HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND CALTRANS

BUILDINGS AND BRIDGES

Caltrans

ENVIRONMENTAL DIVISION
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
SEPTEMBER 1993

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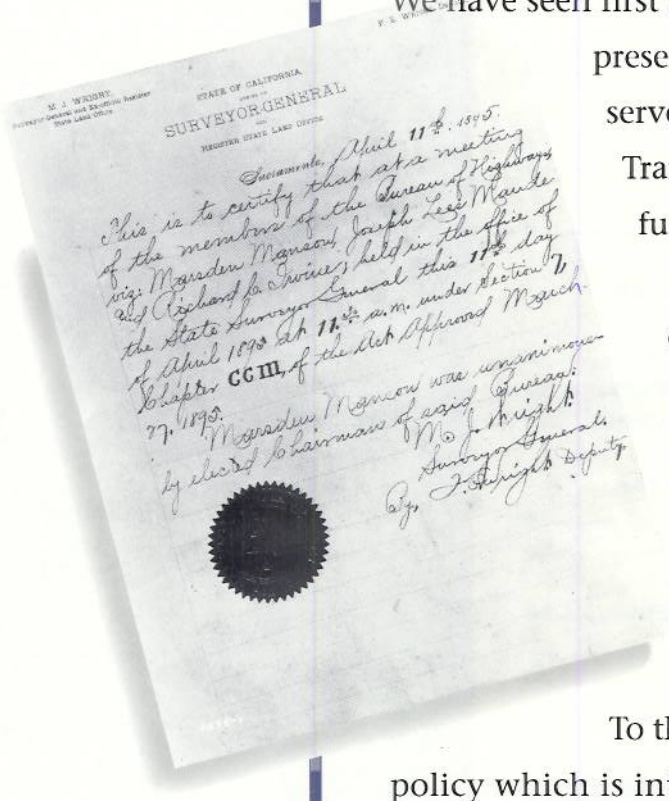
A century has passed since California's first Bureau of Highways was formed, and much has changed in that time. We have seen first the beginning and then the overwhelming presence of automobile traffic and the facilities to serve it. Now the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is looking toward the future with a new vision.


STATE OF CALIFORNIA
SURVEYOR-GENERAL
REGISTER STATE LAND OFFICE

Sacramento, April 11th, 1895.
This is to certify that at a meeting of the members of the Bureau of Highways, viz: Marsden Manson, Joseph Lee Maude and Richard L. Irvine, held in the office of the State Surveyor General this 11th day of April 1895 at 11.30 a.m. under Section 7, Chapter CCIII, of the Act Approved March 27, 1895.
Marsden Manson was unanimously elected Chairman of said Bureau.
M. J. Wright
Surveyor General.
By F. Wright Deputy

The minutes of the first meeting of the Bureau of Highways recorded the election of Marsden Manson from San Francisco as chairman. Under his leadership, the Bureau advocated lowering the highway tax rate within the counties and levying money on a statewide basis, so all taxpayers would share in paying for a statewide highway system.

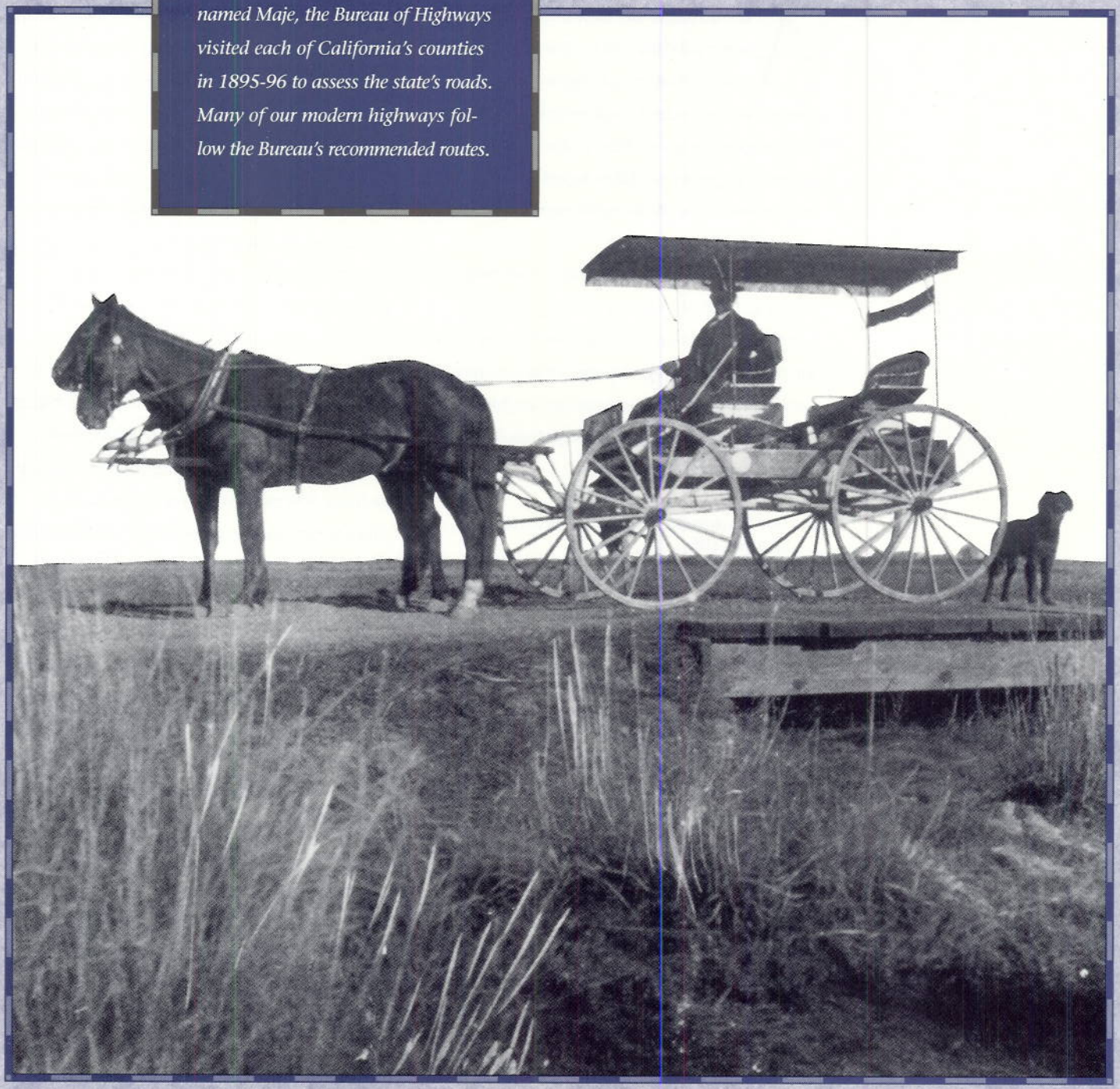
Caltrans' vision includes a modern, swift, and comprehensive mass transit service, along with well-managed and maintained streets, roads, and highways. New technology and innovative approaches will be applied to provide quality transportation products and services, while protecting the environment, to meet California's needs.

To this end, Caltrans has developed an environmental policy which is integrated into all the Department's activities, from planning to project implementation, including the operation and maintenance of the state's transportation system. The policy requires Caltrans to consider environmental consequences before taking action and to implement practices that minimize environmental impacts.

Caltrans is also committed to the goal of enhancing California's environment, economic vitality, and quality of life. Transportation is more than highways—it is a system of partnerships and integrated goals for the future.

The following case studies illustrate how Caltrans engineers and environmental staff work to preserve our important buildings and bridges.

Consisting of three engineers, an office staff of three, one surrey, two horses, and a dog named Maje, the Bureau of Highways visited each of California's counties in 1895-96 to assess the state's roads. Many of our modern highways follow the Bureau's recommended routes.



A century ago, the Bureau of Highways was established as California's first real transportation management agency, predecessor to today's California Department of Transportation—Caltrans. Since then, the agency has grown and developed in response to California's needs to move people, goods, services, and information.

As the state's needs evolve, Caltrans is developing new ways of managing transportation plans and projects within an overall system. An integral part of that system is consideration for historical and architectural resources, as required by the following federal and state laws:

- The National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106
- The U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966, Section 4(f)
- The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- The California Public Resources Code
- The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

These laws are designed to ensure consideration of the important historical, architectural, and engineering resources which embody our state's collective history. As a tangible link to people and events that shaped today's world, and as the work of the master architects and engineers of our past, California's historical resources are a valuable part of our heritage.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act serves as the basic foundation for Caltrans policy regarding historic properties. It requires consultation among the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) when there may be effects on historic properties. CEQA, NEPA, the Public Resources Code, and Section 4(f) impose additional historic preservation requirements.

In 1992 by Executive Order, the governor acknowledged that the preservation and wise use of California's cultural resources are important to the people of the state. With the subsequent establishment of the California Register of Historical Resources, a process paralleling the federal Section 106 procedure has been put in place to ensure the preservation of historical resources that are significant in state and local heritage.

Long before making any project decision, Caltrans examines the areas which could be affected to find if historic properties are present. National, state, and local lists and surveys of historic properties are checked. Then buildings and structures over 50 years old in the project area are thoroughly examined. If any are found to be historically significant—that is, eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places or the California Register of Historical Resources—then the project's potential effects on them must be assessed.

