



CALIFORNIA ORIGINALS

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CALIFORNIA
STATE ARCHIVES

From the State Archivist

In the age of Global Positioning Systems (GPS) that provide location information and directions on hand-held devices and in automobiles, traditional maps printed on paper almost seem quaint and obsolete. But maps are rich sources of information and can be part of a journey of exploration into California's history

Some of the earliest maps of California depicted the area as an island. These maps were based on a novel, *Las sergas de Esplandián*, written in 1510 by Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo. Montalvo wrote that "on the right hand of the Indies there is an island called California very close to the side of the Terrestrial Paradise." The maps at the State Archives date from the mid-19th century and include a series of diseños (sketch maps) that accompanied land grant petitions from the era of Mexican rule. A large portion of the collection consists of railroad maps that show profiles and alignments of the routes as well as the location of stations along the way. State highway maps depict the growth and development of road systems. Irrigation maps by State Engineer William Hammond Hall show water courses, diversions, and irrigated lands in the Central Valley. The California Public Utilities Commission records include maps that document the location of power and telephone lines. These are only a sampling of the wide variety of maps contained in the State Archives.

Come visit the State Archives and explore California's past through these remarkable documents.

Nancy Zimmelman Lenoil

California Surveyors General

and the Quest for a State Map

One of the main concerns of the fledgling state of California was figuring out its physical boundaries and how those boundaries might impact its economic potential. One of the first steps in this process was the creation of the constitutional Office of the Surveyor General. The responsibilities of this elected position were spelled out in *Statutes of 1850, Chapter 104*, and included, foremost, the duty to create a state map. The state map was to be a patchwork of surveys from all of the counties in California. The Surveyor General was also to report to the Governor on the quantity of grazing and agricultural lands, the number of livestock, the quantity of grain harvested, and the quantity of lands being mined and the dollar value of its product. The Surveyor General was to report any suggestions for improving roads, waterways, and timber production.

The first Surveyor General, Charles J. Whiting (1850-1852), reported to the Governor at the end of 1851 that he had heard back from only two counties, and so was nowhere close to being able to create a map of the state. He did not make any suggestions for infrastructure improvements as he knew that the state did not have funding to carry out any of his suggestions. He reported that, in his experience, the best way to grow timber was to plant a seed in the ground, and he suggested an "extensive introduction of Turkeys [sic]" to combat grasshopper destruction.

William Eddy (1851-1853), the second Surveyor General, considered the creation of a state map to be his highest priority. He asked the legislature for \$8,000 to complete this task, although they only appropriated \$3,000. Nonetheless, he set out to purchase instruments and assemble a crew of surveyors to begin the task. He got as far as Placerville. He also asked for assistance from US surveyors who had been mapping the California coast and the Colorado River. Chief amongst Eddy's concerns was the location of the intersection of the diagonal California state line and the Colorado River. (cont'd)

"Preserving and Promoting the History of California"



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California Surveyors General

and the Quest for a State Map (cont'd)

Eddy received considerably more cooperation from county surveyors and assessors than did his predecessor. Surveyors' reports from fourteen counties documented the lay of the lands and attempted to describe their part of the state and enumerate its bounty. From these reports, we learn that in 1852 there were 1,749 mules in Yuba County, 858,190 bushels of potatoes in Contra Costa County, and 990 chickens in Butte County. In Trinity County, "the gold is found in the beds of the streams and in bars on the same, in gulches or ravines and on the hills." The Siskiyou County surveyor stated, however, that since the legislature had not appropriated any funding for the surveys at the county level, "he was little inclined to do all this work merely for the sake of having my report 'duly noticed' in your annual reports, for my experience teaches me that serving in any office merely for the honor of the office, brings poor comfort in the long run."



