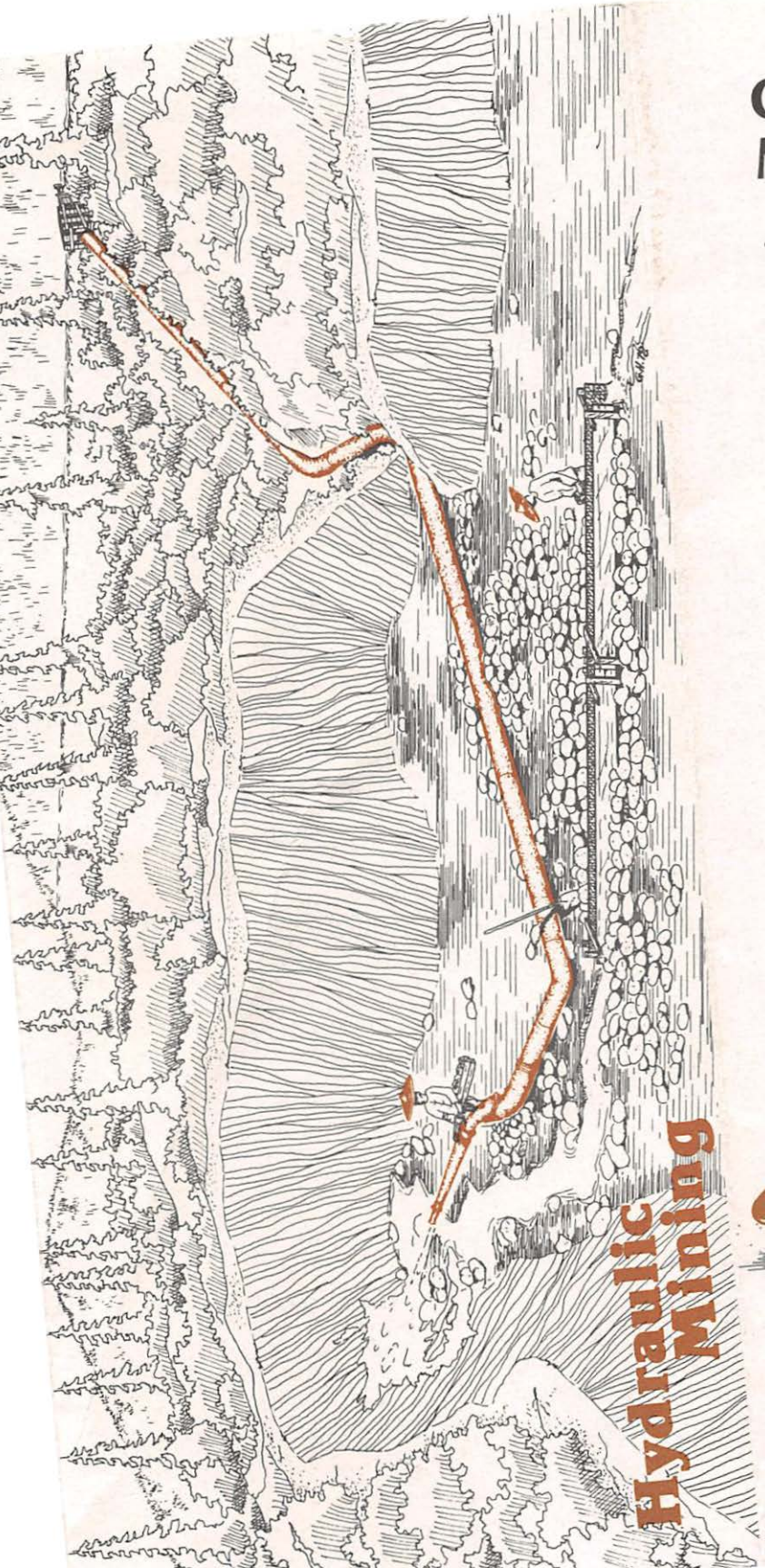

Gin Lin Mining Trail

A Trail Through "Gold Rush" History

United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region

Rogue River National Forest

Gold Fever In 1848 the cry of "Gold!" swept through the country. First discovered near Sacramento, the precious metal attracted thousands of hopeful prospectors armed with picks and gold pans to the new gold strikes in the Siskiyou Mountains of southern Oregon. They worked the streamsides with such zeal that gold deposits along the banks were soon "worked out." New methods of mining had to be developed to reach the less accessible gold deposits that lay buried in the hillsides.