Transportation projects can affect historical resources in a number of ways. For example, they can include proposals to replace a historic bridge not sturdy enough to carry today's heavy traffic, build a new

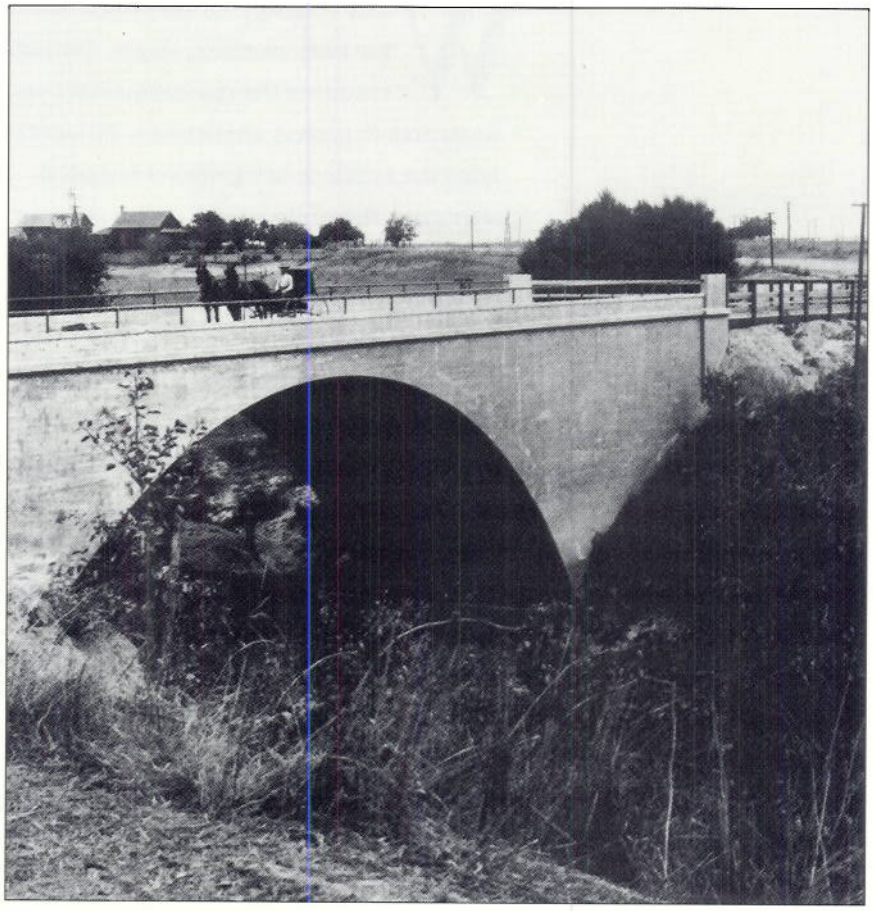
freeway that would demolish a historic ranch complex, widen a dangerously narrow road by taking land from a row of turn-of-the-century cottages, or expand a commuter rail system through a downtown historic district.

When such adverse effects are possible, Caltrans looks at ways to avoid, reduce, or mitigate those effects. One of the options is to change the project design. Perhaps a bridge could be strengthened rather than replaced, or a freeway be routed around a historic area. Maybe a road can be widened by taking land elsewhere. Could a light rail system be rerouted or run underground or overhead? Is the project as designed really necessary at all, or could existing facilities be managed differently to solve the problem?

Sometimes, in the best public interest, a project must proceed despite effects on historic properties. Then Caltrans, in consultation with the SHPO, FHWA, and ACHP, considers ways to reduce or mitigate project effects. A bridge or a building threatened with demolition might be moved. Sometimes important elements can be salvaged for a museum. Landscaping may be able to block visual intrusions, or a sound wall reduce traffic noise. When seeking to avoid, reduce, or mitigate effects on historic properties, Caltrans will be looking for creative solutions; public suggestions are welcome.

Caltrans' first priority is to avoid adverse effects on our historic buildings and structures, but protection of historic properties must be balanced with other environmental, economic, and engineering concerns. State and federal laws ensure that historic properties receive full consideration before any action is taken. If there is a prudent and feasible alternative to damaging historic properties, Caltrans must take it.

Some examples of actual projects illustrate how Caltrans meets its responsibilities on highway projects, in managing state-owned properties, and in broad, thematic approaches to historical resources with regard to historic buildings, bridges, and other tangible remains of our past.



When Caltrans built a replacement for the 1906 Dry Creek Bridge, the old bridge was preserved and given to the city of Modesto for limited access use.

Hollister Bypass

When a transportation project is in the early planning stages, Caltrans examines the environmental consequences of project alternatives. By identifying the locations of significant historical resources, the project team can determine the best possible option and may be able to avoid or reduce harmful effects on historic properties.

Between 1989 and 1992, the Hollister Bypass project team considered a number of alternatives which would remove the heavy Route 156 traffic from downtown Hollister in San Benito County. For each possible route, Caltrans architectural historians conducted a study of the Area of Potential Effects (APE), the geographic area within which a project could potentially affect any historic properties that might be present.

All the alternatives ran through a largely rural area. Historical research undertaken to develop an overview of the area's history found that grazing and field crops had been the earlier land use, preceding orchards. Then as apricots, prunes, peaches, and pears became the primary crops, packing houses and canneries replaced hay warehouses and flour mills. Hollister became known as "the Garden of the Apricot." While there were other industries in the area, such as a quicksilver mine and large rock quarries, agriculture was the dominant theme.

After the historical overview had been completed and the context for evaluation established, the buildings and structures within the APE for each alternative were examined. Three properties were found to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, including a farm complex important for its association with the early apricot industry in San Benito County.

When the project team studied the environmental consequences of each project alternative, they found that all but one of the alternatives would affect the historic properties. In this case, selecting the one route which would have no effect on historic properties was judged to be prudent and feasible. That alternative was chosen accordingly, and with the concurrence of the State Historic Preservation Officer, the Section 106 review process concluded with full protection of the resources.

The project team found an unusual double tank house near Hollister, with each section at a different height.

Harbor Freeway Transitway

Caltrans' project development process invites public participation. In some cases, members of the public point out factors that had been overlooked, and that can make a proposed alternative unacceptable. For example, public comment in May 1990 on the design, scale, and indirect effects of the Harbor Freeway Transitway in Los Angeles sent the Caltrans project team back to investigate other alternatives.

The team developed a new proposal that was acceptable to the community and satisfied public concerns, while still meeting transportation objectives. However, the new alternative involved additional land, and the expanded project area included some buildings outside the bounds of the earlier proposals. Caltrans architectural historians examined this added area and found four buildings of historical significance, eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

One of these properties, the Stimson House, built in 1891, was already listed on the National Register. Two others, the St. Vincent de Paul Church and St. John's Episcopal Church, had previously been determined eligible for listing. The fourth building was the headquarters of the Automobile Club of Southern California (AAA), a 1923 Spanish Colonial Revival building designed by noted architects Silas Burns and Sumner Hunt. When this building was evaluated to assess its significance, Caltrans concluded that it met the National Register criteria. With the concurrence of the State Historic Preservation Officer, the AAA building was formally determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Following identification and evaluation of these historic properties, Caltrans assessed the project's potential effect on them. Part of the project involved street widening which could affect the buildings by bringing traffic closer. Increased noise had to be considered, and the loss of mature street trees and historic light fixtures could alter the streetscape which was the buildings' historic setting.

Noise mitigation often means installation of sound walls, which by themselves may affect a neighborhood's historical appearance. In this case, the minimal increase in noise did not warrant the intrusion of sound walls.

When the streetscape was examined, it was found that much of the original landscaping was already gone. Modern street lights had replaced many of the original light fixtures, and sidewalks had been unevenly patched. The neighborhood's historic setting had been eroded by decades of small changes.

Caltrans proposed reversing the deteriorating visual appearance by developing a landscaping plan to restore the traditional appearance of the area. The plan called for planting large trees and installing reproduction historic light fixtures. This project would ultimately restore part of the neighborhood's historic ambience.

The mitigation measures were accepted, and with their incorporation, the Harbor Freeway Transitway project could proceed. Public comment had resulted in project changes that protected the community's important historic buildings while providing improved transportation services.

Headquarters of the Automobile Club of Southern California, this 1923 Spanish Colonial Revival building was found to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Photo courtesy of the Wm. Reagh Collection, California State Library

ETIWANDA WINDBREAKS

In the process of evaluating historic properties which could be affected by transportation projects, Caltrans staff must look at more than buildings, bridges, and roads. One example, the Etiwanda Windbreaks in San Bernardino county, demonstrates a type of property which could all too easily be overlooked but which may have a high level of significance in an area's history.

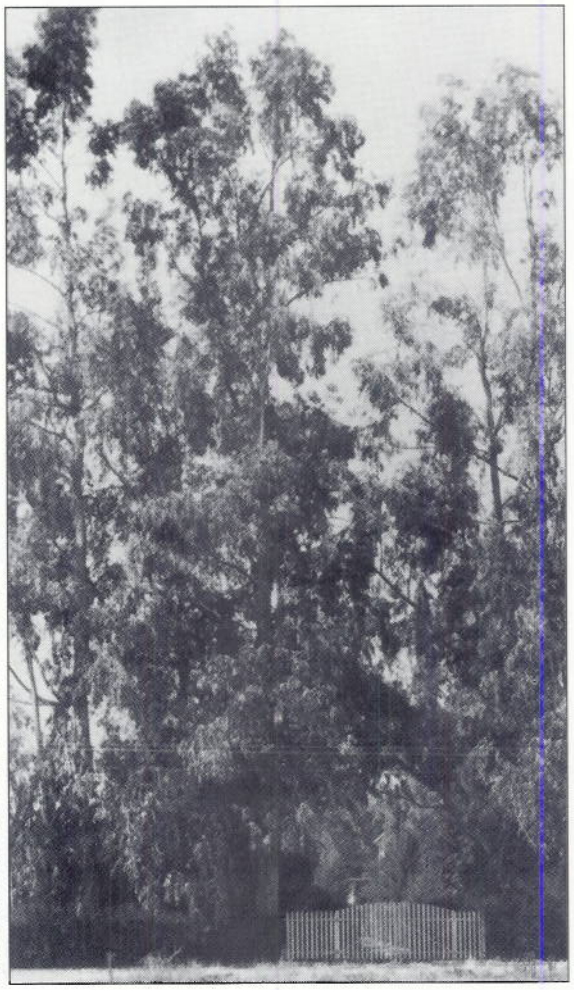


Photo courtesy of the California State Library Collection

The Etiwanda Windbreaks, found eligible for the National Register, remain a symbol of Southern California's real estate boom of the 1880s.

