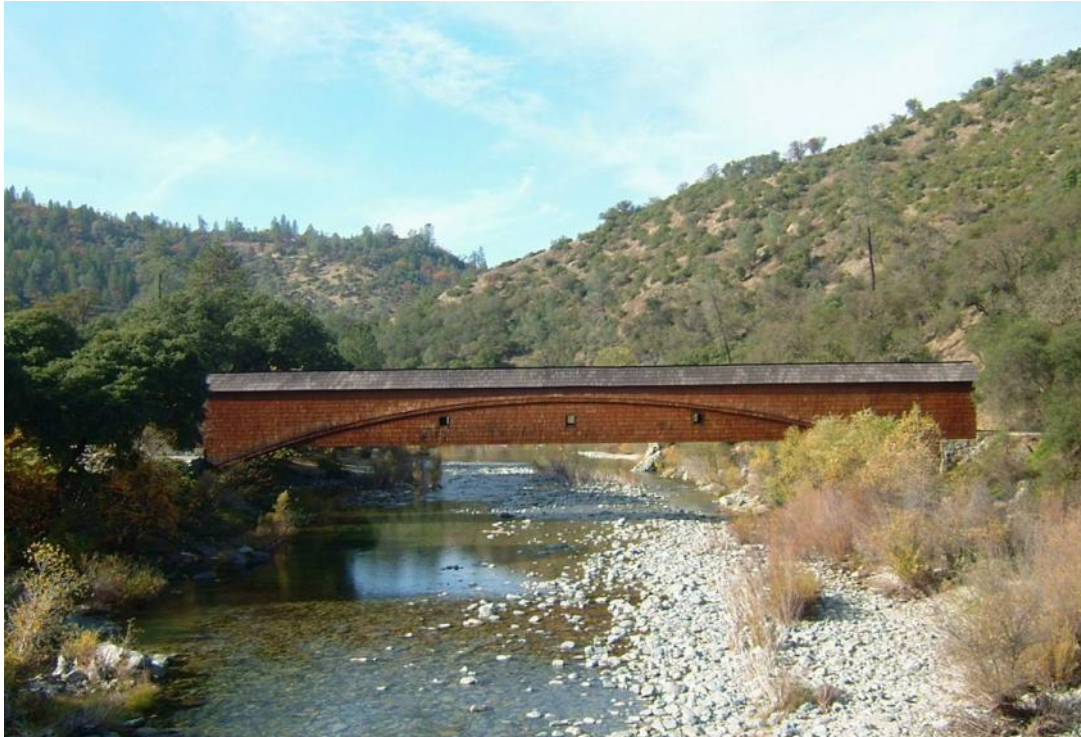
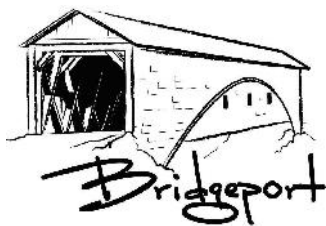


Interpretive Guide for Docents

“How to Make the Park Come Alive for the Visitor”



South Yuba River State Park



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INTRODUCTION TO THE PARK

Welcome from Supervising Ranger Dan Youngren

On behalf of California State Parks and the Sierra District / Sierra Gold staff, I would like to thank you for your interest and support for South Yuba River State Park. Without the combined efforts of our employees, volunteers, and park partners, the beauty and history of our local parks would be lost forever. The mission of California State Parks is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation. We accomplish our mission with the help of our non-profit partners who provide funding for the interpretive and education programs that our staff and volunteers present to the public. Whether it is a Buttermilk Bend wildflower hike, an overnight living history program, or assisting with the design of new interpretive facilities, it is our job to assure that park visitors are given opportunities to learn and experience all they can about the park. Through education, visitors will then not only increase their knowledge, but will hopefully become park supporters like you.

Remember that a few quality minutes spent with a park visitor will foster a lifetime of love and learning about the world around us. Thank you for choosing the path of supporting your California State Parks!

Dan Youngren

Park Description

The South Yuba River State Park contains several parcels of land along the South Yuba River extending more than 22 miles from Point Defiance on Lake Engelbright toward the town of Washington. The Park was established in 1986 for its scenic, recreational, and historic values. It contains the Bridgeport Covered Bridge and Ranch, the Independence Trail, and historic river crossings at Highway 49, Hoits Crossing, Purdon Crossing, Edwards Crossing and Illinois Crossing.

Cooperating Association

The South Yuba River Park Association (SYRPA) provides interpretive materials and financial support to enhance the public's enjoyment of the Park. SYRPA's vision is to advance the public's enthusiasm for the Park through interpretation, education, and appreciation of the park's history and culture. All volunteers are encouraged to join SYRPA and help enhance the Park's future.

THE INTERPRETIVE GUIDE

This Guide summarizes interpretation areas for prospective and new docent volunteers. These summaries help new volunteers evaluate the complete scope of interpretation at the Park, so they can select one or more for their own. The Interpretative Guide is a two-part document:

Part I provides a description of each docent activity. Each article has been written by the activity coordinator to provide a broad look at interpretive, educational and recreational opportunities in the specific area. The article is meant to help new volunteers choose an activity they can feel passionate about. We want to capture that passion and use it to build long lasting connections with visitors of all ages.

Part II summarizes Park history and helps the new Docent give visitors an understanding of the unique and interesting cultural history at this State Park.

