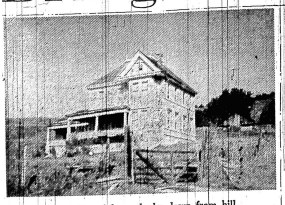
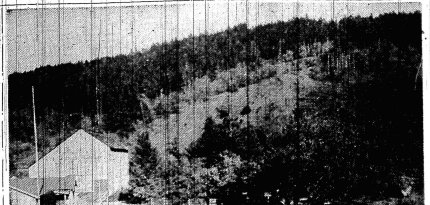
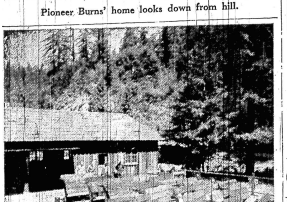
Bridgeville--Heart Of The Upland Empire



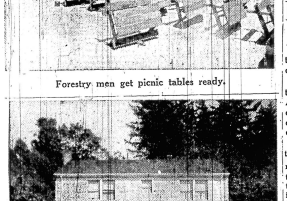
Pioneer Burns' home looks down from hill.



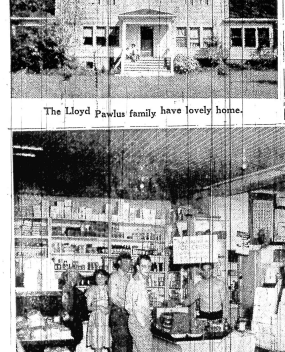
The "four corners," showing store on right, and old stage coach and horse barn in left background.



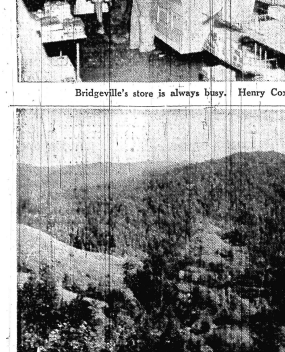
Forestry men get picnic tables ready.



The Lloyd Pawlus family have lovely home.



Bridgeville's store is always busy. Henry Cox wearing vest.



Bridgeville's valley looks beautiful from nearby heights.

OLD PIONEER TOWN IS MEETING POINT OF ALL ROADS IN AREA

By CHET SCHWARZKOPF

Bridgeville is another of Humboldt's historic communities, located in the mountains on the Van Duzen river, some fifty miles from Eureka. A good paved road goes to it, and continues through to Red Bluff, in the Great Valley east of the coast range.

Bridgeville is a natural "four corners," for at the Van Duzen river bridge, for which the town was named, the roads from Iaqua, Hydesville and 101 highway, Blocksburg and Alderpoint, as well as the Red Bluff and upper Trinity thoroughfare, meet. Thus it is a center for travel from four directions, as well as the neighboring cattle, sheep, and lumber country. Scant wonder its name appears prominent on all maps, although the population of the community and surrounding area probably does not exceed 250.

They think of land in large terms around Bridgeville, for many of the older ranches up there number their acres in the thousands. And most of these are in the hands of direct descendants from the pioneer who blazed the trail through in the 1860's, or earlier. It is a countryside that admires to traditions, despite the influx of numbers of semi-migratory workers, attracted by the current logging and lumber boom, many of whom plan to stay.

You leave Highway 101 at Fortuna—or if you prefer it, Alton—and soon after leaving Carlotta are deep in the redwoods. Some of this area is being logged, but it is being done with care, and much of the forests' original beauty is being preserved.

Here and there, you come to delightful clearings, and there will be pleasant appearing farmhouses, or summer homes of people who live in Eureka, and towns nearer the coast. Alongside the road, or always near it, foams the Van Duzen river, aquamarine with water from melting snow in the uplands.

Huge trees tower beside you. Forested hills look down upon the river's canyon. And, now and then, you will get a view of the Trinity mountains, still snow-patched here and there, that loom against the horizon ahead. It is a picture whose impression you will never forget.

From a point high above the stream, you look down upon one of the Van Duzen's blue-tiffed pools just in time to see a steelhead trout break water and flash in the sun. There are big ones in this river—and some of them stay the year 'round if you are fortunate enough to find them. For here is a fisherman's Eldorado.

