

Placerville divided over hanging onto its past

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

Placerville lives on its Gold Rush history and can't escape the past, including a famous public hanging in the 1840s.

As a result, Main Street today is dotted with businesses bearing names with historic allusions such as Prospector's Cafe and Hangtown Hot Dogs.

Residents are once again struggling with that legacy, debating the fate of an effigy strung from a Main Street building that has been unoccupied for three years.

Residents argue over whether the building is an eyesore to be torn down or a historical treasure.

"I think something needs to be done to improve the landscape of that corner, and soon," said Shari Fulton, who owns a cafe directly across from where the dummy hangs.

Is the dummy a valuable tourist magnet, an ugly image of frontier justice, or worse: a reminder of bigotry against people of color?

The argument has been carried out on Facebook pages where a love-it-or-leave mentality is strong.

"If someone can't take our history, then don't come here," wrote one poster, Julie Brian.

Read the whole story