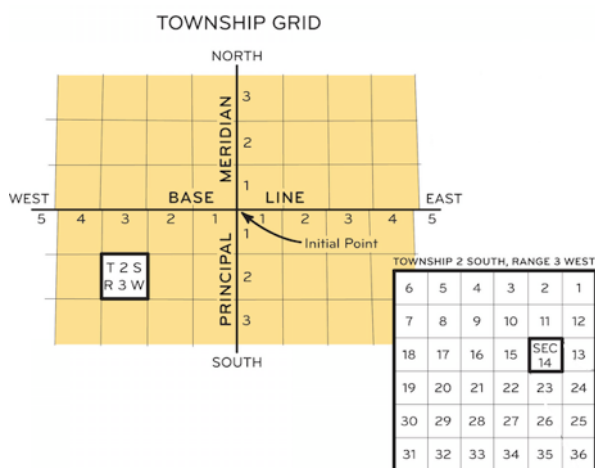
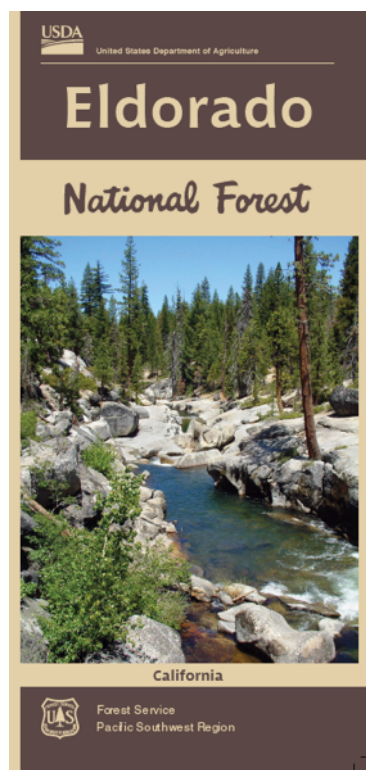


LET THE FOREST VISITOR MAP SING TO YOU; Part 1

Lester Lubetkin

When I was in college, studying geology and geologic maps many years ago, one of my professors encouraged us to let the maps “sing to us”! At the time, that seemed impossible – the maps were just a mish-mash of colors or at best something like a colorful Rorschach test. But over time, the patterns and colors on the maps did start to tell a story and “sing” a wonderful song. The Eldorado National Forest has just released a new Forest Visitor Map. The last time the Forest had this map revised was in 1997, and there are a number of subtle and not-so-subtle changes. One feature of the map that is still the same is the coloring of the lands within the Forest and surrounding areas. As you start to understand what those colors mean, the Forest map can sing a beautiful song to you about the history of this area and how it has changed in the last 150 years or so.

Grab the map and look at the legend for the map (found down in the lower left hand corner – if you don’t have a copy of the Forest Visitor map, you can find a digital copy of the older map at this link <http://www.gerlecreek.com/history/eldoradonf1997.jpg>). You will find a brief title for each of the different colors, showing who owns or cares for the land – Eldorado National Forest, Bureau of Land Management, Indian Reservation Land, Non-Forest Service Land, etc. These are the notes that create the music. Now let’s learn to listen to the music. On the Forest Visitor map, you see large expanses of light green with smaller squares and irregular blocks of white. If you look closely, you will find a few small blocks of purple and patches of peach along the western edge of the Eldorado Forest. As an aside, if you travel to some of the sister Forests in California, such as the Stanislaus or Sierra Forests, you will not see as many white areas on their maps.