Way overhead, under the gusty blue dome of the sky that reflects itself in the waters below, a pair of eagles rejoice in the freedom that only wings can give. The first flowers are in bloom, despite an occasional frost, and the maples are well leafed out. Spring is here!

And, to add a slightly incongruous note, logging trucks rumble by, each with its load, like huge ants lugging their findings to the nest ere winter comes again. In all this lovely countryside man alone seems busy and worried about his future. Nature is at peace.

THE NEW STATE PARK

Just about where the redwoods begin to thin out, and fir, pine, and deciduous trees increase, you come to a sign that says "Van Duzen State Park." Here, in a glen at Grizzly creek mouth, the state has purchased 150 acres along the Van Duzen river for a camp ground.

In charge is Ranger Glen Jones, assisted by Calvin Hazley. Both young men are veterans of the recent war—Glen with the Army, and Calvin an Air Corps pilot. And they and their families are enraptured with their sylvan surroundings and hope to stay there henceforth.

It is still eight miles to Bridgeville, Glen, who was recently transferred from Dyerville station, says. Development work began two years ago, and 24 campsites, as well as a picnic area with all conveniences, are now available.

You catch a bit of Glen and Calvin's enthusiasm as they point out their excellent new water system, together with their homes and office. Here is much-needed project that will take care of tourists and campers in first class style, thanks to state planning.

AND SO, TO BRIDGEVILLE

The river climbs the last rise, and drifts down into Bridgeville's cozy four corners. Here, at the strategic location, stands Henry Cox's store, together with the post office and telephone exchange. Trucks are pulling in and out and early in the season thought it is—visitors are quite in evidence. Later, it will be a continuous procession for, in truth, in this part of the world all roads go to Bridgeville.

Just in back of the store is the town's famed bridge—the third one to be built in this place. And nearby stands a huge barn, showing the years, which is mute evidence of the day when stages and wagon trains stopped for meals and change of horses. There was a 24-room hotel here at one time, but that burned in 1919.

Along the Van Duzen's banks stands the Bridgeville Lumber company's mill, now shut down, and about it are groups of small houses constructed during the war boom period. But there is no lack of employment in Bridgeville, for there are no less than a dozen tie mills and camps in the surrounding mountains, and many of the men who work there live in the town. Also, you are told, the mill in Bridgeville may open again soon. Incidentally, this is the first lumber mill the community ever has had. Always, in the past, they have been scattered about in the surrounding timberland.

A VISIT TO THE SCHOOL

Bridgeville's school building dates back to about 1885, you learn—and it was preceded by another before that time, while the original school in the 50's was held in a log cabin.

Principal of Bridgeville's school is Mrs. Verna C. Fowler, who has earned the liking and respect of the community by her unceasing efforts to offer the best in education. The school's enrollment has increased greatly in recent months, Mrs. Fowler tells you, and now stands at 45 pupils. For some time, this teacher had to handle the classes in split sessions.

Then, about a month ago, came help, when Mrs. Ethel Holbird was sent in. Now, the two teachers divide the eight grades between them, and there is a good prospect of a new building ere long.

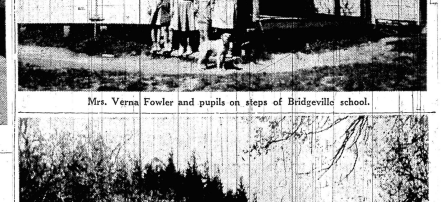
"We are badly cramped for space," Mrs. Fowler says, showing you the neatly kept school room. "But we manage to get along, and the spirit of the children is wonderful. Would you believe it that some our our pupils are the third generation who have attended here?"

An interested student of natural life herself, Bridgeville's principal has taken brush-up courses at Humboldt State college during her vacations in order to promote studies in wildlife at the school.

"With such a wonderful outdoor country around us," she says, "it would be a neglect of duty not to conduct surveys of animal, bird, and fish life. Why, we've even let school out when salmon were spawning in the river nearby! I want these youngsters to grow up with an appreciation and understanding of their land and its trees and animals. We owe it to

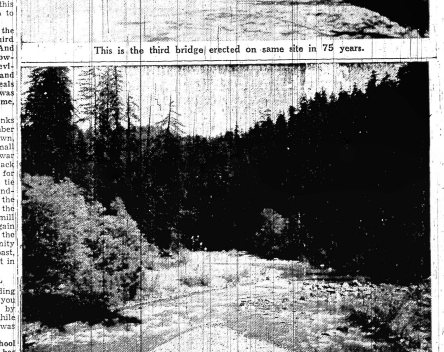
(Please turn back to page 16)

Mrs. Verna Fowler and pupils on steps of Bridgeville school.