Auto Tours

The Park is an interesting destination for auto club tours. Volunteers arrange the tour date, meet the group on arrival, and explain the historical connection to yesteryear's transportation over the Virginia Turnpike. The tour usually begins near the Kneebone Cemetery and continues down the



18¢ Per Gallon!

ered Bridge. Each auto club usually is formed around a particular make. In the past, owners have brought Model A Fords, Mazda Miatas, Corvettes, Porsches, Bentleys, P.T. Cruisers, Packards and Jeeps.

Turnpike to the Gas Station. A docent explains the historic buildings and the route of 1860s teamsters over the Henness Pass to the Nevada silver mines. There are plenty of photo opportunities for the cars alongside the gas station, in front of the Barn, or in front of the Cov-



Auto Tour at the Barn for Photos

Gas Station & Store

The South Yuba River Park Association, in close partnership with the State Park, has undertaken restoration of the Historic 1927 Shell Gas Station as a high priority for historical preservation and visitor education. The mission of California State Parks is to protect our cultural resources such as historic structures, provide visitor education, and enable high-quality recreation opportunities.

Restoration of the Historic Shell Gas Station was divided into three phases: the accurate reconstruction of the original structure and its exterior; restoration of the Kneebone store; and transformation of the garage area into an interpretive center. Reconstruction of the building, purchase of a 1927 gas pump and signage, and the store restoration have been completed.



Gas Station in the 1930s

The interior of the station and store features 1927-1933 era historic Shell products, automotive items, emergency vehicle supplies, and simple store products such as flour, fruits, vegetable, canned goods, cold drinks, candy and basic food. The garage section incorporates a model of the Bridgeport Swimming Resort and gas station areas plus other interpretive materials. There will

also be items that gold miners may have required and a variety of products that people would have needed while on vacation in the 1920's and 1930's.

This restoration is a critical part of our history at South Yuba River State Park. It brings together the 1927 Gas Station, the 1862 covered bridge and the 1860s barn. Some of the specific projects planned or underway are:

- Design and install interior displays for an accurate representation of the store and station
- Design, fabricate and install educational displays, murals, photographs and interpretive signs
- Develop interpretive exhibits of transportation throughout the region
- Develop interactive opportunities and activities for children
- Provide descriptions of the Shell Gas Station and its role at Bridgeport in 1927
- Portray the daily activities of the Kneebone family during the post gold rush period
- Develop exhibits and materials describing the Bridgeport Swimming Resort



Restored Gas Station on Festival Day

Bridge & Barn Tours

In the eyes of the visitor, the standout attraction--the crown jewel of the entire Park site--is the Bridgeport Covered Bridge. Built in 1862 by David Wood, following flooding the previous winter that destroyed the 1850 bridge at this location, this Park icon is the longest single-span wooden covered bridge in the country.

Our visitors are fascinated by the appearance, construction, views from the porthole windows, survival (barely) during the 1997 flooding, and longevity of the structure. Docents explain the bridge history and its part in the wagon route to California gold mines in the 1850s and to Nevada

Comstock Lode silver mines in the 1860s. The story can be told in a compelling way to visitors: the trek across the heavy Douglas fir flooring, the surge of the South Yuba River below the imagined shouts of the teamsters as they urge their oft-spooked horse & mule teams across, the heavy timber trusses and the vertical iron rods that reinforce this solid structure, the 27,000 hand split sugar pine shakes that make up the side walls and roof, the grip of the leather reins in your hands, the jangle of the harnesses pulling together, the smell of sweat streaming off the backs of the team as they make the difficult climb from the heat of the valley below, and the echoes of the sixteen hooves pounding the Bridge planks.

Complementing the Covered Bridge is the recently restored Historic Barn constructed about the same time as the Bridge. Built in the classic Dutch style, it served several functions including animal stalls and pens, hay storage loft, storage of farm equipment, and repairs to the wagons. Long unused, this historic structure came to life in 2006 when the South Yuba River Park Association began its barn restoration project. The structure now is an interpretive exhibit area featuring the Barn as a transportation center. During the day, the screened

off observation area is open to the public, and for group tours (by reservation) the barn doors are swung open and Docents describe each of the horse-drawn vehicles as well as the imposing hay press. The barn tours are a favorite with school groups, especially when accompanied by stories of Black Bart and his holdups of local stage coaches!



The Covered Bridge. Photo by Betty Kelly



Festival Day at the Barn

Beautification

The Beautification Committee assures that the grounds around the Visitor Center are presentable, so the historic features are the main attraction. Grounds are cleared of brush, rid of as much blackberry as possible, and free from star thistle (to the extent possible). Once that is accomplished, the grounds begin to sparkle and show their natural beauty. We add our own touches to enhance the Park's appearance by taking on projects, such as adding large flower boxes to the entrance of the VC and working with the Native Plant Garden docents. We like to see visitors wandering through the Park and the Native Plant Garden, and we like to watch families enjoying a picnic lunch at one of the picnic tables scattered about the Park. The goal is to keep the look as natural as possible and the way it may have been 100 or so years ago. To accomplish these projects, we ask docents to participate in a work party about three or four times a year. These work parties last no longer than an hour and a half, and we do have a good time.



New Boxes and Planting
at the Visitor Center

Bird Walks

Birding in the Park can be enjoyed during most seasons of the year. Experienced docents lead scheduled walks, especially during the spring and fall. Visitors have seen 120 different species of birds at Bridgeport.

Bird interpretation in the wild always begins with finding a bird, whether flying, perching or nesting. Size and shape are the first obvious indicators in assessing the different species. The song or short calls are a significant particular to consider in the spring or mating season. Different shapes and sizes of bills are a great dividing category in selecting the different bird families. Bird activities are important features. Is the bird scratching in the dirt and leaves, pecking at a tree, or snatching flies, etc. out of the air? Where and how do the birds build or obtain their nest? What do the birds feed on? What is the color of its eyes? Is there an eye line through or above the eye? How long are its tail feathers? Is it a year-long resident or does it only stop by during a migrating season?



