

On the Edge of the Big Bonanza: Declining Fortunes and the Comstock Lode¹

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Nevada's Virginia City and its extraordinary Comstock Lode more than any other western mining district defined the term "bonanza" in the nineteenth century. Indeed, the Spanish term, meaning a strike of rich ore, has become more closely associated with Virginia City than any other mining town. One should not lose sight of the fact, however, that like every mining district, the Comstock also knew "borrasca." Again, this Spanish term, referring to a mine with no rich ore, addresses the radical economic possibilities of the industry. The eventual failure of a mine to continue to profit is part of the cycle of extracting minerals from the ground.

While the Comstock acquired fame for its wealth, economic decline is also part of its story. Because the mining district set so many patterns echoed throughout the mining West, understanding the demographic and social changes associated with depressions has the potential for providing information about this aspect of the industry, the communities it spawned, and the character of the region. Historians expend considerable effort describing the nature of mineral rushes, offering as they do an exciting story filled with the glimmer of gold and silver.² Mining booms resulted in hundreds of flash-in-the-pan towns, with populations reaching into the thousands before rapidly withering away when resources did not meet expectations. Other mining districts, like the Comstock, prospered, only to yield gradually to the eventual depletion of ore.

The economic variations of mining which profoundly affected the Comstock also gave the region an unusual history of shifts in major centers of population that may be unprecedented elsewhere. For example, the community claiming to be the largest in what is now Nevada has changed six times: originally

Genoa was the largest town, but the baton then passed to Carson City, then to Virginia City, Reno, Goldfield, back to Reno, and finally to Las Vegas.³ The Comstock played a central role in two of these changes. Although mining was not the principal cause of all these transitions, it was one of the most important factors contributing to at least one western state's demographic, economic, and social changes over the past 140 years.

Shifts in Nevada population were partly due to the boom-and-bust cycles of mining: Weepah, for example, grew from nothing to a community of 1,200 in 1927, and then disappeared when profits proved elusive, all within a few months.⁴ Similarly, the research of Charles Zeier, Lynn Furnis, and Dave Schmitt demonstrates that several central Nevada settlements exhibited rapid growth and decline in the nineteenth century.⁵ In southern Nevada, Searchlight went through dramatic demographic fluctuations during its turn-of-the-century mining boom, but as often happened, its sudden population shifts fell between the ten-year federal censuses, and it is only possible to speculate on the extremes.⁶ These bright flashes were all too common in the mining West, and most booms faded almost as soon as they started. Even the most prosperous mining districts inevitably faced economic ruin and extinction with the exhaustion of viable orebodies. Mining is a dynamic industry; this fact affects the stability of the large and small as well as the rich and poor districts. The decline of wealthier mining centers, while often more protracted and less severe, nonetheless became an important characteristic of society.⁷

Virginia City with its famed Comstock Lode experienced a degree of growth, mineral production, and financial success that made it legendary. The 1859 gold and silver strikes on the slopes of Mount Davidson attracted international attention, and thousands flocked to the once sparsely inhabited region, hoping to cash in on the excitement and the free-flowing wealth. Although dramatic success is a cornerstone of the Comstock story, the mining district was not without poverty and periodic economic setbacks. Still, most histories on the mining district

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focus on the success. William Wright wrote his important portrait of the Comstock, *The Big Bonanza*, during the height of good fortune, and so he gave little attention to the possibility of failure. Eliot Lord's *Comstock Mining and Miners* followed on the heels of Wright's book, written during a period when Virginia City faced a downward spiral from which it never recovered. At the time of Lord's publication, however, the author had little reason to believe that the economic downturn was permanent. Indeed, he documented other depressions on the Comstock that seemed to suggest that the mining district's economic troubles were cyclical and would pass. Nonetheless, Lord wrote a lengthy conclusion suggesting the ways to get through the hard times, and how changes in mining strategy might provide a way to economic salvation.⁸

Charles Howard Shinn, in *The Story of the Mine*, borrowed heavily from Lord, but because he first published his history in 1896, he had the opportunity to see that the failure of the Comstock was long-term. His chapter "Borrasca and Bonanza" addresses the subject of fluctuations, but it does so largely from a favorable corporate point of view. One of his final chapters, "The Comstock as it is today," begins with a quote from an aged Comstock miner who had hopes for Virginia City's rebirth: he proclaimed that "She [the mining district] has another word to say. She is asleep, but not dead."⁹ Shinn then points out that:

Everywhere, in spite of the real decay and wasting plant of many enterprises, things are kept in some degree prepared for the expected revival of mining interests. In outward appearances, the community has fallen upon hopelessly hard times, but the potential capacity of mines and mills is still enormous, and if large bodies of pay ore were uncovered the really important properties would almost instantly resume work at full speed. After twenty years of borrasca, an air of constant readiness still pervades every department.¹⁰

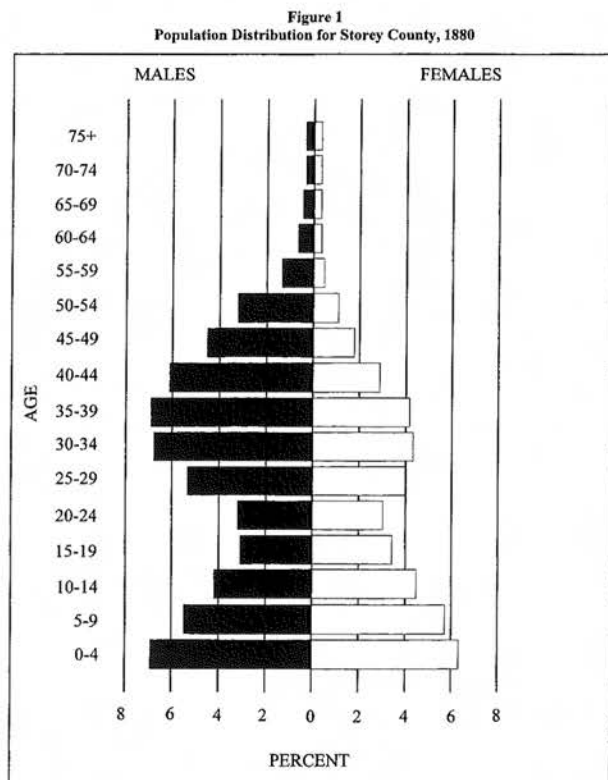
Like Shinn, most Comstock historians discuss the cycles of slump and prosperity, but the latter is at the heart of interest for most. A depression beginning in 1863, only four years after the initial strike, caused many contemporaries to conclude that they were seeing the end of an all-too-familiar pattern of success and failure. The discovery of new orebodies in the middle of the 1860s demonstrated that the Comstock could return to life, giving optimists reason to believe that this mining district might behave differently from others. Still, when miners also depleted these

resources by the late 1860s, depression again set in. The 1867 silver strike at White Pine County's Treasure Hill in eastern Nevada made the area a magnet, attracting many Comstockers who gave up hope as their economy again waned.¹¹ Had the depression of the late 1860s proven to be the end of mining on the Comstock, the district would have faded from the collective memory of western mining interests.

In 1873, however, John Mackay and James Fair struck the "Big Bonanza," elevating the Comstock to myth status. The wealth of this newly discovered orebody was unprecedented, granting the area several more years of prosperity and producing fabulous wealth for investors and mine owners. The district's success attracted fortune seekers from the American West, but drew many others from each of the world's continents. By the mid-1870s, the combined population of Virginia City and Gold Hill was near 25,000, making it, in the context of its time, a sizable, highly urbanized, industrial city. Still, the possibility of depression always loomed. Changes in the relationship of silver and federal currency in 1873 combined with deeper, more costly exploration and the growing scarcity of orebodies to make profits elusive. Ultimately, the mines began to fail in a profound way in the late 1870s, sending the district into a downward spiral that ended with its depopulation after the turn of the century. Local as well as national publications documented its decline, nearly always adding the hope that better days would return. Thus the *Virginia Evening Chronicle* described the removal of Virginia and Truckee Railroad tracks to Silver City in 1880. The reporters of the *Territorial Enterprise* went into mourning with the 1897 closing of the famed Washoe Club that had once served millionaires by the dozen. More than twenty years after the fact, the *Mining and Scientific Press* recalled the halting of the last deep mine pumps as the Combination Shaft eased its way into depression in 1886.¹²

There are abundant anecdotes associated with depression, but these do not necessarily give a full and accurate picture of the process. Data from the federal census manuscripts provide a unique opportunity to examine how economic decline affected the community. Fortunately for this line of inquiry, the 10th U.S. Manuscript Census of 1880 furnished addresses, making it possible to examine the distribution of people during a time when the Comstock was failing.¹³

Figure 1 illustrates the nature of the 1880 population for Storey County which includes Gold Hill, Virginia City, and their environs. Together the