This is the third bridge erected on same site in 75 years.

The Van Duzen river riffles down a Sherwoodland setting.



Rangers' office in Van Duzen State Redwood park blends well.

Bridgeville

(Continued From Page 32)

them and, needless to say, our natural history courses have been popular."

You leave the Bridgeville school with a feeling of admiration for its instructors—and a hope that they will get a needed new building.

THE HEART OF TOWN

If you spend enough time in Henry Cox's store, you will meet almost everyone in the far-flung Bridgeville area. For here is not only a store and post-office—here is where neighbors from ranches miles away stop in for a sociable hour in true American fashion.

Genial, graying Henry Cox has been at Bridgeville since 1912, while his father before him came there in 1909. "But that doesn't make us real old-timers," the store's hospitable proprietor says. "We came about the beginning of the automobile age, more or less. Up until 1914, when the railroad was put through from San Francisco to Eureka, Bridgeville was an important stage station, for this was a transfer point on the road to Zenia, Blocksburg, and the old-side as well as an overland mail route."

After that, of course, things changed, but not for the worse. Tourists came in more and more as automobiles developed, and the big ranches were prospering with better transportation. Today, Bridgeville is busier than ever."

Bridgeville's big disaster occurred when the hotel and store both burned one December morning in 1919 when the mercury stood at 16 degrees. But hardly had the ashes cooled before Henry Cox and his father started rebuilding.

An old saloon and a blacksmith shop stood on the corner where the present Bridgeville store is located. These they hastily merged into a store. Prior to then, Henry Sr. had run the hotel, while his son ran the store. Thereafter, they likewise merged and, until the elder Cox's death in 1934, ran the business as Henry Cox and Son. Henry Cox senior was born in Nova Scotia, while his son—christened George Henry — was born in Bayside, near Eureka.

"The Red Bluff road was opened through it, 1915," Henry Cox recounts. "It was said to have been the first road built with state highway funds. Before that, it was a toll road, known as the Monroe turnpike. We had a big celebration at the McClelland ranch that day it was opened."

The stage company used to change horses every 20 miles on the mountain run, and let them rest three days between turns, Henry tells you. They were given the best of care, but did not last long, because the roads were bad. Thus, the coming of the gasoline engine was a blessing in every way.

"Most of the lumber that built Bridgeville in early days was sawed in a mill at Pepperwood Falls, a few miles downstream," Henry says. "The second bridge here was built in 1879 from hewn, spliced, and whipsawed lumber, and was covered. It was a big job, and lasted until 1925, when it was replaced by the present concrete span. I remember when there was selftile traffic over the covered bridge at night that the cows used to sleep in it!"

SOME PIONEER FAMILIES

One of the Bridgeville area's pioneers was Thomas M. Burns, who was brought to California across the plains in 1849 as a child of ten, from Tennessee. Tom Burns came to Bridgeville in 1869 and bought several thousand acres of "squatter's right" land from Sam Hoagland. There he lived until his death at the age of 93 in 1933—hale and hearty, riding the range until the last.

Owner of the Burns' ranch now is Edwin Burns, old Tom's son, a remarkable man of 65, who looks and acts 45! "My father had a bad time with Indians at first," Ed Burns recounts. "He was run to the house several times, and a number of men were shot. One man named Drinkwater was killed from ambush nearby. After peace was made, the Indians worked on the ranches, and we got along all right."

Ed Burns runs Romsdale and Romney sheep only, nowdays, and says that bears cause quite a bit of trouble, but that coyotes have been fairly well trapped out by government trappers.

"Big cats don't bother sheep back here for some reason," he continues, "although they are a bad pest along the coast. Eagles do not kill lambs, but will eat them if they die. Worst killers are ravens, which will pick the lambs' eyes out."

