draft; four of them enlisted within one month in 1918. The war was soon over and the brothers returned home to work the mine, which yielded fair returns but required tremendous effort to locate and follow the gold-bearing ore. For a while the brothers had rights to an adjacent mining property, later known as the Hoge Mine, but lost it because they had insufficient funds to develop it (Davis n.d.:6). According to the 1920 federal census, Eliza, aged 53 and widowed, operated a farm. All five of her sons were working as miners in the Randolph Mine.

Around 1926 the family leased the Randolph Mine to the Western Merger Mines Company. The company hired Harry Davis to work as a superintendent. During his stint with the company, Harry was nearly killed or seriously injured in an accident in the main shaft involving the hoisting system. When visited by staff from the Division of Mines in September 1929 the mine was idle and the company was expected to give up the lease. By that time, the mine (also called the Western Merger) had been extensively worked, with 5,600 ft of drifts off a 400 ft shaft. Equipment on site at that time included a 22 1/2 horsepower Dillon Box direct connected electric hoist, two air compressors operated by 50 horsepower and 35 horsepower electric motors, a drill sharpener, a 60 inch saw with 50 horsepower motor, a blacksmith shop, and buildings. The mill contained five 1000 pound stamps, a Wheeling crusher, and two concentrators. According to superintendent Harry Skewes, the milled ore averaged \$15.50 a ton; about 45 percent of the gold was amalgamated and the balance was in concentrate worth \$150 a ton (Logan 1930:130). Due to stock manipulations the company closed operations at the mine around 1931 (Davis n.d.:7).

The Sanborn Fire Insurance Company mapped the Randolph Mine around 1934. The company's mapmaker noted that the mine was not in operation, but the Davis family lived on the premises in a house (that still exists) located just off of North Bloomfield Road. Electricity was used to run the lights and appliances, and water was pumped from the mine into a tank. Aside from the house, the mine included the hoist house and compressor room, blacksmith shop, machine shop, drying house, assay office, headframe, ore bins, elevated trestle, and the Davis Mill (Sanborn 1934).

During the early years of the Depression the Davis brothers tried placer mining. They acquired a 160-acre claim on Round Mountain, not far from the Randolph Mine. The venture was unsuccessful and the brothers soon returned home to devote their attention to mining at the Randolph. Their work at the Randolph failed to produce enough ore to warrant mining on a larger scale, though the assay samples showed promise. William, Harry, and Arthur finally gave up on the family mine and decided to earn a living by other means (Davis n.d.).

Harry remained at the family home at the Randolph Mine. He took care of his mother and made a living by farming, ranching, and selling timber on the family land (Davis n.d.:7-8). During the late 1930s (and possibly the early 1940s) he may have operated the Davis Mill from time to time, handling ore from other mines in the area (Montzambert 1981). It appears the mill was idle by the time the United States entered World War II.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property Davis Mill

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In his later years Harry married Lena. After the death of his mother, the couple moved to a new house located on the corner of North Bloomfield Road and Cooper Road, not far from the Randolph Mine. He celebrated his 100th birthday in February 1994. Just prior to the occasion Harry noted that he was proud of being both a "hard-rock" and "soft-dirt" miner (MacDonald 1994).

The house at the mine was occupied by other members of the Davis family after Harry and Lena moved out. Arthur and his wife Letha lived here when Arthur died in 1958. Letha continued to live at the house and in 1965 BLM offered to sell her BLM-administered land encompassing the house, the Davis Mill, the blacksmith shop, and other buildings associated with the mine. She purchased the house, the blacksmith shop, and the other nearby buildings but not the mill because the price per acre was too high, though she apparently believed that she had acquired ownership of the mill and could transfer it to the Nevada County Historical Society or other interested parties. Joe Wiley, the current occupant of the house, bought the house and mine buildings from Letha around 1970.