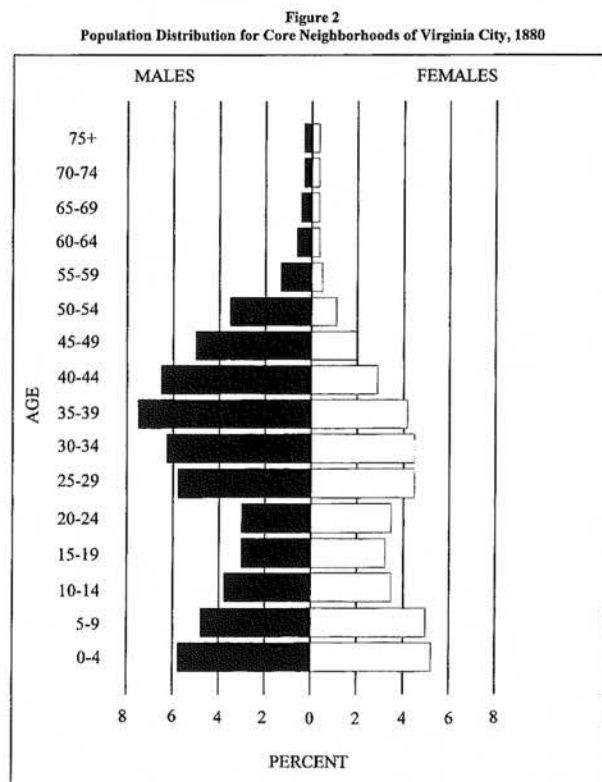
Source: 1880, 10th U.S. Manuscript Census. n=16,014; Males, n=9,221; Females, n=6,783

communities comprised the vast majority of the Comstock.¹⁴ Figure 1 is a population pyramid, a convention demographers use to illustrate the distribution of males and females among the various age groups. Using the standard format employed by that discipline, it portrays a complex community with two somewhat contradictory features: the many adult men fit in well with the stereotypical western mining town, answering the call, as they did for a highly mobile, unmarried labor force; the many children, from infants to school-attending teenagers, however, represented nearly a third of the total population and suggest a community that had permanent roots. These two apparently conflicting aspects of the Comstock were by-products of two distinct processes. The presence of families at first glance seems inconsistent with the cliché of a mining boom town, but in reality they naturally arrived in increasing numbers as long as such a community existed. The thousands of women and children in 1880 testify to twenty years of longevity for the mining district. That so many bachelors remained in the labor force after two decades demonstrates how persistent the first phenomenon was in the mining West. Single mobile men answered the call of employment faster and in greater numbers than families and single women. As

evidence of this, even after twenty years of growth and increasing stability, the Comstock still had 171 men twenty years or older for every 100 women of the same age group.

Figures 2-4 provide similar illustrations for segments of the Storey County population as it occurred in Virginia City, Gold Hill, and the outlying environs. Figures 2 and 3 show nearly equal numbers of men and women between 20 and 24 years old, with slightly more of the latter than the former. At first glance, it appears that young men were leaving the Comstock in search of employment. It might further suggest that young women stayed longer because it was unacceptable or unnecessary for them to leave to look for jobs. Instead, many remained where they were, living with parents or finding spouses among the large number of bachelors.¹⁵ Although some young people followed these trends, there was actually a much more complex process at work.

Figure 4 illustrates what happened to some of the young men who appear to be missing in Figures 2 and 3. A comparison of the sex ratios for Gold Hill and Virginia City with that of the outlying areas demonstrates that some of the young men were not leaving the Comstock but rather were living away from the community cores. The analysis here depends, in part, on identifying areas that are removed

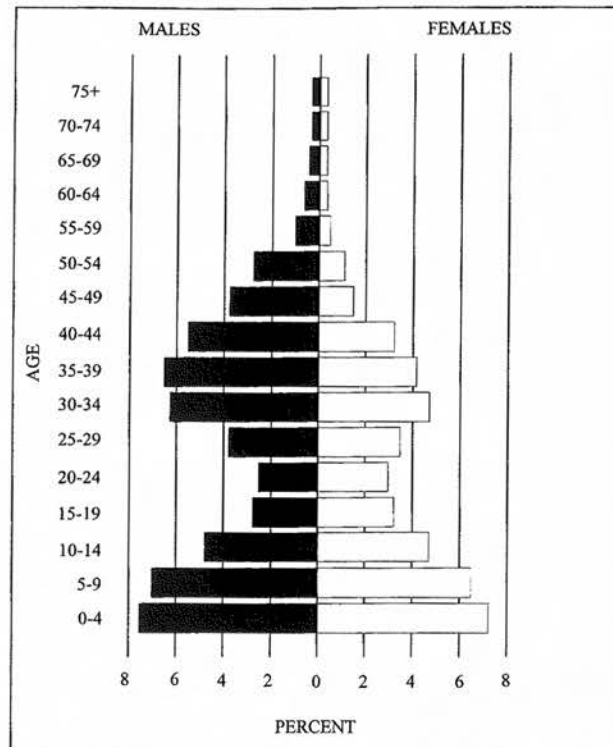


Source: 1880, 10th U.S. Manuscript Census. n=8,504; Males, n=4,992; Females, n=3,512