Map of California, published by J.H. Colton & Co., 1855. General Ephemera Collection

Less than half of the thirty-three counties provided any kind of report back to the Surveyor General, and those counties that did report amounted to less than a quarter of California's physical area. None-the-less, Eddy reported that he had completed his map of the state in March of 1853 and sent it to New York for engraving. The California State Archives does not have a copy of this map, but it is available for viewing as part of the [David Rumsey Historical Map Collection](#), housed at Stanford University and on the [State Lands Commission website](#). Shown here is an 1855 print similar to the official Eddy map.

The third Surveyor General, Seneca H. Marlette (1854-1855), stated that the state map was "comparatively worthless in consequence of its great inaccuracy." He further stated that only if the legislature appropriated money for a competent draughtsman to work full time could he produce "a map worthy to be stamped 'official.'" The reports he received from additional counties only accounted for half of the state's acreage.

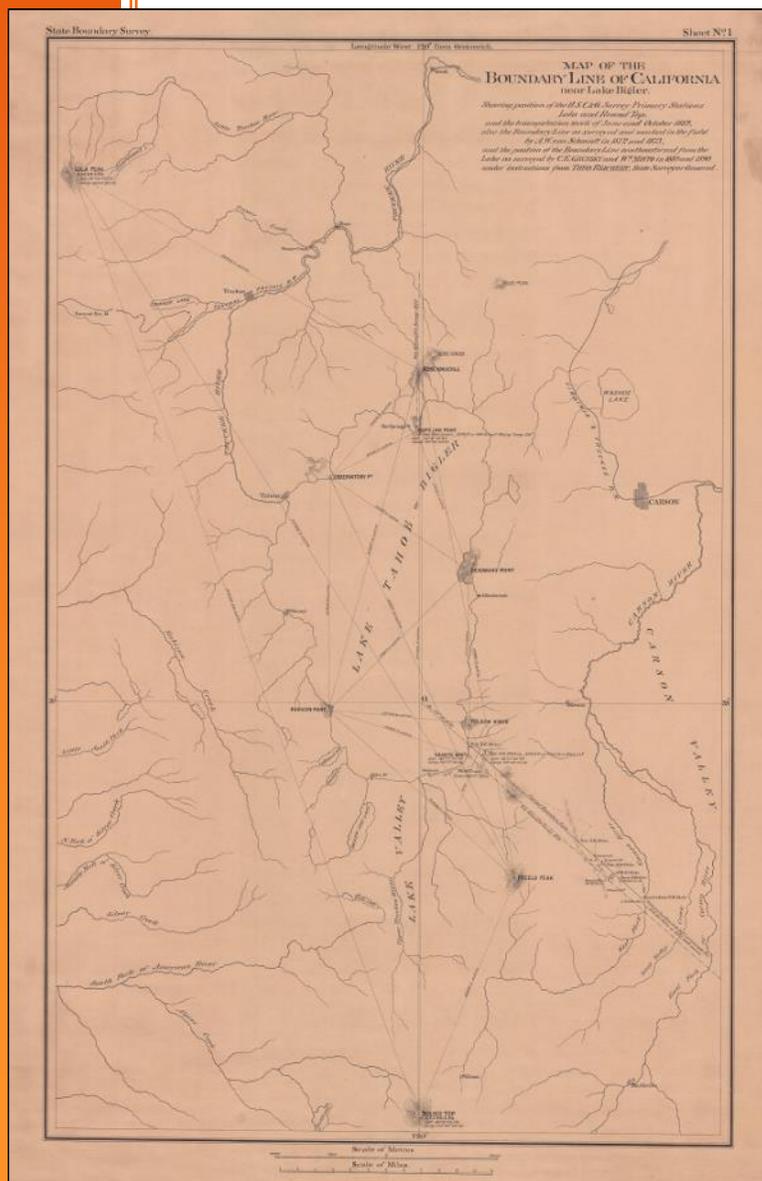
John A. Brewster (1856-1857), the fourth Surveyor General, was even more florid in his condemnation of the state map. Brewster wrote,



California Surveyors General

and the Quest for a State Map (cont'd)

The existing official map of the State is a broad burlesque upon the topography of California. No mortal foot has ever trodden over roads delineated upon it, and the directions of mountain chains and river courses, as there laid down, are most admirable calculated to answer the purpose of an ignis-fatuus to delude the benighted traveler, who should ever trust to their guidance. Lakes are placed where the thirsty soil rarely sucks a drop of water, and fertile plains appear where only barren deserts stretch their broad expanse. It is a disgrace and a reproach to the State, and should be replaced at once by a map conforming to the true character of the country.



