

A Piece of History...

Felton Covered Bridge

Covered Bridges 2-1-03

You may have heard of it, you may even have seen it, but when was the last time you stopped by the Felton Covered Bridge? Did you know that it's the tallest bridge of its kind in the US? It's a little piece of American history, right here in Santa Cruz County.

Eric Taylor

When construction on the Felton Covered Bridge began in 1892, it was not a day too soon as far as locals were concerned. For years, residents and visitors had to ford the San Lorenzo River (when it was low enough) or swim across on horseback. For 45 years after its completion, the bridge served as the only point of entry into Felton.

The Felton Covered Bridge is believed to be the last of its kind built of redwood. Although it is not officially confirmed, it is also believed to be the tallest covered bridge in the US.

A census of covered bridges in 1954 by Richard Sanders Allen of New York revealed there were 1,617 in the United States, California having 16 and Santa Cruz County having 3. One in Felton, one in Paradise Park – which was formerly Powder Flats – and one at De La Veaga Park.

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The purpose of the covered bridge was twofold. The roof and siding were to protect the wooden bridge from the elements, thus preventing wood rot from moisture and snow and drying out, causing this structure to sag. A second purpose was to calm the horses by giving the appearance they were entering a barn. Most of these old timber framed structures have disappeared due to lack of maintenance, use, or heavy rains and swollen rivers.

The De La Veaga covered bridge left us in the storm of 1982. The covered bridge built in 1872 on the site of the first Powder Mill on the Pacific Coast, whose products helped blast the railroad over the Sierra Nevadas, still handles traffic today.

The covered bridge's barn-like entrance was designed to make horses feel comfortable as they crossed

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