from the mainstream community. This study regards peripheral areas as those not designated as Gold Hill and as those areas outside the core of Virginia City. Clearly, it is a problematic methodology. The 1890 Sanborn Ferris Fire Insurance Maps illustrate the core of Virginia City, but there are some areas that fall outside those maps which are nonetheless close enough to the core of Virginia City not to be included in the peripheral areas. Equating such neighborhoods with poverty where squatters could avoid paying rent may not be consistently appropriate: some of the areas designated as "core Virginia City" or as "Gold Hill" could have been impoverished with cabins where rent was free. In contrast, neighborhoods that appear here as peripheral may have been enclaves of steady, well-paid employees. Nonetheless, the geographic zones seem generally to coincide with basic trends. Regardless of minor problems with geographic definitions peripheral areas clearly attracted many young men by 1880 during the Comstock's final economic downturn.

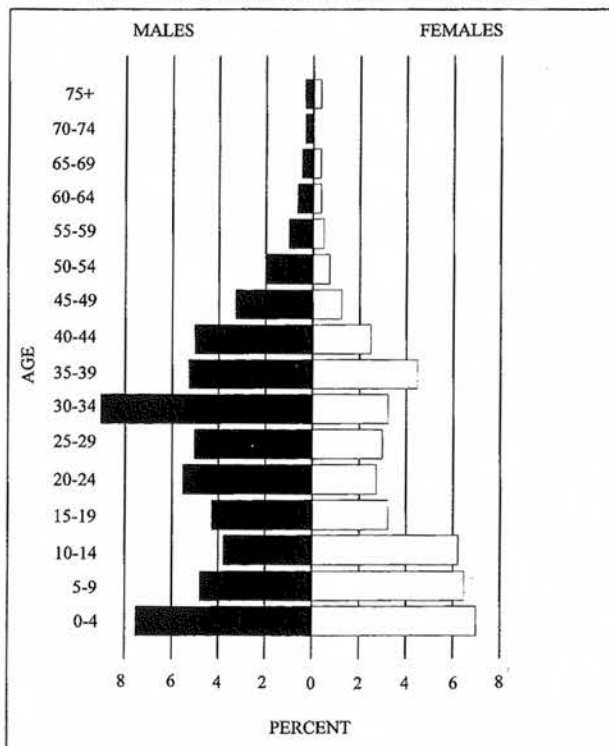
The idea that people left mining communities after they depleted orebodies is not a revelation.¹⁶ How this process occurred is not clearly understood, however. Intuitively, one might conclude that an

Figure 3
Population Distribution for Gold Hill, 1880



Source: 1880, 10th U.S. Manuscript Census. n=4,583; Males, n=2,548; Females, n=2,035

Figure 4
Population Distribution for Peripheral Areas of Virginia City, 1880

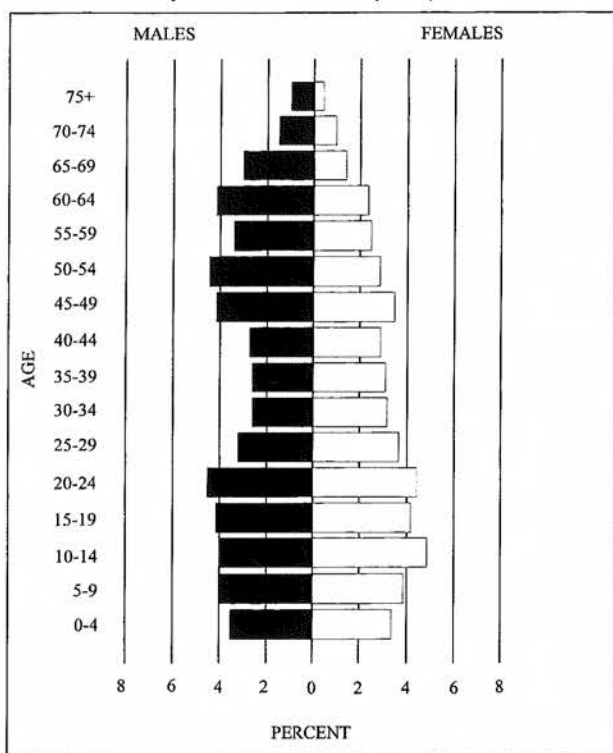


Source: 1880, 10th U.S. Manuscript Census. n=2,968; Males, n=1,732; Females, n=1,236

