IMPORTANT BRIDGE NEWS

On December 13, 2015, two of the Bridgeport Park Rangers discovered that during the storm on the previous day, a large limb had broken off of a tree next to the Bridge. The tree limb had broken one of the support cables for the stabilization structure that has been installed on the Bridge. Luckily, the Bridge itself did not sustain any damage! The next morning, State Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) staff were on site assessing the damage and returned on December 16th to affect the repair and install a new cable. A huge thank you to DPR staff and their quick response and repair!

Now; regarding the next phase of the restoration project of the Bridge:

On Monday, January 11, 2016, the Save Our Bridge Campaign Committee is meeting with DPR Staff to receive an update on:

⇒ The semi-final plans for the restoration
⇒ The progress that has been made in the permitting process
⇒ How much has been spent so far and how much is still available from the $1.316 Million allocated for the project
⇒ An updated cost estimate based on the thorough assessment of repairs needed
⇒ If there are cost increases, how does DPR plan to attain the additional funds needed

The Committee is expecting the updated cost estimates for the total project to exceed the budget currently allocated. We will put out an extended report to everyone following this meeting.

**BE PREPARED TO AGAIN BE VERY ACTIVE IN CONTACTING THE GOVERNOR, LEGISLATORS AND DPR TO LET THEM KNOW THAT THIS HISTORIC BRIDGE RESTORATION IS VERY IMPORTANT AND TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO ALLOCATE THE NECESSARY FUNDS TO COMPLETE THE PROJECT.**

With your help and support, we will SAVE OUR BRIDGE!!

Doug Moon
Chair, Save Our Bridge Campaign Committee

SAVE OUR BRIDGE
GET IT DONE

South Yuba River Park Association
P.O. Box 1658, Penn Valley, CA 95946  www.southyubariverstatepark.org
President’s Message

Winter is a quiet time at our Park. It is an opportunity to reflect on the events of this last year and to look forward to the New Year. Happy New Year everyone!

2015 has been very busy for our Association, including our very successful Spring fundraiser, our Fall Festival, the Member and Volunteer Appreciation Dinner in September, and our Holiday Potluck.

I wish to thank the other officers and directors for their efforts this past year and their willingness to serve in the coming year: Carol Berry, Vice President, Bill Stamatis, Treasurer, and Ginny Brown, Secretary, and Paul Keasberry (who also serves as Co-Chair of Friends of North Bloomfield & Malakoff Diggins), Doug Moon (who also serves as Chairman of the Save Our Bridge Committee), Bruce Stanton, Margaret Vodicka and Warren Wittich (who is our conservator of the Independence Trail). This is a very talented and congenial group. I also wish to thank all of our members of the Association for their support of the Board – it is very much appreciated.

Thanks are also due to the Friends of North Bloomfield & Malakoff Diggins Executive Committee, co-chaired by Paul Keasberry and Dave Anderson. Beginning only last Spring, the Committee worked to assure that the traditional events on the Malakoff Diggins State Historic Park calendar were held so that the public need not take notice of the transition from the prior Association. The Committee continues to work to reinvigorate the role of the Cooperating Association in supporting educational and interpretive activities at this very special park.

Looking forward, the Board has started work on updating the Association’s strategic plan. Our most critical challenge is the effort to assure that our iconic covered bridge is fully restored and maintained. (See the article from the Save Our Bridge Committee for an update.) The Board will be looking at other strategic initiatives and action plans. Please let me or any other Board member know if you have ideas or issues that you believe we should address.

Please remember that it is time for us to renew our annual memberships. Membership dues play a large role in our ability to perform our mission of providing interpretive and financial support to our park. It is also a good time to invite others who enjoy our park to also join our Association and to volunteer at our park.

The Association also needs help for events, including the Spring Fundraiser, fund raising and many other activities to support our goals. Please consider volunteering your time. We have a very talented pool of members. Make a difference and volunteer to help with an activity.

**Finally I want to wish everyone a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.**

See you in the Parks.

