

Pioneer Yosemite History Center Online

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Preface

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r Information for this web exhibit about the Pioneer Yosemite History Center has been gathered from many sources. r They are acknowledged in text or their [references section](#). r Photographs not credited were taken by me. r I'd like to thank those historians that preserved the stories here, r and Doug Hubbard who preserved the

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Introduction

r r r

r Pioneer Yosemite History Center n.r
r r A place of pioneers who profoundly
r influenced the birth and growth
r of the National Park idea.r r

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r Wagon ride with driver Burrel Maierr

r r The scenery of Yosemite National Park is world-renown. Each year, millions ofr people are drawn to its thundering waterfalls, towering giant sequoias,r unique geologic features, and magnificent high country. The story of people,r however, is not as well known.r Here at the Pioneer Yosemite History Center, the National Park Servicer commemorates the efforts of people, the events they experienced,r and the issues they faced during the establishment of this great park.r r

r The Pioneer Yosemite History Center consists of historic structures fromr different eras of Yosemite history.r Originally constructed in different locations in Yosemite, they were moved tor Wawona in the late 1950's and early 1960's.r As you walk among them, it is important to remember that the area does notr represent a village.r Instead, each building represents a different chapter in the Yosemite story.r

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r *Doug Hubbard* (YRL)r

r r The impetus for the Pioneer Yosemite History Center came when the flood of 1955 nearly destroyed the covered bridge. Up until then, historic preservation was a low priority for the National Park Service. In the 1930's, 1940's and early 1950's the Park Service, with the help of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) dismantled several historic buildings in Yosemite Valley, including John Muir's cabin and the oldest building in the park, Cedar Cottage (1859). At the time preservation of natural scenery was considered the "highest use," even if required razing historic structures. However, in the late 1950's thinking started to come around to giving more priority to historic preservation in park planning. r r

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r r *Wawona, location of
r Pioneer Yosemite
r History Center* r

r r Through extensive efforts of Park Naturalist Douglass H. Hubbard, the bridge was restored and several historic buildings were preserved. Park Superintendent John Preston made funds available for the effort. Doug Hubbard's project was initially derided by fellow park staff as "Doug's Berry Farm" (a play on words off the California ghost town amusement park, Knott's Berry Farm). Once approved Doug Hubbard enlisted Glenn Gordo, master craftsman and builder from Mariposa and grandson of a pioneering Portuguese couple, and his workmen were recruited. r r

r r Due to budget cuts, the Living History Program, where docents assume the roles of historic personalities, is no longer running. However, the buildings are usually open Wednesday - Sunday during the summer. Hours vary—check at Wawona Information Station in the old Hill Studio next to the Wawona Hotel. It's worthwhile to take some time to visit the Pioneer Yosemite History Center, and with the stories presented here on these historical buildings, your visit should be more interesting. A riding stable behind the History Center is also open summers, and offers guided horseback rides. r

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Covered Bridge

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r r Wawona, location of
r Covered Bridge r

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r Wagon covered bridge and mud wagon
r with driver Burrel Maier

r r All Yosemite-bound traffic through here crossed the bridge. r The deck and truss portion of this bridge across the South Fork of the Merced River was built around 1857 by settler Galen Clark, who established a tourist facility here. r The area was then called Clark's Station. r Clark's role as one of the original

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conservationists and innkeepers places him in one of the earliest chapters of Yosemite's history. After Abraham Lincoln signed legislation in 1864 protecting Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias by creating the Yosemite Grant, Clark was appointed the Guardian of the Grant.

The road from Wawona to the Yosemite Valley opened in 1875 just after the Washburn brothers purchased Clark's land along the river. The brothers, who were from Vermont, covered the bridge in 1879. Although the large beams were hand-hewn with ax and adze, the lumber to cover the bridge was cut locally at the Washburn's sawmill. Speciality axes were used to hew round logs into square timbers and mortice and tenon joints were used to join the timbers. Bridges were covered primarily to protect their large wood truss beams and flooring from the weather. It is much easier to reshingle a roof than to replace the major supporting structures. The covering also helped horses stay focused on the road rather than the sometimes raging river in spring. Did the Washburn brothers cover the bridge exclusively for practical reasons? Maybe so. But a granddaughter claims the reason was nostalgia — they were homesick for a bit of New England.

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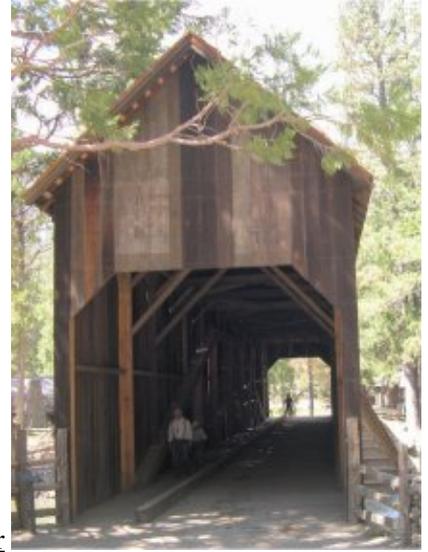


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r Covered bridge from South Fork Merced River

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r r r The bridge was used until 1931 when it was replaced by a modern concrete bridge (which, in turn, has been replaced after damage from the 1997 floods). A flood in 1955 nearly destroyed the covered bridge. Its 1957 restoration was the first step in the creation of the Pioneer Yosemite History Center. Glenn Gordo, master craftsman and builder from Mariposa and grandson of a pioneering Portuguese couple, along with his crew, were recruited after the flood to restore the bridge. Doug Hubbard remembers the bridge restoration:

r Gordo and his workmen shored up the bridge's sagging middle, used pieces of heavy pipe, and with a bulldozer-powered winch rolled it smoothly ashore. After months of intensive work, during which the deteriorating timbers, siding, and roof were replaced, the process was reversed and the bridge rolled back to its original position. [Shirley Sargent *Protecting Paradise* (1998), p. 110.]

