

# Hamilton

a thriving hub of commerce



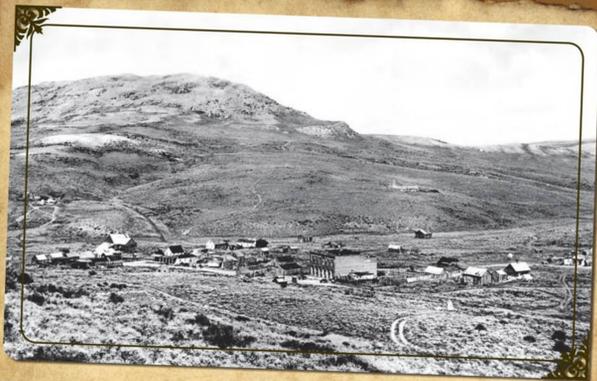
Shermantown resident Dr. James W. Gally described Hamilton as "two lines of ...houses flanking a river of mud." Courtesy Nevada Historical Society.

## White Pine's First County Seat (1869)

Located at the base of mineral-bearing Treasure Hill, Hamilton was well situated as a source for supplies. Entrepreneurs set up shop to serve the thousands of miners and fortune seekers arriving in the district. Canvas and frame houses went up seemingly overnight, and by the end of 1869, town boosters claimed a population of 10,000.

The main streets swelled with breweries and blacksmith shops, chop houses, lodging houses, saloons, groceries and dry goods, butcher shops, laundries, school, and a theater. With

a courthouse, bank and law offices, Hamilton also served as the county administrative center where all legal proceedings were recorded.



Hamilton, c. 1915. Courtesy Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology.

*"Hamilton is the place where we get what we live on, to-wit: whisky, bacon, and flour."*

— Dr. James W. Gally

## "Everything Goes at White Pine"

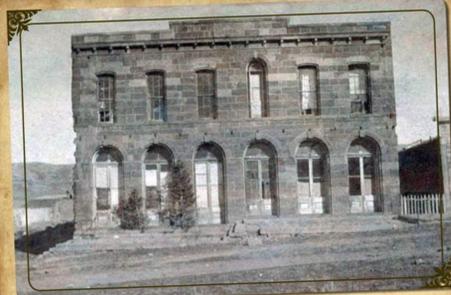
The communities of the White Pine Mining District were free and easy places where almost everything was allowed. A careless and dangerous place, drunken men lay scattered on the side streets, and show-offs rode bucking horses in the thoroughfares. But by late 1869, county government and law enforcement were in place, and plans were made to build a schoolhouse, church, and Masonic lodge. Ice cream parlors, dress shops, and a theater were also in the works.

A series of fires weakened Hamilton's significance in the county, most notably the fire of 1873 that destroyed most of the town. But the final blow came in 1885, when the courthouse burned down, taking all of the county's important records with it.

In its short, short heyday, there was plenty of work, countless business opportunities, and lots of money. But in the excitement of being part of the next big boom, many of the people hoping to strike it rich had no real direction or worthwhile pastime in its pursuit.

*"All was bustle and hurry, noise, excitement, and confusion. The stores and saloons were crowded with men in huge overcoats, the pockets of which were filled with big specimens, small silver bars, and rolls of location notices and assay certificates, buying, selling, and talking mines. . . In the evenings the streets were deserted, but the mad excitement indoors was as great as ever."*

— Albert S. Evans



Hotel in Hamilton. Courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

## Respect Private Land

What remains of Hamilton today is roughly half privately owned. Respect private property, remove no artifacts, and leave all gates as you find them.