established town such as Virginia City shrank in geographic size as people left for other opportunities. It appears that exactly the opposite was the case. As the Comstock began its economic decline, its population scattered widely. More than likely, the unemployed stayed as long as possible, hoping that the economy would rebound and they could be the first to exploit the new sources of income. Experience taught the veterans of the mining West that the first to arrive at a new boom had seniority and most often won reemployment. It was prudent, therefore, to suffer through bust cycles in established districts like the Comstock.

Young men were the most vulnerable to unemployment and most likely to leave the district or find themselves marginalized and literally squatting on the periphery.¹⁷ The observations of a local boarding house keeper illustrate some of the difficulties during down times. Writing of life on the Comstock during the 1870s depression, Mary McNair Mathews noted that "Rents now went down, and times became so dull that men quit rooming and went to 'cabining' themselves in every old cabin they could find. And roomers were so scarce that it was hard work to keep my house full."¹⁸ The miners' economic hardships and lack of pay trickled down to Mathews who grew to

Figure 5
Population Distribution for Storey County, 1900



Source: 1900, 12th U.S. Manuscript Census. n=3,560; Males, n=1,874; Females, n=1,686

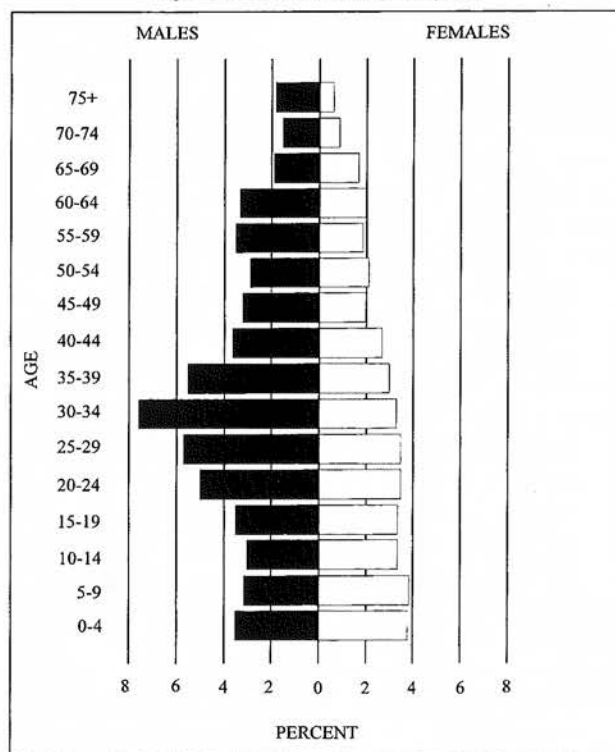
accept that tenants could not always afford rent. Squatters were common during depression which reflected similar conditions throughout the mining West, as evidenced by Grantsville and other central Nevada mining towns.¹⁹

Figure 4 does not include only young men on the edge of the communities, however. There were young families, complete with a large number of children living in the peripheral areas of the Comstock. Many of these were the destitute and homeless, consequences of a slumping mining industry. Having invested emotionally in the community and perhaps less able to move some place else, these families lived on the sides of the district's mountains, hoping for an economic recovery. That there were so many more young girls in the peripheral areas in contrast to boys is perplexing. Possibly, the parents of girls were less inclined to move, perhaps feeling more protective and conservative, while the parents of boys regarded themselves as more mobile. More likely, this phenomenon is a consequence of boys being able to find more ways of augmenting their family's income. John Waldorf, for example, in his recollection of his Comstock childhood, described how he and other boys used a variety of means to obtain cash. These included selling newspapers, scavenging wood and

metal, and collecting rags. Boys could also work at street vending, running errands, or at a variety of menial jobs.²⁰ Mary McNair Mathews, for example, recounted how her son earned fifteen dollars a month in Virginia City delivering papers when he was thirteen years old.²¹ Ultimately, it may not be possible to arrive at a definitive conclusion as to why this demographic anomaly existed in the peripheral areas. It is clear that although child labor was not typical in the Comstock mines, the communities did have employment options for boys. These were not a source of great wealth, but they could mean the difference between living in a comfortable house and squatting in a mountain cabin. Opportunities for girls to earn cash were more limited, which made it even more difficult for their families during financial crises.²²