Map of the Boundary Line of California near Lake Bigler, filed with the Secretary of State, 1890 [ID no. 234b]

Brewster cited other states that had invested in creating accurate maps, but the California legislature continued to refuse to approve the funding for the State Map. His successor, Hoirace Higley (1858-1861) received information from most of the counties; however, he was silent in all of his reports to the Governor regarding a new state map. A decade later, the seventh Surveyor General, John W. Bost (1867-1871) was still advocating for a need to determine California's eastern borders given that several lucrative mines had opened near the state's periphery. The state could be missing out on tax revenue for mines which claimed to be in Nevada.

Statutes of 1889, Chapter 31, finally appropriated \$5,000 to ascertain the exact position of the eastern California border from Lake Bigler (now Lake Tahoe) to its intersection at the Colorado River. Surveyor General Theodore Reichert (1886-1894) oversaw this survey. His surveyors determined that a previous U.S. survey point was off by as much as three miles and took into account that the Colorado River had by then moved two miles to the east. He hired ten Navajo Indians to retrieve the state line granite marker which had fallen into the Colorado River during a flood and placed it on the bluff. Almost forty years after statehood, California's borders were finally correctly fixed upon the earth, the survey coming in \$124 under budget.

The Surveyor General's Reports to the Governor provide intriguing glimpses into the difficulties of mapping out this vast and physically challenging state. They demonstrate that it was one thing to create a state and the office of the Surveyor General and an entirely different challenge to actually understand what California was physically all about. Huge distances, treacherous mountain terrains and deserts, rivers without bridges, and a slim treasury all bogged down what today is taken for granted. The office of the Surveyor General and the quest for a state map serve as windows into California's early state development.

Beth Behnam, Archivist



Staff Favorites

The Iowa Hill Map

Hydraulic gold mining in California during the 19th century generated both enormous profits and catastrophic environmental damage. The practice of hydraulic mining, which blasted away gold-bearing soil with jets of water under high pressure, developed during the 1850s and 1860s. This highly efficient method of finding gold also loosened tons of gravel, mud, and other debris that frequently clogged rivers, destroyed farmland, and flooded entire communities. It is estimated that over one and a half billion cubic yards of earth were washed away by hydraulic mining between 1849 and 1909. Hydraulic mining also spawned numerous lawsuits between farmers, miners, and other stakeholders. The records of one such court case from 1874, *Hill v. Weisler* (No. 2705, WPA1031, 49 Cal. 146), includes an extraordinary map submitted as a trial exhibit.

