

# Placerville homeless camp dismantled

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

In the old Gold Rush town of Placerville, born from rough-hewn mining camps, a heralded social experiment packed up its tents last week.

After just more than 16 months, Hangtown Haven, a self-governing tent city of homeless residents grappling with mental illness, alcoholism and other life issues, is closing. Its demise will end a novel attempt by a small Sierra foothills community to address a major societal challenge.

After a packed chamber of local citizens engaged in emotional debate, the Placerville City Council said Hangtown Haven had to go when its city permit expired Nov. 15.

“What Hangtown Haven created was incredibly special,” said Placerville Mayor Wendy Thomas in offering its eulogy.

The camp, erected in July 2012 on a forested slope lent by a property owner just east of Placerville’s historic downtown, was kept clean and crime-free by homeless residents and community volunteers. It has hosted 25 to 40 people at any given time. And the city granted an extended reprieve in hopes the settlement could solve a persistent problem of homeless people taking over local parks or setting fires in the woods.

**Read the whole story**