Some of the commonly-seen species are Canyon Wren, California Quail, Yellow-breasted Chat, four or five different woodpeckers, six or so sparrows, Northern Mockingbird, Cedar Waxwing, Phainopepla, King Fisher, American Dippers, Wren-tit, Oak Titmouse, Yellow Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Audubon Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Cliff and Violet-green Swallow, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, Bullocks Oriole, Spotted Towhee, Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawk and Bald Eagle.

Wildflower Walks

Wildflower walks guided by Park Docents are offered each spring, March through mid-May along the Buttermilk Bend Trail and the Pt. Defiance Trail. Guests from near and far meet with Docents for an approximately two mile, two hour walk. As they stroll along the trail Mother Nature provides spectacular views of wild flower covered hills and the turquoise South Yuba River as it flows over and around blue-gray granite boulders.

Each year a large number of docents are required for the 11-12 week wildflower season, and new docents are always sought. Typically a total of 22 walks are guided each season by two docents every Saturday and Sunday. One docent usually gives an introduction and leads the walk. The second follows the group, keeps the guests together, and helps to answer questions. New docents are encouraged to shadow several experienced docents for the first season. This will help them learn the flowers as well as see the diverse presentation styles of the veterans. A training class is usually offered in February and often field trips are available during the season. Memorizing all the many flower names is not needed as photos with names are set out along the trail each week. It is surprising how quickly one accumulates a bank of knowledge about the plants and features along the Buttermilk Bend Trail.

The beauty of the Bridgeport area with its intriguing diversity of plant life is a result of the Mediterranean climate of California and the Chaparral and Oak Woodland plant communities found here. The plants grow vigorously in the late winter and early spring as the days grow longer and the soil is wet. The seasonal rain intermixed with clear and sunny days result in an abundance of beautiful and diverse plants and wild flowers. Some of the unique and cleverly named flowers seen along our trail include the delicate Chinese Houses, the dainty Fairy Lantern and the Dutchman's Pipe, host to the Pipevine Swallowtail butterfly. Local Nisenan peoples and later the miners and settlers found many uses for the local plants. Flowers, leaves, bulbs and seeds provided food, medicines, even soap and shampoo, while twigs and needles were made into baskets. Flute-like instruments could be made from the branches of the Tree of Music, which we know as the Western Blue Elderberry.



Buttermilk Bend Trail in Spring



Canyon Dudleya on the Buttermilk Bend Trail

The South Yuba River canyon is somewhat rugged and would be inaccessible for many park visitors had it not been for early resident Caleb Cooley. In the summer of 1877 he claimed the water rights one and a half miles above Bridgeport. There he dug a ditch two feet wide and two feet deep on the north side of the river for irrigation and mining purposes. That gently sloping waterway is now the Buttermilk Bend Trail, providing easy access through the fields of flowers.



Pipevine Swallowtail Butterfly

Numbered markers along the Buttermilk Bend Trail identify the trees and shrubs, and a Self-guided Trail brochure is available.

Pine Needle Basketry

The indigenous Nisenan were pine needle basket experts. The Park offers a chance to learn the art pine needle basket making. Docents have been teaching the art weaving pine needle baskets for over 15 years. On several Sundays through out the year, classes are held in the Visitor Center.

Docents teach how and where to collect the pine needles, how to think through the design, and finally the enjoyment of the finished product. Docents provide the materials, including pine needles, string and instruction. By the end of the class a small, woven basket is completed. Each of the students feel “it’s an art that I’d like to share.” The class is about 3 hours long, on scheduled days, and pre-registration is necessary. Several baskets are on display in the Visitor Center. Many visitors comment “these are really special; they would make great Christmas gifts, especially if I can make them myself”.



Basket Weaving Demonstration

Historic Research & Oral History

The South Yuba River State Park owes its existence to the history of the people and events that played such a prominent part in the eras before, during and after the Gold Rush. Many docents are drawn to the Park because of an interest in history. Volunteers are helping research and record historical facts to fill in and eliminate the gaps in our current knowledge.

There are still some fundamental gaps in our understanding of early times, especially at Bridgeport immediately after the discovery of gold in California. Whenever possible we conduct oral histories with individuals who have knowledge of local history and record them with audio-visual techniques. The information gained is used to update the current history and training manuals. The latest history information is provided to docents, so they can accurately inform visitors and conduct school and public group tours. Finally, the History Research Committee provides information to living history participants and for Park restoration projects.

School Tours

The Park is a wonderful destination for students of California History. Park history and its connection to the gold rush and regional transportation are highlighted. Docents have fun and satisfaction sharing the wonders of nature, wildflowers, gold panning, early-day transportation and Bridgeport history with groups of enthusiastic students from our Elementary Schools.

Several student groups visit each year with their teachers and parents. All tours are in the morning, usually start at 9:00 or 10:00 and end around noon. This is an opportunity to see first hand what kind of job our schools are doing and to contribute to their teaching programs.

"Finally we came to a little mountain town called Bridgeport. It consisted of three little shanties and a toll-bridge, which spanned the Yuba River. The setting sun was just gilding the tops of the surrounding mountains, as we halted in front of one of the dwellings to inquire the distance to French Corral. My husband paid one dollar and a half toll, and we crossed a high bridge, under which rolled the Yuba." Mrs. B.D. Bates, 1851.