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r The bridge was again restored in 2003, but in place.r 19th century tools and crafts were used to replicate worn parts of ther the hand-hewn bridge.r This covered bridge is one of two covered bridges owned by ther National Park Service andr one of 13 in California.r It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.r r

r As you cross the bridge, listen for the lowr rumble of an oncoming stage and allow yourr imagination to return to the days ofr Yosemite's pioneers.r

r r r

More information

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- r
- r r [Photograph of Wawona Bridge before it was covered and rebuilt,r along with more history.](#) r From Sargent's *Wawona's Yesterdays* (1961).r

- r r
- r r ["Restoring a Bridge to the Past"](#)r (PDF)r r by Jeff Lahrr *Yosemite* 66:4 pp. 3-5 (Fall 2004).r Details the covered bridge history and the 1957 and 2003 restorations.r

- r r
- r [Wawona Covered Bridge Restoration, 1957.](#)r Photographs taken by Glenn Gordo, who supervised the bridge reconstruction.r r
- r [Another covered bridge over the South Fork of the Tuolumne River, 1906](#) (no longer standing). From Paden & Schlichtmann'sr *Big Oak Flat Road* (1959).r

- r r
- r ["Can the Wawona Covered Bridge be Saved?."](#) 35(3):31 (March 1956) by Arthur G. Rempselr [PDF]r r

- r r
- r ["The Wawona covered bridge in 1926"](#) 36(11):cover photo (November 1957)r [PDF]r r

- r
- r ["Saving the Wawona Covered Bridge."](#) 36(11):113-122 (November 1957) by Jack F. Fryr [PDF]r r

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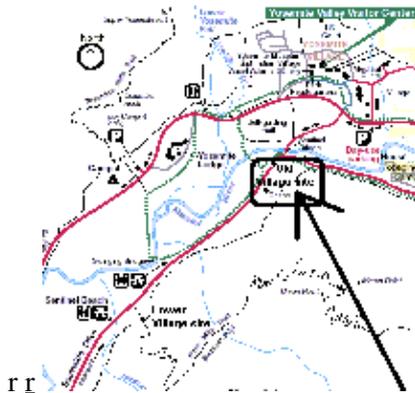
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Chris Jorgensen Artist Home

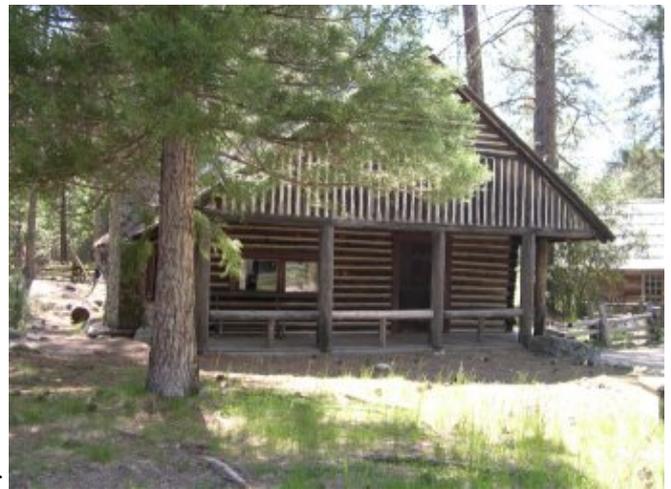
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r Jorgensen's home was
r originally located just upstream
r from Sentinel Bridge, across
r the Merced River from the Old
r Village in Yosemite Valley. r r

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r "The Bungalow" r

r r The era of the artist in Yosemite extends from 1855 to the present time. r Artists were drawn to Yosemite, where they found inspiration in the magnificent scenery. r Artists' paintings, r drawings, sketches, and photographs publicized and popularized Yosemite. r They excited the curiosity of r folks, and interest in the

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area grew rapidly. Consequently, many people chose to travel the rough route to Yosemite and experience the beauty firsthand.

Artists were among the first pioneers to enjoy and appreciate this area for the sake of its natural beauty and grandeur. Explorers, writers, and early tourist parties of the 1850's returned from Yosemite with stories of spectacular beauty. It is they who brought to public attention the magnificence of 30-foot wide trees and 1,000-foot waterfalls, instilling a sense of wonder in those who had never seen the Yosemite.

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r r *Chris Jorgensen painting
r Wawona Tunnel Tree* r

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r *"The Bungalow"* r

Artist Chris Jorgensen, a noted painter, was one of many artists who popularized Yosemite and specialized in scenic paintings in oil and watercolor. Jorgensen first came to Yosemite Valley in 1898 and

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camped two summers before building his first cottage—a studio and residence—on the north bank of the Merced River in 1900. In 1903, he built a one-story, one-room log structure, “the bungalow,” on the opposite side of the river from the Sentinel Hotel in the Old Upper Village, and a short distance above the Sentinel Bridge. Jorgensen maintained a separate studio nearby, and also had a barn and storehouse. This new residence had a wood shingle-covered gable roof, with the front decorative gable end projecting ten feet beyond the front wall of the cabin. Its walls consisted of peeled logs in alternating tiers and contained an original stained glass window. Jorgensen maintained a seasonal residence and studio in the valley until 1918.

