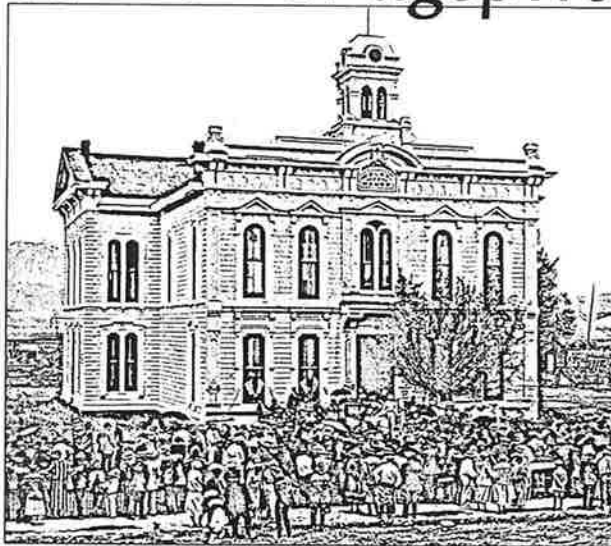


Historic Bridgeport

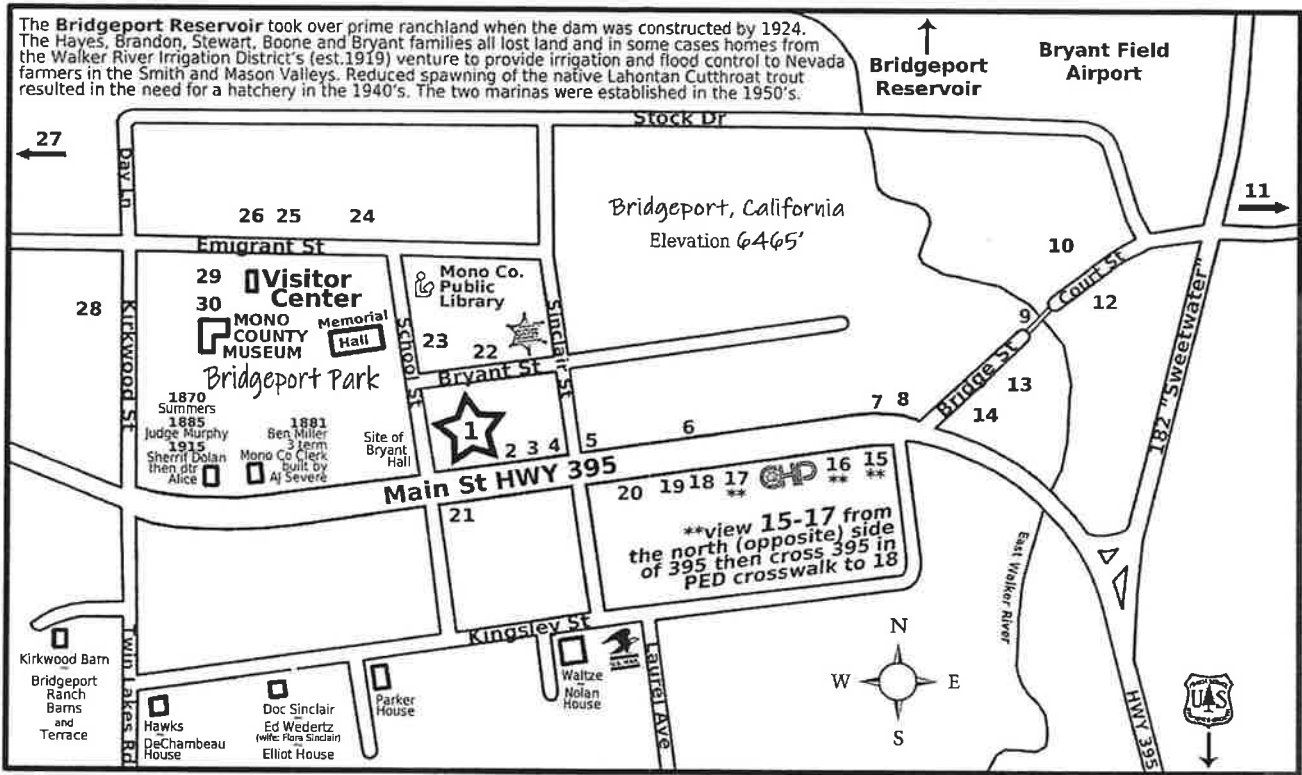


A Walking Tour *by the* Mono County Historical Society

Around 1859, ranchers began setting claims down in this lush valley known initially as "Big Meadow(s)" by the native Paiutes. There were no nearby land offices for recording claims which made possession the rule until much of it was surveyed and mapped by September 1961, thereby protecting interests.

It was necessary to ford the East Walker River for access to the many Mono Diggings camps, and settlers realized the potential for good business at the crossing. Freight wagons and other travelers would need a stop (or "port") for a meal, supplies, and cattle tending. The "Port with a Ford" as it was known, transitioned to the "Port with a Bridge" resulting in a play on words that the New Englanders liked as **Bridgeport**.

Mono County was established in 1861 with Aurora set as the seat of justice. After a two-year CA/NV boundary survey concluded in Sept. 1863, Aurora was realized to be within the Nevada border which prompted a zealous, overnight transference of county records to the American Hotel in Bridgeport. The hotel was leased first then quickly purchased to be the courthouse, surely securing the seat in Bridgeport where it has remained since winning the 1864 Mono County Seat election.



1. Mono County Courthouse (248 Main St) Property donated by Amasa F. Bryant in July of 1880 began the process of constructing what is now the 2nd oldest operational courthouse in California. By late May, 1881 the Victorian masterpiece reached acceptable completion to meet the pressing needs of the Superior Court with one court room ordered by the Board of Supervisors to be prepared for use. Total cost neared \$40,000 when John Reed Roberts saw his vision realized. In the shape of a Greek cross, widest measurements are 74'x80' with a mix of fine woods making up the structure in and outside, including redwood siding, Oregon pine floors, and Spanish cedar adorning the 10' wide staircase. The foundation of 30" granite blocks on large flat rocks support the vaults and 3,000 gal. water tank that was built on top of the roof for water supply. Electricity and plumbing were added in the 1930's.

