

## Mini-history of South Yuba River State Park

Native People. From about 2000 BC to about 500 AD, the Bridgeport area was inhabited by the Martis people. About 500 AD, the Southern Nisenan came to the area. The Nisenan were expert basket makers. Baskets were used for cooking, serving, gathering and storing. Because of the steepness of the river canyons, most of the trading was done with the people to the west. 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.

Early Settlers. With gold rush activity on both sides of the Yuba River, safe crossings were vital. Ferries came first, then bridges, cart paths, and finally wagon roads. Early in 1849, brothers Urias and Emanuel Nye established a ferry across the main Yuba River and set up a trading post and bridge at Nye's Crossing (present-day Bridgeport). They sold out in 1851. Sea Captain William Thompson began ranching in 1849. David Wood arrived in 1851, purchased the bridges near Pt. Defiance and at Nye's Crossing and charged tolls. The original bridges washed out in January 1862. The present covered bridge was built in 1862 using lumber and shakes from Wood's Forest City mill.

The Virginia Turnpike. In 1856, Wood and others formed the Virginia Turnpike Company to serve miners traveling to California gold mines and to Nevada silver mines following discovery of the Comstock Lode in 1859. The Turnpike ran 14 miles from the Anthony House on Deer Creek (now under Lake Wildwood) to North San Juan. In the 1860s upwards of 100 wagons a day passed over the Turnpike. The Turnpike continued in operation until 1901.

The Bridgeport Ranch. Ranching began at Bridgeport with arrival of Charles Cole. In 1862, Cole built Bridgeport House and operated it as a residence and hostelry. It is thought that Cole built the big red barn. The barn is lined up with the bridge so that approaching or exiting wagons could drive directly into the barn, obtain services, feed livestock, and make repairs. Following the Coles, Andrew Kneebone ranched and his son Alfred 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. The Resort closed about 1932 when illegal upstream hydraulic mining tailings fouled the swim hole. Between 1979 and 1984 the Department of Parks and Recreation and Sequoia Challenge made land acquisitions along the South Yuba eventually creating the South Yuba River State Park.

Upstream Parcels. Upstream from Bridgeport, 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 River. Other upstream Park parcels include Jones' Bar, Hoyt's Crossing, Purdon Crossing, and Edward's Crossing.

# Membership Application

## South Yuba River Park Association



*In the 1850s and 60s, thousands of loaded wagons crossed the South Yuba River at Bridgeport en route to California and Nevada mines. The 1862 bridge is the longest single-span covered bridge in the United States.*

### Your membership supports the South Yuba River State Park and its features

- ◆ 1862 Covered Bridge
- ◆ 1860s Barn & Transportation Exhibit
- ◆ 1927 Shell Gas Station
- ◆ Buttermilk Bend Wildflower Trail
- ◆ Independence Trail-wheelchair accessible
- ◆ River crossing at Highway 49
- ◆ River crossing at Edwards Crossing
- ◆ River crossing at Purdon Crossing







The South Yuba River Park Association (SYRPA) is the non-profit organization contracted to the State of California Department of Parks and Recreation to support the South Yuba River State Park.

Your membership in SYRPA will:

- ◆ Help preserve, protect and enhance the Park resources
- ◆ Support interpretation of the river canyon's rich biological diversity, scenic features and historic resources
- ◆ Provide you with a quarterly Newsletter
- ◆ Provide a 10% discount on purchases at the Visitor Center

### Membership Application Form

Please fill out and mail to the address below or bring to the Bridgeport Visitor Center with your tax deductible donation:

Annual individual membership	\$20.
Annual family membership	\$25.
Lifetime individual membership	\$150.
Lifetime family membership	\$200.
Small Business sponsor $\leq$ 5 empl.	\$50.
Business sponsor	\$100.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to \_\_\_\_\_ help financially  
 \_\_\_\_\_ become a volunteer at the Park

Make check to SYRPA, PO Box 1658, Penn Valley, CA 95946

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