Near Rancho Cucamonga's Foothill Boulevard and Highland Avenue, the streets are lined with eucalyptus trees. One row of these trees had already been designated a local landmark by the city. When realignment of State Route 30 was proposed through the area, Caltrans historians examined the historical significance of the trees. Their 1990 study revealed a larger property—a rural historic landscape.

The trees remain from the Southern California real estate boom of the 1880s. Developers and the railroad enticed winter-weary easterners to California with promotional ads promising an easy life in an idyllic land of sunshine and orange blossoms. George and William Chaffey greeted newcomers at the train with an offering of ten-acre parcels in their Etiwanda Colony. The Chaffeys' development stood out from other irrigated colonies because of the parcels' attractive borders of fast-growing eucalyptus trees.

Prospective buyers admired the tree-lined parcels, but the Chaffeys planted the eucalyptus for more than decoration. It seemed that the north wind through Cajon Pass subsided only on days when the hot, dry Santa Ana blew straight in from the desert. Early Etiwanda settlers recorded the tremendous effort expended in propping up young fruit trees, fences, and even house walls against the wind's intensity. When describing life among the orange groves, the Chaffeys may have forgotten to mention the wind, but they did at least plant windbreaks, which proved practical as well as pleasing.

The Etiwanda Windbreaks were determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for their association with the Etiwanda Colony and as representing a significant pattern of historic land use. They remain a visible link between the Southern California of today and its historic roots in the giant real estate boom of the 1880s.

Eucalyptus trees like these still serve as windbreaks throughout rural California.

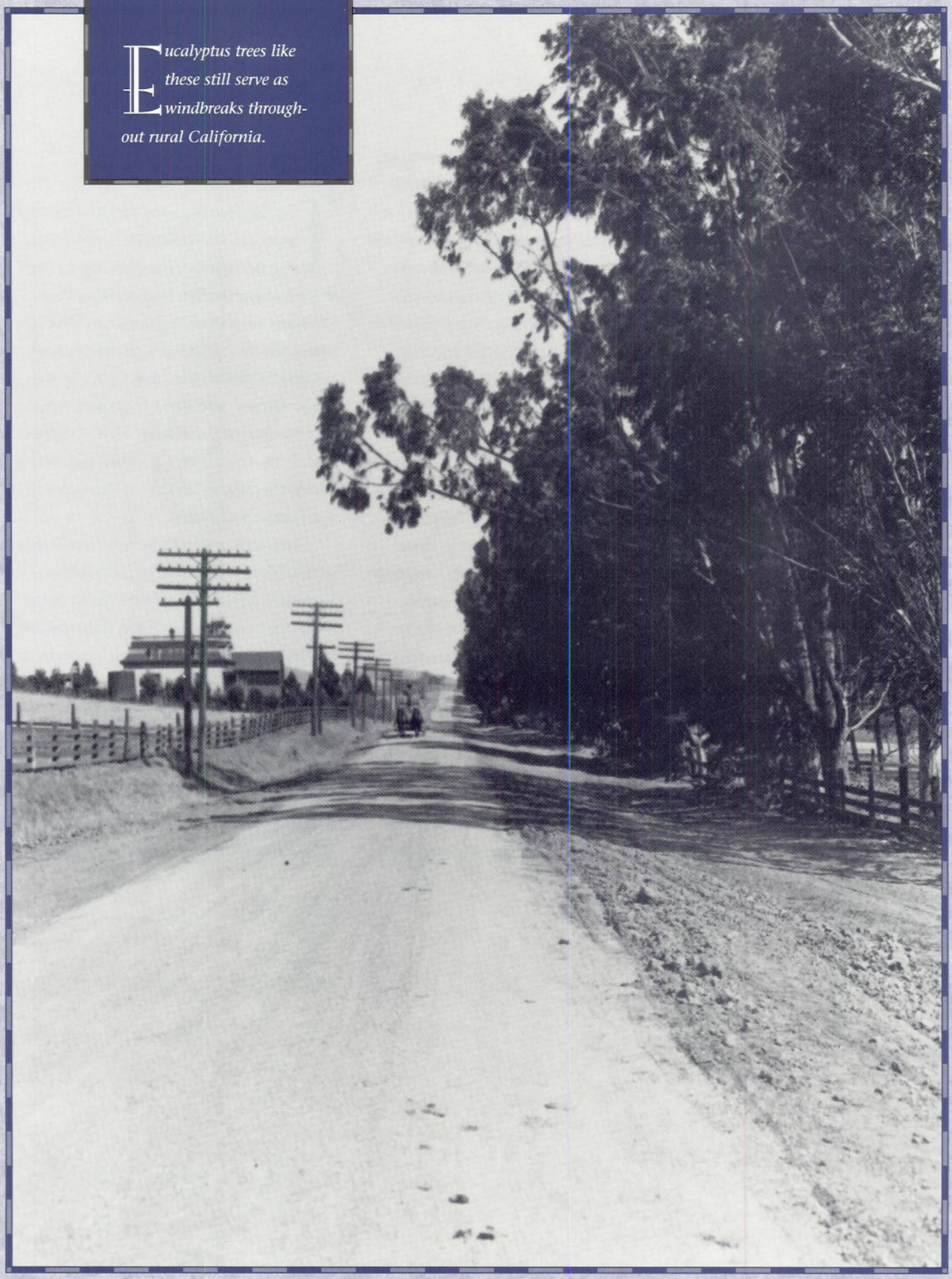


Photo courtesy of the California State Library Collection

Under the California Public Resources Code, Caltrans is responsible for the preservation, restoration, and maintenance of historical resources under its ownership or control. This responsibility involves more than just highway-related structures.

When the commuter rail service known as Caltrain came into being on the San Francisco peninsula, Caltrans took custody in 1985 of the old Southern Pacific railroad stations along the line. The stations ranged from an early wood-frame building to an elegant Mission Revival station to a sandstone "castle." In cooperation with local citizen groups, Caltrans decided to restore these reminders of early railroad days in California rather than replace or modernize them.

Caltrans' architectural historians researched building plans and contemporary descriptions to determine the original appearance of the buildings and provided information to guide the restoration projects. Following restoration, Caltrans turned the stations over to the local agency which would operate the commuter rail service. The restored stations became once again useful and attractive elements of their communities.

Santa Clara

The San Francisco and San Jose Railroad preceded the Southern Pacific along the peninsula, commencing service from San Jose to San Francisco in 1864. Critically important for the area's development, the SF & SJ offered relatively cheap, reliable freight service, making California fresh, canned, and dried fruits and vegetables more widely available. New orchards and fields, canneries, and other agricultural processing plants sprang up throughout the Santa Clara Valley.

Although originally built by the SF & SJ in 1863-1864, the Santa Clara station looks like a typical Southern Pacific wood-frame station. It is the oldest train station in California still used for that purpose.

In recognition of its contribution to the development of the Santa Clara Valley, the Santa Clara station was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985. With Caltrans advice and assistance, the South Bay Historical Railroad Society completed the station's restoration in 1986.

The Santa Clara Station, constructed in 1863 - 64, was restored in 1986. This view of the station dates to 1912.

Photo by Vernon Sappers, Roy D. Graves Collection, courtesy of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

BURLINGAME

By the 1890s, many of San Francisco's most successful businessmen had established residences in the Burlingame Country Club in the Hillsborough area of San Mateo County. They became convinced that their status in the community merited a station on the railroad, then the quickest, cleanest transportation into the city. In response to a Burlingame Country Club resolution, Hillsborough residents George H. Howard, Jr. and J. B. Mathison designed a new station.

For the architectural style, Howard and Mathison selected Mission Revival, just becoming popular among the wealthy at that time. Stucco was chosen to simulate adobe, window designs reminiscent of mission windows were used, and roof tiles were taken from decaying mission buildings. Construction was completed in 1894.