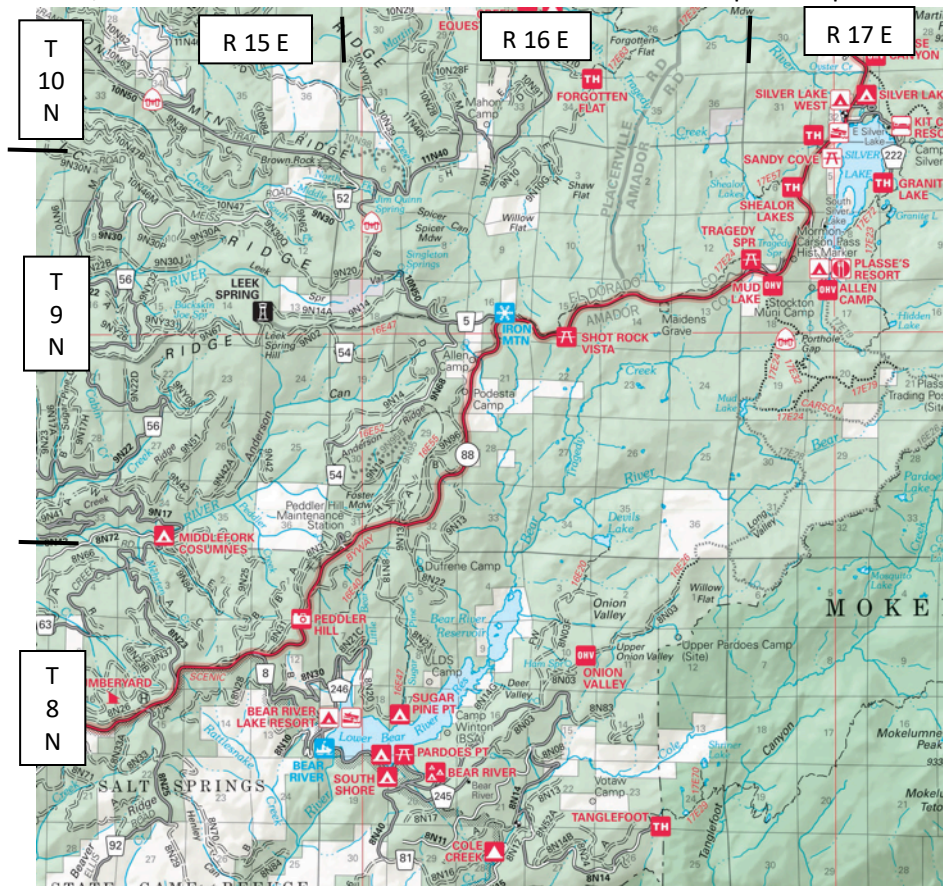
Similar to music signature, we need some tools to read the map. This may seem technical, but bear with me. Along the margins of the map, you will notice some labels, that read R.13E., R.14E., etc. along the top and bottom, and T.7N., T.8N., etc. along the right and left margins. If you want simple, think of these as the grid you use playing battleship or Bingo, and skip the rest of this paragraph. If you want more detail: These labels refer to the grid of **survey townships** that extend across the Forest – part of the Public Lands Survey System. This system dates back to Thomas Jefferson and was created as

a way to identify land parcels before designation of eventual ownership, particularly for rural or undeveloped land. Each township is roughly 6 miles by 6 miles square and is referenced by township (T) and range (R) lines. Township lines run parallel east-west, while range lines run north-south; each is established at six mile intervals. These lines are numbered in relation to a reference point at Mount Diablo (in the East Bay Area); and so T.7N. is the seventh line north (N) of Mount Diablo (roughly 42 miles north) and R.14E. is the 14th line east of Mount Diablo (about 84 miles east of Mount Diablo). Townships are further subdivided into 36 **sections** of approximately one square mile (640 acres) each. When you look at the Forest Visitor map, you will see a fine set of black grid lines with numbers in some of the squares, ranging from 1 to 36. These are the section numbers. Notice how the numbering of the sections shown in the example above starts in the upper right corner and snakes through the rows, ending in the lower right corner.

Aria No. 1: California Statehood and the Need for Schools

Prior to the Gold Rush in 1848, there were no records of private land ownership within the area of the Eldorado National Forest. At that time, primarily Native Americans occupied the area. The area was claimed by Mexico, but had not been occupied by Mexican citizens or other new arrivals, nor were there land grants within this area. Mexico reluctantly gave California to the U.S. in 1848, unaware of the gold discovery in Coloma just 9 days earlier. Then, on September 9, 1850, following the enormous influx of immigrants with the Gold Rush, California declared statehood. The Forest Visitor map tells a part of the