*Robert*
SUPERVISING RANGER REPORT

With the New Year upon us, most people may talk about their New Year’s resolutions. Some might try quitting smoking. Some might go on a diet or exercise more. Or… some people might not want to change a thing since they have already started a positive transformation long before the New Year tradition. I want to say that “consistency” is our word to describe this upcoming year since I believe we have already started our positive change. Being consistent on giving our visitors the best possible experience while they are enjoying our slice of heaven. Being consistent with providing high-quality recreation and interpretive opportunities to our visitors. Being consistent with our ongoing mission of recruiting positive/energetic volunteers within our communities and at the same time, recognizing and celebrating the hard work and dedication of our small volunteer base.

To help with our ongoing “consistency” message, for the third year in a row, we have an adequate seasonal employee budget to help us in our mission. We are in the process of hiring two new seasonal employees that have the willingness and passion to help take our volunteer program to the next level. From the Parks Family to your Family…Happy Holidays. I look forward to seeing all of you in the park this coming year.

Dan Youngren

Show Your Support for California State Parks

Applications for California State Parks specialized license plates “ParksPLATES” are now being accepted. Proceeds from the sale and renewal to the plates will help fund the restoration and preservation of California’s 280 state parks. This is an additional way to show your support for California’s state parks.

In order for the plates to be issued, 7,500 pre-paid applications must be collected before the DMV may begin the process of issuing the plates. In addition to the regular fees for original registration and renewal, the fee for original issuance for a sequential ParksPLATE is $50 and $40 a year for renewals or $98 for original issuance of a personalized plate and $78 per year for renewals.

To learn more and to apply for your ParksPLATE, please visit:

ParksPLATE.parks.ca.gov

A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL VISITOR CENTER DOCENTS!!

We would like to celebrate our special Docents who volunteer at the Visitor Center with a “Thank You Coffee” on Wednesday, February 17th. It will be held at the VC, from 10:00am - noon. Come enjoy some hot drinks and breakfast goodies and let yourself be appreciated. We hope everyone who works at the VC will be able to attend. See you there!

The VC Committee
TIME TO RENEW YOUR
SYRPA MEMBERSHIP!
Invite family and friends to join!

* Annual Individual Membership: $20
* Annual Family Membership: $25
* Lifetime Individual Membership: $150
* Lifetime Family Membership: $200
* Annual Small Business Sponsor: $50
  (up to 5 employees)
* Annual Business Sponsor: $100

Make Checks Payable and mail to:
SYRPA
ATTN: Membership
P.O. Box 1658
Penn Valley, CA 95946
You can also pay on-line! It’s easy!
Go to the SYRPA website:
www.southyubariverstatepark.org
and click on “Become a Member”

HELP WANTED!!

We are in dire need of Docents at the Park! If you are a SYRPA member and not trained as a Docent, PLEASE consider offering your time and talents to help staff our many activities at the Park. We need help in the Visitor Center, Wild Flower walks, Gold Panning, Greeters, Barn Tours and Trail Rovers.

Please call:
Paul Keasberry 530-432-1947
or
Ranger Dan Youngren:
530-432-2546

Why I Volunteer

It is good for my physical and mental health
1. Studies have shown that when one focuses on others, it reduces tension.
2. Being around others brings joy and compassion which in turn boosts your immune system.
3. Volunteering promotes personal growth
4. Giving back to ones community increases self-esteem

While volunteering in the Visitor Center, I find myself engaged with such a variety of people who share such interesting life stories - people come from all over the world from all walks of life. I’ve learned so much about our local history, the environment, our park and the surrounding area all because visitors come with their many questions which I then enjoy researching. I feel good at the end of a day working in the Visitor Center because I was able to promote our gorgeous park and share its many wonderful features. Plus, I am raising some money from our gift sales to continue funding such worthwhile endeavors like school trips, nature walks, gold panning, etc. Finally, my physical health is maintained by taking a walk on either the Buttermilk Bend Trail or Point Defiance Trail either before or after my shift in the Visitor Center.

Margaret Vodika

VISITOR CENTER

Have you seen the great selection of books at the VC? We are especially grateful to the photographers and artists in our midst who have published books about our beautiful parks and surroundings. The VC carries a variety of books about nature, California wildlife, children’s stories and small activity books perfect for the creative minds of our young visitors.

