



Your Family's Guide to the Tower House Historic District

Families with children will enjoy the easy 1.1 mile loop walk through the beautiful historic district. This guide will help you uncover the many fascinating aspects of the area.

Wear sturdy shoes and bring sunscreen, water, a snack or a picnic, and your camera. A \$5 Day Use pass for your vehicle may be purchased at the bulletin board in the parking lot.

Driving directions: Follow Highway 299 west about 8 miles past the Visitor Center to the Tower House Historic District parking lot.

Trail walking directions:

1. At the end of the parking lot, you will find the first exhibit next to the bulletin board. Read the panel to find out ...
Who lived in this area for more than 6,000 years?
What brought great numbers of people here in the 1850s?
Do you see the huge millstone to the left of the path? Touch the stone and feel how rough it is. No one knows for sure what the millstone was used for. *What do you think?*
2. Follow the paved trail to the footbridge and read the Toll Bridge exhibit.
Can you figure out how much it would cost a miner to cross the toll bridge if he had two wagons?
After you cross the bridge, look underneath it to examine the stone piers.
3. Walk over the footbridge and follow the paved path to the right. Find the Tower House Hotel exhibit. The Tower House was at the junction of two main roads, which you can still see today.
What gold mining town could you go to upon leaving the Hotel if you took Trinity Mountain Road?
The town is still there, if you would like to take the three-mile drive after your visit to the historic district. French Gulch has a hotel, saloon, and homes from the Gold Rush era.
4. Continue along the paved path to the gate in front of the Camden House and read the panel.
What do you think that Charles Camden meant when he said, "Success was called luck by those that failed. From observation, nine-tenths of the 'luck' came from hard work and judgment."
5. Walk up to the Camden House and sit on the porch, be quiet, and imagine what things looked like over one hundred years ago.
Instead of seeing and hearing the cars go past on Highway 299, what would be passing in front of you when it was a dirt road in the 1850s?

Then walk around the house and try to guess which building was the summer kitchen, which one was the servant's quarters, and which building was the tool shed.

6. Follow the wide dirt path past the green sheds. As you walk, look for the plastic tags hanging from the fruit and nut trees found throughout the historic district. Many of these trees descended from stock that Levi Tower planted in the 1860s.
Look for the apple, pear, and cherry trees as you walk the trails.

7. Walk to the picnic tables near the creek to find the last exhibit on the Wintu people.
If you and your family were Wintu and lived in this area in the 1850's, what do you think your elders would say about the changes they were seeing?
8. Cross the next bridge and turn right at the trailhead and follow a wide, sandy path along Willow Creek. The first part of the trail passes behind the Camden House. You will arrive at the picket-fenced gravesite of Levi Tower, who died unexpectedly in 1865 of typhoid fever while visiting San Francisco. His friends in the Masonic Lodge brought his body home and buried him here, overlooking the Tower House and its beautiful orchards.
Can you read the inscription on the headstone?
How old was Levi Tower when he died?
9. Turn to the left just past the gravesite and follow the old Camden Water Ditch, which has been turned into a path. This ditch irrigated the gardens and orchards and brought water to the mining operations nearby. You will pass behind an old barn. Many years ago, the meadow was fenced and horses were kept here.
Look out over the meadow and see some places where the grass has been flattened; can you guess what kind of animal has been sleeping in this grassy bed?
10. Keep following the trail until it turns into an old dirt road along Mill Creek; you will soon reach the El Dorado Mine. The mine was active for about 80 years, from the 1880s until the 1960s, when the property was purchased by the National Park Service. The mine shaft was boarded up because it was liable to collapse.
Look inside the stamp mill building and check out the machine that crushed rock with extremely heavy metal bars, which were called "stamps." Gold was separated from the crushed rock by using mercury, a dangerous chemical.
11. Go back on the dirt road where you came from, but stay on the road when you pass the water ditch trail sign. You will end up walking right in front of the Tenant Farmhouse. This house was built in 1913, one year after Charles Camden's death. His daughter, Grace, inherited the property, but she lived in Oakland by then. She hired a caretaker who lived here and did some farming to make extra money. Over the years, Grace, her sisters, and their families returned occasionally to the Camden House for summer and Christmas vacations.

Today, the Tenant Farmhouse serves as the residence of a National Park Service employee who watches over the area.

