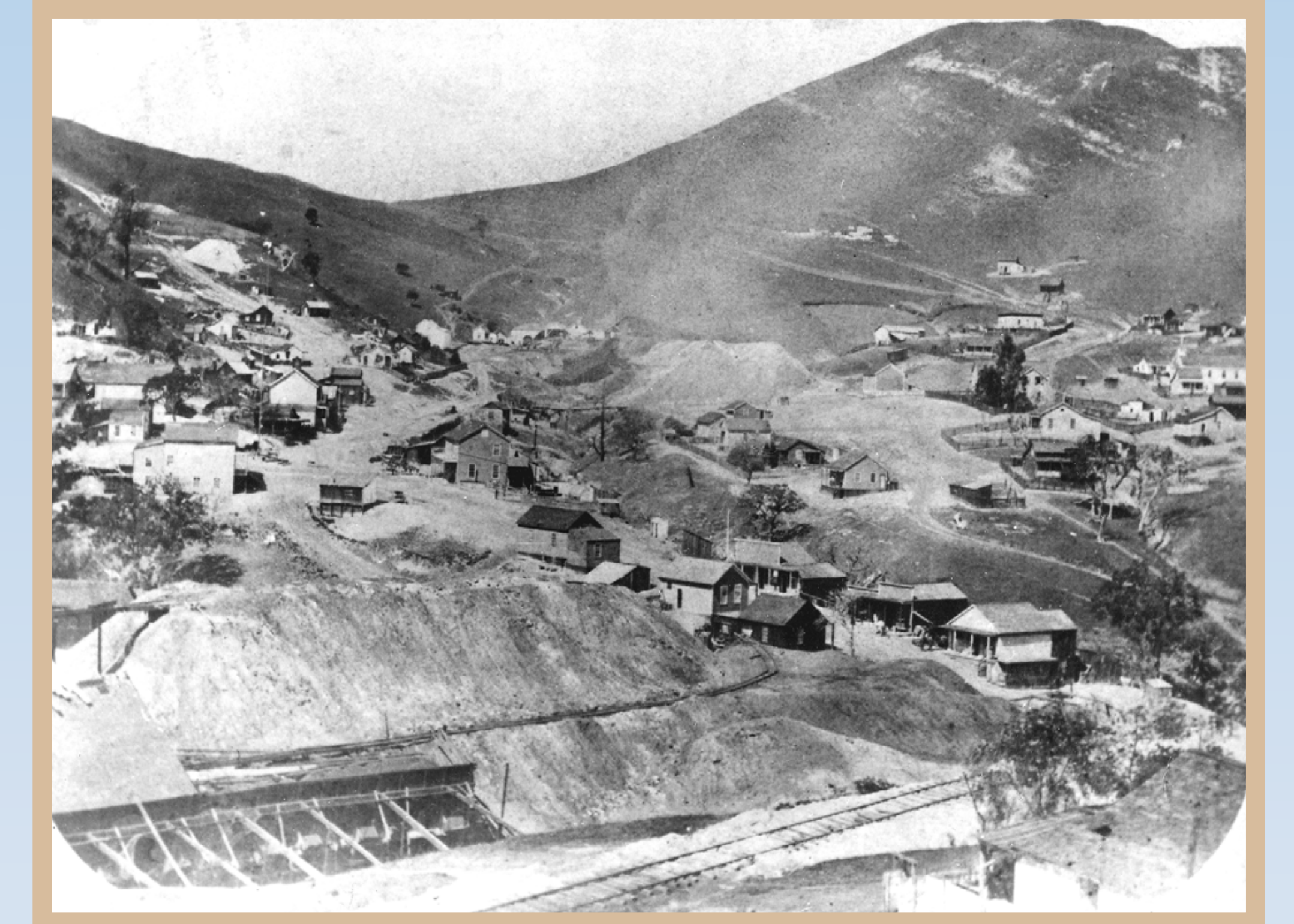


Coal Town Boom and Bust

These quiet valleys once echoed with the huff of steam engines, the rumble of explosions, and the songs of Welsh miners. After the Gold Rush, five towns grew here around twelve coal mines that provided fuel for California's booming economy. Coal miners and their families settled in Nortonville, Somersville, Stewartville, Judsonville, and West Hartley. Besides work, they enjoyed activities such as baseball and bocce ball. They formed bands, choirs, and poetry clubs. Schools, churches, and businesses were built to serve the growing population.