Hydraulic Mining Hydraulic mining allowed the miners to move away from the streams and excavate the older streambeds that formed part of the hillsides. Pressurized water was used to loosen the consolidated gravel and cobbles of the slopes. This material was then washed through a series of sluice boxes or wooden troughs which sorted out the gold-bearing silt.

Chinese Miners News of the discovery of gold in California reached China in the fall of 1848. The promise of the "golden hills," along with the social unrest in China, drew an increasing number of Orientals to the mining regions of America. They proved to be an efficient source of manpower. Unlike many other immigrants, the Chinese did not arrive with the intention of settling in the new land; they came instead to seek their fortune and then return to China.

Gin Lin Mining Trail In 1881 Gin Lin, a Chinese mining boss who had already successfully mined in other areas of the Applegate Valley, purchased mining claims in the "Palmer Creek Diggings" area. Results of his hydraulic mining operations are evident along this trail.

The numbered stations along the three-quarter-mile trail are keyed to the information and diagrams in this brochure. Let us now begin our journey back through an exciting chapter of American history . . . the era of Gold Fever!

1 Gold motivated men to literally move mountains! The extensive pile of cobbles before you, now grown over with trees and shrubs, once was part of an ancient river deposit located further up the slope. The cobbles were sorted from the gold-bearing smaller material and discarded as piles of "tailings." These tailings are the result of hydraulic mining.
Look for other tailing piles along the trail.

2 The V-shaped cut in the slope before you was the site of a system of sluice boxes used to separate the material washed down from the hillside. Thousands of dollars worth of gold dust passed through this area, as well as the worthless cobbles that make up the mound of tailings on which you now stand.

3 Before you is the Applegate River, moving northward from its headwaters high in the Siskiyou Mountains. Thousands of years ago the river flowed across the spot where you now are standing . . . depositing boulders, cobbles, gravel and silt along its route. Mixed in with this material were many small pieces of gold . . . gold that originally had been formed in the bedrock of the then-young Siskiyous, over 150 million years ago. As the river contin-

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R6-ROR-006-95
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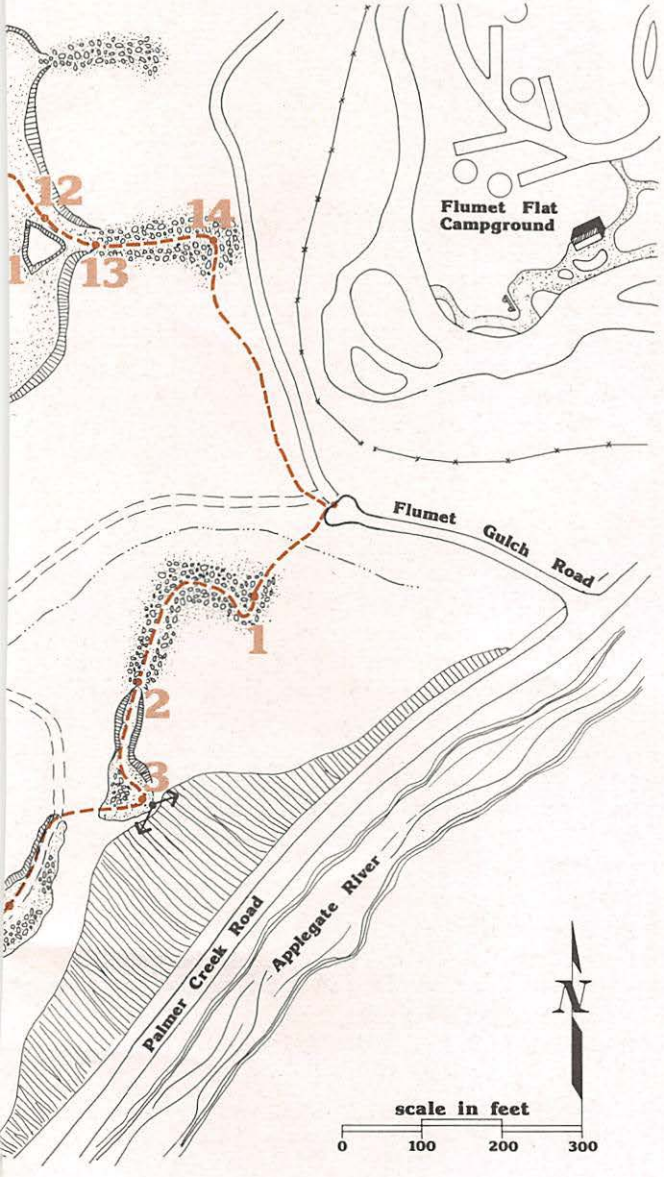
ued to cut a canyon deeper and deeper down to its present location some of the ancient river deposits were left "high and dry" on the hillside.

