



**Barry Lawrence Ruderman  
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**Map of the Gold Region of California taken from a recent survey By Robert H. Ellis  
1850 (with early manuscript annotations)**

**Stock#:** 43035mp2  
**Map Maker:** Ellis  
**Date:** 1850  
**Place:** New York  
**Color:** Uncolored  
**Condition:** VG  
**Size:** 17.5 x 14.5 inches  
**Price:** \$10,500.00



**Description:**

Rare Annotated California Gold Regions Map, with a Vignette of Portsmouth Square in San Francisco, Annotated to Show The Earliest Gold Discoveries in Plumas County.

Fine early map of the gold regions of California, lithographed by George F. Nesbitt, 88 Wall Street, in New York, for Robert H. Ellis in 1850.

Ellis's map is one of the earliest and most important detailed maps of the Gold Region. Published in 1850, it draws upon the legendary first edition of William Jackson's Map of the Mining District of California (Streeter 1968--\$300), although in fact the Ellis map includes significant updates and improvements and is unquestionably the better of the two maps in terms of content and engraving quality, adding a fine view of Portsmouth Square and San Francisco Harbor. The maps were both lithographed on the same street in New York in 1850, and it is a near certainty that Ellis drew from and significantly improved upon the first edition of the Jackson map.

The present example of Ellis' map includes annotations in an early hand, attempting to plot the creeks and



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towns north of Nevada City and about southwest of Downieville, during the initial mining boom in Plumas County in 1850-1851. This example of the map was apparently used by an early miner in the region, as it pre-dates the addition of the place names added here in manuscript, a number of which would appear on printed maps until the Trask map of 1852. **{{ inventory\_detail\_link('36370') }}**

The map provides a fine overview of the gold regions, extending from the southern mines on the "Mariposa River" (Mariposa Creek) to Grass Valley and Chico areas (not named), and centered on the Sacramento Delta and Gold Regions.

The map locates dozens of areas and identified roughly 300 sights labeled as "Workings for Gold", as well as Indian Villages and towns. The Quicksilver mines south of Santa Clara are also shown, as are a number of the surviving Missions. The map also provides a fine overview of the existing roads, including some distance numbers.

The "Workings for Gold" are primarily concentrated on the following Rivers (and their upper tributaries):

- Mariposa River
- Merced (Merced) River
- Tuoleme (Tuolumne) River
- Stanislaus River
- Calaveras River
- Mokelome (Mokelumne) River
- Cosumes (Cosumnes) River
- Bear River
- Yuba River
- Feather River
- American River

The present map is also annotated in an early hand, locating a number of place names not on the printed map, including:

- Tolles (John Tolles New Diggings on the Yuba River)
- Nelson's Creek
- Grass Valley (Little Grass Valley, Plumas County)
- Onion Valley (Onion Valley Creek, Plumas County)
- Poor Mans Creek
- City Seventy Six (?)



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- Auburn
- Nevada (Nevada City)
- (Big) Deer Creek

The annotations suggest that the map was used at the time of the initial gold strikes north of the Nevada City area. Nevada City was first settled in 1849. The Gold Tunnel on the north side of Deer Creek was the city's first mine, being located in 1850. The first saw mill built in Nevada City was on Deer Creek, just above the town, in August, 1850. The Daily Alta California first reported on July 10, 1850, that the Placer Times reported "Gold Lake" as the new diggings in the mountains of the Feather River, based upon a report of Capt. S. Well. The report quoted the Placer Times as follows:

At the head of Nelson's Creek, lies the famous "Gold Lake" diggings so styled from a large body of water which it found there at this time. These diggings are at such an altitude above the level of the plains, that the atmosphere is pure and invigorating. Gold is found there in abundance over a large tract of quartz region. The richest deposits are believed to be at a distance of ten feet below the surface. Washing is performed from the yield of the earth from five to eight feet beneath. The gold is coarse and beautiful.

Capt. S. states, his conviction that these are richer diggings than any yet discovered in the Northern placer. Men were making from one to five hundred dollars per day with ease. . . . The time of discovery appears to have been in February last.

At Marysville "packers" are constantly starting out for "Gold Lake" . . . Over one hundred pack animals left Marysville on Saturday for these new diggings on Feather River .