2. The Court House Corner Saloon (258 Main St) Moved in 1883 from Bodie to Bridgeport by A. Seiler, this building changed hands many times as a saloon and billiard parlor. Years later, in the 1940's Ann Wedertz had her diner there until she became the Mono Co. Clerk, thereby turning "Ann's Grill" into husband, Ket Utzman's store "Kens Sporting Goods."

3. The Brick (258 Main St) Conveniently near the new Courthouse, AJ Severe's nice building was in demand by saloon keepers downstairs and court trials upstairs for the first twenty years until 1899 when Minnie Pimentel purchased it for her post office, market and sporting goods store. At some point the Corner Saloon and The Brick combined. Notable trial of Ah Quong Tai was held in the upstairs courtroom.

4. Bridgeport Market (242 Main St) Saloons replaced residences here in the early 80's. The Travertine

Saloon was next to The Brick, possibly changing to the Gurney Building while Dr. Clark "Doc" Sinclair had his drug store/office on the corner. Doc was legendary for saving 39 of 40 Scarlet Fever cases. By 1900, Frank L. Wedertz obtained sole ownership of the Market until he became the Mono County Tax Collector in 1934. Cain and Evans owned it then as have others- the Bridgeport Indian Reservation now.

5. Rhino's Bar and Grille (226 Main St) This current building arrived here from Manzanar in the 1950's. Previously, William Loose's Parlor Saloon with court rooms upstairs moved here in 1881. B.L. Simmons had it when fire burned it down in 1908.

6. Site of Bryant Store and Residence (170 Main St) Amasa F. Bryant built his 2nd store at this site in 1866, adjoined by his 160 acre ranchland. Bryant was an early settler, drawn first to Aurora. He was instrumental in laying out the townsite and donated land for many uses. He built his (12) and the town's 1st store on Court St in 1863 and was the 1st postmaster totaling 26 years as well as opening a store in Bodie until 1881. His son Amasa S. took over the Bridgeport store in 1899. A.S. pioneered electrical and telephone line construction, operating communications to outlying camps from the store. Forced to build anew after fire in 1963, Bryant descendants remain in town and are loyal to community efforts.

