

News Release



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Workshop set in Los Angeles For Allensworth State Historic Park

*Only California Town
Founded and Governed by African-Americans*

LOS ANGELES – California State Parks has scheduled a Sept. 14 workshop in Los Angeles to seek input for a new interpretive master plan for Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park, the only California town to be founded, financed and governed by African-Americans. The park is about three hours north of Los Angeles in Tulare County, south of Visalia.

The new interpretive plan will guide State Parks in developing educational and interpretive themes at the park. State Parks is holding the Los Angeles workshop as part of a continuing statewide effort to introduce the park to the public, and gather public comment for the plan.

The Los Angeles workshop is scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 14, 2002, 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the offices of the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company, 1999 West Adams Boulevard, at the corner of Western and Adams.

“The workshop will be an outstanding opportunity for Allensworth enthusiasts and other interested parties to help us tell the story of Colonel Allen Allensworth and the town that bears his name,” said Ted Jackson, San Joaquin District Superintendent for California State Parks.

Allensworth is the only California town to be founded, financed and governed by African-Americans, and was the first of its kind in the nation. Colonel Allen Allensworth, a former slave, chaplain and later the highest ranking African-American officer of his day, founded the small farming town in 1908 with four other black men who were dedicated to the principle of improving the economic and social status of blacks.

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Uncontrollable circumstances, including a drop in the area's water table, resulted in the town's demise. With continuing restoration and special events, the town is coming back to life as a state historic park.

Development of the Allensworth Interpretive Master Plan is one component of an \$8 million restoration project for the park. The primary focus of the \$8 million project is the reconstruction and restoration of many of the historic structures that were present when the town was thriving in the early 1900's.

The park has a visitor center and tours are available by making arrangements with the park in advance. The visitor center features a video presentation, "The Spirit of Allensworth," which is available for viewing from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., any day of the week.

The most important building, historically and in the memory of Allensworth pioneers, is the schoolhouse. It was in use until 1972 and is furnished as it would have been on a school day in 1915. An audio presentation is available on site.

Colonel Allensworth's residence is furnished in the 1912 period. It contains items from the colonel's life in the service and the ministry. A small display of farm equipment is a reminder of the Allensworth economic base.

Camping for tents or recreational vehicles is available at the park year round. Each site includes a picnic table and a camp stove, and flush toilets are nearby. A nearby picnic area is shaded by 75 large trees, planted by the California Conservation Corps.

The Sept. 14 Los Angeles workshop will be conducted by the Sibbett Group, a nationally known consulting firm specializing in interpretive planning and development. The Sibbett Group was awarded the contract to develop the Allensworth Interpretive Master Plan through a competitive bidding process that took place this spring.

Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company offices are located off of the Interstate 10 freeway (Santa Monica Freeway). Take the Western Avenue exit and proceed south to West Adams Blvd. The offices are at the corner of West Adams Blvd. and Western Ave. Free parking is available behind the building.

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