Docent Don Denton and a School Group at the Bridge

Fall Festival

South Yuba River State Park has an Annual Fall Festival that involves nearly all Docents and Staff and which hosts about 600 visitors.

The Fall Festival at Bridgeport in late October features living history by trained docents. The “Friendly” Ghosts return to Bridgeport, as the Festival is held close to Halloween. The Ghosts (representing former residents) come alive in the historic 1860s Barn, with each Ghost telling a portion of its life on the South Yuba River.

The Penn Valley Chamber of Commerce serves hot dogs, sodas, chili and baked potatoes, and other vendors provide cakes, pies, brownies and cookies and ice cream. Members of the SYRPA Board sell coffee and cider.

Usually the activities include face painting, pumpkin painting, pioneer games for kids, a worm garden, a craft table, wagon rides, gold panning, tours of the historic Shell Gas Station, Barn Tours and Blacksmithing. Local authors may be there to sign books. All this takes place while music fills the air, provided by local bands and singers.



Fall Festival at the Bridge

Trail Patrol

Trail Rovers patrol the many trails at Bridgeport and Hwy 49 providing answers and direction to park visitors, reporting unsafe or malicious activity and generally being ambassadors for the park. While roving around the park we also pick up trash and report downed trees or visitor emergencies to park rangers. Rovers carry a radio for direct contact with park rangers and carry a small hiking pack for essentials such as water. Roving activities are scheduled from Memorial Day through Labor Day and usually last from two to four hours.



Facilities & Maintenance

The Park volunteer facilities workers, the Bridge Tenders, are a group of docents who maintain, build and repair components at South Yuba River State Park. Currently they are finishing the restoration work on the 1927 gas station. This group of volunteers contributed over 450 hours of labor on this structure to date. The group is capable of most jobs required to keep the facilities in good maintenance condition. The current financial state of the State and Department of Parks and recreation provides many opportunities for us. The hours are short, we get lots of exercise, and we have a good time.



Gas Station Restoration
Docent Bill Haselhorst on the Right

Native Plant Garden and Landscaping

Located near the Bridgeport Visitor Center, the Native Plant Garden (NPG) is part of a re-vegetation project proposed in 2002 by the South Yuba River Park Association board of directors. Plants used are natives found along the South Yuba River. The planting started in 2003 and continues to the present. In addition to adding to the beauty and diversity of the Park, this project is seen as an opportunity to educate children and adults. The plants are labeled and a folder will be available explaining growth patterns, unique properties and, in some cases, uses of the plants. The Native Plant Garden is maintained by Park volunteers and receives support from the California Native Plant Society. Park docents interested in California's native plants make a real contribution to the authenticity and appearance of the garden.



Visitor Center

The Bridgeport Visitor Center at the South Yuba River State Park in many ways represents what goes on in the entire Park. Docents have the opportunity to interact with visitors as tour guides, historians, naturalists, educators and as a sales person for the items available to be purchased.

The Park sales center offers visitors the opportunity to take a memento or book home with them. The sales items have been selected because they are significant to the Park. Educational books, note cards, t-shirts, and much more can give visitors something that is personal to them and their visit to Bridgeport.



Festival Day in the Visitor Center

Docents guide visitors to explore the Park, learn about history, treasure the fragile ecosystem that the State Park protects, and to enjoy their time at the River. Working in the Visitor Center is fun. Meeting and talking with interesting park visitors is what the Park gives back to the Docents. Whether it is recommending a trail, picnic site or swimming area or giving a child a new look at wildlife, it is always rewarding to help the visitors and to represent the Park.

The displays and artifacts from Bridgeport's indigenous inhabitants, the Nisenan Indians, tell the story of how native plants and animals were part of life along the Yuba River. As visitors view the original headdress of red-shafted flicker feathers, musical instruments made from elderberry branches and brushes fashioned from soap plant roots, they can feel and understand the Native American's life along the River.



The Visitor Center has a display of the Park's natural history. Majestic raptors, secretive ringtail cats, red foxes, a golden eagle, snake skins and bird nests are just a portion of the wildlife represented. There are cones, seeds and nuts that grow on the trees and shrubs within the Park. All of this gives visitors, especially children, a close look at life that is ever present at Bridgeport.

Artifacts, photographs, murals, newspaper accounts and personal histories are available for Docents to provide each visitor with true stories of the Park's former residents.

Gold Panning

Gold panning is available for visitors both on the river and at the Bridgeport Historic Ranch. The theme addresses the fact that three local State Parks provide examples of the major types of gold mining: Malakoff Diggins Historic State Park demonstrates the environmentally destructive hydraulic mining technique using powerful water cannons to wash away hill-sides containing ancient river beds through sluices; Empire Mine State Historic Park demonstrates the hard rock mining technique taking advantage of the Cornish immigrants who had extensive experience in hard rock mining learned from the tin mines in Cornwall, England; and South Yuba River State Park demonstrates the placer mining technique, namely searching for gold “in place” using pans and sluice boxes to separate it from the other materials in the river and creek beds or from coyote holes that reached down to old river and creek beds.



This type of mining was extremely hard work and few actually made their fortunes using this method. Visitors can learn gold panning techniques from volunteers on weekends from Memorial Day to Labor Day at the Bridgeport gold troughs. Their efforts will yield a pan with a layer of black sand in the bottom, and as they separate it out they may find gold flakes and nuggets. Other treasures to be found are small semi-precious stones, silver, and iron pyrite or “fools gold” added by the Park to assure that everyone finds something exciting. The visitor will learn the difference in texture and color between gold and “fools gold.” After perfecting his or her technique, the visitor can pan for gold in the nearby South Yuba. It is estimated that eighty percent of the original gold still remains.