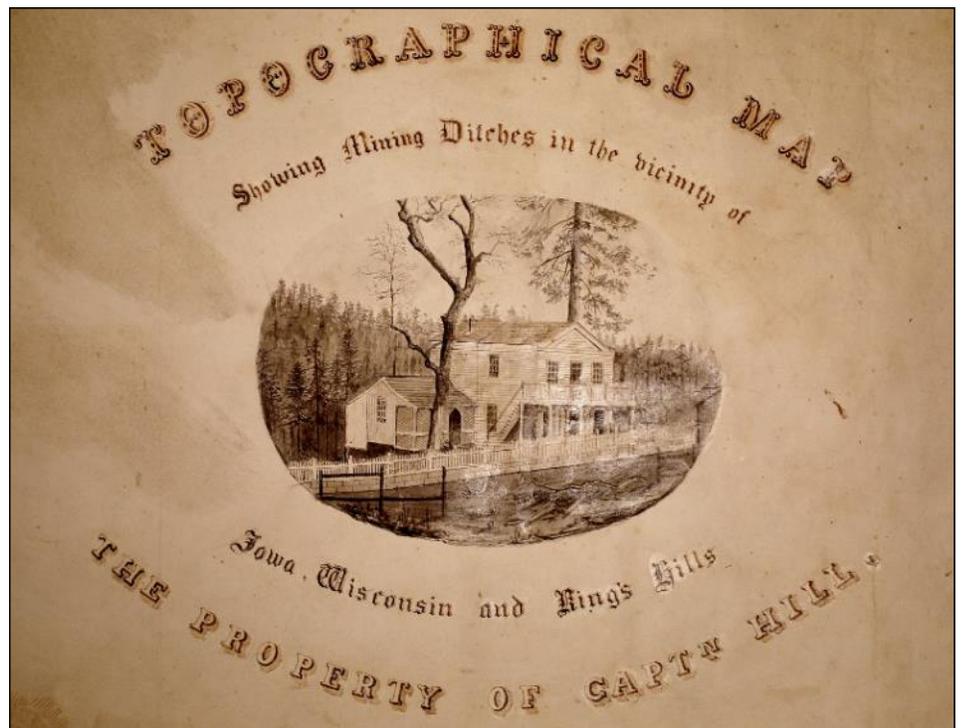
The map measures approximately thirteen square feet and depicts about twenty square miles surrounding the gold mining community of Iowa Hill in central Placer County. Local surveyor R.E. Ogilby drew the map in November of 1856. Depicted on the map is a ditch dug by John T. Hill between 1851 and 1852. Hill, and later his widow Adelia, used this ditch to convey and sell water to the miners and residents of Iowa Hill. John and Adelia's ditch was just one of hundreds of ditches and canals constructed across the Sierra Nevada to transport millions of gallons of water. According to Adelia's complaint, a miner named William Weisler:

...by means of laborers by him employed, and water by him conducted through iron pipes and hose, has, since the 9th day of May, 1868, washed away two hundred and fifty feet of the end of said ditch at Iowa Hill, and has sluiced and washed away the earth...and plaintiff [Adelia] has lost her market for water...for which she would have realized three thousand dollars...

Weisler countered by arguing that John and Adelia's ditch was, in fact, not the same ditch that was washed away by his mining operation. He claimed that a separate, smaller, temporary ditch constructed across his land in 1856 was actually the one that was destroyed. In 1870, a jury awarded Adelia damages of eight hundred dollars. Weisler's subsequent appeal brought the case before the California Supreme Court, the case in which the map is located. The opinion offered by Justice C.J. Wallace denied a new trial and affirmed the judgment and order from the lower court.

In addition to ditches, the map shows old trails, topographical details, the layout of buildings in the neighboring mining communities, and a beautiful depiction of John and Adelia Hill's home in an insert. In 1857, a year after the map was created Iowa Hill was devastated by a catastrophic fire that destroyed the entire town. The community would eventually rebuild, but the map survives as a reminder of both Iowa Hill's roots and the damage caused by hydraulic mining.

Sebastian Nelson, Archivist



Detail from the "Iowa Hill Map", Records of the Supreme Court [ID WPA1031]



Staff Favorites

The Iowa Hill Map (cont'd)



The Iowa Hill map from Supreme Court case no. 2705, Hill v. Weisler [ID no. WPA1031]