After years of legal wrangles concerning the Davis Mill, BLM initiated a protective withdrawal of the Davis Mill in 1975 and began treating it as a significant building. People have continued to challenge BLM's control of the mill. During the 1980s the Nevada County Historical Society asserted ownership, intending to dismantle the building and sell the stamps. BLM intervened, disputing the validity of their title, and thus preventing its destruction. About the same time, mining claimant Tony Smeaton had ambitious plans for revamping the mill in a way that would have diminished its integrity. BLM convinced him to restrict his activities, allowing some of the windows to be replaced and the concentrator floor to be cleaned up of modern debris.

### Justification for Criterion A

The Davis Mill is significant because it reflects the work of a small family-run mining operation in early 1900s Nevada County. Between 1848 and 1955, Nevada County was home to some of the longest lasting, biggest producing hardrock mines in the California. During this same period many mines in the county and Sierra Nevada region were much smaller in scale and provided far different experiences for those involved in developing them. In most cases these mines were operated by a small company—employing a crew of two or three men – with little capital to spare. Some mines were owned and operated by individuals, perhaps with the help of relatives, neighbors, or short-term hires. To succeed the smalltime miner employed various strategies: makeshift or secondhand mining equipment was purchased cheaply or salvaged from closed mines; mining was sometimes conducted "on the side" supplementing other smalltime ventures (farming, ranching, and logging); "custom" mills and assay offices were used to offset the expense of building and operating these facilities at the mine; mining strategies were based largely on personal experience, skills, and even instinct, rather than academic training and real scientific knowledge of geology and metallurgy; and investments of labor and money were often risked on marginal, low-paying claims since the "proven" mining ground had long since been acquired by big mining companies. For the smalltime miner, the margin between success and failure could often be small. The risk was usually high but so was the optimism.

The story of this kind of mining in Nevada County is embodied in the Davis Mill. The mill reflects the decisions of its owners: the Davis family including mother Eliza and sons William, Harry, and Arthur. Though the father, William, was one of the original founders of the Randolph Mine, it was the mother and sons who ambitiously expanded development of the Randolph during the 1910s by erecting a major stampmill, powered by electricity and equipped with the typical array of machinery. Unquestionably the mill was a substantial investment for the family. It provides considerable insight into the family's mining strategies, willingness to take financial risk, and optimism.

The reasons for the investment in the mill are unclear. It may be that the Davis brothers were just starting out in life and were determined to make a career out of mining, following in the footsteps of their father. Their mine, the Randolph, had potential and

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National Park Service

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appears to have been quite productive during the late 1910s and early 1920s. Also, the late 1910s (and the World War 1 years in particularly) saw a surge in local gold production.

Regardless of the reasons, the family's substantial investment appears to have paid off—at least for a while. By the late 1920s the family was leasing the mine to the Western Merger Mine Company. The company was apparently unsuccessful and pulled out around 1931. When the Depression struck, the Davis brothers turned to placer mining on nearby Round Mountain. They returned to work at the family mine only when their Round Mountain venture failed. In the end, the Randolph Mine and Davis Mill couldn't support the family and the brothers were forced to look elsewhere for work. One of the brothers, Harry, continued to live at the mine and may have operated the Davis Mill as a custom mill from time to time during the late 1930s and possibly even the early 1940s. During the 1940s and 1950s, some of the equipment from the mine was scrapped and the mill was completely shut down.

Since then the Davis Mill has remained intact and is today a remarkable testament to the determination of a smalltime miner in early 1900s Nevada County to make a living from a marginal gold mine.

Justification for Criterion C

The Davis Mill is significant because it exhibits many distinctive and representative characteristics of its type, period, and method of construction. Like other California stampmills of its day, the Davis Mill was designed for one purpose: to process gold ore extracted from the mine. The mill appears to have been erected as fast as possible and according to standard plans, with modifications made for local conditions. (The original plans have not been found and likely do not exist.) It was critical to keep the five-stamp battery stable, but the superstructure was not meant to withstand the test of time. Rather, it was built to last for the productive life of the mine (measured in years, sometimes months), and only the most expedient construction materials and techniques were used.

