

The Foundry's Businesses

1859

Molten & Forged Iron

1878 - 1888

Pelton Wheel Era

1907 - 1965

Fabricated Steel

1974

American Victorian Museum & KVMR Radio

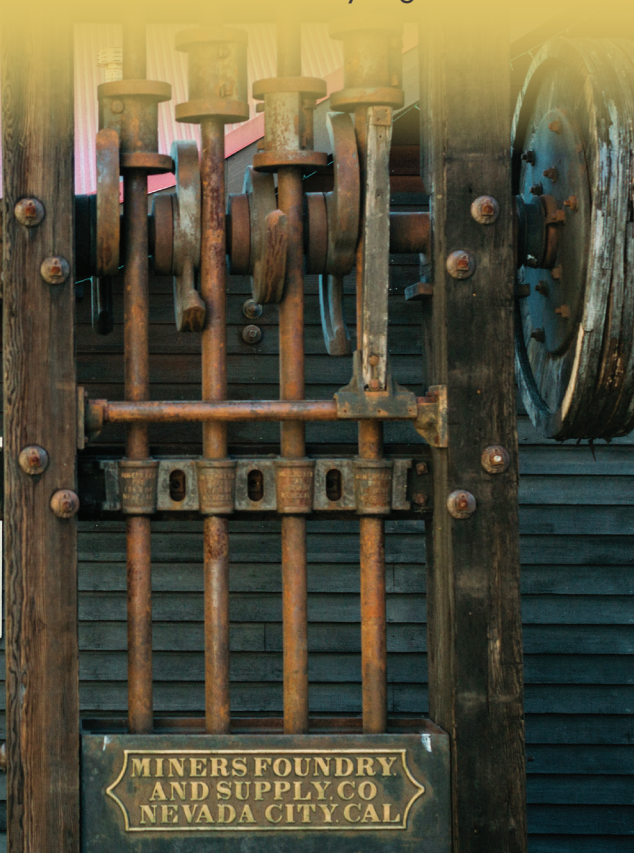
1989 - Present

Miners Foundry Cultural Center

The mission of the Miners Foundry is to preserve, enhance, and utilize the historic Foundry for cultural, educational, and social activities. It is a symbol of California's rich historical heritage, providing an educational, artistic and social bridge from our past to the present and future.

325 Spring Street, Nevada City, CA
530.265.5040
minersfoundry.org

The History OF THE MINERS FOUNDRY



1878

Owners Mr. Thom and George G. Allen manufactured and installed Lester Pelton's first wheel at the Foundry where a single 3 foot diameter wheel at the back of the building powered the entire business. They manufactured donkey engines, stamp mills, ore cars, Pelton wheels, and hydraulic nozzles.

1879

The Pelton Wheel revolutionized power in 1879. Prior to its invention, all power for mines and industry came from steam powered engines fed by wood that decimated forests and left the town's surrounding hills barren. By 1910, electric power was generated by using Pelton Wheels.

1907

William H. Martin purchased the Foundry, renaming it the Miners Foundry. He made pipe fittings, rails, ore cars and supplies for GE. Gateballs were made for Hoover Dam (still utilized today) and steel for the spire of the TransAmerica building. Daughter May Martin Goyne was the office manager and developed a theatrical tradition in the community.



The Depression in the 1930s did not affect Nevada City, as the gold mines continued to thrive and needed stamp mills and mining equipment from the Foundry.

Due to WWII, gold mining was halted by the U.S. Government. During the war, the Foundry ran night and day producing ship parts and other war materials.

1950

The molten metal producing furnaces, the cupolas, shut down after 90 years. Production moved to welding and steel fabrication.

1982

Music in the Mountains was founded from plans made at the Foundry.

1974

After 115 years, the Foundry closed as an industrial business. It was purchased by Charles Woods and David Osborn, who extensively remodeled and upgraded the industrial, renaming it the "American Victorian Museum." It also was a dining and event center. Osborn and Woods installed the stone fireplace, chandeliers, and organ.

1989

The Nevada City Winery purchased the building and donated it to a new non-profit, the Nevada County Cultural Preservation Trust. The venue was renamed as the Miners Foundry Cultural Center.