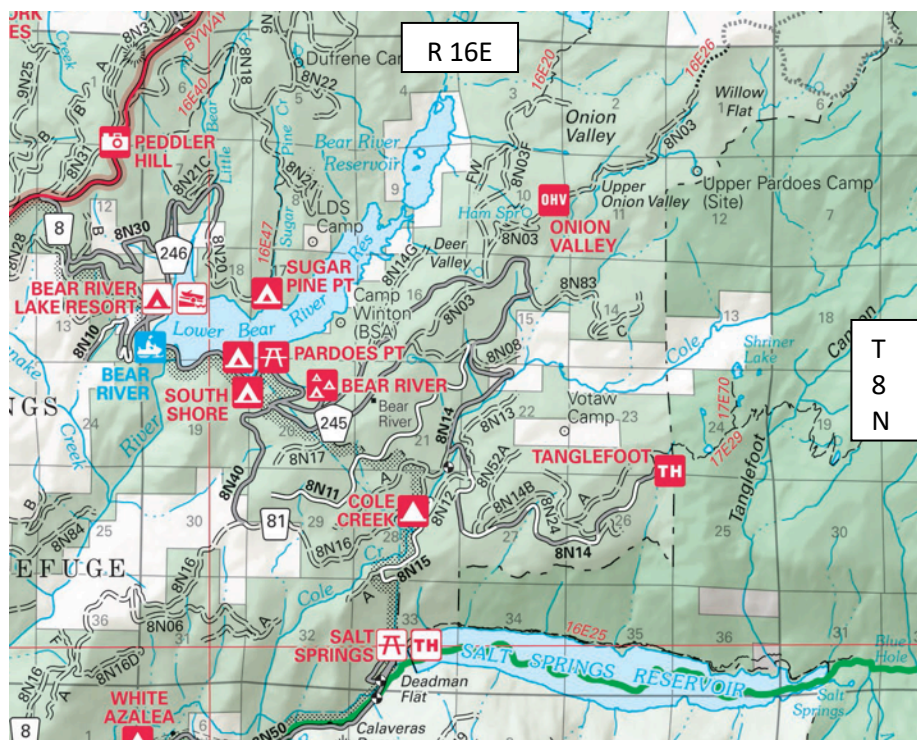
story of California Statehood and the relationship between the federal government and the state. Starting back in the early 1800's, our country gave federal land to each State as it reached Statehood. The intent was to help each State raise the funds needed to function. In particular, sections 16 and 36 of each township were granted for school purposes, and as such were often called the **school sections**. The



intent was to guarantee that local schools would have an income and that the community schoolhouses would be centrally located for all children. It was a good idea, but not practical here. In remote areas like the Eldorado National Forest, there were few settlers and little need for schools in each of these sections.

Let's focus on the part of the map shown above (which is in the lower right portion of the Forest Visitor Map). All the land started out as federal land. Notice that there are three white squares, each identified as Section 36 (along with other smaller blocks of white). These three are **school sections**. One is in the lower right corner of T.10N., R.15E., another in T.9N., R.15E., and a third in T.9N., R.16E. These three school sections, as with most of the school sections across the Forest, were sold to private parties or corporations. Look across the map of the Eldorado Forest to see how many Sections 16 and 36 in other townships are also colored white. Notice that Section 16 in T.9N., R.15E. (shown above) is colored green, indicating that it is National Forest land (lands owned by the U.S. Government and managed by the Forest Service). This section of land was also deeded to the State of California for schools in 1853 and then subsequently sold to private parties. It went back to federal ownership in 1971 when two private lumber companies traded it to the Forest Service for better timberlands.

When you look at Sections 36 in T.8N., R16E. (in the map below) and in T.10N., R16E. (in the map above), you will see portions of each of these sections are colored purple, indicating these areas are still



owned by California – we know purple denotes State lands from reading the Legend. The State has been holding these lands since 1877, for the benefit of schools within the State. However, why was only a portion of each of these sections deeded to the State? Lands were granted to the State only if others had not previously claimed them such as settlers or purchasers of land. When lands were not available, the State would select other lands,

known as “in-lieu” lands. Some of the small white parcels around Bear River Reservoir are lands that were acquired by the State of California as late as in 1901, in lieu of lands otherwise not available. Often these in-lieu lands were more valuable than the original lands destined for granting to the State, since the State had a chance to pick lands they would like, rather than receive lands based on a somewhat

arbitrary surveying method. Upper Bear River Reservoir was built in 1900 and, not surprisingly, the State selected the lands covering the area of the reservoir in 1895 (Lower Bear River reservoir was not built until 1952). Some of the lands just downstream of that reservoir were selected by the State in 1896 and 1901 within a broad open valley with shimmering quaking aspen, later drowned by Lower Bear River Reservoir.

In the next future, we'll look at the evidence you can see of the Gold Rush and past mining claims showing up in the Forest Visitor map and other stories told in the colors on the map.