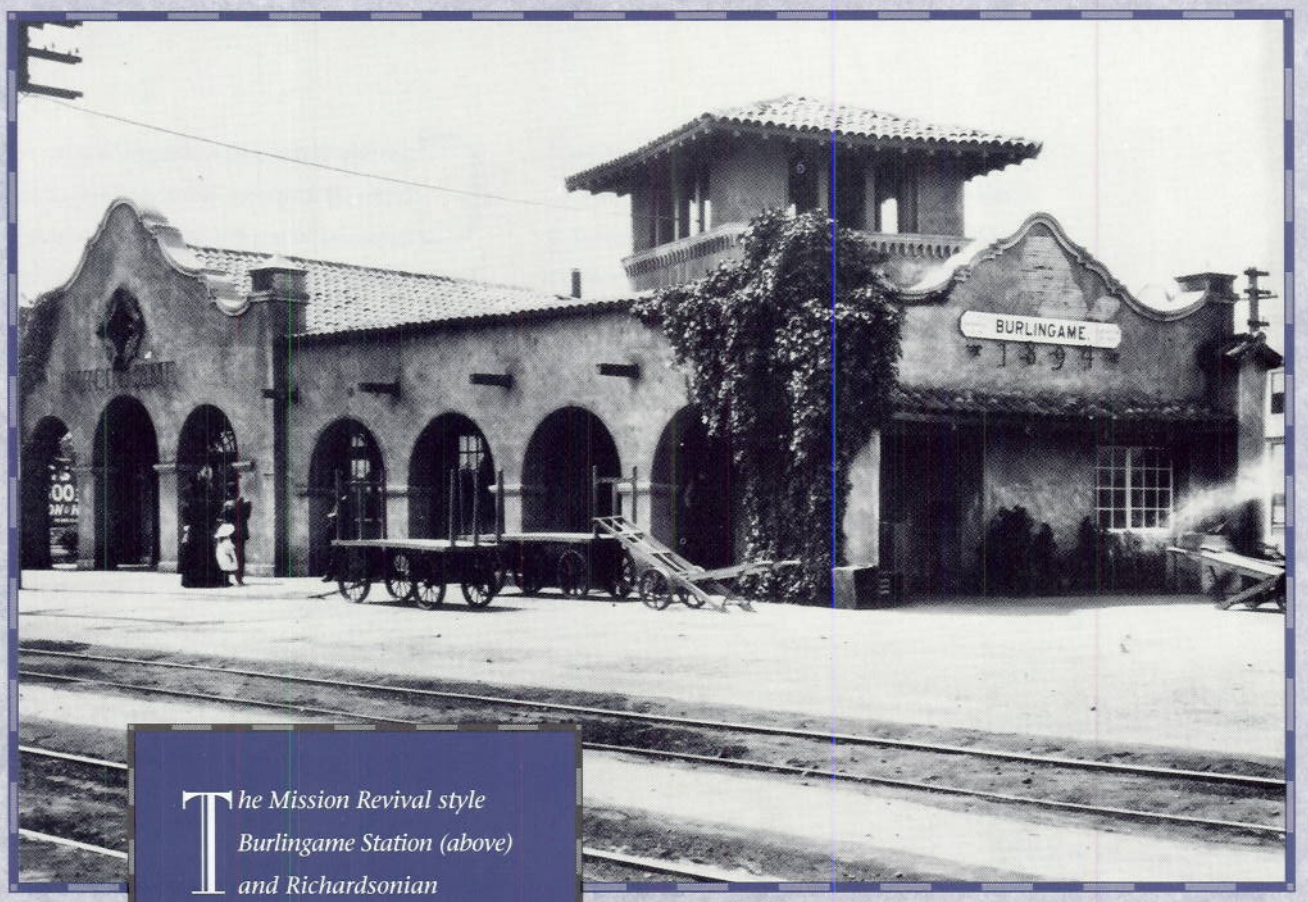
The Burlingame Station was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1973 in recognition of its outstanding architectural qualities. Before the restoration of this important building began, Caltrans consulted with the State Historic Preservation Officer to obtain approval of the plans. The restoration and preservation efforts included analysis of the many coats of paint applied to the station over the years. Research and paint analysis helped determine the original colors and allowed duplication of the historic color scheme.

Nearby Washington Park enhances the visitor's appreciation of the old station. The cool atmosphere of the park on a hot summer's day offsets the disruption of modern traffic, and reminds passengers that the heat and bustle of the city have been left behind, just as in the past. The historic station and its setting demonstrate that memories can coexist with a modern, efficient transportation system.

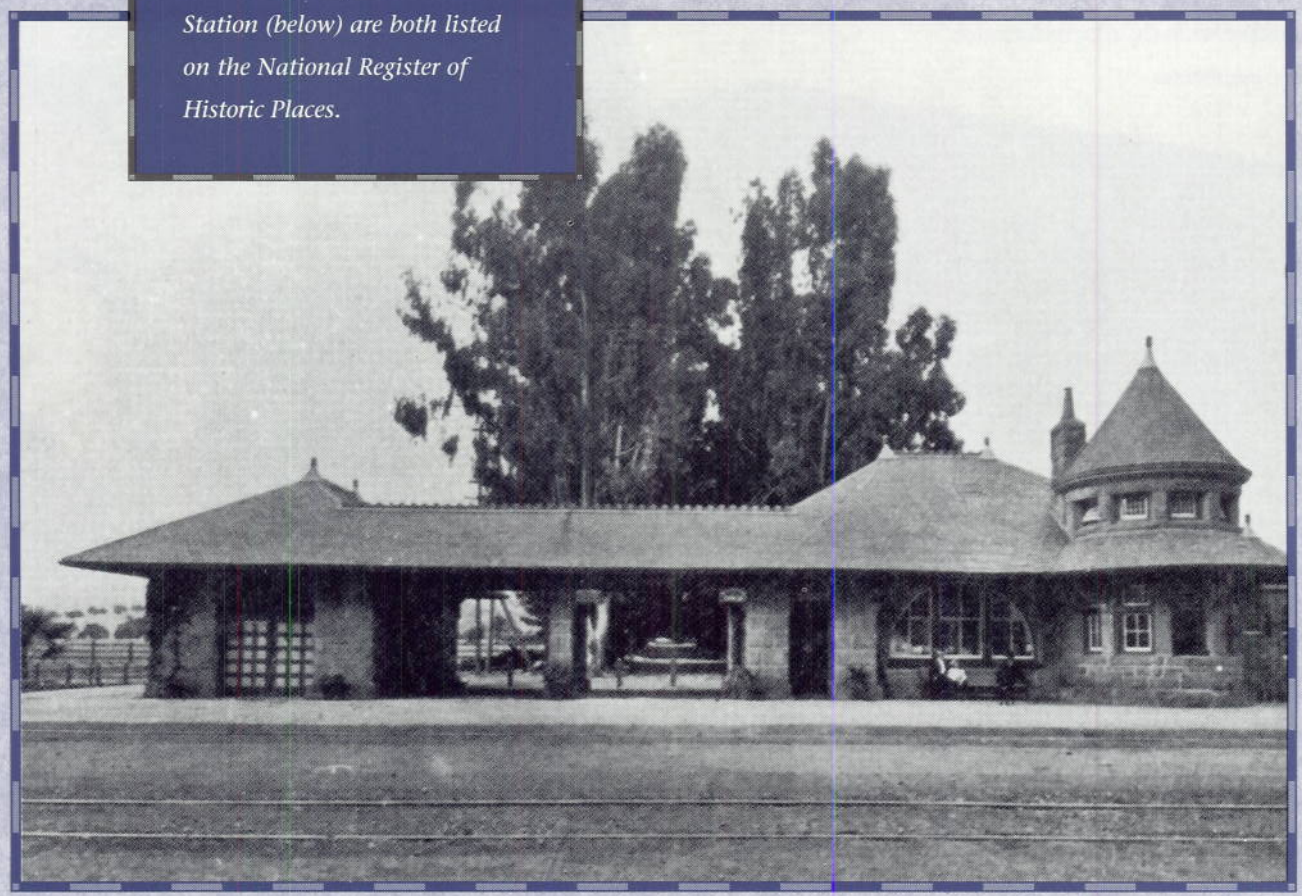
SAN CARLOS

The San Carlos station, also in San Mateo County, is a very different design, not at all a standard train station. It is built of Almaden sandstone in a style known as Richardsonian Romanesque, with a turret that functioned as office and living quarters.

In addition to train depot service, this building has been a church, library, post office, and restaurant since its construction in 1888. In 1984 it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Now restored, it adds its own unique touch, as before, to the community.



The Mission Revival style Burlingame Station (above) and Richardsonian Romanesque style San Carlos Station (below) are both listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



State-owned structures in freeway rights-of-way shall be inventoried before approval of any undertaking which would alter their original or significant features or fabric, or transfer, relocate or demolish those structures.

—Public Resources Code 5024

Caltrans owns and manages many types of property. Some buildings are acquired when the agency purchases the land they are on for project right-of-way. Caltrans is responsible for those buildings while they are under state ownership, and they must be preserved and maintained until a final decision is made on their disposition. What happens then depends on the outcome of a formal consultation and review process, including agreements on effects to historic properties.

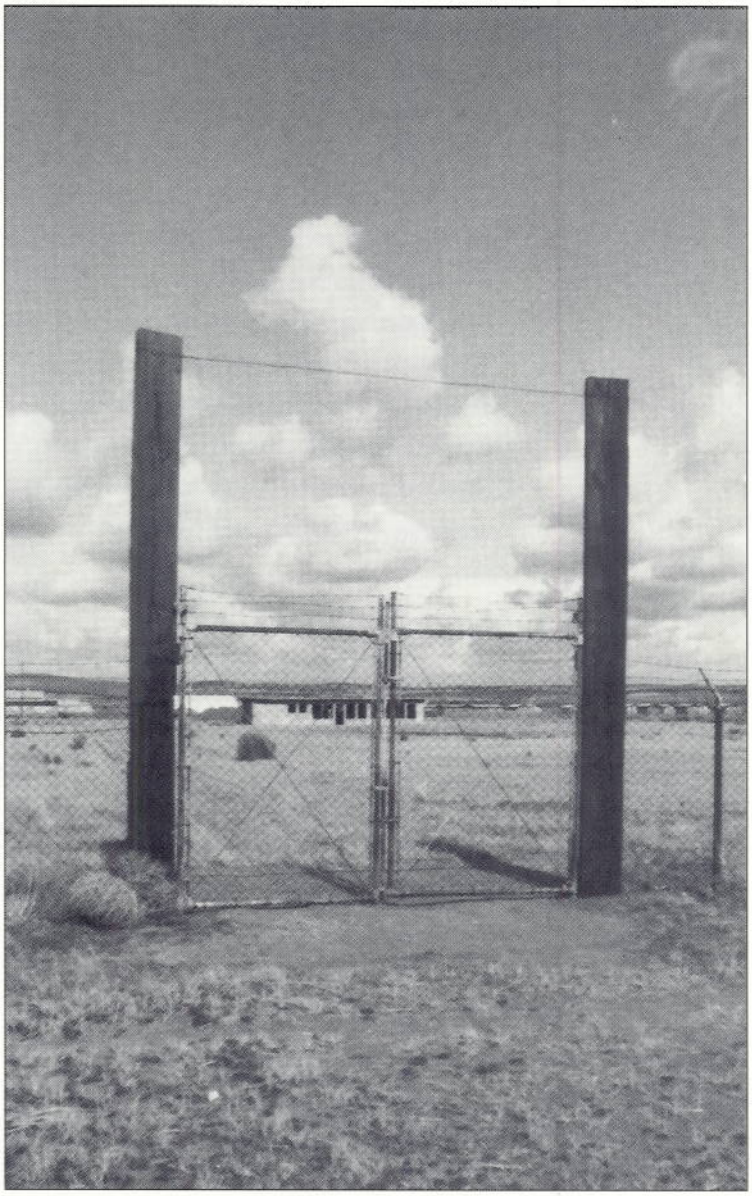
Caltrans became the owner of the 1896 Warner Hutton house while acquiring the right-of-way for State Route 85 in Santa Clara County. The house has since been moved to a site adjacent to the City of Saratoga Civic Center.

