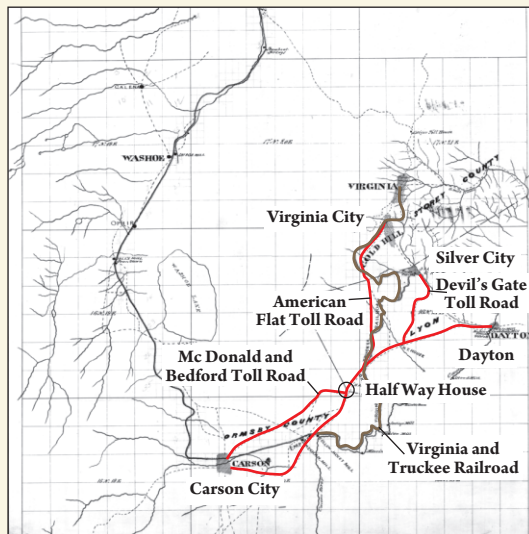


## Half Way House and the Toll Roads

Half Way House was part of a network of toll roads which kept the Comstock supplied with everything from heavy machinery to food and liquor, and carried its valuable ore to mills on the Carson River. Half Way House was built in 1860, at a gap in the hills "half way" between Carson City and Virginia City. Roads linking the Comstock to Carson Valley, and supply points in California, all converged near Half Way House, making it an ideal location for a way station and tollgate.



Background Map Courtesy of the Nevada State Library and Archives

The Virginia and Truckee Railroad, built in 1869, took away much of the toll roads' freight and ore hauling business. Eventually, local governments assumed responsibility for maintaining the roadways, and Half Way House closed in 1887.

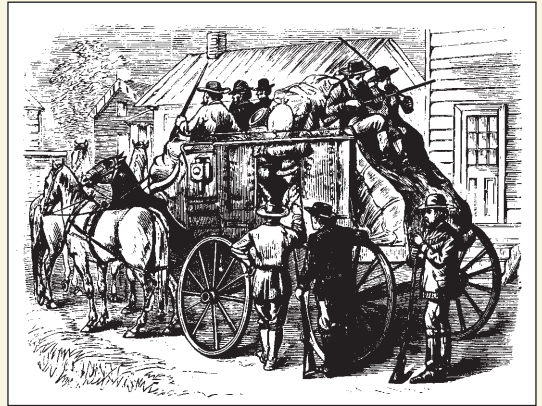
The Nevada Commission for the Reconstruction of the Virginia and Truckee Railway funded the excavation at Half Way House. Its purpose was to salvage archaeological information from a portion of the site lying under the railroad grade near the new bridge crossing US Highway 50 at Moundhouse.

Today's visitors to the Comstock can re-live the experience of traveling on a world famous nineteenth century short-line. Preserving the archaeology and history of the Comstock Era, while re-introducing the V&T to the twenty-first century, is a vital part of the Virginia & Truckee Railway Reconstruction Project. Find more information about Half Way House on the Historic Insight web site: [www.historicinsight.com/publications.htm](http://www.historicinsight.com/publications.htm).



Background Map Mary B. Ansari Map Library, University of Nevada, Reno

## ARCHAEOLOGY AT HALF WAY HOUSE



Herb Caen Magazines and Newspapers Center, San Francisco Public Library

Half Way House was a way station on the busy 1860s toll road from Carson City to the booming Comstock Mining District. Freight wagons, stagecoaches, and horseback riders paused at Half Way House to pay their toll, or stayed longer while mules and oxen were fed and watered, drivers and passengers had a meal, took a drink at the bar, or found a bed for the night. A century and a half later, archaeologists returned to the Half Way House site, digging for clues to everyday life at a Comstock Era way station.





## Excavating Half Way House

Historical accounts tell us Half Way House included barns and corrals, a hotel and residence for the toll collector and his family, a toll gate, a flume bringing water from a flooded mine in the nearby hills, and a bar serving "the finest wines, liquors, and cigars."

Today, little remains of Half Way House except a few depressions in the ground and scatters of rusty metal and broken glass. But these features and artifacts are a record of the people who lived and worked at the way station, or traveled through in search of a fortune—or perhaps just a living—in the bustling Comstock Mining District.



Leftover bones were often disposed of in small pits. Most meat consumed at Half Way House was beef or mutton, but venison and pork were also part of the diet.

Dolls



Children visiting or living at Half Way House left their broken toys behind.

Marbles



1862 Half-Dollar

Tolls ranged from 3 cents per animal to 50 cents for a loaded wagon.



This pen point, and fragments of ink bottles, are evidence of toll station paper work.

Wine or liquor bottle



Spice bottle, J.W. Hunnewell & Co., Boston



E. Brown's Essence of Ginger, Philadelphia

Half Way House served European wine and liquor, and meals were enlivened with spices and flavorings from the East Coast.