Determining the exact location of different groups in the peripheral areas is problematic because the census taker had no streets nor addresses for reference and only cited vague expansive zones as places of residence. There is some indication, however, that at least two ethnic groups preferred squatting in specific places away from Virginia City. For example, unemployed Cornish and English laborers tended to retreat to the slopes of Mount Davidson above the city

Figure 6
Population Distribution for Storey County, 1910



Source: 1910, 13th U.S. Manuscript Census. n=2,977; Males, n=1,748; Females, n=1,228

streets where their employed ethnic counterparts lived. Similarly, many unemployed Irish lived on Middle Hill to the north, located above neighborhoods of the employed Irish.²³

Besides providing a reserve labor force, unemployed men scattered throughout the hills of the Comstock had yet another function for the mining district as prospectors. They used their free time to scour the hills for profitable mineral prospects. Some developed claims with the hope of striking it rich or selling the mine to investors. Even a marginal income was better than no wage at all, especially in a district noted for its corporate mining ventures rather than technologically simple prospecting and mining. Nonetheless, this process heightened the potential for striking the next bonanza. At least one archaeological site near Gold Hill suggests that several men may have been camping in the 1880s, while working a nearby shaft. Although the site lacks a comprehensive survey and analysis, its characteristics suggest it to be the debris from depression-era activities in the district. The site, therefore, fits in nicely with the hypothesis presented here.²⁴ Similarly, a rathole mine in Cedar Ravine, northwest of Virginia City and dating to the latter part of the nineteenth century, provides an example of low-income exploration on the Comstock periphery.²⁵

Figures 5 and 6 illustrate what happened to the Comstock in the decades after the 1880s decline. Unfortunately the Eleventh (1890) Census burned in a warehouse fire, so detailed statistics for that year are not available. By 1900, the Comstock had diminished significantly in size. The ratio between men and women grew more equitable as most of the single laborers had long since left for better opportunities. Still, a small demographic bulge remained among older men who thirty years before as an age group had contributed to the large pool of single miners employed when the Comstock was booming. These men, the remnants of that work force, chose not to leave for whatever reason. Most were probably among the lucky few who had been able to keep their jobs.

The population pyramid for 1910 exhibits the effects of a turn-of-the-century expansion in Comstock mining. Although it could hardly be called a boom, the use of local mills to process ore from the turn-of-the-century Tonopah-Goldfield strikes, and the discovery of small Comstock orebodies created new sources of employment.²⁶

The demographic bulge of working-age men again appears in the census, a hallmark of mining population profiles. Still, this was not the exaggerated number of workers who lived in the county in 1860 or 1870 (see Table 1).

Table 1
Population Size for Storey County
Males and Females

Census	Males: #	Males: %	Females: #	Females: %	Total number
1860	2,857	95%	159	5%	3,016
1862	3,843	85	655	15	4,498
1870	7,814	69	3,505	31	11,319
1875	13,415	69	6,113	31	19,528
1880	9,221	58	6,783	42	16,004
1890	5,144	58	3,662	42	8,806
1900	1,874	53	1,686	47	3,560
1910	1,748	59	1,228	41	2,976
1920	803	55	666	45	1,469
1930	378	57	289	43	667
1940	709	58	507	42	1,216
1950	354	53	317	47	671
1960	295	52	273	48	568
1970	343	49	352	51	695
1980	767	51	736	49	1,503
1990	1,250	49	1,276	51	2,526

The statistics for 1860 summarize the communities of Gold Hill and Virginia City, Utah Territory before the creation of Storey County in 1861. Figures for 1870, 1880, 1890, and 1910 are based on the census manuscripts because they are more accurate than the census reports.

Sources: U.S. census manuscripts and reports, 1860-1990; the Nevada territorial census of 1862 and the Nevada state census of 1875.

The example of the Comstock suggests several things about a mining population as it declined into depression. Young men became unemployed faster than their older counterparts. Perhaps employers wished to reward longevity and retain experience. Although people of all sorts left the Comstock with every week that the depression persisted, many attempted to stick it out as long as they could, while living as cheaply as possible.

