

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West



Folsom Powerhouse Historic Landmark – Photo Credit: Winetta Owens

In the 1850s, Horatio Gates Livermore and his sons, Horatio and Charles, developed dams and ditches on the American River for agriculture and industries. One historic result was Folsom Powerhouse (located on the west bank of the American River), which began operations in July 1895. Power was delivered to Sacramento at 11,000 volts, a new achievement in long-distance high-voltage transmission. The capital celebrated the operation of the powerhouse by having a grand electric carnival on Sept. 9, 1895. The original generating plant, still in place, remained in continuous operation until 1952. The plant was donated by Pacific Gas and Electric Co. to the State of California to preserve its historical values. Visitors can view the giant generators, huge turbines, penstocks and other equipment, such as the solid marble control panel location, inside the powerhouse.

The Folsom Powerhouse is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1981) as being significant in the areas of engineering and industry on the national level. It has been said that it represented a momentous advance in the science of generating and transmitting electricity. It is also a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark (1975), a National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark (1976) and is designated as California Registered Historical Landmark No. 633 (1958).

For more information on the Folsom Powerhouse, please visit:

http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=1349