Greeter Station

As visitors enter the Park it's most likely that their first contact will be the Greeter. These volunteers are on duty for three hours each weekend during the summer season, 11:00am to 2:00pm or an hour earlier during the warmest days.

Greeters play an important role in getting the visitor “off on the right foot” when they enter South Yuba River State Park. If you enjoy meeting people and love the park, this is a ready made activity for new docents. The Greeters position themselves where they meet the most people at the large picnic table on the path leading to the Visitor Center.



On the right: Docents Herb Lindberg, Mary Lindberg, Don Denton and Charles Athill on Fall Festival Day

Greeters have on display park brochures, maps, pamphlets, photos, activities, and new things to learn: Gold Panning, Nature Walks, Bridge and Barn tours and Park history. Visitors are encouraged to see the Bridge, Barn, Gas Station and the exhibits and sales center in the Visitor Center.

Independence Trail

The Independence Trail provides a place where visitors, especially those who are disabled, may enjoy the scenic beauty and the natural plants and wildlife of the South Yuba River Canyon. The origin of the Trail is an old, abandoned miners' ditch, previously known as the Excelsior Canal, which was used to transport water for hydraulic mining in the mid-1800s. In 1969, John Olmsted, a docent at the Oakland Museum, discovered the rock-lined ditches, adjacent paths for ditch tenders, and wooden bridges (flumes) providing access over ravines. He had the vision to recognize that this unusual path could be the answer to a friend's lifelong dream: "Find me a level wilderness trail where I can reach out and touch the wildflowers from my wheelchair." After many tireless years and with help from generous donors and numerous hard-working volunteers, the country's first wheelchair-accessible wilderness trail was created

Docents interpret the Trail in many ways: forest habitats, wildflower identification, stream ecology, nature cycles, and Native American uses of plants and animals. Interpretive techniques include stories, games, and songs geared to the ages and abilities of the participants. Key goals and objectives are to enhance appreciation for the flora and fauna of the South Yuba River Canyon, to encourage a perception of people as "a part of" rather than "apart from" the environment, and to emphasize the importance of protection for all natural and historic features.

The main entrance to the two trailheads is located 6 miles north of Nevada City on Highway 49, shortly before the South Yuba River Bridge. The West Trail has an overlook of the Yuba River built on a roofed platform. Further on is a multi-tiered waterfall, with a switchback ramp leading down to the swirling waters of Rush Creek where California Newts proliferate in the spring. The East Trail features many cliff-hanging flumes, a huge rock tunnel, and more views of the river and foothill landscapes.



Rush Creek Ramp

BRIDGEPORT HISTORY

The Native People of the Bridgeport Region

Ancient Cultures. From about 2000BC to about 500AD, the Bridgeport area was inhabited by the Martis people. These nomadic residents hunted big game in groups using the atlatl (spear thrower). They gathered various kinds of seeds and used grinding stones to process them. They lived wherever food and game were most plentiful.

Southern Maidu. About 500AD, the Southern Maidu came to the Northern Sierra Nevada. These people were also known as the “Hill Nisenan” or “Nisenan”. They were hunter-gatherers, and the land provided them with plentiful running water, game and plant foods, and basic materials needed to fabricate homes, tools and finely crafted baskets. They brought with them a technology for leaching tannic acid from acorns. Acorns were easily stored for long periods of time and were abundant. All these resources gave the Nisenan the capability to settle in one place and establish villages. Their presence is evidenced today by mortar holes in rocks used to grind acorns and in midden mounds, the organic residue from long periods of food preparation. The acorns were shelled, ground in the bedrock mortars, and leached to remove bitter acids. Mortar holes can be seen near the Bridgeport Visitor Center and Barn.

Village Life. Villages consisted of a central sweat lodge, or dance house (where the chief lived), and five to ten family dwellings. Several villages made up a ‘triblet’. Tribal boundaries were marked, sometimes with petroglyphs and may have been patrolled. In the spring and summer, the members of the village would move to higher elevations to collect ripening plants and to follow the migration of game. In the fall, they would return to the village to harvest the acorn crop. Winter was the social season and the beginning of the ceremonial cycle. Groups spent long winter nights in the dance houses listening to stories. People from other villages were invited to visit and join in. It was a time for dancing and looking for mates. In the Bridgeport area, Nisenan villages were located on the west side of the Yuba River near and above Rice’s Crossing, on Deer Creek near Lake Wildwood and at Bridgeport. Other villages were at Mooney Flat and Indian Springs. Nisenan descendants are still present in the area.

Basket Making. The Nisenan, like the rest of the Maidu People, were expert basket makers. There is no evidence that they made or used pottery, but their baskets were so tightly woven that they could hold water. They cooked their acorn gruel by placing hot rocks in the basket with the mix. Baskets were used for cooking, for serving, for gathering and for storing. Some baskets were woven for special purposes such as for use in netting fish and for men to wear as hats. The baskets were made from a variety of materials, the most basic being peeled willow and peeled or unpeeled redbud. Though these functional baskets were simple in the two-color design, they were as beautiful as any in California and were finely crafted.

Trading. Because of the steepness of the river canyons, most of the trading was done with the people to the west. The Nisenan traded out black oak acorns and sugar pine nuts. They traded for shell beads, salt, feathers and obsidian. The Nisenan did some trading with the Paiute and the Washoe to the east, primarily for wild tobacco.