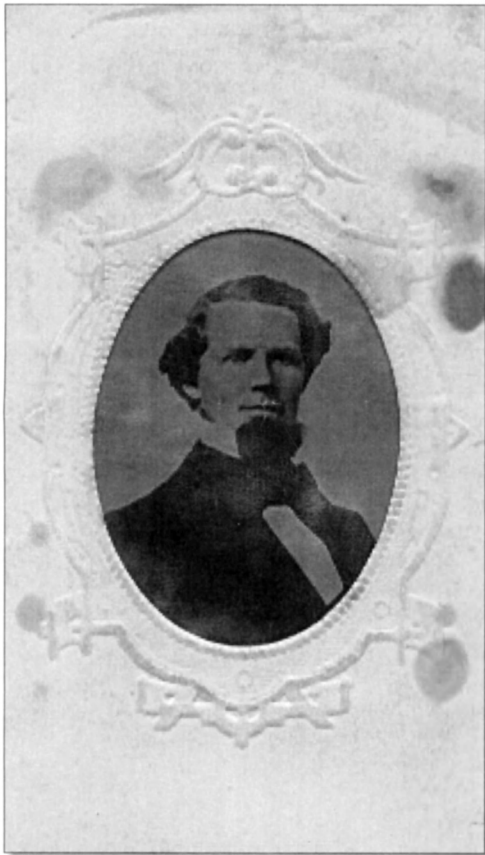
Do you think that you would like to live here if you had the chance? What would you enjoy if lived here? What would you dislike about living here?

Ranger-guided tours of the Camden House and Gold panning Programs

From Memorial Day to Labor Day, ranger-guided tours of the interior of the Camden House are given several days each week. A gold-panning program is presented in conjunction with the tour; pans and shovels are provided so that you can try your luck in the creek.

In December, the National Park Service holds the "Old-time Holidays" event at the Camden House. Enjoy caroling, wreath making, and other activities, as well as a tour of the home festooned for the holidays.

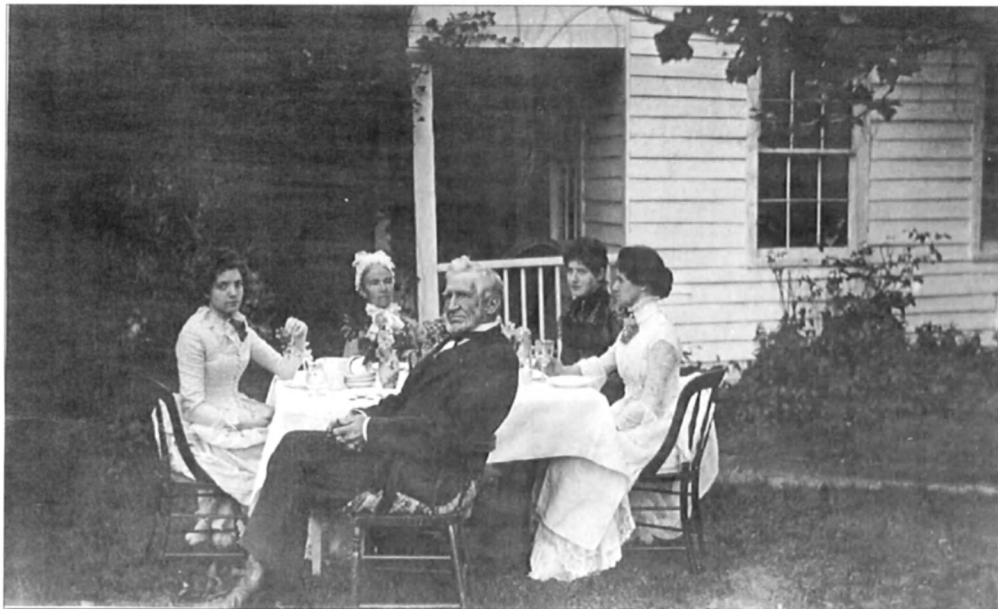
Call the Visitor Center at (530) 246-1225 for more information on these events.



Levi Tower left Rhode Island to seek his fortune in the California Gold Rush. He mined for several years before building his hotel, known as the Tower House.



The Camden family: Charles, Ada, Philena and "nurse" Kate, holding Grace, around 1858. Philena was Levi Tower's sister; she came out west to help Levi run his hotel, fell in love with Charles and married him in 1852.



Afternoon Tea on the Lawn: Grace, Philena, Charles, Mary, Ada Camden
The three Camden daughters, Grace, Mary and Ada, are all grown up in this photograph taken at the side of the Camden house in the 1880s. The entire family lived in Oakland by then, but returned to their old home place for summer vacations.