The Plumas County Tolles New Diggings (as opposed to Tolles Old Diggings, near Forbestown), references the diggings of John Tolles on Indiana Creek in 1851. Gold was discovered along the ravine and creek in 1851, and the diggings were called "Indiana Creek," or "Tolles New Diggings." One hundred feet square was a mining claim, and an ounce per day the average yield. In 1851 and 1852, there were between four and five hundred miners at work along Indiana and Keystone creeks, making a very lively camp.

Onion Valley and Little Grass Valley are in the mountains North of Nevada City. The following is excerpted from the Illustrated History of Plumas, Lassen & Sierra Counties (1882):

Onion Valley was so named because of a wild onion that grew there in early days, and which the people used to eat. A house was built in the valley in 1850, and that winter a great many miners came in from the river and creeks, and camped until spring. Early in the spring, also, a great many on their way to the mines from below camped in the valley for a few weeks, waiting an opportunity to go to the river. This was



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then an exceedingly lively neighborhood. There were half a dozen hotels, as many stores and saloons, a large gambling-house, and a ten-pin alley. During 1851, and for several years thereafter, it was the general headquarters for miles around. Its business began to decline in the fall of 1851, when trading posts became more numerous in the surrounding mining camps. A few years later a post-office was established here, for this place, Richmond Hill, Sawpit Flat, and other adjacent mining points. . . .

The same source provides the following excerpt:

Little Grass Valley from 1850 until roads were made was the end of wagon travel from Marysville, and here goods were transferred to the backs of pack-mules, and carried to their destination beyond. Several cabins were built here in 1850.

The same reference work also includes the following excerpt:

Of a sad incident of that winter Mr. Mason writes: "During a fine spell of weather, in January, I think, five of us concluded to go to Butte Bar. We made the trip in two days. We arrived just before dark, and began gathering wood for our camp-fire. While others were cooking, I wandered into the one cabin that stood on the bar, and saw what appeared to be a pile of blankets lying in a corner. Thinking it strange that they should have been left there, I went over to feel them, and was soon convinced that they covered the body of a dead man. After we had finished our evening meal, I lighted a pine knot, and telling the boys what I had found, led the way into the cabin, where we found that my suspicions were correct. In the morning we searched to see if we could find some clew to the mystery. On his person were only a knife and a little coarse gold. He was apparently a German, about twenty-two years of age, but his name I could never learn. We found some old beef bones that he had been biting, and were satisfied that he had come to his death from starvation. Wrapping the blankets around the body, we buried them a short distance from the cabin, and returned to our camp down the river. In the spring of 1851 went to Onion Valley, and there learned more of the sad affair. Three men who had been working on Poorman's Creek had left the creek in December to go to Onion Valley, had lost their way in a severe snow-storm, and wandered down to the river. Seeing this cabin on the other side, they crossed over and availed themselves of its friendly shelter until the storm abated. They had been out of provisions for a number of days, and were becoming rapidly weak and powerless. They again started for Onion Valley, but this one was too feeble to get over the mountain, and the others had been compelled to go on without him, promising to send relief if they survived. One of the others gave out on the top of the mountain, while the third struggled on to within a few miles of the valley, when he was found by a party of miners, who gave him food and took him to the valley. He related his story, but told them it was no use to go back after the man at Butte Bar, as a storm had occurred since, and he had surely perished. The second man was rescued, but no effort was made to



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go after the first one, whom every one supposed to have died several days before. If they had gone to Butte Bar after him, I think they would have found him alive, as we saw his foot-marks in the snow after the last storm, showing that he still lived when the rescuing party was on the mountain."

While the Ellis map has been referred to as a copy of William A. Jackson's Map of the Mining District of California (Lithographed by Lambert & Lane, No. 69 Wall St., NY, in New York in 1850), in fact, the Ellis map is the more detailed and better engraved of the two maps, and is probably better described as a significant improvement on the first edition of Jackson's map, likely issued within several months of the first edition of the Jackson.