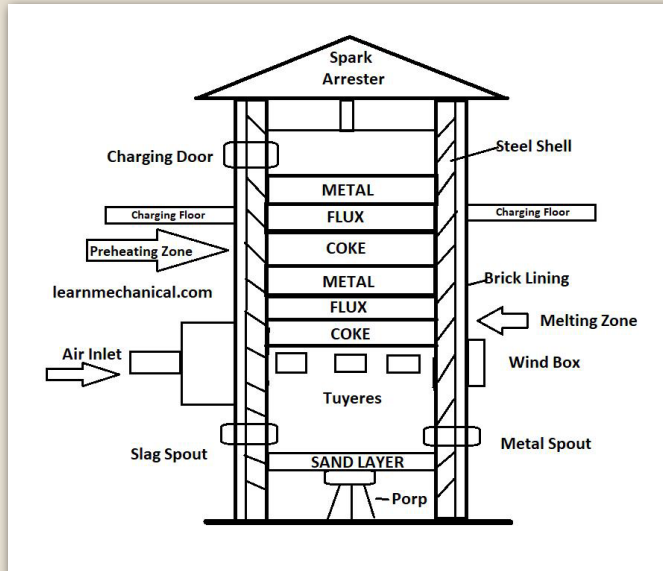
Photos by Kat Alves

In 1978, KVMR (Victorian Music Radio) was born under the umbrella of the non-profit museum. The radio station began broadcasting live from the Foundry in 1981.

BUILT IN 1859, the Foundry grew up with Nevada City serving the mines of the foothill region and beyond with the mining equipment manufactured here. At its height, the Foundry employed 100 men.

The Cupola Furnace of the Miners Foundry

Furnace for melting iron scraps.



The working Foundry was ...

HOT

from the two cupolas & the fires of the three forges;

NOISY

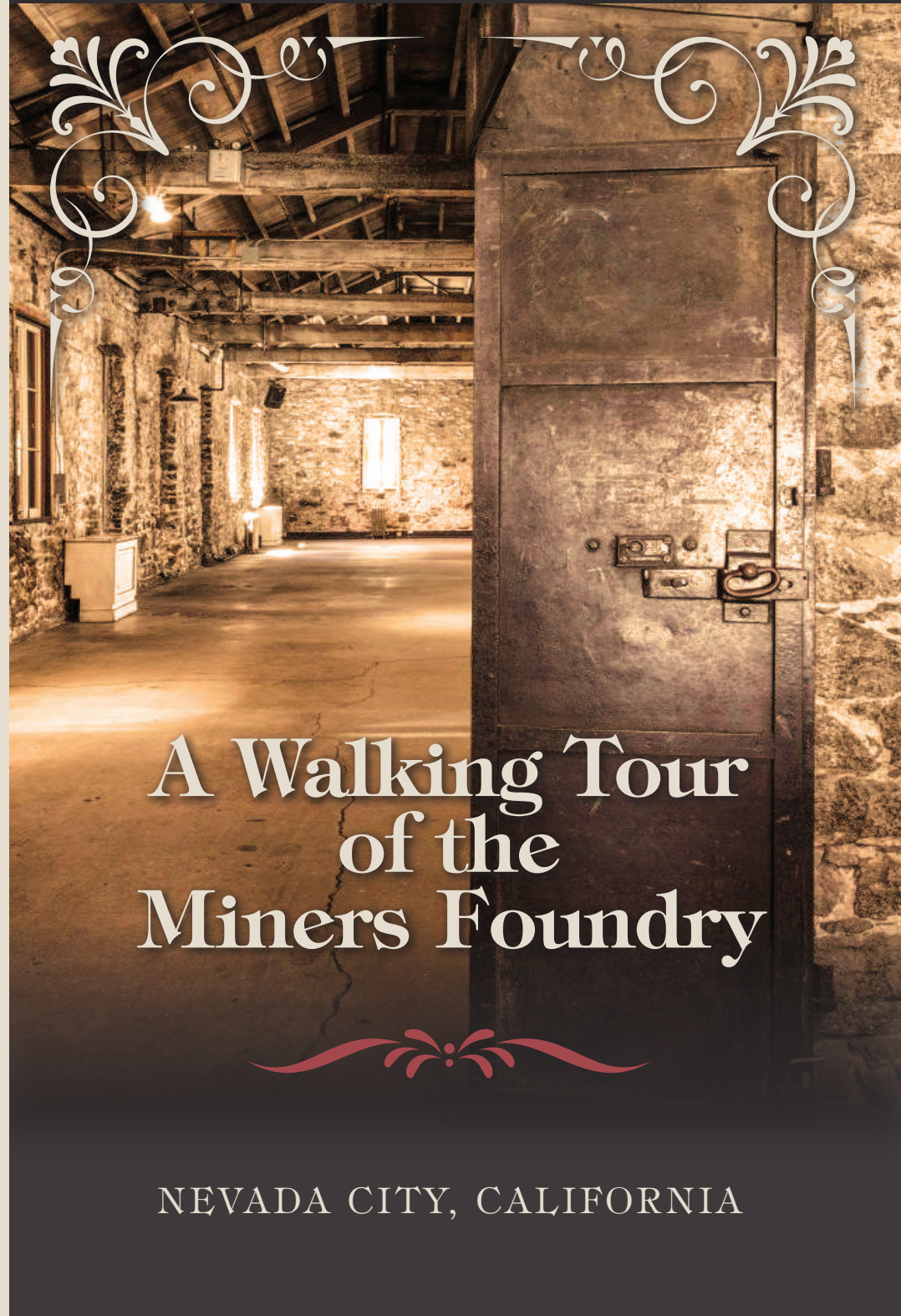
from the huge hammers breaking up metal to scrap size, &