To volunteer contact: Ranger Marc Wetherbee, phone: 530-432-2546; email: marc.wetherbee@parks.ca.gov

The Visitor Center winter hours are: Thursday thru Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
SYRPA HOLIDAY POTLUCK

A GREAT CELEBRATION OF THE HOLIDAY SEASON!

On the beautiful evening of December 3, 2015 the South Yuba River Park Association held it’s annual Holiday Potluck Dinner and Celebration. It was a resounding success! The attendance was up over 50% from last year, due in large part to a great publicity effort by John and Kathy Field. We also enjoyed the company of two of our Rangers, Marc Wetherbee and Dan Youngren. The Oak Room at the Lake Wildwood Community Center was beautifully decorated and arranged for dinner by Bev Morgan-Fuller, Sharon Anderson and Mickey Springer. Mickey also provided the two great raffle door prizes won by attendees at the end of the evening. Ardie Obert, Steve Pauly and Carol Berry were our greeters and made sure everyone had a name tag and raffle ticket.

The food, as usual, prepared by all of our SYRPA chefs was fabulous! Especially notable was the elk stew provided by our retired Ranger Mike Smittle. Good beverages were provided by SYRPA and the bar was set up and staffed by our resident bartenders Bill Stamatis and Paul Keasberry. The company and conversation was lively and filled with laughter. We also enjoyed great music provided by Billy and Kellie. All in all it was a great evening spent with friends and colleagues. A great big thank you goes to all of the members of the committee that planned and presented this year’s event. We hope everyone had a very Merry Christmas and has a Happy New Year!

Doug Moon
Bridgeport’s Annual Fall Festival

The South Yuba River Park Association (SYRPA) and the South Yuba River State Park hosted the Annual Bridgeport Fall Festival at the South Yuba River Historic State Park on October 25th. The park came alive with fun, food, games and music. Several State Park Rangers, Park Aids and many SYRPA Volunteers participated in putting on this wonderful event.

The day’s activities included music by Michael Bremer and The Buffalo Girls, living history characters, hayrides provided by Rod Hisken driving his 1956 John Deere tractor, wild bird exhibits and presentations by Wildlife Rehabilitation and Release of Grass Valley and Gold Country Wildlife Rescue. There was also an Audubon table along with representation by the Bear Yuba Land Trust and the Nisenan Tribe.

Among other activities were basket weaving, wool spinning, face painting, pumpkin painting, gold panning, barn tours and much more for kids of all ages. Even the old Shell gas station was open for root beer floats. Food and drink was available from vendors including Culture Shock Yogurt, June’s Deli and the Penn Valley Chamber of Commerce.

The Ghosts of Bridgeport returned to tell their own stories of life along the South Yuba River. Mark Lyon, the Ghost Tour Guide from Nevada City and Grass Valley called on several of the ghosts of the area to tell of their lives in the late 1800’s.

Although the covered bridge is closed for renovation, visitors were able to peer into it from behind a chain link fence. Attending the Bridgeport Fall Festival was, once again, a great way to experience one of our local treasures in Nevada County.

John Field

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR NEXT YEAR’S FALL FESTIVAL: SUNDAY, OCTOBER 23RD!! IT’S A FREE FUN FAMILY EVENT
Sierra District Cooperating Associations Gathering

In late October, the Sierra Parks Foundation hosted a day long meeting that brought together leadership and staff of the Cooperating Associations in the Sierra District and leadership of the State Parks that we work with, including District Superintendent Marilyn Linkem and District Maintenance Chief Ron Hansen. We met at the new Visitor Center at Donner Memorial State Park.

The Cooperating Associations in the Sierra District are (1) South Yuba River Park Association (South Yuba River State Park), (2) Friends of North Bloomfield and Malakoff Diggins (Malakoff State Historic Park), (3) Empire Mine Park Association (Empire Mine State Historic Park), (4) Bodie Foundation (Bodie State Historic Park, Mono Lake Tufa State Natural Reserve and Grover Hot Springs), (5) Plumas Eureka State Park Association (Plumas-Eureka State Park), and (6) Sierra Parks Association (Six parks around Lake Tahoe, including Donner Memorial State Park).