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r Half Dome from Washburn
r Point Area. *Watercolor by*
r *Christian Jorgensen*
r *(Yosemite Museum)* r r

r In 1917 the National Park Service was established. After a summer of inadequate tent quarters for a government mess, the operation moved into the old Jorgensen cabin, which the artist had vacated after relinquishing his concession. A committee of three men appointed by Superintendent W. B. Lewis made the studio into a clubhouse for members of the mess by converting it into a kitchen and dining room. r r

r In 1921 the Yosemite Museum was established and housed in the old Jorgensen cabin. This was the first museum in a National Park. Chris Jorgensen donated his extensive Native American basket collection to the newly-established Yosemite Museum in 1923. In 1926 a “permanent” museum was built in the new Yosemite Village, partly on donations from school children and others. r

r r

r Chris Jorgensen died in 1935 and the Yosemite Museum acquired 198 oil and watercolor paintings from his heirs. These were on display until around 1966 when the Yosemite Museum was closed for use as administrative offices. Unfortunately, since the museum closure the public cannot view his art or other Museum collections. r

r r

r In 1962 the Park Service razed the earlier Jorgensen studio and residence (built in 1900) and moved the latter bungalow (built in 1903) to the Yosemite Pioneer History Center, in the mistaken belief that it was the studio building. So, unfortunately, the latter Jorgensen home that was preserved instead of his studio. The

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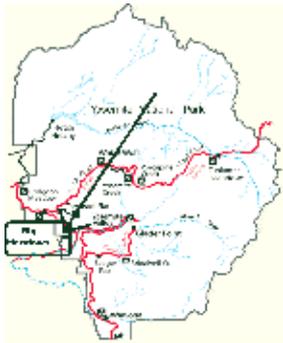
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George Anderson Pioneer Home

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r Big Meadows (now Foresta),
r original location of
r Anderson Home

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r r Men such as Scots emigrant George Anderson provided many of these visitor needs, serving as blacksmiths, cooks and trail guides. r Anderson, a Scottish sailor, goldseeker, and jack-of-all trades, r represents the early pioneers and settlers of the area. r Tourist parties provided business for local residents. r George Anderson, a miner and blacksmith, worked as a guide in the later 1800's, and escorted visitors on expeditions in Yosemite. r Anderson himself built many of the trails still used in the Valley. r r

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r This simple cabin of George Anderson was built in the 1870s.r Anderson used this floorless cabin as his
residencer when not working elsewhere in the area.r He spent his winters in this buildingr and his summers as
a blacksmith in Yosemite Valley.r The cabin was originally located near Big Meadow,r northwest of
Yosemite Valley (now called Foresta).r

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r r (NPS)r

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r r In October, 1875, George Anderson was the first man to climb Half Dome.r Although many had tried to
scale the summit before him, Andersonr laboriously drilled holes for spikes all the way up the back side to its
peak.r Following the entrepreneurial spirit that energized many ofr Yosemite’s first settlers, Anderson soonr
began charging for tours to the top.r Visitors used his rope for several years thereafter to make their own
ascents.r George Anderson was planning on building a wooden stairway to the top ofr Half Dome, with the
hope of making a small fortune from tolls.r While collecting timber for the project he became sick and died
alone inr this cabin.r r

r Although Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove had been set asider for protection by the State of
California in 1864, prior claimsr to the land caused legal battles between residents and the government.r Land
claims would be fought for many years.r

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r In Shirley Sargent’s *Protecting Paradise*,r Jim Cuneo is asked by Doug Hubbard how the small cabin was
furnished.r He saidr “Gunny sacks and maybe a blanket on a make-shift bed.”r For the kitchen,r “A wood
stove; frying pan and a saucepan or two.”r For dishes,r “Maybe a plate, but he probably ate straight out of the

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Hodgdon Homestead Cabin

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r Aspen Valley, original
r location of cabin r

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r r The Hodgdon cabin is the only two-story
r log cabin in Yosemite National Park. r r

r r The Hodgdon cabin represents the role of the homesteaders, a controversial chapter of Yosemite's history. Homesteaders claimed a portion of the Yosemite area under the stipulations of the Homesteading Act of 1864. The Hodgsons owned a ranch in the Sierra foothills and claimed a section of land near Yosemite as summer pasture. The Hodgsons, along with other pioneer families, opposed John Muir's efforts to create Yosemite National Park, believing that it would erode their rights as property owners. After building the only two-story cabin in the region, and creating a summer home, the Hodgsons feared that the

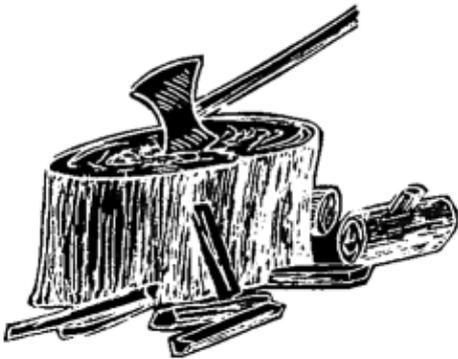
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creation ofr Yosemite National Park would undermine their homesteading efforts.r r r

r The idea of protecting the watersheds of the Yosemite area, by meansr of a natural preserve surrounding the state grant, gained popularity.r The Homestead Act of 1862 provided for 160 acres (65 hectares) of landr to any person willing to occupy and cultivate the land for five years.r Much of the high country around Yosemite Valley had also been claimed by the late 1800's.r Were such a natural preserve to be set aside, would these homesteadsr be reclaimed by the government?r Or, could homesteaders play an important role inr meeting the needs of increasing numbers of visitors?r

