

ARCHAEOLOGY AT HALF WAY HOUSE



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



1867 half-dollar.



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.

HISTORIC INSIGHT

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