7. Site of PG Hughes Blacksmith Shop (110 Main St) One of the first buildings at the town site of the early 1860's with heavy gallows in front to raise oxen up for shoeing, Patrick G. Hughes outlasted all other blacksmiths until autos ended his trade.

8. Site of The Stanton Saloon (110 Main St) Former farmer William H. Stanton was the 3rd owner of the saloon upon purchase in 1873. Also an early 1860's building, the saloon was built onto the east wall of T.B. Severance's blacksmith shop. It is noted that "Sparkey's Shoe Shop" was the first building.

9. The Bridge (East Walker River, Bridge St/Court St) A wagon bridge of log and stone first allowed goods to cross the river easily while generating business for the town site gathered off both ends. Loggers and teamsters nightly camped along the river banks, their campfires lighting the river's edge while the oxen grazed. More businesses and houses were built at the bridge settlement until the new courthouse pulled prospects uptown, the Chinese settling into the abandoned buildings there. A new bridge in 1897 was tested by Charles M Stewart and his team of 14 horses pulling 4 wagons. Early auto traffic crossed the bridge before the route changed course in the mid 1930's. Two walking bridges have served since.

10. Washigton P. Brandon House (North side Court St)
Site of The American Hotel/Mono County Courthouse
"Wash P. Brandon moved his house here in 1892. He had bought the empty lot at auction in 1887. It had been the site of Mono County's 2nd Courthouse, a hotel that J.C. Kingsley sold to the county after he had purchased it from W.M. Weaver. The 1877 Bodie boom stirred up a petition for an election to decide if Bodie should take over the Seat, but the Board of Supervisors dismissed it as unauthentic, immediately calling for bids to construct the new Courthouse uptown. The American Hotel building used as the courthouse was sold at auction in 1883, moved, used for hay, and later torn down.

11. Bridgeport Indian Colony (Milk Ranch Rd.) The native Paiute people have lived in the area for thousands of years. The valley was referred to as Poogitu, named for the abundance of Pooka (Arrow Leaf Balsam Root,) a type of native sunflower which flourished in the "Big Meadow" at one time. The Paiutes harvested great amounts of seeds from the Pooka and were known within the Paiute Nation as the Poogi-dukadu (Sun flower seed eaters.) Pine nuts were also harvested from the pinion trees, a tradition that continues on. Many of the current roads were developed along the well-traveled footpaths of the natives. Structures remain from when the "Old Camp," east of the river relocated in 1980 to the hillside further north and became the Bridgeport Indian Reservation.

12. Bryant and Reese Store - George Whitman House - Ah Quong Tai Store (South Side of Court St) The Bryant and Reese store was the first store built in Bridgeport in 1863. Lawyer, George Whitman arrived in 1863 and established his residence and office here presumably once Bryant had completed his bigger store (6) uptown in 1866. Whitman served as District Attorney two terms and was a justice of the peace. He died in 1885, sometime after which Ah Quong Tai operated his store. A human torso and bloody floorboards indicated the Chinaman Tai as the suspected murderer of Poker Tom, a visiting Indian gone missing. Though evidence was insubstantial in court (3), he could not escape justice from the Indian masses throughout town.

13. Nye Mill/LE Wedertz Store and Home (64 Bridge St) Peter and Josiah Nye, brothers of NV Territory Governor James Nye, built their shingle and planing mill in 1874. Logs came downriver from Green Creek Canyon. Louis E. Wedertz acquired the property at least by '81. He made the mill into a home and added a 2-story section as a store downstairs and public hall upstairs. He died 6 months later and wife Dorothea ran it for 20 years, leaving it to sons Clarence and Frank L. Wash Brandon moved Clarence's store/hall uptown to Emigrant St. (24) Frank L. added on, and it remains family-owned.