The Effect of the Gold Rush. In June 1848 gold was discovered on the Yuba River near Rose’s Bar downstream from Bridgeport. By 1850 the area swarmed with more than 2000 miners. European contact brought a halt to the well-established Nisenan way of life. With the discov-

ery of gold came devastating diseases and loss of the native people's traditional resources. Settlers seeking land for grazing and lumber for construction simply took over the available resources. In the process they polluted the river with mining debris and cut down many trees including the oaks that provided food and shelter materials for the Nisenan.

The Early Settlers at Bridgeport

With gold rush activity on both sides of the Yuba River, safe crossings were vital. Ferries came first, made by overturning wagons and connecting them to form barges or by refitting wagons to travel across water. It is believed the name "Bridgeport" came from a ford located near the present site of the covered wooden bridge.

Early in 1849, brothers Urias and Emanuel Nye established a ferry across the main Yuba River (near present-day Pt. Defiance) and set up a trading post at Nye's Landing (present-day Bridgeport). They sold out in 1851, possibly to David Wood who arrived that year and purchased two bridges. William Thompson, a sea Captain, began ranching in 1849 at Bridgeport after his crew deserted ship to pursue California gold. Thompson is buried in the cemetery near Kentucky Creek later used by the Cole and Kneebone families. In the early 1850s Mathew Sparks built the original bridge across the South Yuba River at Bridgeport. In 1855 David Wood bought the Sparks Bridge from Thomas P. Hess.

David Wood also purchased a lumber mill at Forest City and established a store at nearby French Corral. The original South Yuba bridges washed out on January 4, 1862. The present covered bridge was built later in 1862 using lumber and shakes from Wood's Forest City mill. The bridge is of a unique construction, consisting of a Howe truss, patented in 1840, and a Burr arch believed to be modeled after a Burr-truss design, invented in 1806 and the basis of many bridges built in Chester County, Pennsylvania around 1850. Wood covered the bridge with sugar pine shakes to protect the wood frame from the weather.

The Virginia Turnpike and Hennes Pass Road

In 1853 the State authorized Counties to license toll turnpikes. In 1856, Wood and others formed the Virginia Turnpike Company to serve miners traveling up country from San Francisco and the central valley to California gold mines and to Nevada silver mines following discovery of the Comstock Lode in 1859. The Virginia Turnpike ran from the Anthony House on Deer Creek (now under Lake Wildwood) to North San Juan and was fourteen miles long. In the 1860s upwards of 100 wagons a day passed over the Turnpike on their way to and from the Nevada mines. Many of the teams consisted of two or three heavy freight wagons pulled by sixteen horses and mules. The Turnpike connected to the Hennes Pass Road at North San Juan establishing a route over the Sierra and into Nevada. Completion of the Transcontinental Railroad to Reno in 1868 doomed the toll road, as freight from the Bay Area could be delivered by train to Nevada. The Turnpike continued in operation until 1901, when it was declared a free County road. Automobile traffic continued over the bridge until 1972.

In 1866, David Wood lost the Turnpike and the bridge in a sheriff's sale. With completion of the railroad, the importance of the Virginia Turnpike was diminished, and it was used primarily for support of local commerce and mines. In 1873, control and ownership of the Virginia Turnpike and Bridge transferred to Samuel Wood, David Wood's son. In January 1900, Samuel Wood renewed his license to charge tolls, however the turnpike and bridge were taken over by

Nevada County in 1901 and declared a free and public highway. Today, 0.37 miles of the original turnpike still exist in the Park including the stone walls constructed to confine travelers to the roadway.

The Bridgeport Ranch

Ranching began at Bridgeport with arrival of Charles Cole. He married Capt. Thompson's widow, Mary Ann, in 1854. In 1862, Cole built Bridgeport House, and operated it as his residence and a hostelry for the mining men, teamsters and travelers using the Turnpike. Bridgeport House included nineteen rooms and was widely known and popular. The hotel operated successfully until August 1919 when it burned to the ground. It is thought that Cole built the big red barn. The barn is lined up with the bridge so that teamsters approaching or exiting the bridge could drive directly into the barn, obtain services, feed livestock, or make repairs to wagons or equipment. The barn features a unique Jackson hayfork to lift hay from ground level to the loft opening and then on a rail into the loft. Following the Coles, the ranch was owned by the Kneebone family who rebuilt a house on the 1862 foundation following the 1919 fire. Andrew Kneebone had married Charles Cole's daughter Victoria Cole in 1868. Andrew was an expert and widely known teamster and was famous for his ability to intricately maneuver large teams with multiple wagons in tight quarters using the "jerk line" method. From 1927 to 1935, Andrew's son, Alfred, ranched and operated the Bridgeport Pleasure Resort. The Resort included the Shell gas station and store plus a swimming hole, picnic area, dance hall, changing rooms, soft drink sales, and cabins upstream from the Ranch (now Kneebone Beach). Remains of the soft drink cold storage can be seen near Kneebone Beach. The South Yuba River Park Association is leading a project to restore the gas station to its 1927 appearance. The Resort closed about 1932 when illegal upstream hydraulic mining tailings fouled the swim hole. The store continued in operation through 1943.

Following the Kneebones, the Ranch was owned by Charles White, Evan Harrison, Melvin Maish, Jack Cowan, Robert Spitzer, Bridgeport Ponderosa (Spitzer, Murray, and Mastin) and Sequoia Challenge. Harrison demolished the Kneebone 1920 house in 1956 and built the ranch house nearby that became today's Visitor Center.

