

# exploring

## Three Small Parks

### Discovery, Covered Bridge, Highlands

Neil Wiley

Sometimes small is a better fit than big. Big Basin, Henry Cowell, Fall Creek, and Loch Lomond are big parks with long trails, some solitude, and lots of exercise potential. On the other hand, where do you go when you have less time, young children, or simply want a small slice of nature. The San Lorenzo Valley has three small bites you can enjoy in one afternoon.

Let's begin with the smallest, but most delightful, experience. **Felton Discovery Park** is hidden behind the Felton Branch Library.

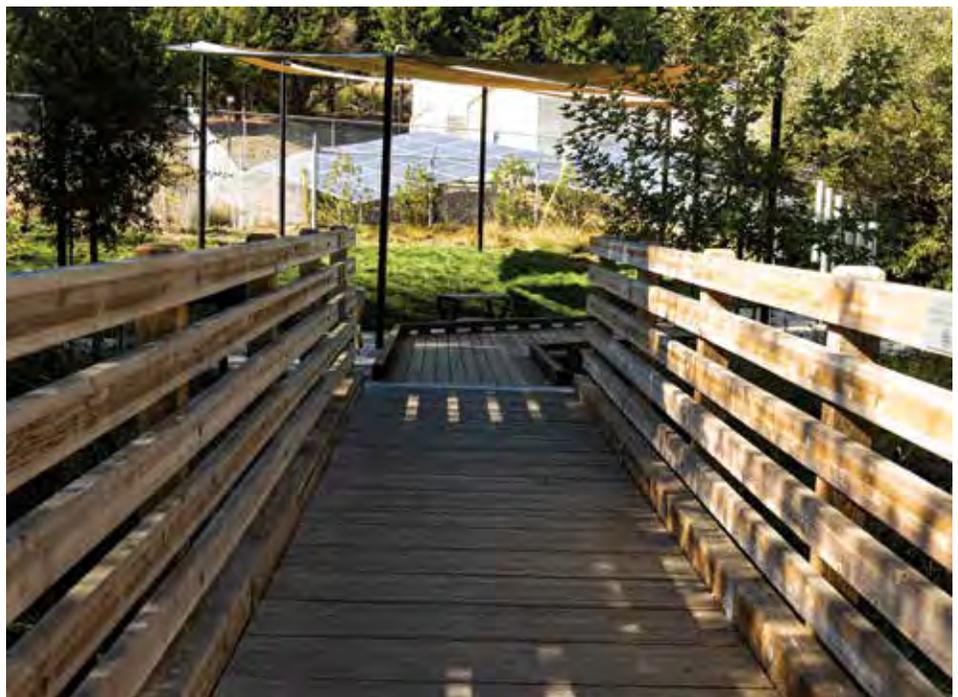
It's a short trip. Take Highway 17 south to Mt. Hermon, then drive through Scotts Valley to Felton. Turn left on Highway 9, right on Kirby, and left on Gushee Street to 6121 Gushee. Turn right into a small lot next to the library.

A few steps take you into a beautiful little garden park with a nature trail, over two little bridges crossing Bull Creek. Enjoy a rest area under a permanent shade structure. Make music playing a xylophone, beating a drum, or thumping on a row of tall pipes. Read interpretive signs along the trail for painless education. Sit on benches that offer comfort while watching children play or simply enjoy a well-designed garden environment.

I talked with one woman who told me that she walks alone here almost every day. It's her quiet time.

Just outside the park, you can see a large array of solar panels. It could be a visible opportunity to discuss or simply think about a new technology that is changing the world.

Walk a trail measured in steps and minutes, not miles and hours. Enjoy peace or bring children. It's your choice.

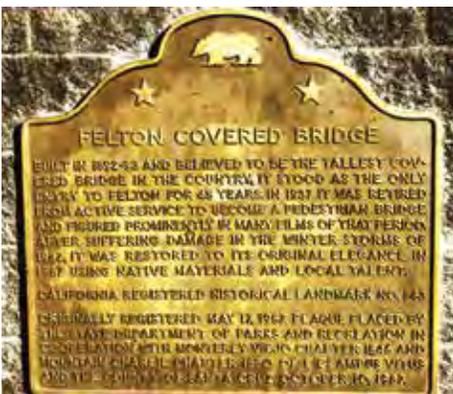




You can walk or drive from Discovery Park to **Felton Covered Bridge Park** located at the intersection of Mt. Hermon and Graham Hill Road. Built in 1892, the bridge is a California Historical Landmark.

The main entry to Felton for 45 years, the bridge isn't used as a road anymore. That is fortunate, because it was severely damaged by a floating redwood in 1982. Not to worry. It has been restored, and you can walk through history on the tallest covered bridge in the United States. You can imagine the carriages, wagons, and old cars that traveled the eighty-foot-long span. As you walk along, you can see the San Lorenzo River through open windows.

The end of the bridge reveals a large metal plaque that offers a short history of the bridge. To your left you can see the entrance



to the Covered Bridge Equestrian Center. (It brought back memories—this is where I purchased my daughter Lisa's first horse.) The stable has a big arena, three round pens, and a trail that goes down to the river and Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park.

Back at the bridge, a narrow, unmarked trail takes you through a large meadow and then uphill into a forest. You reach a dead end in impassable brush and trees, but not completely. I could see an old, white-bearded man rolling up his sleeping bag through the trees.

The area in the front of the bridge is a bit more park-like, with large green lawns, picnic tables, a volleyball court, and playground. History buffs should see the history booth in the front lawn. It displays many bridge photos and stories, including some about movies that used the bridge as a prop.

