

# Oat Hill Mine Trail

and selected trails in Robert Louis Stevenson State Park

## About the Trail

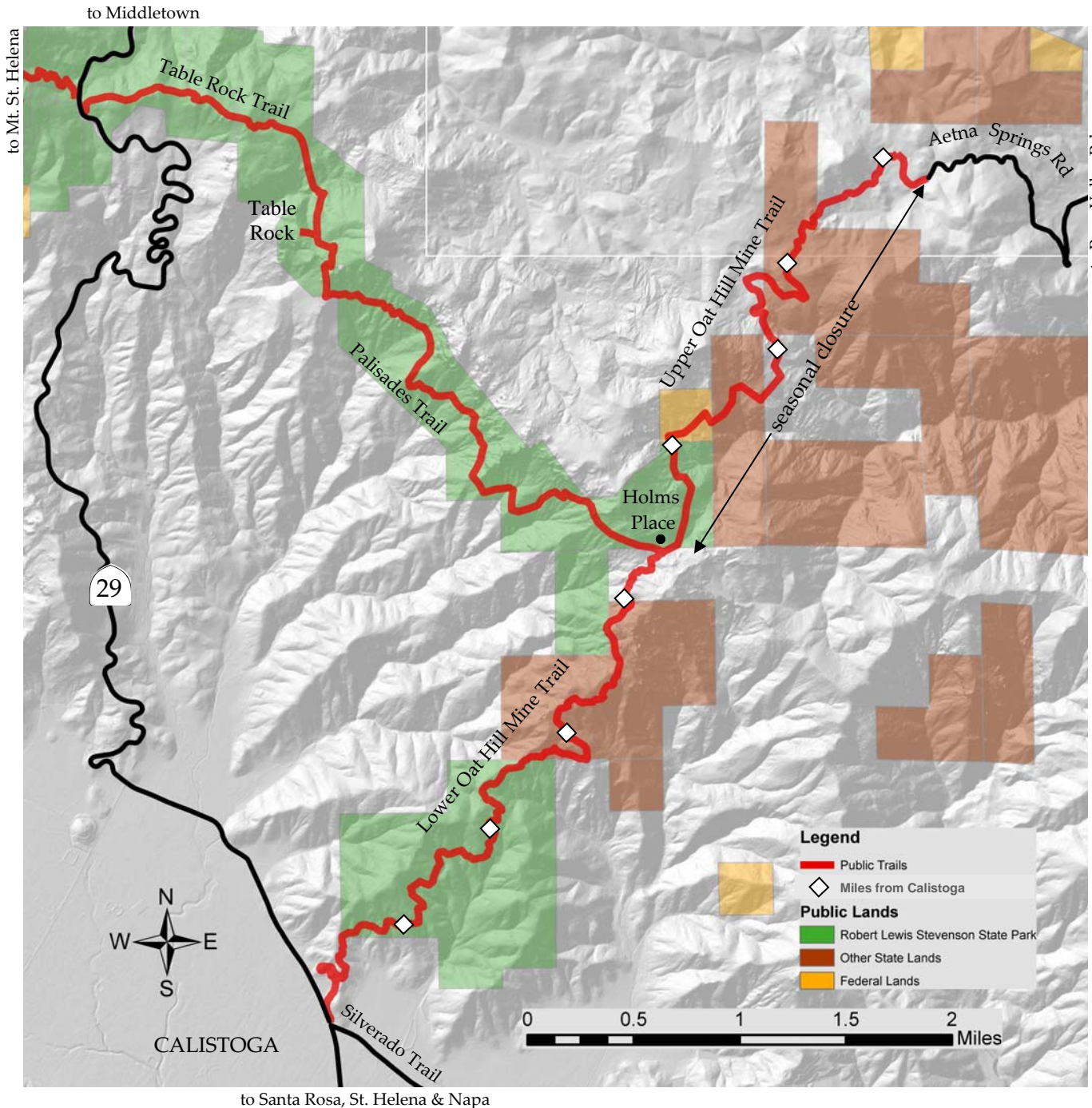
With the discovery of cinnabar deposits in the late 1800's Napa County saw the development of several mines to extract the ore and produce quicksilver (mercury). The most productive of several mines in the area was the Oat Hill Mine which accounted for one third of the total U.S. production of quicksilver from its discovery in 1872 until the late 1960's. The mine was idle from 1923 to 1927 when it reopened and operated continuously through 1944. After the Second World War mining profits fell, and mining ceased in the late 1960's.