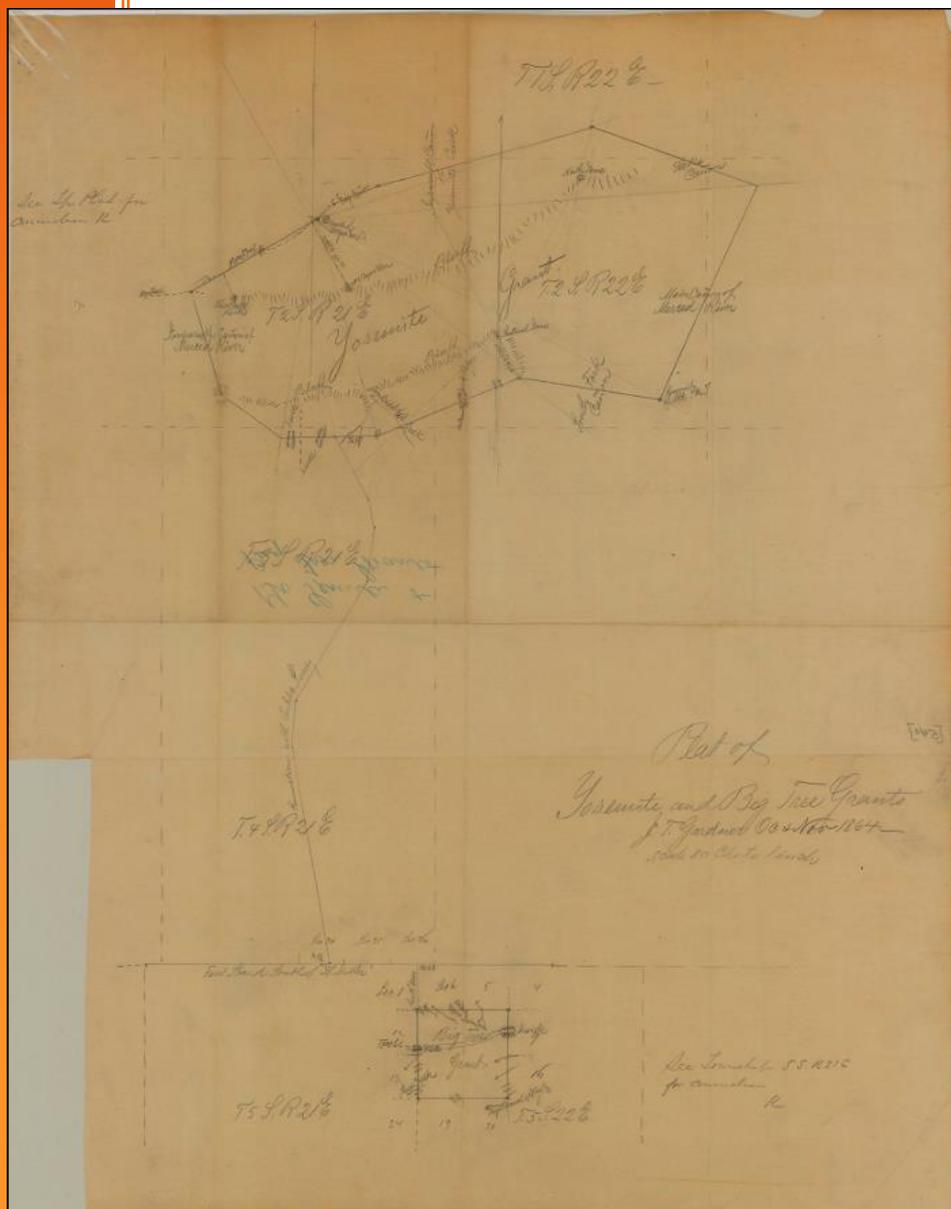


Staff Favorites

Mapping Yosemite

California has a rich and diverse landscape, making it the source of much inspiration for writers, painters, and photographers. The landscape of Yosemite Valley is no exception and it has inspired such individuals as Ansel Adams and John Muir. From the spectacular views of the granite cliff face of El Capitan to the majestic waters of Bridalveil Fall, it is no wonder that the early conservation movement was so eager to preserve this land.

Proposed in 1864 by U.S. Senator John Conness, the Yosemite Grant placed control of the Yosemite Valley with the state instead of with the federal government. President Abraham Lincoln signed the bill, creating the nation's first state park and eventually leading the way for the creation of the National Park System in 1872. In 1865, soon after the passage of the bill, Clarence King and James T. Gardner (aka Gardiner) formally surveyed the area to establish the boundaries of the grant. The State Archives has the original hand-sketched survey map, seen here.