Similarly, Caltrans is responsible under state law for stewardship of its own buildings, including offices and maintenance stations. These facilities must be evaluated to determine if they are historically or architecturally significant.

The Newell maintenance station on Highway 139 in Modoc County is located on the site of the Tule Lake Relocation Camp. Here, in a spasm of racism and war hysteria, the federal government incarcerated over 10,000 people of Japanese descent, both American citizens and resident Japanese aliens, between 1942 and 1946. A monument beside the highway holds a State Historical Landmark plaque marking the site of the relocation center. Behind the plaque stands the camp's stockade and the adjacent Caltrans maintenance yard.

A proposal to modernize the maintenance station brought Caltrans' historians and architectural historians here, in response to concerns raised by Californians of Japanese descent. The 1989 study found that the stockade represented a significant aspect of the camp and that it should be protected from maintenance station activities. As a result, Caltrans fenced four acres surrounding the stockade and installed a separate entrance gate near the monument to allow controlled public access.

Although the setting has changed, something of the original feeling is maintained around the stockade. Today Caltrans maintenance activities continue, adjacent to, but not disturbing, this important reminder of a searing period of injustice in our nation's history.



Behind the fence, and adjacent to a Caltrans maintenance station, stands the stockade from the Tule Lake Relocation Camp.

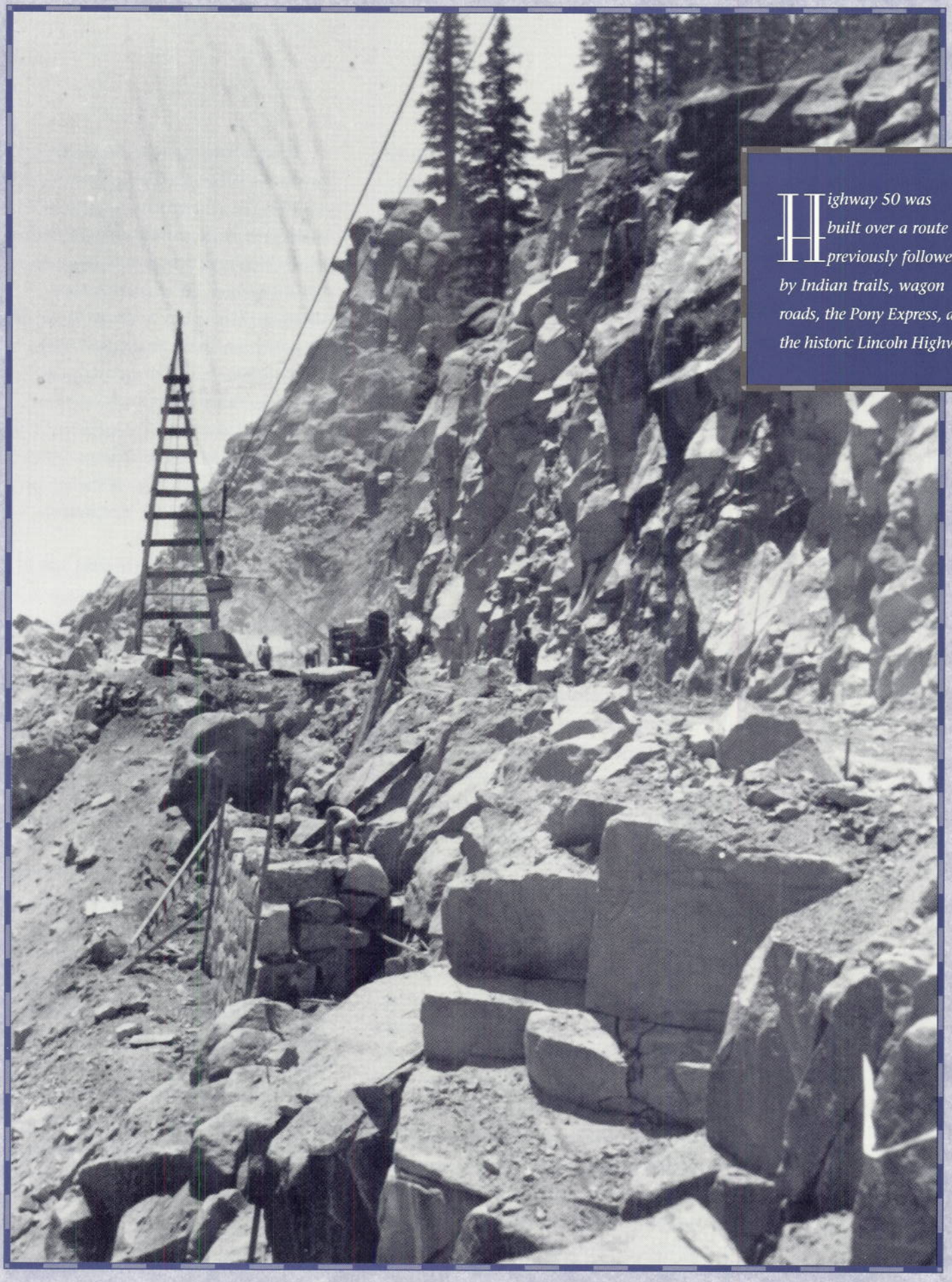
Individual historical resources can be studied, but sometimes it is difficult to determine their importance without examining a wider context. Is a covered bridge or old stagecoach road or one-room school the only one left in the state, or are there many? Is it the first, last, or best of its kind? How does it compare with any others? Comparisons with similar resources may be essential to understanding a property's historical, architectural, or engineering value. Other times, a large, complex resource, such as a transportation corridor or a hydroelectric system, needs to be looked at as a whole, not just in segments as projects occur. In either case, broad studies may be the most efficient approach for evaluating large or recurring resources. By establishing the historical context and basic criteria for evaluation, repeated piecemeal studies can be avoided, and a more credible result produced.

HIGHWAY 50

One of the state's large resources which benefited from a comprehensive approach is Highway 50 between Sacramento and Lake Tahoe. No other highway in the state better exemplifies the evolution of California's highway system than this transportation corridor.

Travelers journey east over a highway that narrows from multi-lane freeway to a two-lane mountain road as it climbs the American River Canyon. Long before Highway 50 was built, Indian trails, a gold rush immigrant trail, public and private wagon roads, the Pony Express Trail, and the historic Lincoln Highway all followed the same narrow route through the canyon. Portions of some of these older trails, roads, and highways survive, reminders of past travelers and earlier modes of travel.

Recognizing the value of this resource, Caltrans and the U.S. Forest Service undertook a collaborative study of the transportation corridor in 1990. Much of Caltrans' effort in identifying historic sites along Highway 50 has been in response to specific projects. However, the Caltrans-Forest Service study will establish an historical overview in advance, to be used for projects yet to be developed. Information on historically sensitive areas will be available right from the beginning, providing an immediate public benefit in the form of a more efficient planning process.



Highway 50 was built over a route previously followed by Indian trails, wagon roads, the Pony Express, and the historic Lincoln Highway.

Congress hereby finds and declares it to be in the national interest to encourage the rehabilitation, reuse and preservation of bridges significant in American history, architecture, engineering and culture. Historic bridges are important links to our past, serve as safe and vital transportation routes in the present, and can represent significant resources for the future.

—Surface Transportation Act of 1987

Early highway bridge engineers emphasized beauty and appreciation for natural setting, as well as function. Many of these early structures are now among the best known of California's bridges. At the same time, older bridges are more likely to be regarded as obsolete or undersized by today's standards, hence subject to bridge replacement projects.

The first step in reconciling the goals of preservation and safety is to identify important historic bridges. With an understanding of which bridges are significant, engineers can direct their efforts toward preserving and rehabilitating important structures wherever possible, while proceeding with upgrading or replacing other bridges identified as not significant.

In the 1980s, a statewide survey was undertaken to locate these valuable resources and evaluate them on a statewide basis. A survey team was established, consisting of representatives of Caltrans, the State Office of Historic Preservation, and the Federal Highway Administration. The team's first step was to create a list of bridges to be evaluated from among the Caltrans inventory of 23,000 transportation structures. Overpasses, culverts, and tunnels, and bridges constructed in recent years were eliminated from consideration. At that stage, about 1,000 bridges remained to be evaluated.

Using a computerized point system, the team weighed attributes which could contribute to a bridge's historical significance, such as age, esthetics, design, rarity, construction type, history, local significance, unusual features, builder, and designer. After rating the bridges by this point system, the survey team reevaluated them with a professional eye, then came up with a list of significant bridges on a statewide and regional basis. Caltrans submitted 190 bridges for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as a result of the bridge survey, to be added to the 90 California bridges already listed.