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r (NPS)r

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r *Kitchen and woodlot*

r r Jeremiah Hodgdon and family,r ranchers from the San Joaquin Valley, built this cabin on theirr homesteaded land in 1879 at Aspen Valley, north of Crane Flat,r and grazed cattle there each summer.r This building represents the homesteadersr who endeavored to carve farms and ranches from the wilderness.r It is Yosemite's only two-story log home.r r

r In the late 1880's, John Muir and other preservationists grew concernedr that the damage caused by cattle and sheep in the high country would impactr the watershed and Yosemite's waterfalls.r This led to Congress

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establishing Yosemite National Park in 1890. The Hodgeons were opposed to the park's creation as they feared they will have to sell their land and lose their livelihood.

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r r *Front inside of cabin* r

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The Hodgdon cabin was originally located in Aspen Valley, on the old Tioga Road, it was dismantled trucked to Wawona for the History Center. The cabin was photographed and each log numbered for reassembly. Historian Margaret Schlichtmann, author of *The Big Oak Flat Road to Yosemite* provided historic furnishings for the cabin. Mrs. Schlichtmann for a time played the role of Mrs. Hodgdon, sitting in a rocker on the front porch telling stories, providing the Park's first living history. The Hodgdon Homestead Cabin is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (architecture, local).

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More information

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- r
- 1870 travel account briefly describing the stage stop and meal at Hodgden's
- r
- r Description of Hodgdon's hotel and cattle business in the 1870s (from Paden & Schlichtmann *The Big Oak Flat Road*)r
- r
- r Jeremiah Hodgdon's cabin and homestead in Aspen Valley is described in r "Business Ventures," The Tioga Road (1961) by Keith Trexler.r
- r
- r "Yosemite's Pioneer Cabins," describes r Hodgdon Cabin and r "Hodgdon Ranch or Branson

Meadows.r

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r r *Aspen Valley Homestead Cabin, 1909*
r (*USGS digital file topa0078*)r r

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Blacksmith Shop

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r r By 1900, many people had made the trip to Yosemite on horseback or by horse-drawn stage. Roads were rough on horses and riders. It took eight hours to travel approximately 25 miles (40 km.) from Wawona to Yosemite Valley. A four-up stage (a stage being drawn by four horses) changed horses four times during the trip. Consequently, 16 horses were used to make the journey. Blacksmith shops were located throughout the park, and “smithys” offered valuable assistance with shoeing and stage repair. r r

r The blacksmith shop was moved from a Madera County ranch, southwest of Yosemite Park. r r

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Cavalry Office

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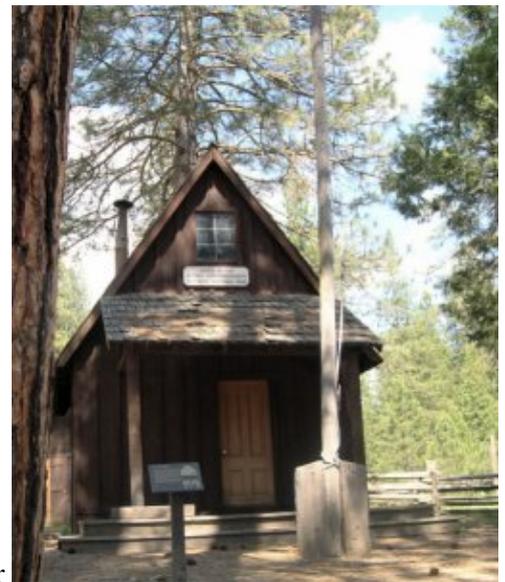


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r Camp A. E. Woodr
r (now Wawona Campground),r
r original location of Cavalry
r officer

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r Cavalry Officer

r r r On October 1, 1890, a national preserve of 932,600 acres (377410 hectares)r was established, surrounding Yosemite Valley and ther Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias.r Although Yosemite was set aside as a national park,r the National Park Service had not been created.r Following the precedent set in Yellowstone, our

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country's first national park, the U. S. Cavalry managed Yosemite, becoming Yosemite's first park rangers. Between 1891 and 1913, 150 cavalry troopers from the Presidio in San Francisco spent the summer months here to protect and administer the area.

Their headquarters was Camp A. E. Wood, now the Wawona Campground. This particular peaked-roof building was erected in Wawona as headquarters for the commanding officer who served as "Acting Superintendent" of Yosemite National Park.

Camp A. E. Wood closed in 1906 when California received its grant of Yosemite Valley back to the Federal Government. The Army moved its headquarters to where Yosemite Lodge is now located. The headquarters building was moved around that time and ended up in "Soapsuds Row," formerly near the Yosemite Lodge, in the 1950's. This was the first of nine buildings to be moved to the History Center.



