

In the Footstep of Pioneers

By **Andréa Lucacher, 4th grade, Camino Pablo**

It was very early in the morning one Monday in May when 3 buses took all the 4th graders from Camino Pablo Elementary on a trip into the past, when gold was first found in California. The 2 hour bus drive felt short. We arrived at an old railroad station near Jamestown.

We went gold panning in the American River. We wore long black rubber boots made for men. We had a round black pan, about 11 inches in diameter, flat bottom, and the sides were about 3 inches high. There was a big pile of soil freshly dug with gold inside. In order to get the gold, you fill your pan with soil then you put the whole pan in the water and wash out all the

dirt, take all the big rocks out, until you see the nuggets. It was very painful to lean over and scoop water from the river.

After the gold hunt, we went to our camp in Silver Spur. 4 big orange cabins are set in a large meadow surrounded by pine and oak trees. There are hills in the back for hikes and a big field to play. A river runs through it, but we couldn't get in. We slept in bunkbeds in the cabins. The classes took turns setting and cleaning up in the dining hall. The food was not what my mom would call "healthy", but it was the kind I love: spaghetti and chocolate cake.

The next morning, we left after breakfast. We went



Camino Pablo 4th graders panning for gold in the American River

to Columbia, an old village like in the 1840's. We visited a blacksmith, a candy shop, a school and a jail. But my favorite part was taking a ride in a horse carriage. I sat on top and it was unbelievably bumpy but fun! We were attacked by a robber, he had a pistol and he asked me for my gold earrings. My dad had to fight with him... just kid-

ding! It was simply fake.

We came back in the afternoon. I think the adults had as much fun as us, the children. I felt it must have been very hard work for the adults a long time ago, but I think that children of that time had as much fun in their village as we do in Moraga today.



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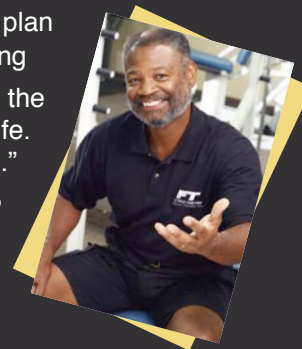
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