

# Folsom Powerhouse State Historic Park

FOLSOM – Over 100 years ago, the Folsom Powerhouse brought electricity to Sacramento, 22 miles downstream. The plant was the nation's first power system to provide high-voltage current over long distance lines for major city and industrial use. The Historic Folsom Powerhouse State Historic Park, located on the bank of Lake Natoma in the historic city of Folsom, recently re-opened after being closed for 18 months for stabilization and accessibility improvements.

Today, still looking much as it did in 1896, Folsom Powerhouse State Historic Park preserves the powerhouse building and equipment. Vintage generators are still in place, as is the control switchboard, faced with Tennessee marble. Visitors can see the massive General Electric generators, Allis-Chalmers transformers and Lombard governors, as well as the forebay and canal that brought water to the building. Interpretive displays are located throughout the park with information about the history of the Powerhouse. The site is open Wednesday through Sunday from Noon to 4 p.m. For tour information, call (916) 985-4843.

The park is part of a colorful chapter of Sacramento history and is an example of the tremendous advance in the commercial application of electricity. Entrepreneur H.P. Livermore realized that the water of the American River could turn generators for electricity in Sacramento. With his partners, Livermore built the powerhouse. The opening of the facility brought with it a "grand electric carnival" parade through downtown Sacramento and a 100-gun salute from a detachment of soldiers near the substation.

The 1893 Historic Truss Bridge is found just upriver of Rainbow Bridge and the Folsom Powerhouse. It now serves as a bicyclist-pedestrian bridge linking the existing American River Bike trail to the Folsom Historic District and the powerhouse.

The Folsom Historic District, adjacent to the Folsom Powerhouse, offers a Gold Rush-era town setting for strolling, shopping, dining, lodging, and a look at a restored 1850s railroad turntable. A local history museum is also found in the district. Joint State Park/City of Folsom connecting pathways and bike lanes lead from the historic district either upriver to the Folsom City Zoo or downriver for a pleasant walk or ride along the wooded south side of Lake Natoma to the Willow Creek fishing and small watercraft launch area.

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