The survey, completed in 1986, identified the state's most significant bridges and established objective criteria for future evaluations, providing a basis for expediting the planning of transportation projects. Caltrans has also made the survey findings available to the public by publishing a book entitled *Historic Highway Bridges of California*. The book is illustrated with sketches and historic photographs of some of California's grandest bridges. It can be purchased from the Caltrans Publication Unit, 1900 Royal Oaks Drive, Sacramento, CA 95815. For credit card phone orders, call (916) 323-5606.

Unfortunately bridges do not last forever. Some do not meet current standards, some have become weakened by natural forces, and others have been bypassed in highway reroutings. Generally, laws and regulations limit Caltrans to spending no more for rehabilitation and preservation than the cost of demolition. In addition, a potential owner must be found to take on responsibility for the bridge.

The following examples illustrate some of the possible outcomes to bridge replacement projects.

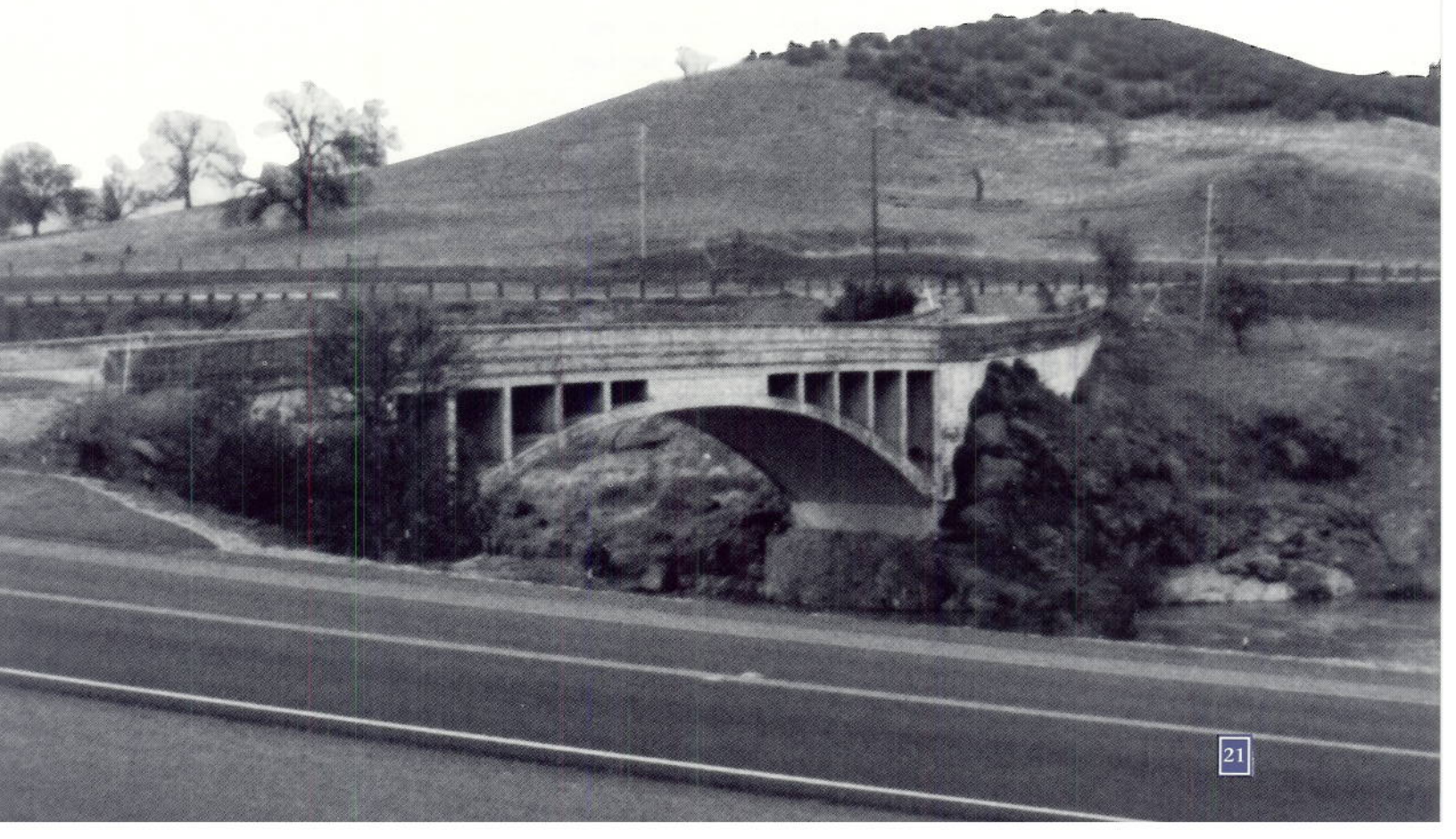
Stony Creek Bridge

Where State Route 162 crosses Stony Creek near the Glenn County community of Elk Creek, the Division of Highways built the Winslow Bridge in 1920. The reinforced concrete spandrel cross-wall arch bridge provided the auto crossing for the next 70 years. Determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 1987, the Winslow Bridge was found to be one of only three of its type still standing in California and the creation of a notable California engineer.

When the bridge over Stony Creek had to be replaced, Glenn County agreed to become the caretaker of the old bridge and preserve it in a park setting. Caltrans provided both the bridge restoration work and three acres for the park.

Some bridges just fit their setting, and none does it better than this 125-foot-long span. Today it frames the shallow gorge just as it did when it served as a highway bridge. The Stony Creek Bridge offers an example of state and county cooperation in preserving our highway heritage. Highway travelers and local residents now have a restful spot to relax and enjoy one of California's historic highway bridges.

Built in 1920, the Stony Creek Bridge is one of only three of its type still standing in California.



Dardanelle Bridge

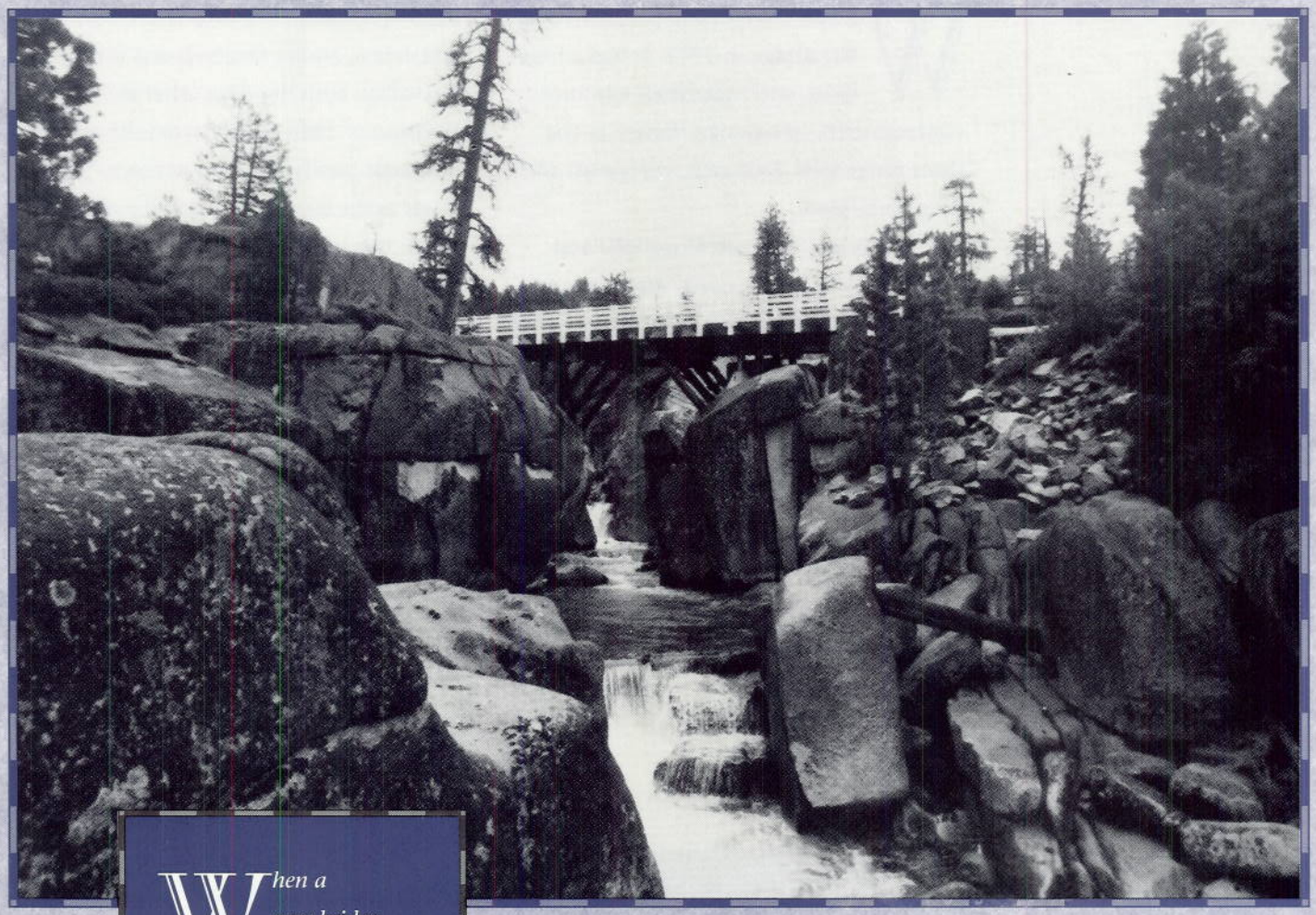
Since 1933, the Dardanelle Bridge has spanned a deep, narrow gorge of the Stanislaus River's Middle Fork in Tuolumne County. Bridge engineer F. Manhart designed this functional and relatively simple scissors truss wooden bridge. It was well suited for quick construction in its remote, rugged location, where most work had to be done by hand.