DIRTY

from soot, smoke & dirt floors.



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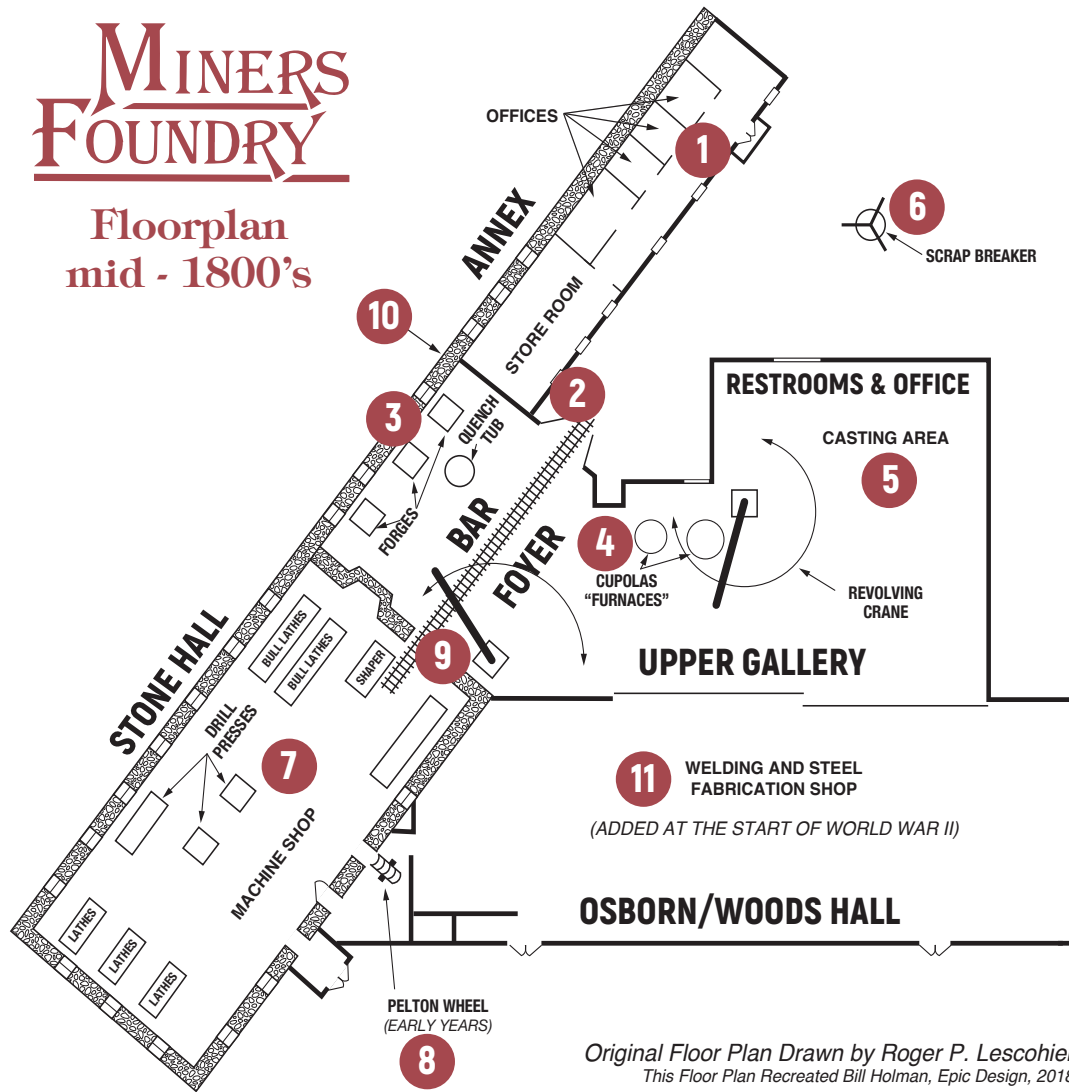


