

Visitors Guide to the Coke Hallowell Center for River Studies



River
Center

Coke Hallowell Center for River Studies

What is this place?

The Coke Hallowell Center for River Studies at Riverview Ranch (River Center), is owned and operated by the San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust (Trust), a 501(c)3 non-profit, community benefit organization.

The River Center was deeded to the community by Vulcan Materials Company on April 13, 2001 for use as an interpretive center featuring the natural and cultural history of the San Joaquin Valley. In this guide you'll find information about the history and architecture of Riverview Ranch House, grounds, and Hidden Homes Nature Trail.

For more information about the Trust's other programs and properties, visit our website at <http://www.riverparkway.org>.

Riverview Ranch House

For 100 years this 1890's Victorian style building was home to many people—from single families with very fine furnishings to multiple families of farm workers. Through the years, the surrounding land was used as a dairy farm, nursery, orchard, or vineyard. Livestock, alfalfa, and row crops were raised here.

Between 1998 and 2002 the house was restored to create this Interpretive Center. Be sure to look for photos of the restoration process in our scrapbook when you tour the house.



History

Nurseryman William Macca Williams built this house in the 1890s. Perhaps he chose this location because of the easy access to river water and roads. Originally the house had no inside plumbing. Cooking was performed outside or in an exterior smokehouse.

Arts & Crafts Style Architecture and Furnishings

Though built in the Victorian era, the house has been restored to the early 1900s Arts and Crafts style, the time frame when the sleeping porch on the north side of the house and the dining room on the south were added. The furniture and lights are replicas in the Arts and Crafts style. Notice the stylized decorative motifs reflect-

ing medieval and Islamic design on the rectilinear and angular furniture. The wallpaper colors and motifs are reproductions of renowned Arts and Crafts designer, William Morris.



Downstairs Rooms

In the Foyer, the transom windows over the front door and parlor doorways are original. The original staircase was a straight, steep flight, but early renovations added the landings. Look in the Foyer for wall panels with historic photos to learn more River Center history.

Fireplaces in the parlors are currently non-functional. The cabinets, although removed during earlier renovations, have been returned to their original locations. Above the fireplaces are specially commissioned paintings of the San Joaquin River by Tony King.

The room in the northwest corner of the house functioned as the Ranch Office when the River Center was a dairy ranch and later as a kitchen when two families lived in the house together.

When the house was expanded in the 1920s, families dined in what is now the Conference Room. Today this room is furnished with audio visual equipment and is available to rent for daytime business meetings and retreats.

Upstairs Rooms

The upstairs rooms are the same size as when they were built in the 1890's. Note how small closets were then, probably due to much smaller wardrobes.

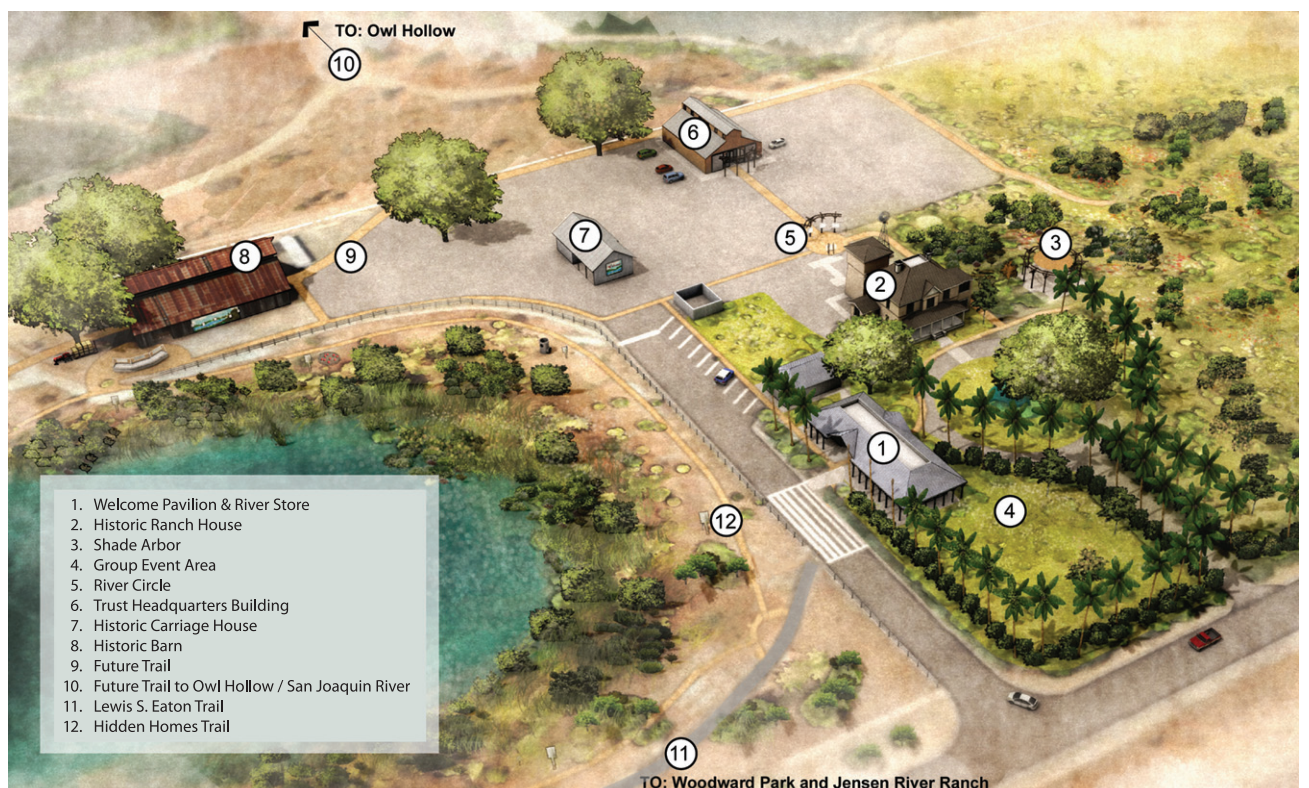
In the small Nursery at the top of the stairs, an exhibit called "Whose Clues are Whose?" challenges visitors examine animal signs to detect which animals call the San Joaquin River home. Next door, in the Room With a View take time to roll out a life-sized nest quilt, or flap your wings as fast as real birds. Compare your wingspan to life-sized cutouts, and find hidden animals in the hanging quilt made by the late artist, author and quilter, Jean Ray Laury.

