

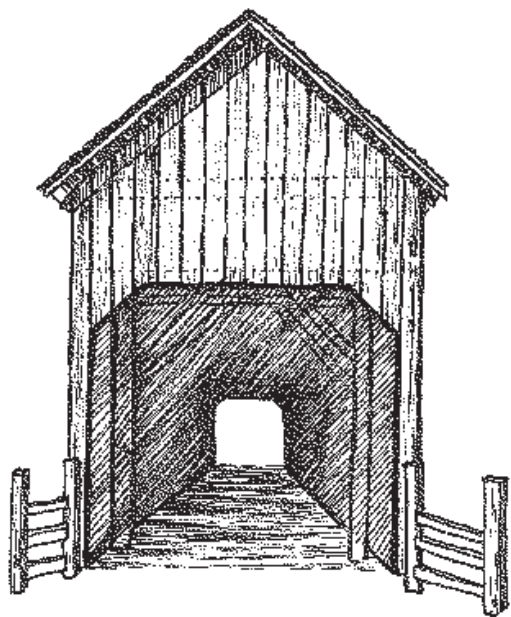
The Pioneer Yosemite History Center

Yosemite National Park

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BACK TO THE FUTURE

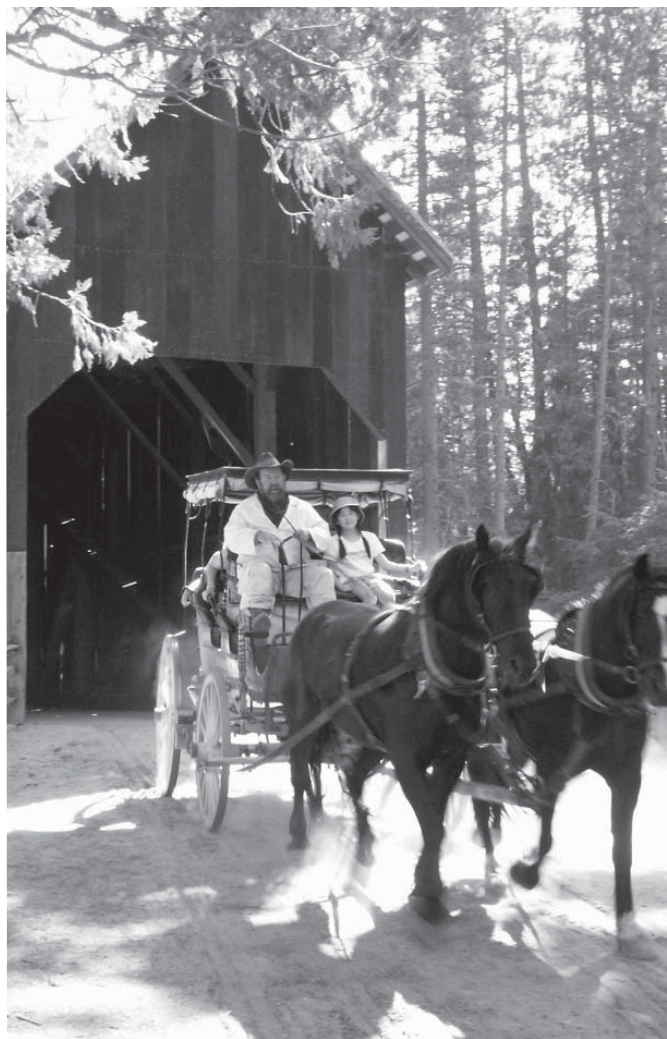
Issues such as preservation versus use, overcrowding, automobile traffic, and private land ownership in the park confounded the pioneers. Solutions to some issues elude us today. What is the future of Yosemite National Park? What role will you play in its preservation? How will you change Yosemite? How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



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This brochure is dedicated to the memory of Rod Collier, whose love for Yosemite history and concern for environmental preservation influenced thousands of young people.

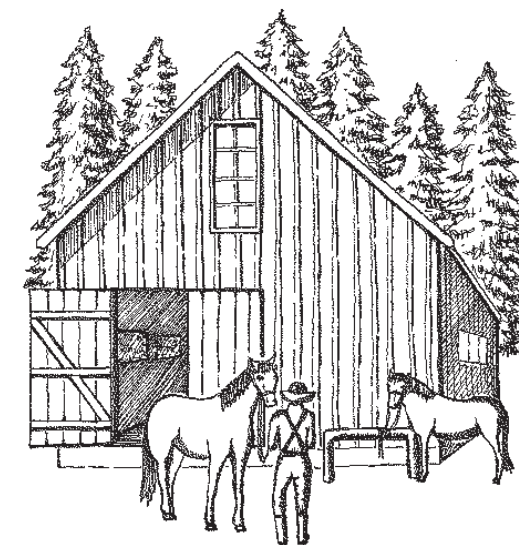
Cover Photo Courtesy of Bob Roney; Sketches by Dov Bock.



The scenery of Yosemite is world-renowned. Each year, millions of people are drawn to its thundering waterfalls, towering giant sequoias, unique geologic features, and magnificent high country. Many visitors are less aware of the stories of individuals that have both changed and been changed by Yosemite. At the Pioneer Yosemite History Center, the National Park Service commemorates the efforts of people, the events they experienced, and the issues they faced during the establishment of this great park.



The Pioneer Yosemite History Center consists of historic structures from different eras of Yosemite history. Originally constructed in different locations throughout Yosemite, they were moved to Wawona in the 1950s and 1960s. As you walk among them, it is important to remember that the area does not represent a village. Instead, each building represents a different chapter in the Yosemite story. Allow Yosemite history to come to life as you travel back in time to an era of horse-drawn wagons, covered bridges, and log cabins.