A horse soldier could go anywhere, so it was logical to use the U.S. Cavalry to patrol Yosemite National Park (NPS, Yosemite Guide)



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r r Front office of Calvary Headquarters

r r The troops built miles of high Sierra trails for patrol purposes, trails suitable for visitors as well. From here, troops visited the big trees, patrolled the high country and stocked lakes and streams with trout to provide fine angling. They patrolled trails and enforced rules, such as no hunting or grazing, and protected the park from timber theft and mining. After several seasons, they succeeded in abating sheep herding in their delicate high country meadows. In addition, they dealt with wildfires, poachers and lost travelers. r r

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*r r 24th Negro Infantry, Co. H
r "Buffalo Soldiers" were one of the
r Calvary units protecting Yosemite
r (Celia Crocker Thompson, 1899) r r*

r In 1906 the State of California returned Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove to the federal government to be managed as part of Yosemite National Park, and the headquarters moved to Yosemite Valley. The National Park Service was created in 1916, replacing the role of U.S. Cavalry in protecting the park. r r

r The Acting Superintendent's Headquarters is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (conservation, local). r

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Ranger Patrol Cabin

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r Crane Flat, original
r location of Patrol Cabin r

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r r Crane Flat Patrol Cabin r

r r In 1905, California ceded Yosemite Valley and ther Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias for inclusion in Yosemite National Park.r The ceded land was accepted by the federal government in 1906, addingr 31,104 acres to the Park.r Thus, after sixteen years, the Valley and Grove became part ofr Yosemite National Park.r r

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r In 1914, the army stopped coming to the Yosemite, but the National Park Service had not as yet been established. r In the intervening three years, r the management of this huge park fell to a group of fifteen civilian rangers, most of whom were formerly army scouts. r They were hired to protect the Park and its visitors — r a big change from 150 cavalry men the previous year. r

r r

r They were provided with three patrol cabins. This one, r built at Crane Flat in 1915, incurred the following costs: r

r r Materials — \$250.98r r Labor — \$685.36r

r . . . a wise use of your tax dollar in the early 1900's. r

r r r

r Their duties were made more difficult by the fact that automobiles were allowed to enter the park. r Buildings such as this were used as automobile check stations. r Here, drivers paid a fee to enter the park (\$5.00 in 1915!), and r were informed of regulations. r Yosemite faced a critical issue during this period, as John Muir led an unsuccessful campaign to save Yosemite's Hetch Hetchy Valley r from being dammed for a domestic water supply. r

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r *Jean Witter, 1915*

r *(from Sargent's Protecting Paradise)* r r

r In 1917 r these civilian rangers were absorbed into the fledgling National Park Service, r created in 1916 to administer our unique national preserves. r r

r The ranger patrol cabin is furnished in a fashion reflecting the lifestyle of a ranger in the early 1920s. r Jean Witter was its first inhabitant. r He was one of a handful of College boy rangers who served between the time the Cavalry pulled out in 1914 and before the Park Service came in in 1917. r Jean Witter's name and fraternity is carved in the cabin. r Jean Witter later became a stockbroker and, with two cousins, r founded Dean Witter & Company. r

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Wells Fargo and Stage Office

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r r *Wells Fargo and Stage Office* r

r r r With the opening of roads into Yosemite Valley in 1874 and 1875, r travel by stage coach — or “stages” as they were known locally — r became a popular mode of transportation. r Visitors endured at least two days of r jostling and bouncing aboard the stage in r order to reach the wonders of Yosemite. r r r

r The Old Upper Village in Yosemite Valley was a hub for most visitor services. r Visitors arriving by horse-drawn or r auto stage used this office to make railroad r and lodging reservations, place long-distancer phone calls, or send telegrams. r

r r

r When the spur railroad from Merced reached El Portal in 1907, r the stage industry suffered. r The first automobiles were permitted to enter the park, under strict regulation, in 1914. r As automobiles became a successful mode of transportation the stages r were doomed. r

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r r



Front office of Wells Fargo station

The very modern office was erected by the Yosemite Valley Railroad Company in 1910 for their agent, the Wells Fargo Company. Mr. and Mrs. George Farber, a newly married couple, served as the Wells Fargo agents and first occupied the living quarters on March 17, 1913. From here, you could purchase a stage ticket, phone to any part of the state and telegraph any point in the world. It is even equipped with electric lights!

By 1914, automobiles were common in Yosemite, and in that year horse-drawn stage service was discontinued. However, annual visitation to Yosemite in 1915 doubled to 31,000. Consequently, stage operations were renewed. In 1916, the era of stage travel ended and another began. The National Park Service, a federal agency created to preserve and manage our country's national parks, was established.

In summer, 10--minute stage rides may be purchased here when the office is open.

The Yosemite Transportation Company Officer building is of an unusual rustic design. It is 24-feet (7 m.) square and made of pine poles and cedar bark. The building is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (architecture and transportation, local).



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r r *The White motor stage in front of the Wells Fargo
r office in Yosemite was the first motor stage to
r arrive in Yosemite Valley (Nov. 19, 1913)*
r *(Hank Johnston, Yosemite's Yesterdays, II)*r r

r r Doug Hubbard remembers moving the building from Yosemite Valley:r

r The Wells Fargo building was difficult to move to Wawona.r It was three feet too wide for
the Wawona Tunnel, but Glenn Gordo,r master craftsman and builder from Mariposa,r
realized that the main hall ran from front to back so her chainsawed three feet out and
squeezed the buildingr together. He set up a generator and strung lights allr around it and one
night after midnight we dragged itr through the tunnel, scraping first on one side and then the
other!r [[r Yosemite 65:2 \(Spr. 2003\)](#)]r

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r r **[Next: Degnan Bakery](#)** • **[Contents](#)** • **[Previous: Ranger Patrol Cabin](#)** r

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r http://www.yosemite.ca.us/pioneer-yosemite-history-center/wells_fargo.htmlr