A Sleeping Porch was added to the north side of the house in the early 1900s to allow cool evening breezes to flow through. Spotting scopes now offer views of the Sierra Nevada, and of Rank Island Ecological Preserve. The large pond directly west of the River Center holds water from ongoing sand and gravel mining operations.

The River Gallery in the southeast corner of the house features a video about river preservation. A model depicts the San Joaquin watershed and other exhibits reflect the river's past, present and future. A collection of river-related cultural, historical, and nature-oriented written resources can be perused in the Research Room in the southwest corner of the house.

The Necessary Room was a welcome addition in the early 1920's when electricity made deep well pumps practical. Prior to this, indoor plumbing was limited because water was pumped by wind power to the tank house and gravity fed to the house.

Recorded stories of people who lived along the San Joaquin River through the years can be viewed in the northwest corner of the house in the Reading Room. Videos show how native residents processed acorns for food, how river grasses were woven into baskets, and how salmon were speared by firelight from rafts. From gold mining to swimming on hot summer days, people living at the river's edge fondly recount their memories.



Tank House

In 1900 William Walker Phillips built a tank house in back of the house to store water pumped by a windmill for cooking and bathing. In the 1940's the Folsom family replaced it with a garage. During the River Center restoration, the tank house was reconstructed to house an elevator that allows upstairs access for all visitors.

River Center Grounds

The **Leon and Pete Peters Welcome Center** and River Store function as the first point of contact for visitors coming from the Lewis S. Eaton Trail. Restrooms and drinking fountain are available for visitors, and a catering kitchen was built to serve the many events held at the River Center each year. The River Store offers a variety of nature-inspired gifts, art, and guidebooks on local trails and wildlife.

At the River Center you can connect with the culture and natural history of the San Joaquin River through art and educational exhibits, programs and activities, gardens and links to pedestrian and bike trails.

East of the Welcome Center is the **Kremen Outdoor Events Arena**. This large lawn is often used for special events and is conveniently located adjacent to the catering kitchen.

In front of the Ranch House in the middle of a circular lawn is the critter pond. Originally a five-foot deep cistern that collected rainwater for growing crops and watering cattle, it is now quite shallow and home to frogs, fish, insects and reeds.

The Sun Maid-Raisin demonstration orchard and vineyard were planted to remind visitors of the agricultural history of the site. Grapes, peaches, oranges and lemons can be gathered at various times of the year.

The **Robert Scott Patton Memorial Shade Structure** provides a lovely setting for outdoor events. Connecting the shade structure to the back porch of the house is a wisteria arbor. Behind the arbor is the Beeman rose garden, with over four dozen different varieties of heirloom roses that bloom profusely in the spring and summer.

Directly behind the Ranch House is the reconstructed **Albert and Julia Folsom Smoke House**. The smoke house was originally used for curing meats and cooking, before the ranch house had a kitchen. Later a garage was added. The smoke house was torn down during restoration of the ranch house, but the bricks were saved and used to rebuild the structure in the original location.

North of the smoke house and beyond the rose garden lies the **Cedar Bark House**. Mono Indian families from the foothills around Fresno built houses from cedar bark, which could be easily moved and re-built.

Behind the Ranch House and across the parking lot lies the Trust's Headquarters. The building is a modern office completed in 2008, but disguised to look like a barn. The building includes many green design elements, such as blue jean insulation, marmoleum desktops, fly ash in the concrete floor, and siding recycled from a pier. Hanging in the main hallway are five banners commissioned from artist Jean Ray Laury. The themes of the banners are Aquatic Animals, Insects/Spiders, Plants, Birds, and Reptiles/Mammals. If the Headquarters is open during your visit, feel free to

pop in to view the last major work completed by this renowned textile artist. A guide to the banners is in the lobby of the headquarters.