**Highlands County Park** is a short drive from Felton up Highway 9 to 8500 CA-9, Ben Lomond, CA 95005. After you turn in to the park, you'll see a general-parking area. Although smaller than nearby state parks, it covers 26 acres with a large playing field, picnic areas, play equipment, tennis court, skating area, and an historic house built in the early 1900s.

If you are an explorer, you can ignore these facilities. Instead, leave your car in the general-parking area and walk toward the back of the park. Follow the signs to the Senior Center on the right. You'll find a path going down through a grove of big trees. Near the bottom of the hill, you should see the sign for Highlands Park Nature Trail. This narrow dirt trail takes you to the Santa Lorenzo River and a pretty, little waterfall.

You can rest at a table and chairs, have a picnic, or climb down to the river to see the waterfall. Looking up-river you'll see a large reflecting pool. It isn't Yosemite Falls or Big Basin's Berry Creek Falls, but it is a nice view. Down-river looks more river-like. Take the trail to the left to continue the loop back to the Senior Center area and your car.



**For more fun.** If you want to do more in this area, hike in Henry Cowell or Fall Creek state parks, visit Quail Hollow Ranch, take shorter walks in Scott Valley's Glenwood's east or west parks, ride the train at Roaring Camp Railroads, or boat in the Loch Lomond Recreation Area.

For more information, visit [www.mnn.net](http://www.mnn.net), and then click on *Hikes and other explorations*.



# history



**Marlene Wiley's Mountain-History Archive**  
**The North Coast**  
Marlene Wiley

Driving north up Highway 1 from Santa Cruz, you may have enjoyed the scenery, visited wonderful parks, walked around Davenport and Pescadero, eaten at Duarte's Restaurant, or parked and climbed down to a secluded wild and often windy beach.

We learned more about North Coast history on July 2004, when Neil and I took a bus tour with Sandy Lydon, the "History Dude," and Cabrillo College historian emeritus.

The jagged coastline dictated the path of the early road that followed arroyos inland until they could be crossed, then returned to the coast. Sandy told us that a wagon trip of eleven miles between Davenport and Santa Cruz could take half a day. The road had 126 curves.

Our first stop was at Laguna, a settlement built where the road crossed Laguna Creek inland over an arroyo that carried water year-round. Sandy pointed out the Laguna Inn, a time-worn structure built in the 1800s. For many years, it was a hotel and the social center for the coastal communities.

Our next stop was the town of Davenport. The cement business developed in 1906 because of the nearby source of lime and kilns. One of the original companies, Santa Cruz Portland Cement Company, was bought by Pacific Coast Aggregates in 1956. Later, the company built Newtown upwind of Davenport for company managers. The cement company property covered 6,000 acres.

In 1923, Santa Cruz Portland Cement Company installed a narrow-gauge electric railroad to carry limestone from the quarry to the plant. In 1934, they built tall storage silos at the plant, and a 2,300-foot welded-steel pier with pipes to carry cement to waiting ships. After World War II, the plant was shipping 700,000 barrels a day. It was one of the largest cement plants in the world.

Davenport earned the nickname of "cement town," because cement dust covered everything, infiltrating each nook and cranny, and creating health problems for people and animals. In 1955, Davenport



residents held a town meeting to discuss their options. Eventually, a series of lawsuits were filed for damages totaling over one million dollars. The settlement decreed dust-arresting equipment to reduce emissions.

While in Davenport, Sandy talked about the process of straightening Highway 1 that occurred in the 1950s. When the railroad tracks were laid, the arroyos were filled in and high spots cut down to create a relatively level bed.

To move the water that normally flowed through the arroyos to the ocean, engineers created tunnels under the road.

On our walking tour of Davenport, we stopped at the jail. Small and seldom used, it now belongs to the Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History.

The most distinctive landmark in





Davenport is the beautiful St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church. Louis Morretti, last of the Italian-speaking Swiss family, donated the money to build the church that opened in May 1915.

Leaving Davenport, we took the Old Coast Road north through Newtown. We passed the site of Davenport Landing, a 450-foot-long wharf in the 1870s at the mouth of Agua Puerca Creek. The small settlement that grew around it handled milled lumber, cordwood, and posts. Most of the town was destroyed by a fire in 1915.

We continued up Swanton Road away from the coast to Waddell Bluff at the San Mateo County line. Reaching Pigeon Point Light Station, we stopped for lunch. Tours inside the lighthouse were discontinued because of deterioration, but the outside is



still worth seeing.

Pescadero was our last stop. In 1868, the state legislature moved 90,000 acres, including Pescadero, San Gregorio, and Half Moon Bay, from Santa Cruz County to San Mateo County. The reason: the three small communities were more isolated from Santa Cruz than San Francisco.

In the early days of Pescadero, it was a tourist town with two excellent hotels. Visitors came by the Ocean Shore Railway to fish for steelhead trout in Pescadero Creek and for salmon in the Pacific Ocean. Hunters came for fowl, deer, and grizzly bear. Added attractions were redwood

forests, berries, and wildflowers.

Pescadero was described as a “friendly, funky, rundown” town, but this unincorporated rural agricultural community is undergoing gentrification. The values of homes and property in Pescadero have risen dramatically, a situation that has caused hard feelings between longtime families and newcomers.

We enjoyed a walking tour of town along Stage Road. The shops appeal to tourists, especially the one selling custom-made furniture. Duarte’s Tavern founded in 1874 by Frank Duarte, remains a special attraction, known for its wonderful soups.

