



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Big Band Street Dance at Columbia State Historic Park On July 8

COLUMBIA - On July 8, bring your dancing shoes and your 1945 spirit to Columbia State Historic Park and dance the night away to the sounds of the Big Band Era. The park is three miles north of Sonora off Highway 49.

Columbia State Historic Park is presenting the sounds of Rod Harris and His Big Band, from 8 to 10:30 p.m. at the corner of State and Main Street. The event is free and open to all ages. Visitors are encouraged to dress in 1940s-style clothing and prizes will be awarded for best costumes. This event is sponsored by the Friends of Columbia State Historic Park, a group that raises funds to support the educational programs in the park.

Columbia State Historic Park, located in Tuolumne County, is designated as a National Historic Landmark District, and has been preserved to tell the story of the towns which arose during the California Gold Rush to serve the needs of miners. Today California State Parks has restored and continues to preserve over 30 of the original brick buildings along the town's Main Street.

On July 15th, 1945, Governor Earl Warren visited Columbia and signed the legislation dedicating the town of Columbia as a part of the State Park System. On that day, thousands of visitors crowded the streets of Columbia to take part in the historic celebration. In honor of Columbia's 61st birthday, Columbia State Historic Park is planning a variety of activities and events to remember the day.

In addition to the Big Band dance, the park will also host an open house of the Wilson-McConnell House, where Governor Earl Warren is reported to have stayed while in Columbia, from 3 to 8 p.m. 1940s era photos of the town will be available for viewing throughout the day. And special tours will be offered at 1 & 3 p.m.

The acquisition and subsequent establishment of Columbia as a State Historic Park set a precedent for the State of California. It was the first "town" that the park system acquired and, unlike similar east coast historic sites (such as Virginia's privately-owned Williamsburg), its preservation and ongoing operation are under public control. Columbia, along with other properties acquired in the 1940s, established the foundation for California, through the work of California State Parks, to become what it is today: a leader in historic preservation and interpretation.

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Today Columbia State Historic Park annually hosts over 600,000 visitors, presenting school programs for over 10,000 4th graders, and is a major tourist destination in Tuolumne County. Its many historic stores and restaurants are run by over 20 Concessionaires whose businesses, along with park staff and volunteers, help recreate the experience of the California Gold Rush for visitors from around the world.

For more information, call the park at (209) 588-9128, or www.parks.ca.gov.

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