A Walking Tour of the Miners Foundry

NEVADA CITY, CALIFORNIA

MINERS FOUNDRY

Floorplan
mid - 1800's



Original Floor Plan Drawn by Roger P. Lescohier
This Floor Plan Recreated Bill Holman, Epic Design, 2018

A Walking Tour of the Miners Foundry

- 1 Original Foundry offices. South portion dates from 1859.
- 2 Doors to original Foundry now replaced by a large window. Tracks were for carts full of heavy scrap metal or finished metal products.
- 3 Blacksmith's shop where hot metal was forged with hammers, now the bar and foyer. Floor was dirt to prevent fires.
- 4 Cupolas (furnaces) fed by scrap metal. Molten metal was transferred by cranes or poured by hand into indentations in the sand/clay floor created by wooden molds in the casting area. Utilized until 1950.
- 5 Casting area. Some casting was done in front of the cupolas.
- 6 Scrap breaker. Larger pieces of scrap metal were placed in the breaker, consisting of a 500 lb. iron ball mounted on a tripod that broke metal into smaller pieces to be fed into the cupolas.
- 7 Machine shop. In earliest days prior to electricity, power was provided by a steam donkey outside the building fired with wood. Floor was originally wood.
- 8 A 2ft diameter Pelton Wheel, manufactured here in the Foundry and installed in 1880, replaced the steam engines and was the only source of the Foundry's power. It alone drove a maze of shafts and belts powering machines before electricity.
- 9 Iron doors for fire protection were made in a Scottish foundry and installed in 1856. The crane just outside the iron doors loaded metal equipment and parts onto horse or mule-drawn wagons.
- 10 The stone walls are serpentine, quartz granite and schist from a Grass Valley quarry. The roof is tin underlaid with bricks in sand which saved the building from fires that destroyed Nevada City multiple times.
- 11 Welding and Steel Fabrication Shop added at start of WWII. The mines closed and the Foundry produced war-related products.

A Thumbnail History of the Miners Foundry

1859

Molten & forged iron

Hoists, stamp mills, ore carts, hitching posts, monitor nozzles.

1878-88

Pelton Wheel Era

By 1910, electric power was generated by using Pelton Wheels.

1907-65

Fabricated Steel

Iron fences & gates, WWI ship parts. Gateball for Hoover Dam. Steel spire for SF Transamerica building.

1974

American Victoria Museum

Museum devoted to Victoriana. KVMR Radio started here.

1989

Miners Foundry Cultural Center

Non-profit community center for all types of events.