When the time came that a new bridge was needed, Caltrans decided to save the old bridge because of its historical value and to build a replacement bridge elsewhere. Caltrans also agreed in 1989 to retain maintenance and preservation responsibilities for the old bridge, which the U.S. Forest Service planned to use for public access. The older bridge would become an interpretive walkway, with paths down to the river and parking on adjacent Forest Service land.

However, with few locations in the rugged canyon suitable for a bridge crossing, Caltrans ended up building the new structure immediately upstream from its predecessor. Building in essentially the same location, Caltrans faced some of the same construction challenges as the earlier builders. The close proximity of the old bridge in the narrow gorge added to the difficulty.

When the bridge contractor began blasting for the new bridge footings, the force of one explosion blew a car-sized boulder into the air. It came down on the historic bridge, right through the timber deck. Everything stopped. Caltrans architectural historians immediately consulted with the SHPO on the cause and extent of the damage. They quickly reached an agreement for repairs with in-kind, full-dimension redwood timbers, allowing work on the new bridge to resume.

Nothing was easy with this bridge replacement project, but Caltrans staff found the echo of the past in the construction process itself, as well as in the old historic bridge.

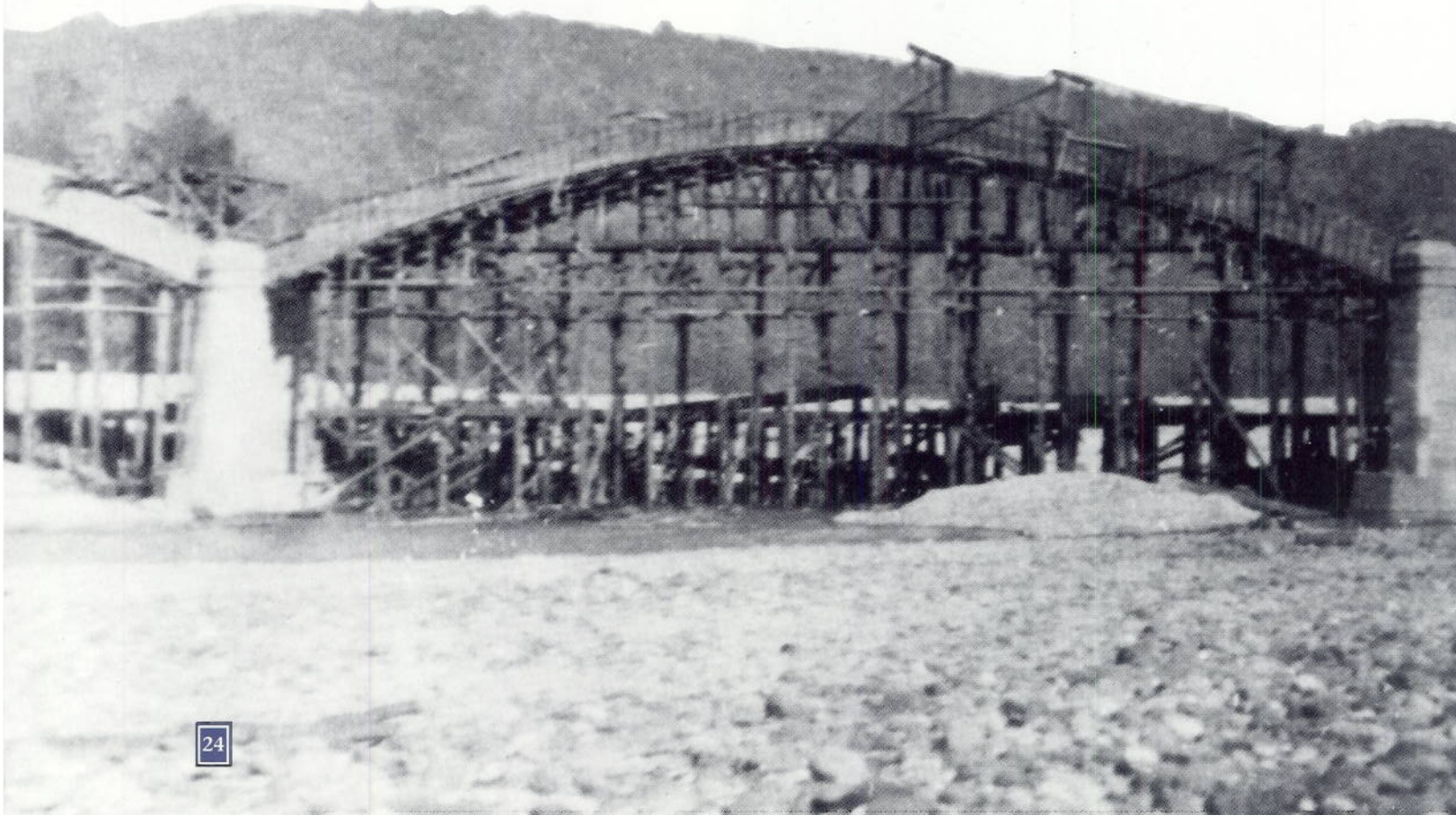


When a new bridge was needed, Caltrans saved the Dardanelle Bridge, built in 1933, because of its historical value.

Parks Bar Bridge

William Thomas designed the Parks Bar Bridge in 1912. It was a four-span, open spandrel, reinforced concrete arch, in a design known as the three-hinge arch. Each arch was precast and then set in place.

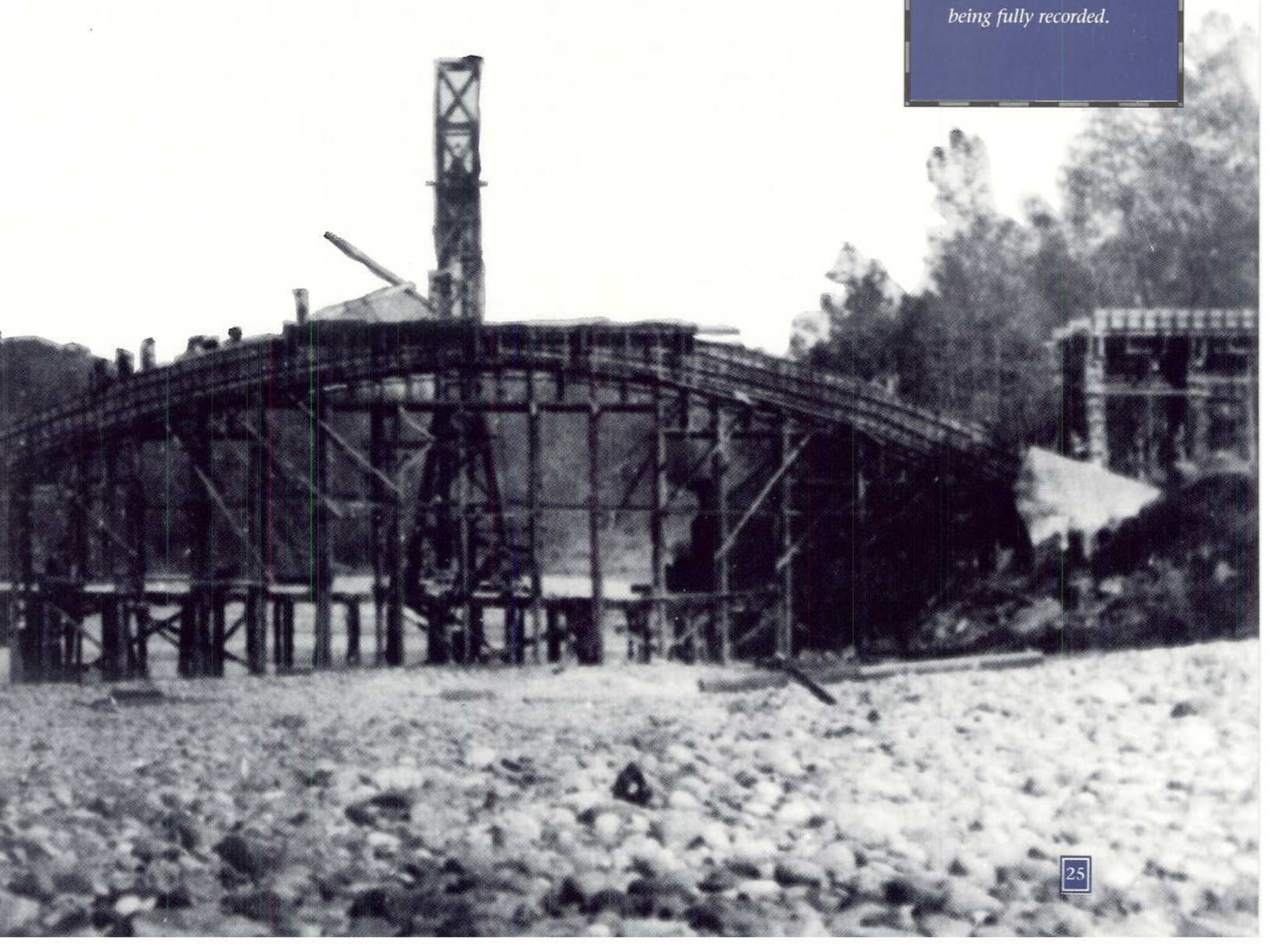
This bridge between Marysville and Grass Valley in Yuba County represented more than just highway history. The eroding of its footings by the Yuba River was a reminder of the effects of nineteenth century hydraulic mining. That destructive mining technique filled California rivers with mud and debris, raising riverbeds and threatening the valleys with flooding. After the Sawyer Decision of 1884 ended hydraulic mining, riverbeds slowly began to return to historic levels as the debris was washed out to sea. When this bridge was built in 1913, the riverbed still held quantities of hydraulic mining debris and it was twenty feet higher than today. As the riverbed sank, the Yuba River ate away at the bridge's newly exposed supports, threatening the foundations.