The barn in the southwest corner of the property was built in the 1900's for dairy cattle. Black and white Holsteins were milked in the barn – a Holstein hide rug in the Ranch Office creates a link to the dairy heritage. In the future, the barn will be restored as a visitor use area with exhibits. Until then, it is off limits to visitors for safety reasons.

The **Hidden Homes Nature Trail** is accessed near the entrance to the River Center. This easy, half-mile loop is perfect for families with young children.

The viewing scopes at the trail entrance enable children and adults a better view of the turtles and birds that inhabit the pond below.

The Riverview segment of the **Lewis S. Eaton Trail** links the River Center with Woodward Park. A trail user can connect to the **Sugar Pine Trail** at Shepard Avenue. You can also take the trail along the back of the park and enter Jensen River Ranch on the **Thomas MacMichael Sr. Loop Trail**. A hiking guide book featuring these trails and others in the Fresno area is sold in the River Store.

Plants and Gardens

Prickly Pear Cactus – This 100-year old cactus came from Mexico. The fruits, called nopales or tuna, make great jelly. Many wildlife species hide in this prickly retreat.



Sycamore Trees – Growing up to 90 feet tall, these California natives are often found near water. Purple finches and other birds feed on the seed balls. The large branches with mottled bark provide nesting platforms for large birds such as crows, herons, hawks and bald eagles.

Fig Tree – This fig tree was planted to honor Fresno author William Saroyan.

Valley Oak Trees – The Valley Oak is the largest American Oak and can grow to 120 feet tall. Its long, narrow acorns were a favored food of Native Americans. Oaks provide food, cover, nesting materials and cavities

for wildlife.

Rose Garden, Wisteria Arbor and Shade Area – Over 50 rose varieties, including many "old roses" predating introduced hybrids, grow in the gardens. White wisteria twines around the Shade Area and purple wisteria lines the Arbor. Surrounding the benches are drought-tolerant Pink Muhly Grass, Oriental Fountain Grass, Desert Willows and Sunset Rockrose.

Camphor Tree – This tree was planted in the 1890s when the house was built. A rope hanging from the largest branch allowed children to swing into the cistern's cool water. Birds rest in its shade.

Grass for Baskets – Look for large 4' clumps of deer grass in the gardens and by the Hidden Homes Trail. Native Americans used this grass to weave baskets for cooking, storage and carrying food or babies. Other plants like redbud, sedges and sourberries were added to native basketry for color and strength.

Palm Trees – The formal entrance to the property from Old Friant Road is lined with 100-year old California Fan Palms. Lightning strikes killed some of the trees. Rather than replacing the trees, the Trust kept them to provide nesting cavities for owls, kestrels and bats. Seen from a distance, they say "home sweet home" to people and critters alike.

Deodar Cedar – This tall evergreen tree is not a native, but it does well in extreme valley temperatures. In spring Great Horned Owlets hide in its top as they prepare for independence.



Who We Are and What We Do

The San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust, Inc.

(River Parkway Trust). A 501(c) 3 non-profit, community benefit organization, was created in 1988 to establish a continuous greenway along 22 miles of river in the rapidly urbanizing Fresno-Madera region. In partnership with state and federal agencies and local governments, the River Parkway Trust has been successful in protecting land through acquisition and in restoring wildlife habitat. In addition, the River Parkway Trust provides outdoor education programs for school children and recreational opportunities for the community.

About the Parkway

The San Joaquin River Parkway is a work in progress that will ultimately form 22 miles of trails, wildlife reserves and recreation areas on over 6000 acres.

To date, 4,000 acres have been protected and six miles of trails are complete. Being on the trail during our mild winter weather you can hear the honk of Canada geese, or catch sight of a red-tailed hawk circling the Woodward Park bluffs. In early spring you can rejoice at the wildflowers and feel the joy and wonder that comes from experiencing nature along the Parkway.

Connect to the Parkway. It's yours to Explore, Experience and Enjoy.

San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust

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Hours of Operation:

Riverview Ranch House and the River Store are open weekends 10am-3pm.
Grounds are open Monday-Friday from 8am to 5pm, and weekends 8am-3pm.
Headquarters is open Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm.

If you've enjoyed your visit to the River Center, please make a donation!

Donation boxes are located in the breezeway of the Welcome Center and in the foyer of the ranch house. Donations help the Trust maintain this property for the enjoyment of all the Valley's people. As a guideline for your donation, consider the entrance fees to similar facilities:
Woodward Park: \$5 per vehicle
Meux Home Museum: \$5 per adult

Want to be even more involved? Become a member of the San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust. Membership envelopes are available in the Welcome Center breezeway. Your membership donation helps us create the San Joaquin River Parkway. As a member, you'll enjoy a subscription to our newsletter, the Current, and discounts on our guided canoe tours, River Camp, and Parties for the Parkway.