During the day, the six Cooperating Associations shared information, including successes and challenges. There were presentations by Wayne Breece, State Parks Cooperating Association Program Manager, and Steve Szalay, State Parks Transformation Team Leader. There was also a panel including Wayne Breece, Marilyn Linkem (Sierra District Superintendent), Matt Green (Sector Superintendent), Ron Hansen (Sierra District Maintenance Chief), Natalie Davenport (Sierra District Curator) and Bill Lindemann (Sierra District Interpretive Specialist). Lunch was provided by State Parks staff.

The session on the Transformation Team provided insight into the progress being made in response to the Parks Forward Initiative and Report. The Transformation Team’s task is to prepare our State Parks for the next generation of users with a fiscally sustainable model. This is no small or easy task. This two year process is an opportunity for all of us to share our ideas about improving our State Parks and keeping them relevant. Members and supporters of our Association may become involved by contributing ideas to the team and following its progress on the Transformation Team website (www.parks.ca.gov). Heidi Doyle, Executive Director of Sierra Parks Foundation also serves on the State Parks Transformation Team Advisory Committee.

A big thank you is due to the Sierra Parks Foundation and Sierra District staff for organizing this first annual meeting. It was a good opportunity to learn more about the Sierra District and lessons learned and challenges faced by the other Cooperating Associations in our area. All attendees came away with new perspectives and ideas to be applied to their Parks and Associations.

Robert Coats
Tour of the Henness Pass Road with Chuck Scimeca.

Be very careful if Chuck Scimeca ever invites you to dinner. 17 of us arrived at the SYRSP at 9:00 am for an enjoyable Sunday drive followed by dinner. After 9 hours, 91 miles, over 11,000 feet of climbing and over 7000 feet of descending we arrived in Verdi Nevada where we enjoyed dinner with great company. I am of course talking about the tour of the Virginia turnpike and Henness Pass Road. I think that I can speak for everyone when I say we were very happy to be in modern cars and not in a stage coach or driving a freight wagon. Even in modern cars we had one flat tire and one minor mechanical failure due to all the shaking. When training to become docent I was given information on the wooden bridge built by David Wood at SYRSP and the road that got supplies up to the Comstock diggings. I seem to remember all the maps we were given on this tour with Chuck but until this tour I never really understood the matrix of roads that were available and the companies that built the various segments or the many stops that supported the travelers. All I really knew was Bridgeport had a wooden bridge leading to a road on the other side called Henness Pass. Now I understand that they actually took the Virginia turnpike north where they joined with the Truckee Turnpike in North San Juan or the Sierra turnpike around Camptonville. These two actually came together and later joined up with the Henness Pass at Jackson Meadows. On our tour we followed the Truckee Turnpike. We visited the site of David Wood's mill where the lumber for the Bridgeport Bridge would have been milled and we learned that Mr. Wood not only built the bridge but also built and improved some of the roads that were used. Mr. Wood was also involved in a court case that went to the Supreme Court and to this day that case is referred to in the courts. We also visited the sites of many stage stops and inns that provided services and support to the travelers using Henness Pass. Other than open fields and maybe a water source little still exists of these old buildings except for the Webber Lake Lodge. It is still standing and it looks like it has been standing for 150 years. The lodge was purchased by the Truckee Donner Land Trust in 2012 and in 2017 the public will have access to this property. Plans are now being made to restore the old buildings. We were very fortunate to get an early tour of the property. Thanks for a great tour!

Frank Hamlin
Toll Keeper Thomas William Milton Thompson

In mid-2015 the South Yuba River Park Association installed a plaque in the Barn to commemorate the two known Bridge toll keepers: Perkins Lafayette Hutchinson (1856-1864) and Gideon Hand Graves (1876-1899). Recently we have found that Thomas William Milton Thompson was listed in the 1870 US Census for French Corral as Toll Keeper.