It was in these old river beds that the Chinese diligently searched for the yellow metal, hoping to recover the gold deposited by the Applegate River long ago.

4 The cut-bank to the right of the trail is the result of one of Gin Lin's hydraulic mining operations. It shows a cross-section of the old river deposit dotted with cobbles which were rounded by the water action of the ancient river. Rocks similar to these make up the tailing piles found on the opposite side of the trail.



The shallow pit before you is a "prospect hole." The material excavated from this depression was a test sample used to indicate the possible gold concentration in the hillside. It is fairly recent in age, indicating that the search for mineral wealth still brings people to the Applegate Valley.

5 Note the ditch-like excavation you have just crossed. It descends from far up the slope and forks about thirty feet above the trail crossing. Each fork leads to an area that has been hydraulically mined. They were constructed to hold the steel pipes or "penstock" that transported the water down to the mining operations.

6 While some miners searched for gold among the stream deposits, others hoped to strike it rich by discovering the "mother lode," the original source of the gold. Prospect holes, such as the shallow depressions a short distance above and below the trail, were dug to expose the subsurface rock in the hopes of uncovering evidence of a vein of gold ore. If the "prospects" looked favorable, an adit or mine shaft would be excavated to tunnel deeper into the mountainside.

7 The success of hydraulic mining depends upon a reliable supply of water. This necessity spurred the Oriental miners to dig the ditch you see here. Literally hundreds of miles of mining ditches were dug into the slopes of the upper Applegate Valley in order to divert water from large creeks to the mining sites. Even then a poor rainfall or snowpack could call a halt to winter mining operations. Imagine the hard work and determination needed to dig mile after mile of this ditch, using picks and mattocks . . . through the thick brush and around many rocky slopes.

8 **The Ditch** This section of the trail follows the Palmer Creek Ditch. Although partially filled in with dirt and plant debris, it once carried water from Palmer Creek to the mining sites located down the slope. The ditch continues north to Gin Lin's other diggings at Flumet Gulch and China Gulch, a total distance of about five miles.

The lust for gold not only compelled men to move mountains . . . it also inspired them to reroute the river's water.

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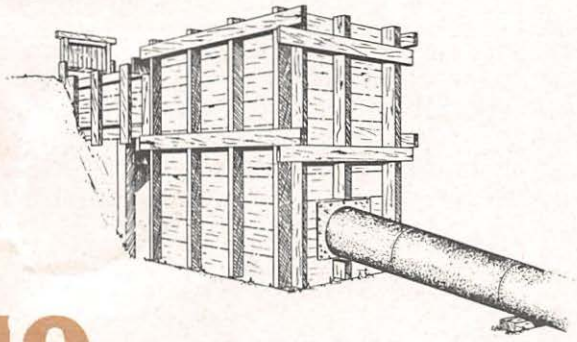
9 The Headbox

At this junction, the water from the main ditch flowed into a large wooden structure called a "headbox." The ditch water was diverted through the headbox into a penstock made of connected segments of riveted steel pipes. The pipe was placed in the trench that led straight downslope. The fall in elevation increased the pressure of the water as it flowed downward to the mining operation.