The Davis Mill was built partially on a concrete foundation, was framed with posts and beams, and was clad entirely in corrugated metal panels, as was typical for gold mills built after the turn of the century. Concrete was a relatively new material type in the 1910s. It provided a stable platform for the stamp battery and a level, easy-to-clean, and low-cost flooring for the concentrator level. The posts and beams used to build the superstructure could be milled from timber on the claim. Indeed, it appears that the Davis family hired a close relative of the mother Eliza to do this work. The mill's panel siding was inexpensive and more fire resistant than wood siding. The panels were easy to cut, attach, and replace. They did the job of keeping adverse weather from harming the milling and concentrating machinery (the most expensive and important part of the mill). Corrugated panels were used almost universally on stampmills by the early 1900s.

Also typical, the Davis Mill was built on a hillside with multiple levels so that the ore entered the building at a point higher than the concentrator floor. This design allowed the operators to use gravity to help move ore from the mine to mill and then through each step in the mill process. The Davis Mill is so well preserved that the function of each level/step in the process is evident, even to the layperson. The steps in the process, which are also typical for an early 1900s stampmill, include the grizzly, ore bin, crusher, stamp battery, and concentrators.

A remarkable element of the building's architecture is the elaborate system of wood-framed stairways, catwalks, ladders, and walkways that provided access to each level so that mill machinery could be operated and maintained. Today this same system is intact and allows the visitor to experience the interior of the mill much like the original operators did during the mill's period of significance.

Many other architectural details of the Davis Mill are evident and are of considerable importance to understanding stampmill vernacular. The retort room was built as an addition to the east side of the building. Within this room it is still possible to see the work

**United States Department of the Interior  
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Name of Property Davis Mill

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bench that held the retort. A sloping table extends south from the bench to a wooden tub. The tub was likely used for panning the concentrates once they had been liberated from the mercury.

Overall, the mill building's exterior shape has eye-catching aesthetics. Its roof, in particular, has dramatic lines and angles. This was not uncommon for stampmills of this era. Cutting costs was the overarching goal. Mills were often placed on mountainsides and other steep topography, as close as possible to the principal mine workings. This reduced the cost of conveying the ore to the mill. The Davis Mill was placed on a steep hillside adjacent the main shaft of the Randolph Mine. The mill has dramatic side-gable and shed roofs, which step down the hillside.

In summary the Davis Mill exhibits the distinctive characteristics of its type, period, and method of construction. Notably the mill has typical design elements, construction materials, and placement with respect to the mine. The Davis Mill illustrates how many mills of its era were designed. It is also important to note that many the mill's extraordinary details (like the retort room) give the mill its own character and speak to the ability, skill, and effort of the mill's builder—the Davis family.

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property Davis Mill

County and State Nevada County, California

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

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Page 1

Bibliography

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Nevada, County of

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Proof of Labor Books

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Davis Mill  
Name of Property

Nevada, CA  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1 acre

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	10	673500	4350730	3		
2				4		

See continuation sheet.

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title James Barnes, Archaeologist

organization Bureau of Land Management date August 10, 2009

street & number 5152 Hillside Circle telephone 916-941-3140

city or town El Dorado Hills state CA zip code 95762

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

### Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

### Photographs

Representative digital photographs of the property.

### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

### Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

Name Bureau of Land Management

street & number 5152 Hillside Circle telephone 916-941-3140

city or town El Dorado Hills state CA zip code 95762

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary encompasses the Davis Mill building and its immediate surroundings—the flat on which it was built. This area is entirely on federal land managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The mine workings at the Randolph Mine as well as associated houses and outbuildings are on private land and are not included in this nomination.

Boundary Justification

The boundary completely captures the mill building and its immediate surroundings.

Form Prepared By

name/title Judith Marvin, Architectural Historian

organization contractor/consultant date August 10, 2009

street & number P.O. Box 2040 telephone 209-728-8542

city or town Murphys state CA zip code 95247



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

=====

**SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD**

NRIS Reference Number: 10000157

Date Listed: 4/1/2010

Davis Mill  
Property Name

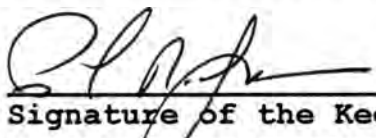
Nevada  
County

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.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

4/1/2010  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

=====

**Amended Items in Nomination:**

**Location:**

The street address should read "off North Bloomfield Road; 3 miles NE of Nevada City."