14. Towle House (32 Bridge St) A lumberman from Maine, Joshua Towle built this house in 1875-77 from lumber he milled in Buckeye, chiefly assisted by Peter Nye. Towle wed Adelia (dtr of LE Wedertz) and greatly preserved history with his glass plate photography. The house remains in the family through the Wedertz line.

****Note: View 15-17 from the north side of 395, then cross 395 in PED crossing to 18****

15. David Hays Warehouse and Hall (14 Hays St) Built first as a warehouse, the upper level hall was added a couple years later in 1895 by Sam Hopkins and was used by the Odd Fellows and other societies. Dave and brother Henry first built a general merchandise business next door upon their arrival in 1869. It had an attached residence. Twenty years later, the warehouse was built. Hays helped finance and build area roads.

16. Parraguirre/Sierra Lodge Motel (105 Main St) Sold in 2017 after 50+ years closed, the motel was built in the 1940's by Paul and Bertha Yparraguirre (silent Y later dropped.) The two had previously developed the Sweetwater Ranch (HWY 182) with a mercantile and boarding house early 1900's, but fire took it in 1945.

17. Brandon House (157 Main St) Ed Murphey lived here with his wife, a daughter of Andrew H. Allen who built the Livery Stable and Barn next door that served his Allen House hotel opposite 395 in 1877. The Allen House property was sold to Mrs. W.H. Rickey then Wash Brandon bought it in 1897. It is unknown if this house was ever Allen's, but he apparently died here in 1894. Brandon decedents own it and tell of a ghost.

****Cross 395 in PED crossing to 18****

18. Patrick G. Hughes House (175 Main St) Hughes lived here with his family and owned a 160 acre ranch. His sons worked with him in his blacksmith shop (7). The Bryant family acquired the house and kept it for many years. It underwent restoration then recently sold.

19. Parrish/Goodall/Sawyer/Sinclair/Berryessa (185 M) Pioneer families E.A. Parrish wed Joseph W. Kingsley, combining their neighboring 160 acres each, this '64-'65 house is where they resided from 1866-1879. Bodie business drew them and Judge J.E. Goodall took up the house for his residence and law practice in the 80's followed by J.M. Sawyer whose saloon business ran out of the Court House Corner then moved to The Brick in 1897. Dr. Clark Sinclair purchased this house sometime after he left his practice in 1890. He kept busy with one of the first sheep bands in Mono County. The Berreyessa family owned it for years in the 1900's.

20. Bridgeport Inn (205 Main St) Hiram L. Leavitt first operated a stage station and ranch east of Sonora Pass

-Bridgeport Inn continued-
operated a stage station and ranch east of Sonora Pass (Rte 108) in Leavitt Meadows, formerly Indian Valley. His business followed him to the Leavitt House in 1877 when it was completed by Sam Hopkins, who became his son-in-law while Leavitt served as County Judge. He died in 1901 and Charles M. Stewart bought it, his descendants (Maude Berreyesa/Grace Crocker) ran the Bridgeport Hotel until McGinley (Inn-1977), Nolan (1984), and currently Bob and Kathy Peters (1999). Their son John manages while serving on the Board of Supervisors.

21. DeChambeau Hotel/Bodie Hotel (287 Main St) The DeChambeau Family ran a hotel that remains in Bodie along with a large ranch/stage stop in the Mono Basin. A picture postcard from the early 1900's shows the DeChambeau Hotel here, describing it as new. It may have been moved earlier from Bodie. The family also had a residence on Kingsley St. It became the (Frank) Dolan House in the early 1940's. Jean Courtney bought it in the 50's and renamed it Bodie Victorian Hotel.

****Cross 395 in PED crossing and resume to 22****
Main street was paved in 1906. The route for HWY 395 used to turn here and run on School Street alongside the Courthouse to Emigrant then resume west out towards the W.T. Elliott (Centennial) Ranch. In the late 1960's, the highway was straightened through town.

22. Old Mono County Jail (49 Bryant St) After an inmate burned down the 1881 wooden jail of Bodie origin, the new "impregnable" jail was built using stones two-feet squared by five-feet long. It was completed in 1883 with living quarters attached. Designed by Capt. G.I. Porter, it cost \$5,750 in gold coin and was dubbed the "County Bar Hotel" by well-fed tenants.