Surviving on the periphery could be difficult, however. The Comstock Mining District was extremely large. The National Historic Landmark District that commemorates the area is over fourteen thousand acres. With steep slopes, walking on paths up and down hills outside the cores of Virginia City and Gold Hill is arduous, making trips to stores or places of prospective employment lengthy and exhausting. The 1890 Sanborn Maps for Virginia City and Gold Hill indicate that there were mountainside cabins scattered throughout the hills, and nineteenth-century photographs and an 1875 bird's eye view of Virginia City document their existence.²⁷ Clearly, squatters used these places even though they were isolated, living in substandard housing, and without potable water.

The initial archaeological survey in the peripheral areas of the Comstock appears to confirm that these were places of refuge during times of depression. The archaeological record, therefore, supports the hypothesis that the hillsides surrounding Virginia City and Gold Hill provided rent-free living space for the unemployed during the depressions of the 1860s, 1880s, and 1930s.²⁸ Archaeology may also add details to conclusions based exclusively on statistics and demographic profiles as well as further define the distribution of people on the periphery. With a thorough analysis of cultural remains, it should be possible to distinguish the places where families as opposed to bachelors lived. It may be possible, for example, to demonstrate that families preferred mountain cabins closer to communities while bachelors camped farther out. Further archaeological exploration may also provide information on the everyday life of squatters by defining diet and consumer behavior.

Certainly worker migration is as old as mining and has a global history as well. Wallace Stegner's characters in his novel *Angle of Repose* travel throughout the West.²⁹ Similarly, one of the underlying themes of Richard Llewellyn's *How Green Was My Valley* deals with young men leaving their homes in Wales because the mining economy slumped. As the narrator asserts, ". . . there is something big to be felt by a man who has made up his mind to leave

the things he knows and go off to strange places."³⁰ Because of the importance of mining to the West, the inevitability of decline in the industry has been a defining factor for the region. Understanding how this process affected the people provides new perspectives on mining life during the booms and the busts.

NOTES

1. The author thanks William Douglass, Kenneth Fliess, Donald Hardesty, Sally Zanjani, Alice Baldrice, Eugene Hattori, Rebecca Palmer, Bernadette Francke, and Senator Harry Reid for reviewing the manuscript. Errors and shortcomings are the responsibility of the author.
2. See J. S. Holliday, *The World Rushed In: The California Gold Rush Experience*. NY: Simon and Schuster, 1981.
3. Populations in the 1850s of Genoa, Carson City, and other communities in the western Great Basin are difficult to determine with precision, but the assertion that Genoa was the largest town, later to be eclipsed by Carson City and then Virginia City after the 1859 strike appears defensible.
4. Hugh A. Shamberger, *Weepah*. Carson City: Nevada Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources, 1975, 71.
5. Charles D. Zeier, C. Lynn Furnis, and Dave N. Schmitt, "Grantsville: The Archaeology and Historical Investigation of a Late Nineteenth-Century Nevada Mining Town." Prepared by Intermountain Research, Silver City, Nevada. Submitted to the Toiyabe National Forest, Sparks, Nevada, 1989; also see Dave N. Schmitt and Charles D. Zeier, "Not by Bones Alone: Exploring Household Composition and Socioeconomic Status in an Isolated Historic Mining Community," *Historical Archaeology* 27:4 (1993), 20-38. Compare W. Turrentine Jackson, *Treasure Hill: Portrait of a Silver Mining Camp*. Tucson: Univ. of Arizona Press, 1963, 127-212. The author thanks Charles Zeier for help with his material.
6. Nevada Senator Harry Reid, who is conducting research on the history of Searchlight, indicates that there is a local tradition that the community rose to several thousand before declining to the 640 people recorded in the 1910, 13th U.S. Census. Further work with local newspapers may provide more detail on the fluctuation of population.
7. Compare Ralph Mann, *After the Gold Rush: Society in Grass Valley and Nevada City, California, 1849-1870*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1982, 30-33, 72-79, 197-198.
8. William Wright, [Dan De Quille pseud.], *The Big Bonanza*. NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953, reprinted from the 1876 original; Eliot Lord, *Comstock Mining and Miners*. San Diego, CA: Howell-North Books, 1959, reprint from the 1883 original. A recent treatment of the failing of a mining community appears in Michael A. Amundson, "Home on the Range No More: The Boom and Bust of a Wyoming Uranium Mining Town, 1957-1988," *Western Historical Quarterly* 26:4 (Winter 1995), 483-505.
9. Charles Howard Shinn, *The Story of the Mine as Illustrated by the Great Comstock Lord of Nevada*. Reno: Univ. of Nevada Press, 1980; reprint of the 1910 edition; first appearing in 1896; citations refer to reprint, 259.
10. *Ibid.*, 264-265.
11. Jackson, *Treasure Hill*, 5-33.
12. *Virginia Evening Chronicle*, 13 July 1880, 3:2; *Territorial Enterprise*, 9 September 1897, 1:1; *Mining and Scientific Press*, 96:24 (13 June 1908), 804; Grant Smith, *The History of the Comstock Lode: 1850-1920*. Reno: Nevada Bureau of Mines and the Univ. of Nevada, 1943; all citations from the sixth printing with revisions, 1966, 269-287.
13. Census data were provided initially by Richard Adkins and Rachel Hartigan working for the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office and then by Professor Kenneth Fliess of University of Nevada, Reno supported by a grant from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, and administered by the State Historic Preservation Office. The projects entered census data into a computer data base to facilitate computation of statistics and the retrieval of information.
14. Lyon County to the south was home to the Comstock