**Historic/Current Functions:**

The Historic Function should be revised to read: *Industry/Processing Site*.

The Current Function should be revised to read: *Vacant-Not in Use*.

**Cultural Affiliation:**

The Cultural Affiliation box should be left blank.

[This item is only for use with properties nominated under National Register Criterion D.]

**Verbal Boundary Description:**

The Verbal Boundary Description is amended to add the following clarification: "Starting from the east elevation of the mill building and running clockwise, the BLM land boundaries are located approximately 260 ft, 460 ft, 330 ft, and 70 ft out from the exterior walls of the mill building. The Davis Mill property is located within this area and encompasses sufficient federal lands to convey the historic setting of the industrial facility. The BLM parcel on which the property is located provides a buffer to modern residential development in the surrounding area."

These clarifications were confirmed with the BLM FPO office.

-----

**DISTRIBUTION:**

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Davis Mill  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: CALIFORNIA, Nevada

DATE RECEIVED: 2/26/10 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 3/17/10  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/01/10 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 4/12/10  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 10000157

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

\_\_\_ACCEPT \_\_\_RETURN \_\_\_REJECT \_\_\_\_\_DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

The Davis Mill is locally significant under National Register Criteria A and C in the areas of Industry and Architecture. Built and operated between 1915 and 1940, the Davis Mill exhibits the distinctive architectural characteristics of an early twentieth century stamp mill. The multi-story, heavy-timber frame structure, which retains a substantial collection of period industrial equipment, served as the centerpiece of a small family-run gold mining operation in the Sierra-Nevada mining region. Such operations were vital components of the region's small scale, hardrock gold mining industry, itself a sub-component of the larger corporate mining industry in the region. [Adjacent buildings (house, ranch, mine, sheds) associated with the historic operation may serve as complementary resources to a potential boundary increase/mining district, but are not nominated at this time.]

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept Criteria A+C

REVIEWER Paul R. Lusignea DISCIPLINE HISTORIAN

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE 4/1/2010

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.





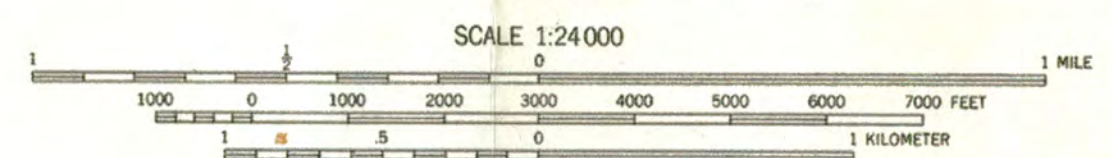
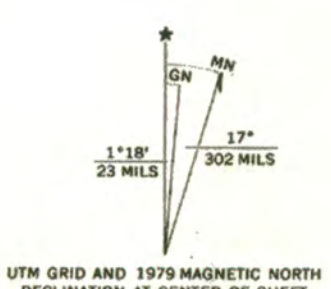






Davis Mill  
Nevada County, CA  
UTM Zone 10  
673500 m E  
4350730 m N

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS  
Topography from aerial photographs by multiplex methods  
Aerial photographs taken 1946. Field check 1949  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grids based on California coordinate system, zone 2  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 10, shown in blue  
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983  
move the projection lines 15 meters north and  
90 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks  
Unchecked elevations are shown in brown  
Dashed land lines indicate approximate locations  
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of  
the National or State reservations shown on this map



CONTOUR INTERVAL 40 FEET  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty	Light duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt
U. S. Route	State Route

NORTH BLOOMFIELD, CALIF.  
SW/4 ALLEGANY 15' QUADRANGLE  
N3915-W12052.5/7.5

FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Revisions shown in purple compiled by the U.S. Forest Service  
from aerial photographs taken 1976 and other source data  
This information not field checked. Map edited by the  
Geological Survey 1979