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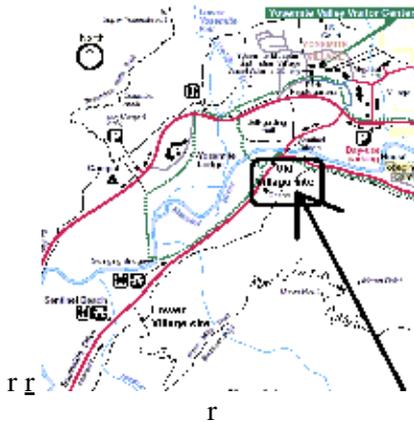
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Degnan Bakery

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r r The Bakery was originally located
r in the Old Village in Yosemite
r Valley, east of the chapel. r r

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r r Degnan Bakery and Kitchen r

r r John Degnan, his wife Bridget, an Irish couple with a family, r settled in Yosemite Valley in 1884, and began working as a laborer and caretaker for the state administrators of the Yosemite Grant. r John Degnan cultivated Lamon's upper orchard and the family lived in a small frame house near the site of Lamon's original cabin for a few months. r After the family moved back to the Old Village, r John continued to work for the state and do odd construction jobs for the hotels and stage companies. r In 1898 Degnan built a new house

on the site of the oldr J. J. Westfall meat market in the Old Village.r r

r In the bakery Bridget prepared breadr for sale in a brick oven that yielded 100 loaves per baking.r His wife, Bridget, added to the family’s incomer by selling bread she baked daily in Dutch ovens for 12 1/2¢ a loaf.r The demand for Mrs. Degnan’s bread increased steadily as travel tor Yosemite grew.r A larger portable oven, capable of producing 50 loaves a day,r was used for a time.r In 1900 the Degnans ordered a large brick ovenr for a more permanent bakery.r The Degnans sold these and other baked goods through the store.r

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r John and Bridget Degnan and family about 1896.r
r Back row: Daisy, Ruth, and Laurence Degnan.r
Front row: Christopher, Alfred, Mary Elen, and John Degnan.r r

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r John and Bridget Degnan and family
r Laurence is at far right.r (YRL)r r

r r The bakery and kitchen is a tongue-and-grove structure that attached to ther rear of the Degnan house.r The Degnan home and bakery were originally located near the Chapelr in the Old Upper Village in Yosemite Valley.r It was moved to the Historic Center in the 1980s.r This bakery is an important remnant of Yosemite’sr early visitor services.r r

r r



r (NPS)r

r r r The Degnan operation was moved to a modern structure in the presentr Yosemite Village in 1956.r Degnan’s remained a family business andr independent park concessioner until ther Yosemite Park and Curry Company purchased the business in 1974.r This was forced in part due to a bankruptcy.r The expense of moving and building a modernr A-framed building in the new Village was too much for ther small family-ran business.r r

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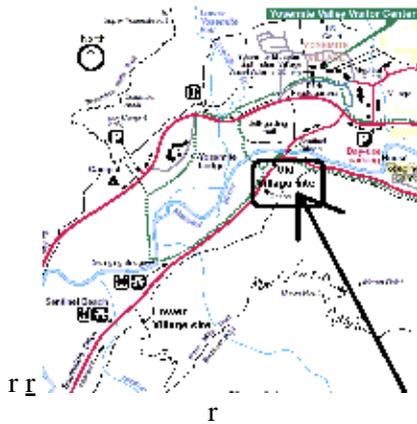
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Powderhouse and Jail

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r r The Jail was originally located in
r the Old Village in Yosemite Valley,
r on the south side of the road r

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r r Powderhouse and Jail r

r r The black powder and dynamite used in the routine State work in Yosemite Valley were kept in the “Tool House” before John Degnan built this stone magazine in the 1890’s, while employed by the State of California for road repair and other odd jobs. In addition to thick stone walls, the powder house also had six inches of sand in the ceiling as protection from fire. The powderhouse was originally located in the Old Upper Village in Yosemite Valley. r r

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Later, the powder house was converted into a jail — a very poor one. In 1915, two young car thieves escaped by digging away the mortar between their rocks with a leg they had twisted off the rickety steel frame cot. The pair claimed the task was so easy that they waited until after breakfast to perform their escape. Patrol rangers recaptured them, and shackled them by leg irons to the corners. Following this incident, horseshoes were embedded in the floor to provide a chain base of greater security. Occasionally, the powder house-jail also served as a morgue.

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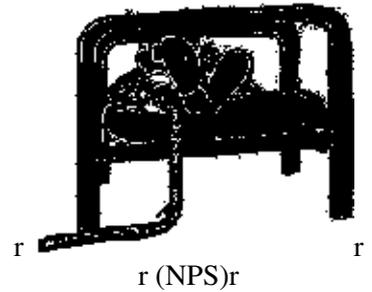
The powderhouse jail was moved to Wawona by splitting it in two, shoring up with heavy vertical timbers, then dragging onto a trailer bedded with old tires. Doug Hubbard remembers

The old jail, from the Yosemite Valley, a tiny structure of rough granite blocks and soft mortar gave Gordo some headaches. It had a foot or so of sand above its ceiling, a fire proofing technique dating back to its original use as a powder house. [Shirley Sargent *Protecting Paradise* (1998), p. 112.]