23. Bridgeport Chronicle-Union site (NE School/Bryant) Robert M. Folger and brother Alexander C. merged their Bodie Chronicle and Bridgeport Union papers when they moved here from Bodie in 1881. "Uncle Bob" passed in 1899, then Alex. Montrose & Montrose took over in 1906.

24. Community Church (80 Emigrant St) Moved from Bridge St. (13) by Wash Brandon and his 16-horse team in the winter of 1901, Clarence Wedertz donated the deed to the town for church use. The skids can be seen underneath, and Church Services are held each Sunday.

25. Stewart/Crocker/Denton (106 Emigrant St) Several Stewart siblings came to Mono County in the 1860's and ranched the land that is now covered by the reservoir. Charles M. wed daughter of L.E. Wedertz, Emma. This was their "town" home, later lived in by granddaughter Emma "Grace" (20) with Albert Crocker, then Pat, their daughter and spouse Attorney/Judge Edward Denton. The Denton kids ended five generations here by the 1960's.

26. Harvey Ladd House (122 Emigrant St) Constructed in Bodie originally, Ladd had this house moved here from the Hunewill Ranch in 1891-92. Blacksmith H.C. Ladd built the first house in the townsite just west of (7) in 1863. It sold to A.H. Allen in '65 to become the Allen House of '77. Harvey worked for Hunewill Ranch.

ⓂThe Hunewill Ranch (1110 Hunewill Ranch Road) Napoleon Bonaparte Hunnewell and wife Esther built a sawmill up Buckeye Canyon in 1861-62 and a residence near the hot springs. In 1872 he purchased meadowland in south Bridgeport for his oxen to graze during lumber trips to Bodie. He moved his family there, and by 1880 he made the cattle business priority. With the Sawtooth Ridge as its backdrop, the family added a Guest Ranch in 1931 that is now owned/operated by the 5th/6th generations.

27. George Byron Day House (260 Emigrant St) "By" Day initially partnered in the hay-yard and stable business of first settlers William and G.A. Whitney but quickly established his own enterprise, gaining more acreage through the 60's while trusted as the primary liaison with the Indians. He married Harriet whose notable brothers were James and Robert Patterson. The Day barn previously housed a hoisting works in Bodie.

28. Thomas Kirkwood House (85 Kirkwood St) The Kirkwood Ranch bounded the west end of town, and he sold land to Nye (13) and Towle (14) on the east end. He made his home here in 1871 with his family and was a farmer, teamster and stockraiser in addition to owning a main street saloon. Son Charles moved a Waltze house to the ranch for wife Pearl, daughter of James Sinnamon.

29. Old Hospital/Welfare Office (137 Emigrant St) Built by Arthur DeChambeau in 1938, Dr. William Denton was the doctor here. Nurse, Mary (Zigler) Delury assisted for 50 years and lived with County Clerk spouse George Jr. in the 1898 Delury house opposite the church (24). In 1961, she continued at the new hospital on Twin Lakes Rd. Daughter Darlene (Coy Ziglar widow) still lives at the 1904 Delury site on Main St, redone in 1964.

30. Old Schoolhouse/Mono County Museum (Bridgeport Park) Opened on Kingsley St in 1880 with Miss Carrie Havens as teacher to 166 children, the school served for 84 years before it was moved here in 1964 to become the museum. The 1st woman Superintendent of Schools in CA, Alice Hays, along with Cordelia (Hays) Dolan and Alice Dolan (house on Main St.) made up a teaching dynasty.

Thank you for touring our town. ~ Please come again!

MCHS is a nonprofit organization per Section 501c3 of the Internal Revenue Code and a public charity under Section 509a2. Federal Tax ID #77-0tqt728. Memberships and donations are tax deductible. monocomuseum.org -- www.bridgeportcalifornia.com Mono County Historical Society, PO Box 417, Bridgeport, CA 93517 Brochure composed by Sarah Jenkins, 6th generation Wedertz line. 2018