10 The Cut

Once a continuous landscape, the area below you has been excavated by Gin Lin's hydraulic mining operation. A pressurized stream of water carved away sections of the hillside to a level 20 feet below the original surface. Cut-banks mark the edge of the mined area.

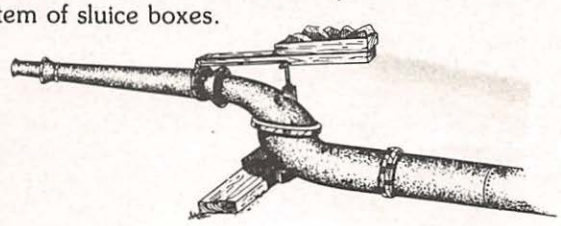
Pines, madrones and red-barked manzanita have returned to an area greatly altered by mining activities. Stunted by the loss of good soil, some of the pine trees are almost a century old. Recovery has been slow . . . even after a hundred years.

The trail continues to the right, crosses the final section of the penstock ditch and winds down for a closer look at the mining site.

11 The Giant

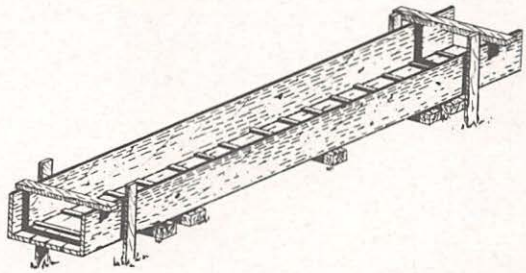
The penstock pipe carried the water over the edge of the bank on your left to a large nozzle, often referred to as a "giant." Having been pressurized by the drop in elevation from the Palmer Creek Ditch, the water blasted from the mouth of the nozzle into the exposed bank. The force of the water from the Giant was sometimes powerful enough to move huge boulders with ease!

Loosening the material from the bank, the water then washed it into the trench before you and on to a waiting system of sluice boxes.



12 The Sluice Box

A steady flow of water washed the cobbles, gravel and gold-bearing silt through a system of sluice boxes that were located in this cut. As the rubble passed over the sluice's iron gate, much of the water and smaller material, including the gold, dropped through the openings into the "undercurrent sluice." This had wooden slats or "riffles" which trapped the heavier gold dust, flakes and nuggets.



13 The Tailings

Meanwhile, the larger cobbles were carried by the water flow out of the mining site and deposited in piles at the end of a wooden flume (similar to a sluice box but lacking riffles). It became necessary to extend the flume every few days as the piles of tailings grew higher and wider. By the time Gin Lin had finished his mining activity in this area, a long high mound of cobbles had built up. The extensive pile of tailings before you is the dramatic result of Gin Lin's hydraulic mining operations.

14

What happened to Gin Lin and his gold? Hard work paid off for Gin Lin and his laborers. A a result of his mining activities in the Applegate Valley he deposited over a million dollars worth of gold dust in a Jacksonville bank. This unexpected success of the Chinese, coupled with cultural differences, aroused many hard feelings among the other miners. Various laws were enacted that unfairly taxed the Orientals as well as other ethnic minorities. Because of this, few Chinese remained in the area. Some took jobs helping to build the railroads . . . many returned to China.

The actual fate of Gin Lin is uncertain. One source reports that he was robbed and fatally beaten as he got off the ship in China. Although we will probably never know what happened to him . . . part of his story will remain etched on the moss-covered tailing piles, overgrown ditches and the hydraulic cuts of this once gold-bearing hillside.