Not every project has a happy ending, and the Parks Bar Bridge had to be scheduled for demolition. No responsible agency came forward in 1990 to assume the heavy maintenance costs or to undertake the necessary repairs in the riverbed. Without a buyer, and because the cost of restoration was greater than the cost of demolition, Caltrans had no choice but to demolish the bridge on completion of the new one.

Although it is no real substitute for preserving the bridge, a mitigation agreement was reached through the Section 106 process. For this project, mitigation required documenting the bridge in the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER). Caltrans architectural historians photographed the bridge, documented its appearance, and recorded its history in accordance with HAER standards. The photos, documentation, and original building plans are deposited in the Library of Congress where they will be available for future researchers. Even though it will be gone, the Parks Bar Bridge will not be totally lost to memory.

The Parks Bar Bridge was built in 1912 atop hydraulic mining debris. Eighty years later, its footings eroded away, the bridge was scheduled for demolition after being fully recorded.



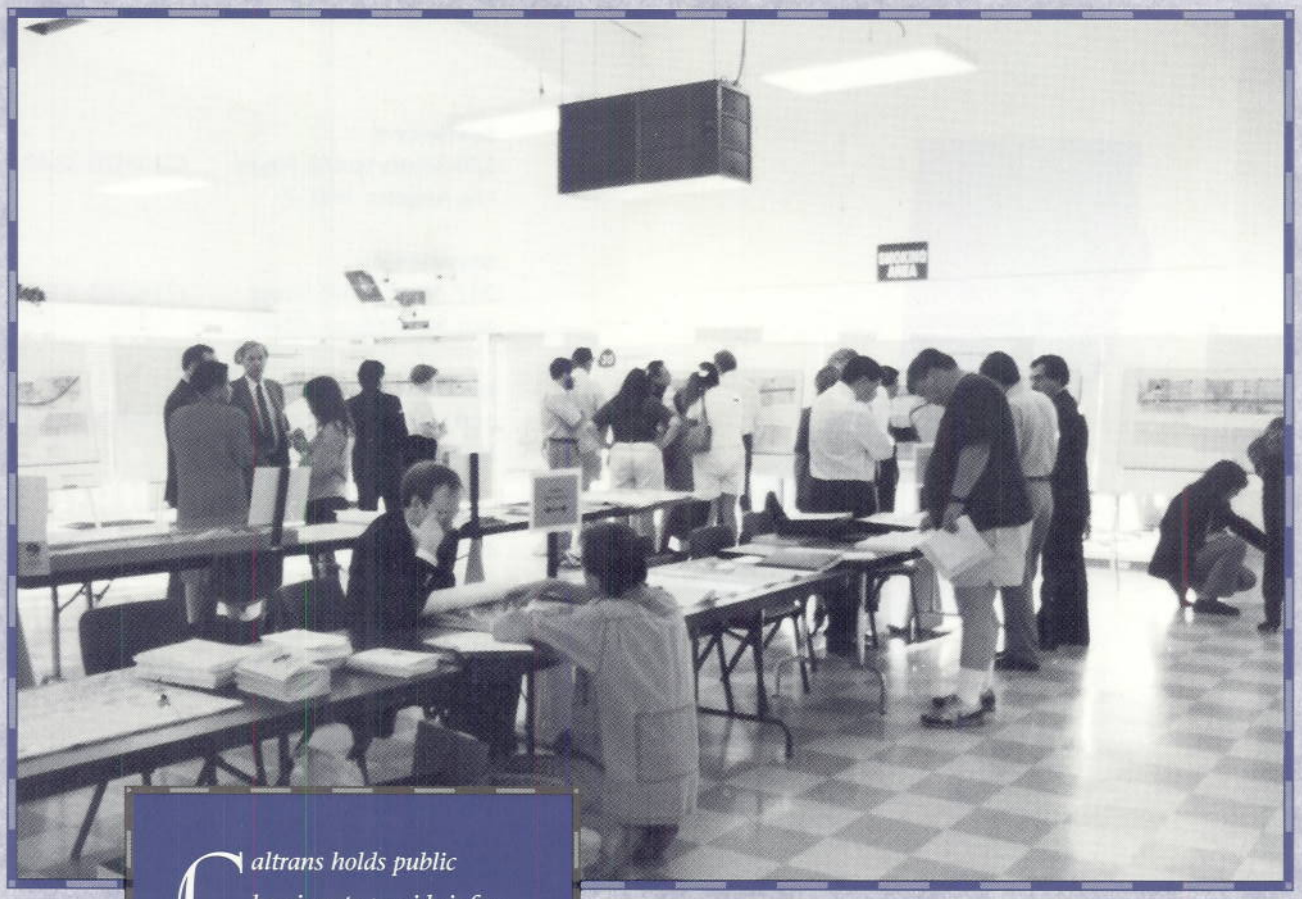
Caltrans is a public agency, working for the people of California by building, operating, and maintaining the state's transportation system. Sometimes this mission comes into conflict with other public interests or private concerns. Then, open communication and public discussion are essential to reach decisions that will be in the best public interest.

To address issues, Caltrans has to know about them, and the sooner the better. It is much simpler to change a project in the earliest planning stages than to halt construction already underway. Caltrans holds public hearings when projects are proposed to learn if there is community opposition, if local values have been overlooked, or if other effects should be taken into account.

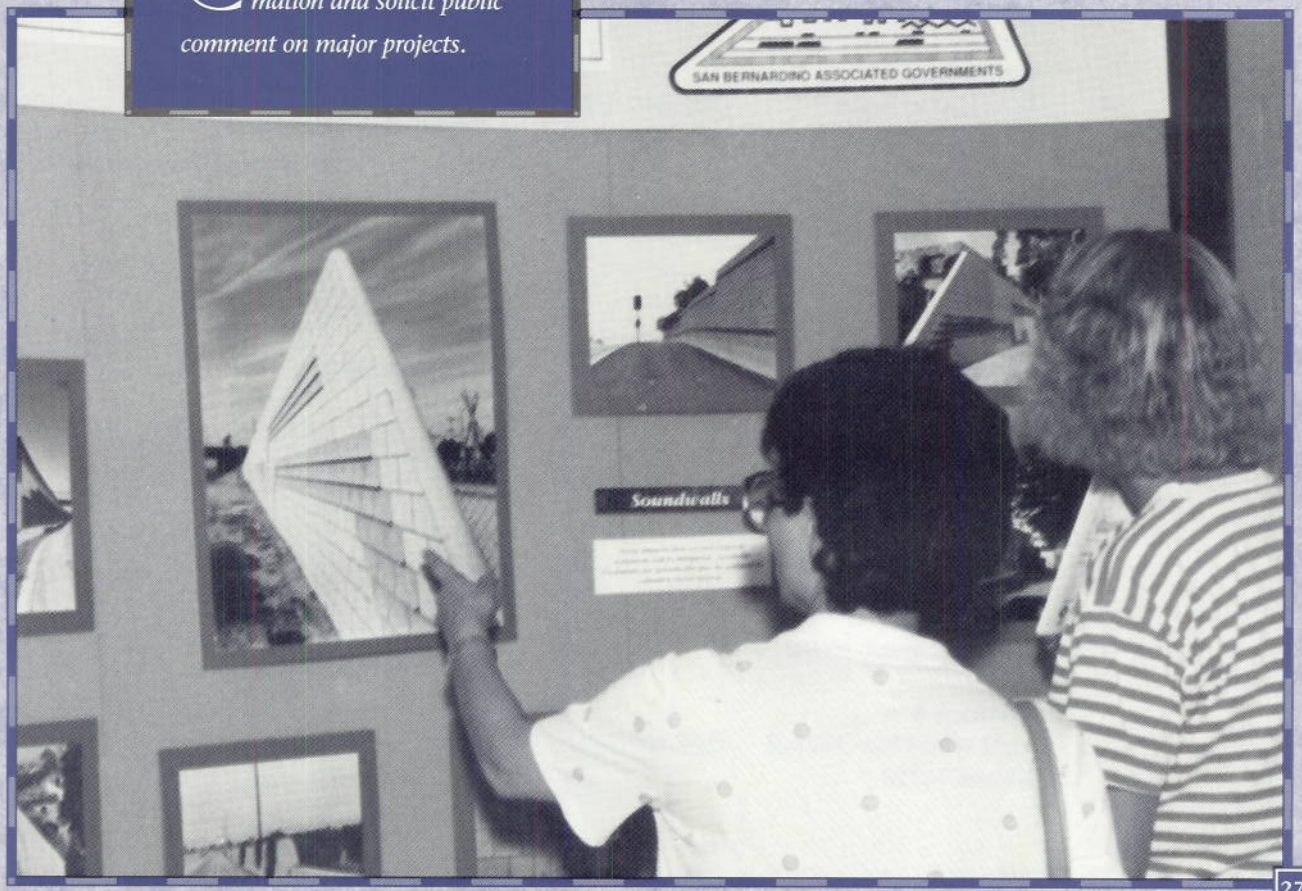
How can you participate? You can attend public hearings or respond with written comments when project alternatives are presented. Notices of opportunities for public comment will be published in local papers as the project planning progresses. Other, less formal contacts are welcome also. Whether in favor or in opposition, study the issues and weigh the arguments. A reasonable, logical presentation supported by evidence is the most effective way of providing input.

All comments will be considered and all viewpoints taken into account when project decisions are made, in accordance with state and federal law and Caltrans policy. Clearly, not everyone's ideas can be accommodated, but public comments are a valuable part of the planning process, and they will be heard. They often result in changes that produce a better transportation project for California.

For information on specific projects, contact the Caltrans District office in your area. (See page 28 for a list of District offices.)



Caltrans holds public hearings to provide information and solicit public comment on major projects.



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