After the grant was transferred to the state, Governor Frederick F. Low appointed eight people to a board of commissioners to help manage the park. Governor Low appointed Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., renowned landscape architect known for designing Central Park in New York City, as the chairman of the committee. At the direction of the Board of Yosemite Commissioners, Olmsted compiled a report that defined the management policy for this first-in-the-nation state park.

Despite the creation of a plan, Olmsted had concerns about the likelihood of long-term conservation of the area. As time went on and tourism to the valley increased, doubt in the state's ability to correctly manage the park grew. On September 30, 1890, Congress passed a bill that created a "forest reserve" around Yosemite Valley, to be overseen by the federal government, not by the state. This legislation prompted a campaign to return Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove of Big Trees to the control of the federal government.

(cont'd)

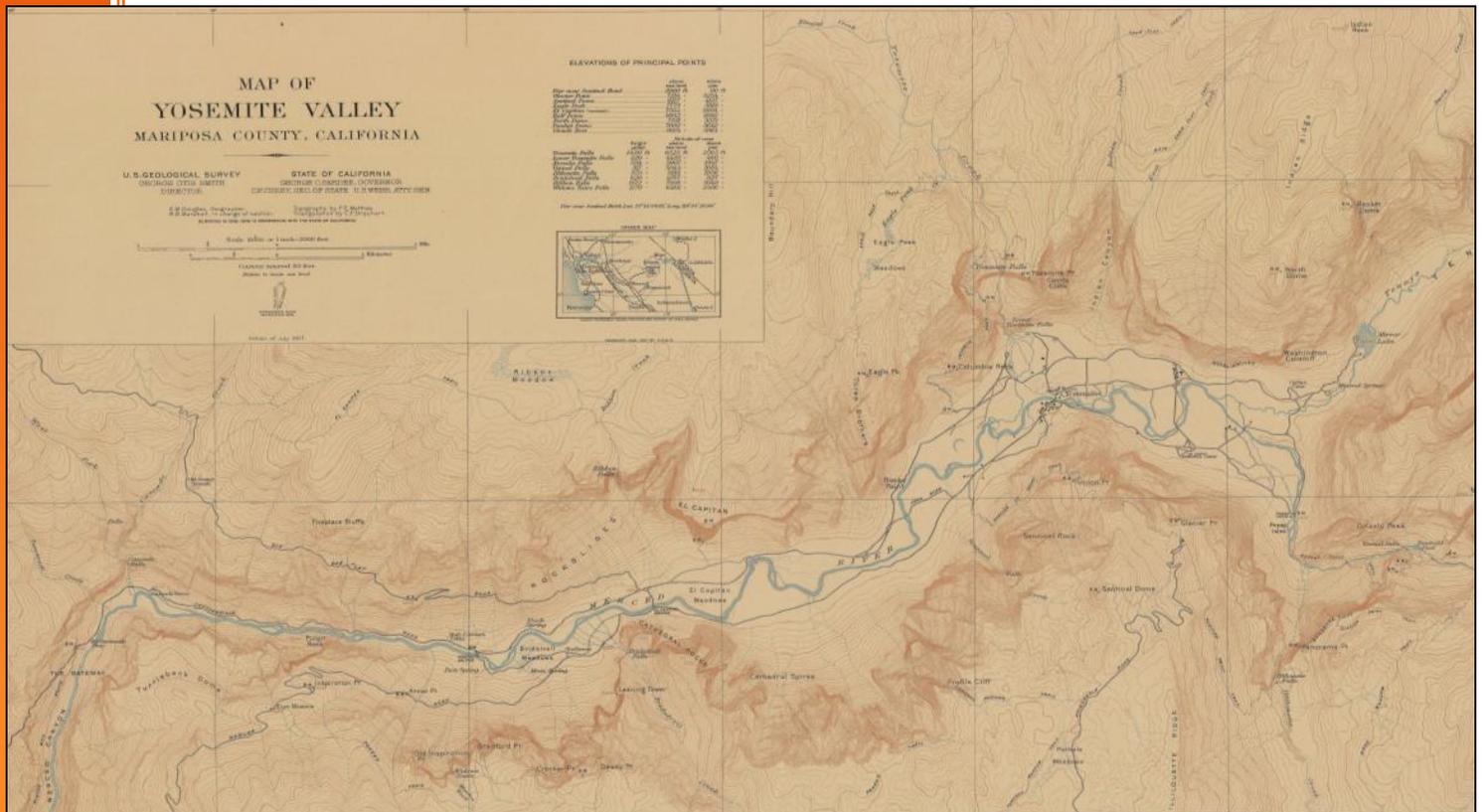
Sketch map of Yosemite and Mariposa Big Trees Grants, U.S. Surveyor General [ID MC4:4(540)] Image enhanced for better viewing.