One of the original homesteaders in Bridgeville and vicinity was John Hale, builder of the hotel, who late sold much of the present town's site to Bert Barnum, who in turn sold to Henry Cox senior.

Hugh McClelland was another early timer. Part of his ranch, some 9,000 acres, is owned by Everett and Barbara Cottrell. And William H. Barnwell III owns the original William H. Barnwell senior ranch—the third generation on a 7,000 domain.

Another was Salmon Brown, son of John Brown who made history at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, before the Civil War. He was Ed Burns' grandfather.

First store at Bridgeville was owned by a man named Caldwell, while another store in nearby "Chinatown" was owned by John and Tim Kelly. Dr. L. C. Farrar was the pioneer medical man in the area.

The present Bar-W ranch was started by Joel Whitmore in the '70's, and is now owned by Chris Rasmussen, and operated by Claude and Raymond Barsdull. Many other names are associated with the countryside. Among the earliest were Rudolph Hinkley, of Yager; Silas Hoagland, George Williams, Sherman Beach, Jim Parmer, Mordecai McCoy, Ed Barnum, John Hutchins, William and John Friend, Charles Beckler, Alexander Robertson, George Eaton—according to Mrs. Margaret McCreery, of Eureka.

Mrs. McCreery, a sprightly lady of 92 summers, was born in Crescent City in 1857, and was brought to Bridgeville in 1860. Her father was Alexander Robertson, who crossed the plains in 1850, and was killed in 1860 while surveying a road to Bridgeville with Sam Strong, of Strong's Station, and Joel Whitmore, of Bar-W ranch.

After her father's death, Mrs. McCreery, then a girl in her early twenties, helped her mother run the family's 7,000 acre ranch on the Blocksburg road, until her brothers grew up. Several years before her father's death, Mrs. McCreery had attended the convent in Eureka.

THE ROBINSON FAMILY

William S. Robinson came to California from Virginia in 1850, and settled in Bridgeville in 1869, according to his daughters, Caltha and Gertrude Robinson, and Mrs. E. S. Murray, now of Eureka.

He was among the first stockmen in Humboldt to raise wool. The old Robinson ranch site is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Dwight May, of whom Mrs. May is a Robinson descendant.

According to the Robinson daughters, Bridgeville was first named Robinson's Ferry, before the first bridge was built in 1875. It was then named Bridgeport, and later changed to Bridgeville when the first post office was established.

"They used to ford the Van Duzen river with horses," Miss Caltha Robinson says. "They turned them loose on the other side, and the horses swam back by themselves. Rainfall was heavier in those days, and the Van Duzen was a larger stream."

"The first bridge was washed out about 1879," Miss Gertrude Robinson adds. "A little boy named Johnny Hale was drowned in the high water. After that, they built a stronger structure."

The Robinson family lived in a double cabin for a time where the present Bridgeville school stands, you are told. And the first school in the district was on the family's ranch. An Indian rancheria was located near Bridgeville and early settlers were at times caused trouble by Indians who came back from the newly established reservations.

First voting precinct for the Bridgeville district was located in the Williams' store, at Yager, according to Mrs. Murray, who adds: "Yager was settled a little before Bridgeville. I've heard my father say. There was no road up our way beyond Cuddeback—just a trail for many miles through the woods. Father should see it now!"

The Standard

FOLK DANCES OF M
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noon when the Eureka Recreation
entertains visiting dance groups at
Municipal auditorium, starting at 2

The public is invited to watch t
admission charge. The spectators
any dances which they know.

Among the visiting dance groups
will be folk dancers from Fort
Bragg, Arcata, Scotia, and Fortuna. The festival is being held on Sunday so that the visiting groups may participate.

The complete list of dances that will be presented follows:

Oklahoma Mixer, American; Ride Ratas, Estonian; Road to the Isles, Scottish; Cotton-Eyed Joe, American; Spinning Waltz, Finnish; Narcissus, American; Meitschi Putz Di, Latvian; California Schottische, American; Buffalo Glide, American; Island Schottische, American; Doris Waltz, American.

Laces and Graces, American; Swedish Schottische, Swedish; Tu Tur, Danish; Black Hawk Waltz, American; Glow Worm, American; Wooden Shoes (Prog.), Lithuanian; St. Bernard's Waltz, Scottish (progressive); Hambo, Swedish; Va

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