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Inside view of powderhouse

As auto-touring increased, the newly-formed National Park Service recognized that roads needed improvement. Road-building in this region was not easy. Granite rock was blasted away to form roadbeds. Powderhouses were used to store blasting powder. In 1933, access to Yosemite Valley from Wawona was improved with the completion of the Wawona Tunnel. The tunnel's power lines, carbon monoxide sensors,

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Gray Barn

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rr Wawona, location of
r Gray Barn r

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rr Gray Barn was originally a garager r

rr In the late 1800's, Wawona was the largest stage stop in Yosemite. Inbound stages stopped for the night at the Wawona Hotel before making the eight-hour trip to Yosemite Valley. The Washburn Brothers, proprietors of their hotel, used this barn for harnessing and repairing stages.

r During the days of stagecoach travel, there were a number of barns, corrals and related structures around here. This is the original location of the "Washburn Barn" built around 1895 by the Yosemite Stage and Turnpike Company. The Company, run by the Washburn Brothers who built the Wawona Hotel, provided transportation between Raymond and Yosemite Valley and for the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias.

r r

r This Gray Barn was built in the early 1920s andr served as a garage for the Shell Service Station thatr once operated on the old Wawona Road, before the Road was relocatedr over a newer concrete bridge downstream in 1931.r

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r r *Students inr ELP classr r*

r The Barn was not used for livestock; rather, it housedr wagon construction and repair and horseshoeing activities. Itr contains an overhead windlass for heavy lifting; and at oner time had a “stocks” — a framework for holding troublesomer horses securely for shoeing. As horse-drawn carriages gaver away to horseless carriages, the Gray Barn became a servicer station known as the Wawona Garage. The Gray Barn may ber of homely appearance, but it played an important role duringr the formative years of Yosemite National park.r r r

r On the Fourth of July and other dates in summer,r traditional dances are held in the Gray Barn,r with callers and “do-si-do” lessons.r

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r r **Next: Wagonsr •r Contentsr •r Previous: Powderhouse and Jailr r**

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Wagons and Stagecoaches

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r r *Shed protecting wagons and stagecoaches.*
r *Farm equipment on right.* r r

r In 1864, the Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias were granted to Californiar as a public trust.r At first, travel into these areas was only on foot or horseback.r But soon, nationwide and local improvements inr transportation, such as the transcontinentalr railroad (1869) and stage roads into Yosemite Valley (1874), made travel more practical.r r

r The Pioneer Yosemite History Center’s collectionr of restored and authentic stagecoaches represents earlyr travel to the Yosemite region.r After a train-ride from San Francisco to the terminus in their small foothill town of Raymond, Yosemite was still a two-day ride by stage.r The stage trip was a bruising one, and one which left passengersr covered with a fine coat of dust.r The stage drivers were literally the “Kings of the Road,”r commanding respect from all their passengers as they navigated the rocky roads,r the hair-pin curves, and dealt with the occasional bandits along the route.r

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Washburn

r Mud wagon. Mud wagons were lighter and faster than stage coaches, which were completely enclosed. Built by Henderson, Stockton, California. Used by Yosemite Stage & Turnpike Co. Gift of Yosemite Park & Curry Co. r r

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Mahta

r 11-passenger mud wagon. Built by McDonald, Merced, California. Used by Stoddard Stage Lines, El Portal to Yosemite. Gift of Horace Meyer. r r

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Chuck Wagon

r Built by Joe (Boy) Ashworth, Washburn Shops, Wawona.r Used by Washburn Brothers.r Gift of Yosemite Park & Curry Co.rr r

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Spring Wagon

r Spring wagons were the pickup trucks of yesterday. Light loads were transported conveniently in the box. Some models featured a slip-in rear seat for times when the cargo was extra people.rr r

r Except for the lack of a tip, this type reminds one of a modern station wagon.r The term spring wagon refers to their combination of steel springs on which the box and seat are mounted.r We believe this particular spring wagon was brought into Yosemite by pioneers Bobr McGregor & Frank Ewing.r

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Farm Wagon

r Built by Louis Egling, Chinese Camp, California.r Used by George Meyer, Big Meadow, Yosemite.r Gift of Horace Meyer.r r r

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Mosquito Wagon

r Used by National Park Service.r r r

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Spring Wagon

Galen Clark Wagon

r 8-passenger wagon.r Built by Louis Egling, Chinese Camp, California.r Used by Coffman and Kenny, Kennyville, Yosemite Valley.r Gift of Yosemite Park & Curry Co.rr

r Galen Clarkr “brought the first wagon into Yosemite Valley. Charles Tuttle, the first white boy born in Yosemite, rehearsed the sensationr created by this event: ‘I was a boy of eight or nine years when the first wagon was brought into the Valley. Galen Clark had it packedr in on mule back. I had never been out of the Valley and had neverr seen a wagon. Everybody was interested to see it assembled. Whenr all was in readiness three or four days were given to celebrate the event and everybody living in the Valley had a free ride; I will neverr forget those days! They were wonderful!’ In 1889 John Muir writes:r ‘I find Old Galen Clark also. He looks well and is earning ar living by carrying passengers about the Valley.’ The old wagon isr an interesting and prized relic.r [“Galen Clark,”r *Yosemite Indians and Other Sketches* (1936) by Mrs. H. J. Taylor.]r

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Egling

r Mountain Wagon.r Built by Louis Egling, Chinese Camp, California.r Used by Pat Kelly, Sonora to Milton, California.r Gift of Howard Egling.rr r

r Pat Kelley made many trips between the towns of Sonora and Milton in this wagon.r This one was built in the Egling Shop at Chinese Camp.r

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McGurk

r Buckboard.r Built by Studebaker, South Bend, Indiana.r Used by Jack McGurk, Madera Co. Rancher.rr r r

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Freight Wagon

r Heavy capacity wagon drawn by a mule team.r Used to move heavy, slow freight long distances overland.rr
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More information

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- r
- r r Carl P. Russell, "Stagecoach Days,"r *One Hundred Years in Yosemite* (1947)r discusses stages and mud wagons.r