1949  
PHOTOREVISED 1979  
DMA 1862 IV SW-SERIES V895

**OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

P.O. BOX 942896  
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(916) 653-6624 Fax: (916) 653-9824  
calshpo@ohp.parks.ca.gov  
www.ohp.parks.ca.gov



September 24, 2009

BLM/MOTHER LODE F.O.  
EL DORADO HILLS, CA

SEP 28 2009

RECEIVED

James Barnes, Archaeologist  
Bureau of Land Management  
5152 Hillsdale Circle  
El Dorado Hills, CA 95762

Subject: Davis Mill Nomination to National Register of Historic Places

Dear Mr. Barnes:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the National Register nomination for the above named resource. I concur that the Davis Mill is eligible for listing on the National Register at the local level of significance. The property is significant under Criterion A because it reflects the work of a small family-run mining operation in early 1900s Nevada County, contributing to the development of Nevada County's gold industry, and under Criterion C because it exhibits many distinctive and representative characteristics of its type, period, and method of construction. Built by Art and Harry Davis, the Davis Mill embodies the characteristics of a stamp mill intended to process gold ore extracted from a mine. The mill appears to have been erected according to standard plans, with modifications made for local conditions.

I have signed the signature page as commenting official and will retain a copy of the nomination and photographs for our records. Congratulations of the completion of these nominations. If you have any questions, please contact William Burg at (916)653-8936 or [wburg@parks.ca.gov](mailto:wburg@parks.ca.gov)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve D. Anderson for".

Milford Wayne Donaldson, F.A.I.A.  
State Historic Preservation Officer





# United States Department of the Interior



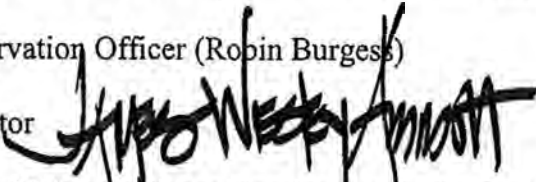
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
California State Office  
2800 Cottage Way, Suite W-1623  
Sacramento CA 95825  
www.ca.blm.gov

FEB 10 2010

In Reply Refer To:  
8100 (CA930)P

## Memorandum

To: Division Chief, Cultural Paleontological Resources and Tribal Consultation  
WO-240, 204 LS  
Attention: Preservation Officer (Robin Burgess)

From: Acting State Director 

Subject: National Register of Historic Places Nomination for the Davis Mill  
Nevada County, CA

I have reviewed the nomination form for the Davis Mill and fully support its nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The site, located on BLM-administered land, 8 miles north-northeast of Nevada City in Nevada County, California, contains scientifically important data about hunter-gatherers at the local and regional level from circa 4000 B.C. until European Contact 160 years ago.

The nomination was well-received and approved by the California State Historic Preservation Officer. Please review and certify the nomination, which was previously delivered to your office, and forward it to the Keeper of the National Register.

If you have any questions about this nomination, please contact Dr. Charlotte Hunter, State Archaeologist, at (916) 978-4648.



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Washington, D.C. 20240

<http://www.blm.gov>

February 23, 2010



In Reply Refer To:  
8100 (240)

## Memorandum

To: Keeper of the National Register of Historic  
National Park Service

From: Federal Preservation Officer  
Bureau of Land Management

Subject: National Register Nomination for Davis Mill, Nevada County, California

We take great pleasure in forwarding the attached National Register nomination for Davis Mill, Nevada County, California (CA). The Davis Mill is a stamp mill for processing gold ore extracted from the Randolph Mine. The mill, constructed between 1915 and 1920 as part of a small family run mining operation, is a well preserved example of stampmill vernacular. The nomination was prepared by Mr. James Barnes of the Bureau of Land Management's Mother Lode Field Office and has been signed by the CA State Historic Preservation Officer.

We look forward to the results of your consideration. If you or your staff has any questions, please call me at (202) 912-7241 or e-mail [Robin\\_Burgess@blm.gov](mailto:Robin_Burgess@blm.gov).

*Robin L Burgess*

Attachment