Construction of the Oat Hill Mine Road was started in 1873 to provide a transportation route between Calistoga and the mines. It took 20 years to complete the project and the road was officially opened in 1893. The road connected Calistoga to the Oat Hill Mine with a side branch descending to Aetna Springs.

Today the 8.3 mile long Oat Hill Mine Trail follows the original route between Calistoga and the western end of Aetna Springs Road in Pope Valley. The old mercury mines are further to the north, and are not open to the public. The trail provides a magnificent recreational experience for hikers, mountain bicyclists and equestrians, although the trail is rough and rocky in many places, and can be quite challenging. Visitors enjoy sweeping views of Napa Valley along the lower Oat Hill Mine Trail, while the middle and upper sections of the trail cross striking volcanic formations. The trail passes through a diverse mixture of Oak, Douglas Fir, Gray Pine and Cypress forests, chaparral, and grasslands. Spring wildflowers are exceptional.

Midway along the trail is the homestead property of Karl Gustov Holm, who built a log cabin on his 160 acre homestead in 1893, and added a new house in 1896. Parts of stone wall for his barn and a few old fruit trees remain today.

Ruts carved by heavy wagons traversing the soft volcanic rock are still visible along parts of the middle and upper trail. Hand-laid stone walls are visible at many locations along the trail.



## Take Care

This is wild country. Take care of yourself and the natural environment, and show respect for others.

You are responsible for your own safety.

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- ⇒ Bring lots of water—there is NO drinkable water on the trail.
  - ⇒ RESPECT PRIVATE PROPERTY. Where the trail crosses private land, stay on the trail. The trail right of way is 30 feet on either side of the trail.
  - ⇒ Watch out for and share the trail with others, including hikers, bicyclists and equestrians. Always announce your presence and ask permission before passing. Never surprise horses. Be extra careful on blind curves.
  - ⇒ Watch out for potential hazards, including but not limited to poison oak, rattlesnakes, ticks, mountain lions, loose rocks, and other users.
  - ⇒ All wild plants, animals and historic features are important—please don't gather, remove, harm, harass or damage any of these resources.
  - ⇒ No hunting or shooting is allowed in the State Park, or on, from or over the Oat Hill Mine Trail.
  - ⇒ Dogs are permitted on the Oat Hill Mine Trail, but not off the trail within the State Park.
  - ⇒ Motor vehicles are not allowed. (note: private property owners may use motor vehicles on the Trail coming from Aetna Springs Road to access their land)
  - ⇒ Please. No fires and smoking.
  - ⇒ Upper Oat Hill Mine Trail is closed in late summer during periods of high fire hazard and deer hunting season. Check the web site for dates.
  - ⇒ In an emergency, call 911. Note that there is no cell phone service along many parts of the trail.

## Getting to the Trail

**Calistoga Trailhead:** On-street parking only. Please be very careful when crossing the highway.

**Palisades Trailhead:** Parking provided off Highway 29 at the Mt. St. Helena trailhead. Part of Robert Louis Stevenson State Park, the Palisades Trail is designed for hikers only; bicyclists and equestrians are not permitted for safety reasons.

**Aetna Springs Road Trailhead:** Only limited parking is available at the trailhead. The last four miles of Aetna Springs Road are not paved, and the last one-half mile is rough and may not be passable when wet. Trailers and low clearance cars are not recommended.



The historic Oat Hill Mine Trail is managed by the Napa County Regional Park and Open Space District with the support of numerous volunteers, community organizations and businesses.

For current information about trail conditions, seasonal closure dates and volunteer opportunities, visit the web site

[www.NapaOutdoors.org](http://www.NapaOutdoors.org)

Parts of the trail cross Robert Louis Stevenson State Park. For more information about the State Park, go to [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov) or call (707) 942-4575



Napa County Regional Park  
and Open Space District