Nortonville Townsite

This is the site of the largest town on the Mt. Diablo Coal Field. The founder of the town, Noah Norton, built the first house in 1861. At the peak of mining activity there were more than 1,000 residents.

The economic life of Nortonville was dependent on the Black Diamond Mine, which employed as many as 300 men and boys in the largest mining operation on the coal field. The town boasted one of the best public schools in the county, a hotel, stores, churches, fraternal halls, and saloons.

The mines closed in 1885 when the Black Diamond Coal Mining Company and many of the town's inhabitants moved north to Washington Territory. There, the coal was of better quality, more abundant, and more economical to mine. The town of Black Diamond, located near Seattle, was established as a result of this move.

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Main Street, Nortonville, circa 1878
Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve, EBRPD, George Vivian Collection

Nortonville looking south, circa 1880
Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve, EBRPD, George Vivian Collection

Ginochio Boarding House and Saloon, Nortonville, circa 1895, center; Giovanni Ginochio with white beard, right: white horse and buggy driven by Dr. George, balcony: Angelina Ginochio with daughter Amelia (age 3)
Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve, EBRPD, Betty Maffei Collection

School Hill, Nortonville, looking west, circa 1880
Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve, EBRPD, Louis Stein Collection

Background: Nortonville
Photo: EBRPD

Italian Hill, Nortonville (no date)
Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve, EBRPD, George Vivian Collection

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