After the 1971 restoration of the covered bridge, Sequoia Challenge developed a cooperative management agreement with Nevada County to protect the bridge. Between 1979 and 1984 the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and Sequoia Challenge made land acquisitions along the South Yuba River and the Excelsior Mining Ditch. In December 1984, DPR acquired the Sequoia Challenge property, creating the South Yuba Project and, later, South Yuba River State Park.

UPSTREAM PARCELS

Independence Trail

The purpose of the Independence Trail is to provide a place where visitors, especially those who are disabled, may enjoy the scenic beauty and the natural plants and wildlife of the South Yuba River Canyon. The origin of the Trail is an old, abandoned miners' ditch, previously known as the Excelsior Canal, which was used to transport water for hydraulic mining in the mid-1800s. The Canal delivered South Yuba water to Smartsville, 25 miles away, for hydraulic

mining. In 1969, John Olmsted, a docent at the Oakland Museum, discovered the rock-lined ditches, adjacent paths for ditch tenders, and wooden bridges (flumes) providing access over ravines. He had the vision to recognize that this unusual path could be the answer to a friend's lifelong dream: "Find me a level wilderness trail where I can reach out and touch the wildflowers from my wheelchair." After many tireless years and with help from generous donors and numerous hard-working volunteers, the country's first wheelchair accessible wilderness trail was created.

The Independence Trail is a truly unique slice of foothill ecology where individuals, schools, and other groups are invited to experience its natural and historic qualities firsthand. Popular themes for guided walks include: forest habitats, wildflower identification, stream ecology, nature cycles, and Native American uses of plants and animals. Interpretive activities may consist of stories, games, and songs geared to the ages and abilities of the participants. Key goals and objectives are to enhance appreciation for the flora and fauna of the South Yuba River Canyon, to encourage a perception of people as "a part of" rather than "apart from" the environment, and to emphasize the importance of protection for all natural and historic features.

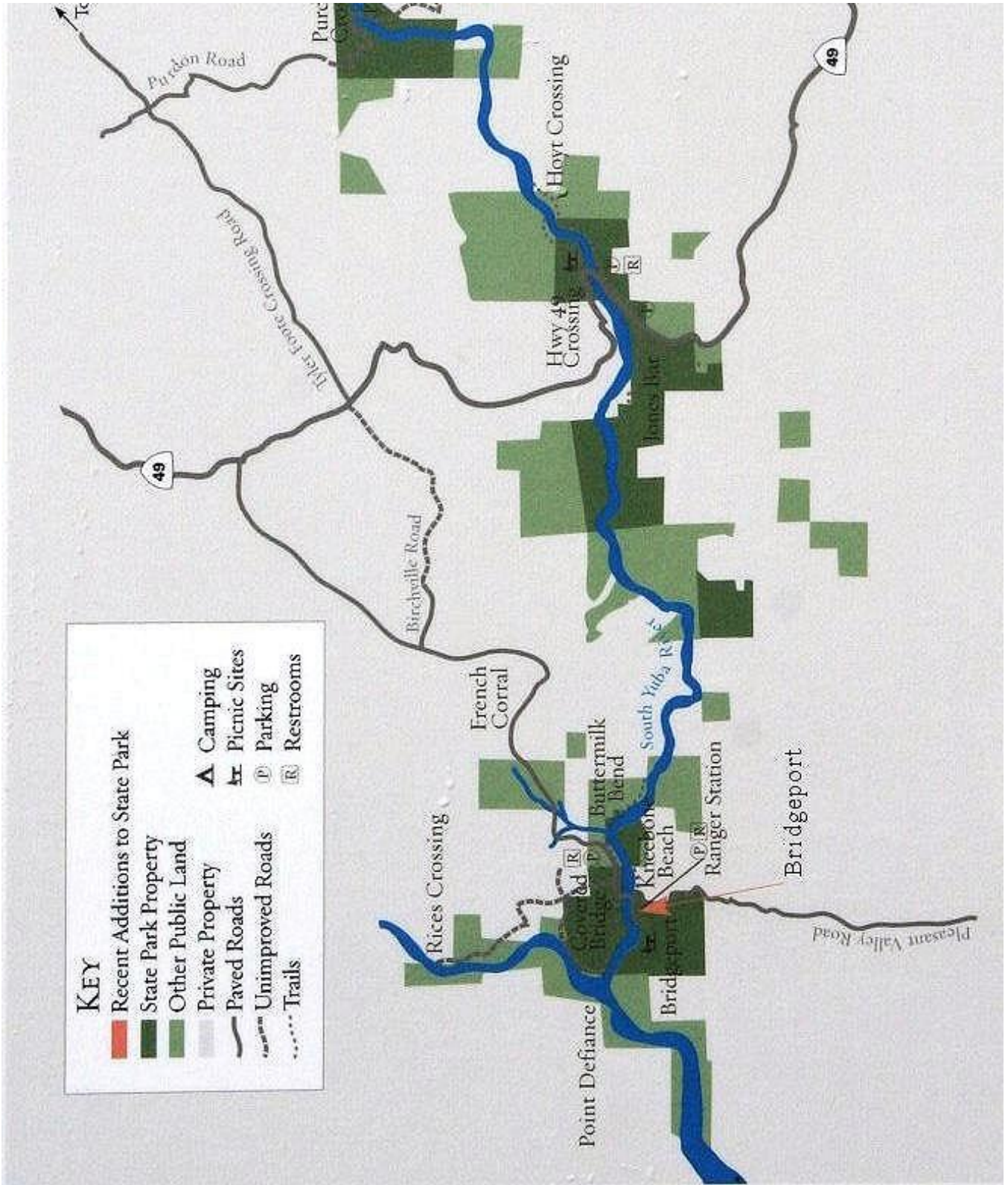
The main entrance to the Trail is located 6 miles north of Nevada City on Highway 49, shortly before the South Yuba River Bridge. There are two directions to choose from, both filled with spectacular views. Less than ½ mile from the entrance, the West Trail has an overlook of the Yuba River built on a roofed platform. Further on is a multi-tiered waterfall, with a switchback ramp leading down to the swirling waters of Rush Creek where California Newts can be seen proliferating in the Spring. The East Trail features many cliff-hanging flumes, a huge rock tunnel, and more views of the river and foothill landscapes. The configuration of the Trail remains unchanged from its original route and does not follow a circular pattern. Whichever direction one decides to take, they must retrace their steps for the return trip.