- communities of Silver City, Dayton, and Sutro, but its population during the nineteenth century always represented a minority of the mining district.
15. Paula Petrik has observed a similar phenomenon in Helena, Montana, as local mining interests declined. See her *No Step Backward: Women and Family on the Rocky Mountain Mining Frontier, Helena, Montana, 1865-1900*. Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1987, 21. This initial hypothesis appeared in Ronald M. James, Richard D. Adkins, and Rachel J. Hartigan, "A Plan for the Archeological Investigation of the Virginia City Landmark District," Carson City: State Historic Preservation Officer, June 1993, which was released before the completion of the more extensive analysis presented here. The "Plan" relied exclusively on data for the core of Virginia City before comprehensive data on all of Storey County was available.
 16. Donald L. Hardesty, *The Archaeology of Mining and Miners: A View from the Silver State*, Special Publication Series, Number 6, William Turnbaugh, ed. Ann Arbor, MI: Society for Historical Archaeology, 1988, 102, 113, discusses mining communities with declining fortunes.
 17. Mary McNair Mathews, *Ten Years in Nevada or Life on the Pacific Coast*. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1985, 269.
 18. *Ibid.*, 144.
 19. See Zeier, Furnis, and Schmitt, "Grantsville"; also see Joseph Robert Conlon, *Bacon, Beans, and Galantines: Food and Foodways on the Western Mining Frontier*. Reno: Univ. of Nevada Press, 1986, 173.
 20. John Taylor Waldorf, *A Kid on the Comstock: Reminiscences of a Virginia City Childhood*. Reno: Univ. of Nevada Press, 1991.
 21. Mathews, *Ten Years in Nevada*, 127.
 22. Elliott West, "Beyond Baby Doe: Child Rearing on the Mining Frontier," from Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson, eds., *The Women's West*. Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1987; and see Elliott West, *Growing up with the Country: Childhood on the Far-Western Frontier*. Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1989.
 23. Ronald M. James, "Defining the Group: Nineteenth-Century Cornish on the North American Mining Frontier," in Philip Payton, ed., *Cornish Studies: Two*. Exeter, U. K.: Univ. of Exeter, 1994; Ronald M. James, Richard D. Adkins, and Rachel J. Hartigan, "Competition and Coexistence in the Laundry: A View of the Comstock," *Western Historical Quarterly* 25:2 (Summer 1994), 164-184.
 24. Site CrNV 32-4596 is located on land managed by the Bureau of Land Management. The BLM conducted a site visit during the summer of 1994 in coordination with the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office.
 25. William G. White and Ronald M. James, "Little Rathole on the Big Bonanza: Historical and Archeological Assessment of an Underground Resource," Special Report, Carson City: Nevada Historic Preservation Office, 1991.
 26. Smith, *The History of the Comstock Lode*; also see Russell R. Elliott, *Nevada's Twentieth-Century Mining Boom: Tonopah, Goldfield, Ely*. Reno: Univ. of Nevada Press, 1988.
 27. "Birds Eye View of Virginia City, Storey County, Nevada: 1875," Ithaca, NY: Historic Urban Plans, reproduction, 1970; Sanborn Perris Fire Insurance Map, 1890; the Comstock Historic District Commission (Virginia City, Nevada) has a comprehensive collection of photo reproductions of historic images from the Comstock. These include many overview photographs that allow for a view of the area including mountainside cabins.
 28. This conclusion is based on preliminary survey work conducted by the State Historic Preservation Office as part of its planning process that ultimately produced James, et. al. "Plan."
 29. Wallace Stegner, *Angle of Repose*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971.
 30. Richard Llewellyn, *How Green was My Valley*. NY: Dell Publishing, 1976, 5.