

## PARK FACILITIES

- Ten campsites, 34' RV length maximum, dump station available for use Memorial Day thru Labor Day
- Restrooms with flush toilets
- Picnic tables with barbecues
- Shaded group-use area with 10 picnic tables, sink, electricity, a large barbecue, lawn area and plenty of parking. Available by reservation.
- Walking paths and trails

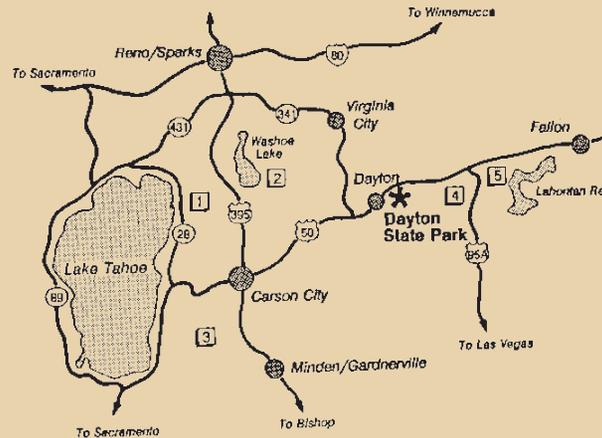
## REMINDERS

- Pets are welcome if on a leash in populated areas
- Collection of firewood within the park is not allowed
- Fires are allowed only in the provided fire rings and barbecue pits only
- Swimming or playing in or near the canals and head gates is dangerous and is not allowed
- Drive only on established roads (all vehicles and drivers must be licensed)
- Plants, animals, artifacts, rocks and mineral materials are protected by state law (please leave them where you find them)
- Hunting is not permitted in the park
- Quiet hours are from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m.



# DAYTON STATE PARK

825 Highway 50 East  
Dayton, Nevada 89403  
(775) 687-5678  
washoelake@hdiss.net



Dayton State Park is located on U.S. 50, 12 miles east of Carson City.

## DIVISION OF STATE PARKS

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(775) 687-5678  
www.parks.nv.gov/dsp.htm

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Dayton State Park consists of 160 acres with typical Great Basin desert topography. Cotton wood, desert sage, rabbitbrush and willows are prominent. The lower park borders the Carson River. The upper park includes the remains of old Highway 50 and the Rock Mill site and looks out over Dayton valley at the foot of the Virginia mountain range. Cottontails and ground squirrels are plentiful. An observant visitor will see a hawk, coyote, fox, mule deer or porcupine. Dayton summer temperatures range from 80-100 degrees F with lows around 40-50 degrees F.

## DAYTON HISTORY

### Before the discovery of silver

Once a traditional Paiute Indian meeting place, Dayton was used by Paiute people as a base camp for fishing on the Carson River and as a winter camp sheltered from the snows of nearby Sierra. The discovery of silver and gold changed that forever.

### Gold

In 1849, Abner Blackburn, restless at a stopover on his way to the California gold fields, was first to see gold. In what was then Utah Territory, legend has it he used a hunting knife and a frying pan to prospect. This was not a rich strike, however, and California beckoned—Abner and his friends moved on.

### Silver

In June of 1859, while searching for gold, prospectors found a strange bluish rock in Virginia City and Gold Hill. This rock turned out to be silver.

### Dayton

In 1849 Spafford Hall built a log trading post to serve prospectors and emigrants, and the area became known as Halls Station. Over the next few years the name changed several times and finally, in 1861, the town was named Dayton after town surveyor and future Surveyor General, John Day.

Dayton was the Lyon County seat from 1861 until 1909 when one of the frequent—and often suspicious—fires burned the courthouse. At that point, Yerington won the battle to become the county seat.

What was once Utah Territory became Nevada Territory and, in 1864, Nevada became a state.

### Mill Sites

It was the silver discovery that created the need for stamp mills to crush the rock and release the metal for use. There was water available in the valley and in 1861 the first ore crushing stamp mill was built in Dayton. Eventually there were 21 quartz mills along the Carson River. The Rock Point Mill, located in the Park on the west side of the highway, was one of the earliest large mills in Nevada built to crush ore from the Comstock mines. The mill brought workers and merchants from across the Nevada Territory turning Dayton into a bustling mining town.

### Camels

In the mid 1850s camels were tested by Lt. Edward Beale of the U.S. Army for use as caravan operations in the southwest. The experiment was unsuccessful. The camels were auctioned off and brought to Dayton to haul wood and salt to the mills and mines of the Comstock. The Leslie Hay Barn on Pike Street corralled the camels and they were used for the next 10 years. They were later abandoned to fend for themselves. Few were seen after the 1880s.

### Pony Express

Dayton was a Pony Express stop between July 1, 1861, and November 20, 1861, and also served as a stage stop and railroad depot.

### Decline

Disastrous fires in 1866, and again in 1870, wiped out most of the town, and the population dwindled. Construction of the

Sutro Tunnel in the late 1870s revived Dayton's population to some extent but the fires took a toll. By 1900 the population had dropped to a mere 500 residents due to the decline in the mining industry.

The mill too was destroyed by fire, first in 1882 and again in 1909. Floods also took their toll. Although the mill was rebuilt, it became less in demand and was dismantled and moved to Silver City in the 1920s.

### Consequences

Huge quantities of wood were needed to support the mining activities in Virginia City and surrounding areas. Dayton was known as the "Cordwood Capitol" of Nevada and by around 1870, all the wood from the valley was cut.

## PARK HISTORY

From the 1920s to 1954 the mill site was used as the local dump. In 1954 the property was deeded to the Nevada Department of Transportation, and in 1977 the Nevada Legislature officially designated Dayton State Park. Construction began early in 1979, and the park was opened to the public in the fall of that year.

The Carson River flooded in 1997 and substantially changed the flow of the river, which is now considerably more to the east than before the flood. The park now serves as a site for year-round camping, picnicking, nature study and group events in the park's group area.