Staff Favorites

Mapping Yosemite (cont'd)

Well-known naturalist John Muir supported the proposal to return control of the valley to the federal government. After a three-day camping trip in in the park with President Theodore Roosevelt, Muir was able to convince the president that conservation of Yosemite Valley would best be served by the federal government. Soon after, President Roosevelt and Governor George C. Pardee publicly announced their support to return the state park to federal control. On June 11, 1906, Congress passed a bill to do just that and the U.S. Geological Survey completed an extensive survey of the area that was to be returned to federal control. The resulting topographic map (cropped in the image below) shows rivers, roads, and points of interest such as El Capitan and Glacier Point.



Map of the Yosemite Valley, Mariposa County, California [ID MC2:4(9)]. Image cropped.

Almost 30 years later, Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr., who carried on his father's legacy as a landscape architect, annotated a map created by the National Park Service for a report. These annotations show the planned locations of structures such as the Ahwahnee Hotel (renamed the Majestic Yosemite Hotel in 2016) and the Yosemite Valley Lodge [ID R191.005].

Spanning 1,169 square miles, Yosemite National Park draws more than 3 million visitors a year and is a significant part of California culture. Yosemite's Half Dome was chosen to appear on the state quarter as a symbol of the "commitment to preserving our golden state for future generations." (Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, State Quarter Unveiling speech, March 29, 2004).

The mapping of Yosemite took many years and was instrumental in preserving this natural, and national, treasure.

Veronica Lara, Graduate Intern

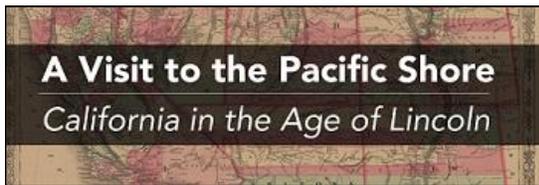


California Digital Archives

Three new exhibits have been added to the ever-growing California Digital Archives!



Our newest online exhibit, "The California Legislative Black Caucus: Celebrating the Past, Working toward the Future," features photographs, documents, and original works of art that tell the history of the Legislative Black Caucus as it celebrates its 50th year of advocacy.



President Abraham Lincoln dreamed of visiting California and what he called the 'Pacific Shore'. Explore the Golden State that Lincoln would have experienced had he ever been able to make the trip across the country, as presented in this new digital exhibit "A Visit to the Pacific Shore: California in the Age of Lincoln."



World War II changed life in California forever. Take a look at civilian life during WWII through new digital exhibit, "Home Front: California During World War II."

Visit the [California Digital Archives](http://www.sos.ca.gov/archives) for more online exhibits and collections!

Jessica Herrick, Archivist & Digital Exhibit Curator

Upcoming Events

March 24	Monthly Public Tour of the California State Archives	www.sos.ca.gov/archives/tours
April 28	Monthly Public Tour of the California State Archives	www.sos.ca.gov/archives/tours/
May 26	Monthly Public Tour of the California State Archives	www.sos.ca.gov/archives/tours/

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