The very next household in that Census is of Caleb Cooley who lived in the former David Wood house (at the present North Parking Lot site). So it seems logical to conclude that Thompson lived near to Cooley and to the Covered Bridge and would have taken tolls at the Covered Bridge in the 1865 to 1875 period between the other two known toll keepers. Also, in 1855 Thompson was elected Treasurer of the Virginia Turnpike Company. Thompson was born October 14, 1827 in Campbell County, Virginia. He was Jane Thompson Wood’s (David Wood’s wife’s) nephew. That would explain why Thompson came to this part of California from Missouri. The 1850 Calumet Township, Pike County, Missouri, census, below, shows Thomas, then 21, had gone “to the mines” sometime in 1850.

Thompson married Bridget Victoria Evans October 12, 1858 and they had a daughter in 1862. Bridget died shortly after the birth due to tuberculosis, and the child died soon thereafter as well. Both are buried in California. (Could these be two of the nine unmarked graves at the Kneebone Cemetery?) Thompson registered as a voter in 1877 at French Corral. By the time of the 1880 US Census, Thompson had moved back to Campbell County, VA, married Ann Isabella Evans, and was farming. The couple raised six children. Thomas died April 14, 1898 and Isabella died in 1902 in Campbell County, Virginia. It’s interesting to contemplate the very distinctive and interesting names of our three toll keepers.

Steve Pauly
History Coordinator
Remembering Dick Alexander

Longtime park docent Dick Alexander, a native of Toledo, Ohio, passed away October 8, 2015. He was 89. Following his medical degree at University of Michigan in 1949 and a tour of duty in the Korean War, Dick married Dodie Euber and they raised a family of five children. He established a private practice in general surgery in Sunnyvale, was on the staff of El Camino Hospital in Mountain View, and practiced there until his retirement in 1992 as director of emergency services. He was involved in establishment of the Northwest YMCA in Cupertino, was president of the Mountain View-Los Altos School District Board and in many other volunteer activities. Dick and Dodie moved to Penn Valley in 1993.

Dick will be remembered as the Park History Coordinator from 1997 to 2012. In this role he researched the South Yuba River State Park cultural history including former residents, historic bridges, and historic structures. Dick loved the 1860s Barn and interpreted it often for visitors especially during our public events. He was appointed History Coordinator by Ranger Chuck Scimeca in 1997 and later passed the baton to Steve Pauly, who considers Dick his mentor. He had an enviable and not-to-be-equaled exacting and patient approach to his historical research. Dick also was a member of the Nevada County Historical Landmarks Commission from 2007 to 2014.

Steve Pauly
CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2016
South Yuba River State Park

SAVE OUR BRIDGE CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING: January 11th, 2:00pm~ NC Admin Center; Empire Room
VISITOR CENTER DOCENT THANK YOU COFFEE/TEA: February 17th, 10:00—12:00~ VC
SYRPA SPRING FLING FUND RAISER: Date and locale to be announced
MALAKOFF FISHING DERBY: May 14th ~ Malakoff Diggins
MALAKOFF HUMBUG DAY: June 11th ~ Malakoff Diggins
NEVADA COUNTY FAIR: August 10th-14th ~Nevada County Fairgrounds
GOLD RUSH DAYS: Dates to be announced ~ Downtown Grass Valley
DOCENT APPRECIATION DINNER: September 21 ~ at Bridgeport
FALL FESTIVAL: October 23th at Bridgeport ~11am– 4pm
VISITOR CENTER Open Thursday-Sunday 11am-3pm until Spring; then 10am –4:00pm
HOLIDAY POT-LUCK: December date and place to be announced

Reoccurring events
BIRD WALKS: Dates to be announced: meet at 8:00am Bridgeport North Parking Lot
GOLD PANNING Memorial Day - Labor Day Sat & Sun 11:00am-2:00pm~ Bridgeport Visitor Center; donation $1 per pan
WILDFLOWER WALKS - Every Saturday and Sunday at 11:00 am, beginning in March, and continuing through May. Donations of $3 appreciated.
SYRPA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS: Second Thursday of each month; 9:00~ Bridgeport
FNB/MD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS: First Friday of each month

**For more information on any of these events, please visit the SYRPA webpage at www.southyubariverstatepark.org

Or call the Visitor Center: 530-432-2546