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Questions for the Future

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r Issues such as preservation versus use, overcrowding, automobile traffic, and private land ownership in the park confounded the pioneers. Solutions to some issues elude us today. What is the future of Yosemite National Park? What role will you play in its preservation?

r r

References and Further Information

r r

r

- National Park Service. Exhibit signs at Yosemite Pioneer History Center. n. d. This was a major source for this online exhibit.

r r

- National Park Service, [r *The Pioneer History Center*](#). (PDF, 2006) Leaflet available at entrance to Yosemite Pioneer History Center. This was a major source for this online exhibit.

r

- [r *Wawona's Yesterdays*](#) (1961) by Shirley Sargent. Contains several reminiscences of people and places around early Wawona. See particularly the chapter on the [Pioneer Yosemite History Center](#).

r r

- r The National Park Service's [r Environmental Living Program \(ELP\)](#) allows schoolchildren (grades 4 and 5) assume the roles of historical people in the 19th and early 20th century. Teacher training is required and the visiting group bear all costs.

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- ♦ r r [r "Young Pioneers in Action"](#) from *Movin' On* newsletter (June 1991) describes one such school group.

r r

r r

- r r [r "Living History Fun for Everyone"](#) from *Movin' On* newsletter (July 1991) describes the now-defunct living history program.

r r

- r r [r "A Walk Through Time."](#) (PDF) *Yosemite Guide*, 29:2, cover and p. 1 (Summer 2000) by Jeff Lahr. Article on Yosemite Pioneer History Center.

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- r [Shadow Soldier](#) online exhibit about African-American soldiers (“Buffalo Soldier”) who, with other U.S. Cavalry, protected Yosemite National Park from 1891 to 1914, before the establishment of the National Park Service.

r r

- r r [“Whatever happened to Doug Hubbard?” \(PDF\)](#) r *Yosemite* 65:2 p. 8 (Spring 2003) r by Allan Shields. r Douglass H. Hubbard is responsible for the creation of the Pioneer Yosemite History Center.

r r

- r r [“Restoring a Bridge to the Past” \(PDF\)](#) r by Jeff Lahrr *Yosemite* 66:4 pp. 3-5 (Fall 2004). r Details the covered bridge history and the 1955 and 2003 restorations.

r r

- r Robert J. Szabo, r r [“The Photography of Time: Following in the Footsteps of Carleton Watkins.”](#) r *Yosemite* 65:3 (Summer 2003), pp. 4-7. r History or early wet plate photography in Yosemite and recreation of the wet plate collodion process at Pioneer Yosemite History Center.

r r r

- r [Yosemite: The Park and its Resources \(A History of the Discovery, Management, and Physical Development of Yosemite National Park, California\)](#) (NPS, 1987) r Historic resource study produced to provide historic background information for park officials. r The Pioneer Yosemite History Center is mentioned in volume 3. r Volumes 1 and 2 volumes mention some individual historical structures in the center in the context of their original location (usually the Old Upper Yosemite Village in Yosemite Valley). r Some information in the study is outdated, such as the [origin of the word Yosemite](#), and [first European discovers of Yosemite](#) (1845, not 1833).

r

- r Shirley Sargent [“A Decade of Uneasy Peace,”](#) r *Protecting Paradise* (Ponderosa Press, 1998). r Chapter discusses the 1950s in Yosemite, including creation of the Yosemite Pioneer History Center.

r r

- r r [Carl P. Russell, “Stagecoach Days.”](#) r *One Hundred Years in Yosemite* (1947) r discusses stages and mud wagons.

r r

- r Huell Howser, *California’s Gold: Wawona* #114 (2004). r Episode includes Pioneer History Center. r [PBS TV series available on DVD](#).

r r r

Acronyms

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- ELP - r [Environmental Living Program](#) allows schoolchildren assume the roles of historical people

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- r
- NPS - National Park Service

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- YNP - Yosemite National Park

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- YRL - Yosemite Research Library, located in the now-closedr Yosemite Museum in Yosemite Village

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r <http://www.yosemite.ca.us/pioneer-yosemite-history-center/references.html>r

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r **Yosemite** >r Pioneer History >r

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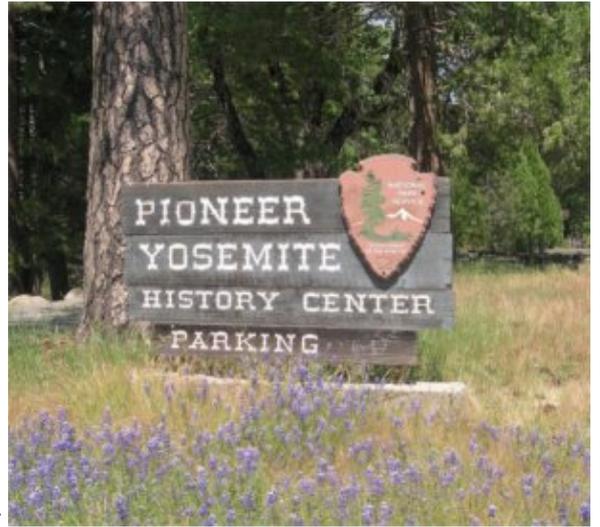
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Preface

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r Information for this web exhibit about the Pioneer Yosemite History Center has been gathered from many sources. r They are acknowledged in text or their [references section](#). r Photographs not credited were taken by me. r I'd like to thank those historians that preserved the stories here, r and Doug Hubbard who preserved the

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buildings, that made the Pioneer Yosemite History Center and this exhibit possible.

r r

r —Dan Anderson, July 2005r

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