First edition of Jackson Map: [www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:4m90fc37g](http://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/search/commonwealth:4m90fc37g)

Second edition of Jackson Map: [www.raremaps.com/gallery/detail/23821](http://www.raremaps.com/gallery/detail/23821)

The primary differences between the two maps are listed below:

The Ellis includes a large vignette of Portsmouth Square and San Francisco Harbor.

The Ellis map identifies Empire City on the Tuolumne River. The Jackson map names Crescent City in the same place, whereas the second edition of Jackson's map correctly refers to the map as Empire City. See below for the histories of these two towns.

The Ellis map locates Grayson Ferry on the San Joaquin River, between the Tuolumne and Merced Rivers. The Jackson map fails to locate Grayson Ferry, although the second edition locates Grayson City on the opposite side of the San Joaquin River. See below for a history of Grayson's Ferry.

The Ellis map locates San Joaquin City at the confluence of the San Joaquin and Stanislaus River. The Jackson locates Stanislaus City in both the first and second editions of the map.

The Ellis map locates Montezuma to the east of Suisun Bay on the San Joaquin River. No similar town appears on either Jackson map.

The Ellis map locates Suisun City, which is not on the Jackson map.

The Ellis map locates Washington, which is called Margaretta on both editions of the Jackson map.

The Ellis map locates Fremont. The first edition of the Jackson shows Fremont, but fails to include the name, which is added in the second edition.

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The Ellis map locates Marysville (founded January 1850), Eliza, Plumas City and Nicholas on the Feather and Yuba Rivers. The Jackson omits these towns.

The Ellis map locates Chico Creek. The Jackson map refers to the map as Bear Creek in the first edition.

The Ellis map locates Hensley's Ranch, Biddle's Ranch and Neal's Ranch on Chico Creek and Butte Creek, which do not appear on the Jackson. Both maps locate Heath's Ranch, while the Jackson locates Guillaume Saw Mill on the upper Butte River, which does not appear on the Ellis.

Crescent City was established on the NORTH bank of the Tuolumne River in late 1849 or early 1850 by Benson & Byers. However, after promoting the city, the Steamer Etna coming from Stockton was unable to regularly reach the town, and the town failed within months of its formation. Empire City was founded at about the same time on the SOUTH bank of the Tuolumne in April 1850 and would quickly become a well populated and viable town, the county seat of Stanislaus County and the head of navigation on the Tuolumne River. The Stanislaus Historical Quarterly for Winter 2013 notes:

Empire City was founded a mile or so up the river from the failed settlement of Crescent City. It was on the south bank, near the point where today's Santa Fe Railroad bridge crosses the Tuolumne River. For at least a month, there was some confusion as to Empire City's real name. It was called Crescent City at first by some and then Crescent City Secundo, but Empire City quickly became its official name. The founders were E.S. Townsend, Jr. and Edmund P. Hart. Some considered John G. Marvin, a longtime supporter of Empire City, as being the founder. The Stockton Times newsman who [reported the Etna's first trip to Crescent City] . . . also wrote on May 4, 1850: "Having spent a very merry evening with Mr. Townsend, Jr. and Mr. Hart from a rival city [Empire City] on the opposite bank two miles higher up."

Andrew Jackson Grayson, a native of Louisiana, who came to California in 1846, established a ferry at the Grayson site in April 1850. Captain Grayson, veteran of the Mexican War in California, and other men settled on the land grant in early 1850. In 1849, Grayson and J.F. Stephens were partners in a merchandise business in Stockton. They conceived the idea of planting a town and ferry boat service for miners heading for the southern mines. There was a public meeting of sorts held at the Grayson ferry site on February 27, 1850, establishing a settlement, with the name of Grayson. Grayson Ferry began operating in April 1850. Grayson, also known as Grayson City and Graysonville, is located on the west bank of the San Joaquin River, about five miles south of the mouth of the Tuolumne River, on land once part of the Mexican land grant, Rancho Pescadero.

San Joaquin City was a river town established in 1849. Pioneers and freight wagons following post roads to the southern mines crossed the San Joaquin River nearby at Durham's Ferry. As a terminal for



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riverboats, the town played an important part in the development of the west side of San Joaquin Valley, with grain farming and cattle raising.