GREY BARN & COVERED BRIDGE

In the late 1800s, Wawona was the largest stage stop in Yosemite. After hours of bouncing and bumping along uneven dirt roads, inbound stages stopped for the night at the Wawona Hotel before making the eight-hour trip to Yosemite Valley. If a stage needed a repair before the sixteen-hour round-trip journey, the grey barn was the place to visit. The Washburns, proprietors of the Wawona Hotel, used this barn for repairing stages.

All Yosemite-bound traffic through this area crossed the covered bridge, which was built in 1857 by Galen Clark. Clark opened the first waystation for visitors in Wawona and later became the first guardian of the Yosemite Grant. He sold his land along the river to the Washburns, and they covered the bridge in the style of their native Vermont. Its restoration was the first step in the creation of the Pioneer Yosemite History Center.

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



A place of pioneers who profoundly influenced the birth and growth of the national park idea.



ARTIST CABIN

Explorers, writers, and early tourist parties of the 1850s returned from Yosemite with stories of spectacular beauty. Artists were drawn to Yosemite, where they found inspiration in the magnificent scenery. Paintings, drawings, sketches, and photographs publicized and popularized Yosemite. Consequently, many people chose to travel the arduous route to Yosemite and experience the beauty firsthand. Thus, artists played a key role in increased awareness, tourism, and protection of Yosemite National Park. Painter Christian Jorgensen constructed this building on the banks of the Merced River near Sentinel Bridge in Yosemite Valley.

ANDERSON CABIN

Tourist parties provided business for local residents. George Anderson, a miner and blacksmith, worked as a guide in the late 1800s, and escorted visitors on expeditions in Yosemite. In 1875, he was the first person to climb Half Dome. He spent his winters in this building at Big Meadow (now called Foresta), and his summers in Yosemite Valley.



HOMESTEAD CABIN



Much of the high country around Yosemite Valley had been claimed by individuals in the late 1800s. The Hodgdon family, ranchers from the San Joaquin Valley, built this cabin on their homesteaded land in Aspen Valley and grazed cattle there each summer. In the late 1880s, John Muir and other preservationists grew concerned that the damage caused by cattle and sheep in the high country would impact the watershed and Yosemite's waterfalls. Muir led the movement to preserve the high country, and helped establish the expanded boundaries of Yosemite National Park in 1890.

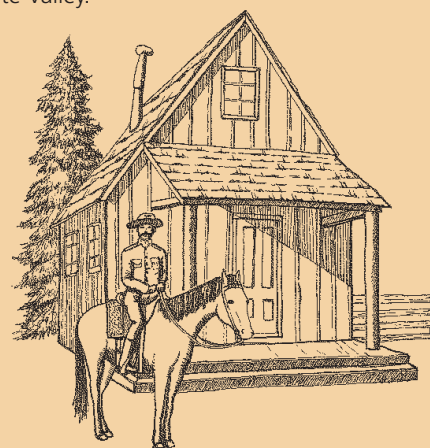
Although Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove had been set aside by the federal government for protection by the State of California in 1864, prior claims to the land caused legal battles between residents and the government. Land claims would be fought for many years — the cabin represents such disputes.

BLACKSMITH SHOP

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 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. Blacksmiths shops were located throughout the park, and "smithys" offered valuable assistance with shoeing and stage repair.

CAVALRY OFFICE

Although Yosemite was set aside as a national park in 1890, the National Park Service had not yet been created. Following the precedent set in Yellowstone, our country's first national park, the U.S. Army managed both Sequoia and Yosemite. Each summer over 200 soldiers, usually cavalry, rode from the Presidio of San Francisco to protect both parks. They patrolled trails, stocked fish, and enforced rules, such as no hunting or grazing. In 1899, 1903, and 1904, African-American buffalo soldiers served in the Sierra Nevada. All of these troopers were among the first park rangers. Their headquarters was Camp A. E. Wood, now the Wawona Campground. 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.



RANGER PATROL CABIN

In 1914, the U.S. Cavalry left Yosemite. The management of this huge park fell to a small group of 15 men who had served as cavalry scouts. Their duties were made more difficult by the fact that automobiles had been allowed to enter the park in 1914. Buildings such as this were used as automobile check stations. Here drivers paid a fee to enter the park and were informed of regulations. Along sections of the Big Oak Flat and Wawona roads, automobile were only permitted to go east, downgrade, on odd hours and west, upgrade, on even hours.

DEGNAN'S BAKERY

John Degnan settled in Yosemite Valley in 1884, and began working as a laborer and caretaker for state administrators there. His wife, Bridget, added to the family income by selling bread she baked daily in Dutch ovens. As travel to Yosemite increased, the demand for her bread grew. A larger oven, capable of producing 50 loaves per day, was used until 1900, when the Degnans ordered a large brick oven for a more permanent bakery. This bakery was originally connected to the Degnan's home near the chapel in Yosemite Valley, and is an important reminder of Yosemite's early visitor services.



WELLS FARGO OFFICE

Yosemite Valley was a hub for most visitor services. Visitors arriving by horse-drawn or auto stage used this office to make railroad and lodging reservations, place long-distance phone calls, or send telegrams. 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 operation was 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.

POWDERHOUSE AND JAIL

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, its carbon monoxide sensors, and its high-speed fans made it an engineering feat. Workers used 275 tons of blasting powder and spent nearly two years drilling the tunnel at a rate of roughly 20 feet per day.