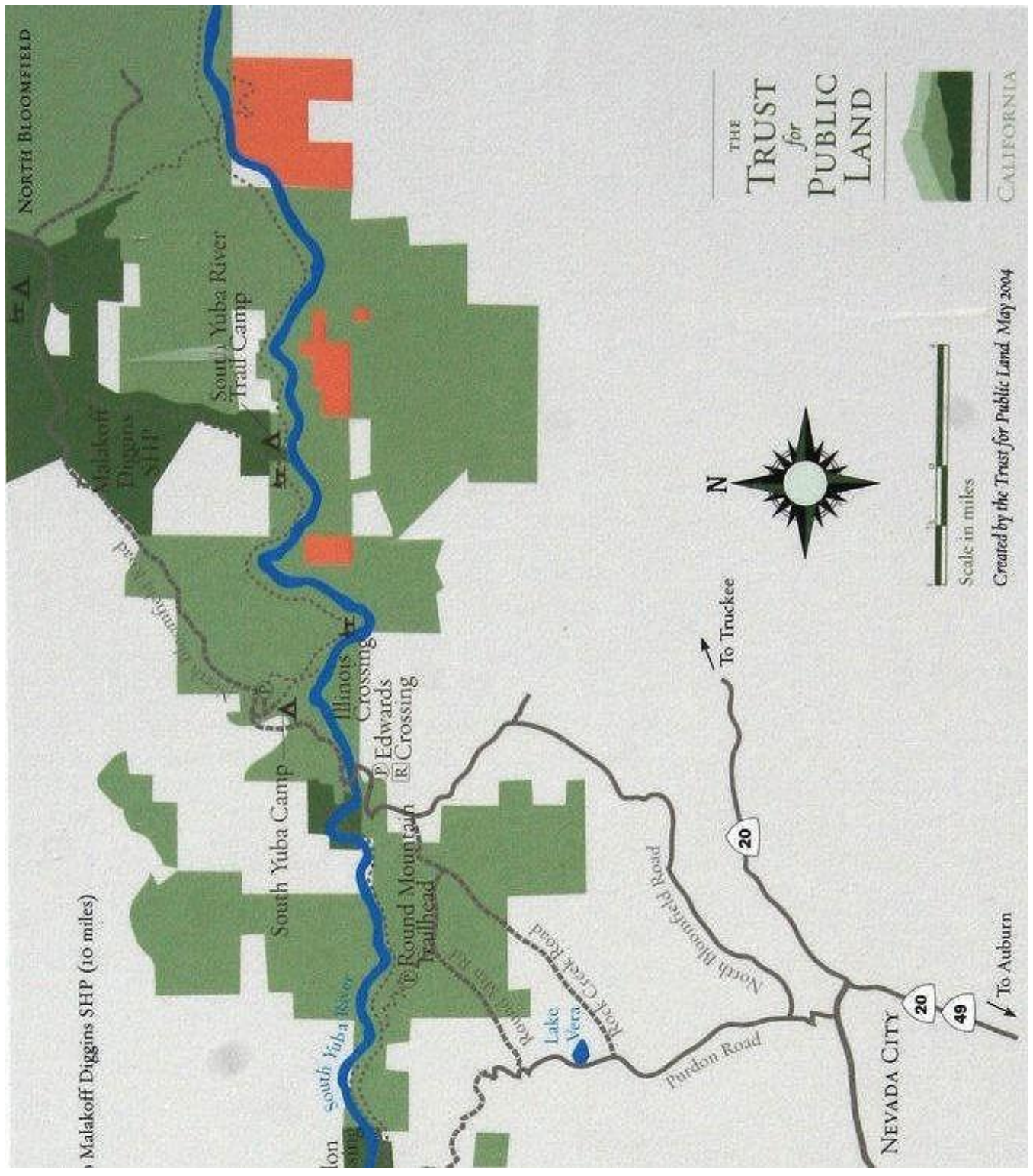
The following is an example of how this very special place can make a difference in so many people's lives, as written by Sandra for Dave:

"A hike in the woods. This singular joy has eluded my darling for thirteen years. A large battery claims credit for propelling him along in his chair. But we know what really moves him, what carries us to rushing waters and gliding newts: the hunger to be here, in this river canyon. And the hearts that saw to remove all barriers as shadows lengthen and the wind picks up we leave, satiated by the Independence Trail, a profound miracle."

Upstream River Crossings

Ferries and bridges across the South Yuba River were established in the 1850s at Jones' Bar (Rush Creek Ferry), Hoyt's Crossing, Purdon Crossing (Lower Robinson), Cooper's Crossing (Illinois Bar), and Edward's Crossing (Upper Robinson). The concrete arch bridge at Highway 49 Crossing was built in 1921 and replaced by the modern bridge just upstream. These sites form the upstream elements of South Yuba River State Park.





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