Stanislaus City (now Ripon) was founded in 1846 as a Mormon settlement, also known as New Hope. Mormon Sam Brannan brought settlers to a spot 1 1/2 miles north of the junction of the Stanislaus and San Joaquin Rivers, near present day Salida. Brannan established the settlement of New Hope or Stanislaus City. Mormon President Brigham Young could not agree with Brannan to settle the Mormon people at New Hope instead of in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake. Many of the Mormon settlers went to the gold mines or to Utah, abandoning the settlement by the Fall of 1847, although a brief attempt was made to restart the city after the discovery of gold.

Montezuma Slough dates back to the Spanish explorers. The town of Montezuma was first formed by Lansford Hastings, whose emigrant's guide, published in 1845, was the guide book which was followed by the Donner Party on their ill-fated attempt to cross the Sierras. After seeing Adolph Sutter's fledgling dream taking root, Hastings decided to establish his own city called Montezuma, located south of Sutters Fort at the juncture of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers. Before Hastings could start his own dream of Montezuma, however, he sailed to Mexico during the summer of 1844, made an overland crossing to the Gulf of Mexico, and then returned to Ohio to increase the emigration to California. He decided to raise money to print the book by giving a series of presentations on the benefits of western emigration. His efforts paid off when the book was released in Cincinnati in early 1845. Sales of Hastings book were surprisingly good. His promotional circuit took him to New York where he met Sam Brannon, a Mormon leader who was organizing a contingent of the faithful, to sail for California. Hastings told Brannon about Montezuma and soon began dreaming about a rush of Mormons going west to settle in New Switzerland. In August 1845, Hastings decided to return to Sutters Fort to be in position to meet the Mormons and other emigrants who he anticipated arriving in California. Hastings led a small party of 10 men west along the California Trail with the intention of checking out the shortcut he wrote about in his book. Hastings' group, however, decided against taking the cutoff and they stuck to the traditional trail, reaching Sutters Fort on Christmas Day. It wasn't until the following year Hastings finally saw his dysfunctional shortcut as he headed east to meet the 1846 migration. Tragically, Hastings' confidence was not shaken at the thought of families breaching mountain canyons and stumbling across parched deserts. It was a reckless decision that led to the Donner Party meltdown and their demise in the Sierra snow.

The town of Washington (now West Sacramento) was laid out by Margaret McDowell in 1849. We suspect Margaretta refers to Margaret McDowell.

In his 1979 Catalog, Howell (erroneously) describes the first edition of the Jackson map at December 1849



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and states the follows:

An extremely rare and important map, chronologically the fifth to be printed showing the gold region. Wheat describes it as "an excellent early map [which] includes all of the important diggings of 1849 and early 1850." The map indicates the rapid growth of roads and trails, and of bars and diggings, some of the latter being named for the first time (Murphy's, Angel's, Jamestown, Sonoranian Camp, Hawkins Bar, Double Springs, Nye's Ferry, and Jacksonville). . . . The Ellis map of 1850, published later in the year, was based upon the Jackson map, of which a second revised edition, appeared in 1851.

Streeter, however, dates the Jackson map as no earlier than February 1850, stating:

The Jackson map, which extends from below the Mariposa River on the south to a little above the 39 1/2 parallel on the north, is, I believe, by far the best of the maps of the gold region published to that time. It is on the large scale of about nine miles to the inch, and is skillfully drawn, showing the rivers and roads clearly and indicating a great number of separate mining districts. As the text of the Appendix is dated at the beginning "California, Dec. 1849" and at the end on p. 12, "Dec. 30, 1849," it could hardly have been published in New York until some time in February, 1850.

Streeter acquired his copy of the first edition of the Jackson map from Warren Howell in 1946. Howell re-offered the same copy of the map in his 1979 catalogue.

The Ellis's map is of the utmost rarity. The example in the Streeter sale (sold for \$150) and the present example (purchased in 2015 at Skinner), are the only examples to appear in reported auctions, with no references in dealer catalogs. OCLC locates 3 examples of the map (Library of Congress, Harvard College, UC Santa Cruz, although we suspect the UC Santa Cruz copy is a facsimile).

**Detailed Condition:**

Top and bottom left corner repaired with minor loss at corners, expertly reinstated. Old fold splits, expertly repaired on verso.