Somersville school, date unknown
Courtesy of the Contra Costa County Historical Society



Somersville in 1878
L.L. Stein Collection, EBRPD



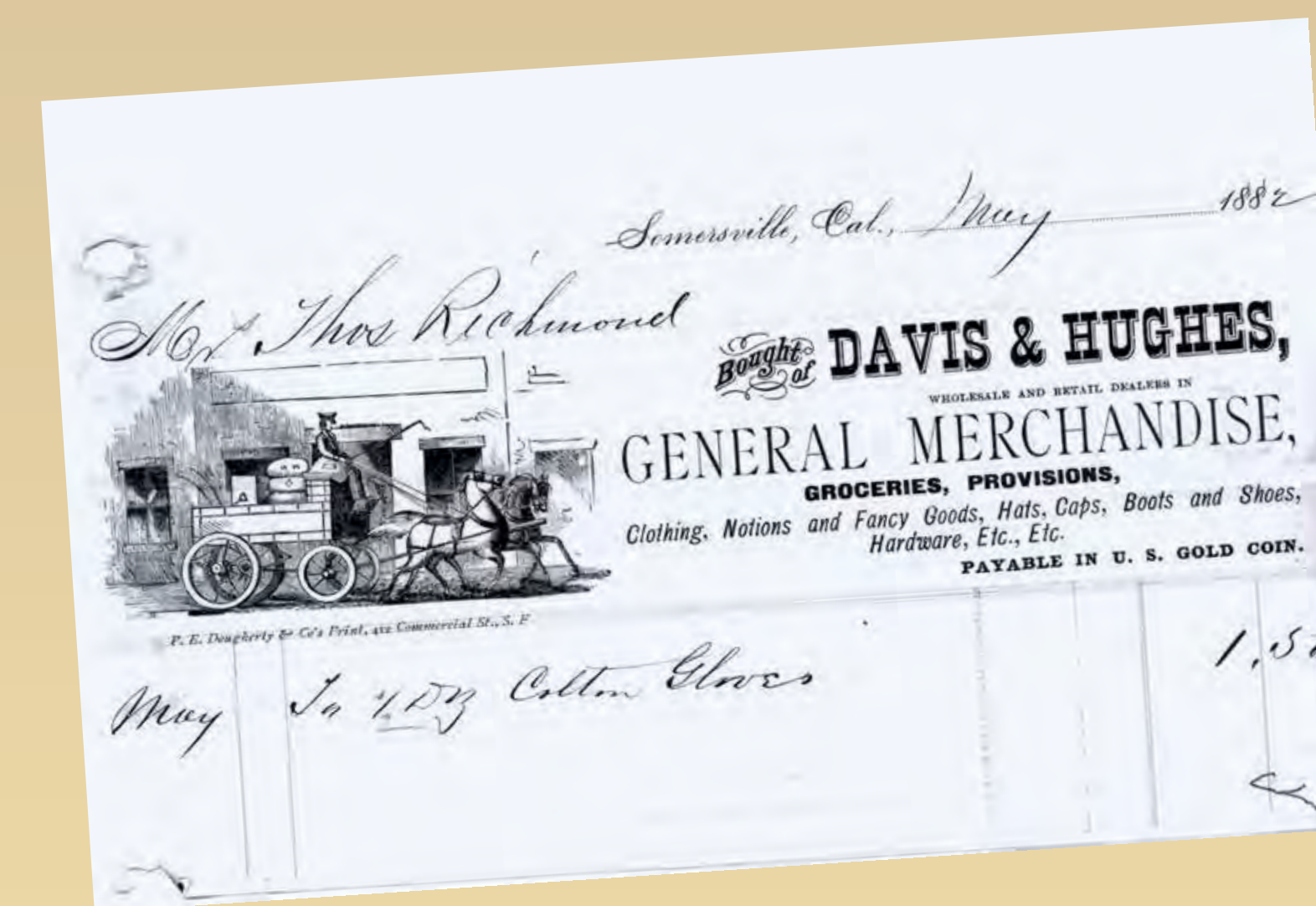
The Nortonville Welsh choir, circa 1875, was photographed below the house of Sarah Norton, the wife of Nortonville founder Noah Norton.

George Vivian Collection, EBRPD



Somersville "9" baseball team

Jack Lougher Collection, EBRPD



Davis & Hughes receipt

Courtesy of the Contra Costa County Historical Society



Miner's families gathered at Central Mine Bunker, Stewartville, 1880s

George Vivian Collection, EBRPD

When other sources of energy became available in the 1890s, the mines closed and residents moved away. Many buildings were dismantled and moved to nearby towns. Other than exotic trees and scattered artifacts, the abandoned townsites give few clues to their bustling past.



Nortonville school as it appeared in the 1880s. Around this time, it was the largest school in Contra Costa County.

George Vivian Collection, EBRPD



Miners at Black Diamond Mine, Nortonville with foreman Watkin Morgans (front row, third from right)

L.L. Stein Collection, EBRPD