

## REDWOODS -- ROMANCE AND REALITY

by

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"It is my firm conviction that if the cutting of redwoods is not stopped by wise action of our government, California will become a desert."

That's the word from a leading botanist of the times. His prediction was made in 1874. Ninety-three years later his words sound a bit foolish. But forecasts equally as foolish are being made today about the redwoods -- and unfortunately, are being believed.

Up in the beleaguered northwestern corner of California, the people of the lumber industry have been villified on a scale unprecedented in our industry's history. Distorted facts, untruths and emotionalism have been used against us as part of a well-bankrolled campaign for a redwoods national park. The spectre of the timber baron, ravaged land and a shortage of timber supplies has been raised again.

Come along with me for a moment on an imaginary trip through what some sources claim to be the last redwoods. When the Spaniards and Russians arrived in California, the range of the coast redwoods stretched from the Big Sur country, 200 miles south of San Francisco, north in to Curry County, Oregon, 300 miles north of San Francisco. That is still where they grow today.

Far across the great central valleys and on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada, grows the Sierra redwood -- the Big Tree of *Sequoia gigantea*. This species is now entirely preserved in government parks and forests.

About 50 miles north of San Francisco flows the fish-famous Russian River. This has long been a popular resort area and like the Big Sur country, and the Santa Cruz resort area, it's been logged off-and-on for a hundred years.

We're reluctant to give the Russians a claim to any more "firsts", but this we must do. Those Russ and Aleut colonists who settled at nearby Fort Ross in 1812 established California's first manufacturing industry by making redwood lumber for export. The seeds they sent to Russia from this Sonoma County outpost in the 1830's started the first redwood plantations in Europe. And don't think that pre-cut housing is something new in America. The Russians built knockdown redwood houses that were shipped to Alaska and Russia as early as 1827.

Poking around in the woods behind Fort Ross we find magnificent forests of redwood. Trees 220 feet tall and six feet thick. These are California's oldest youngsters -- second-growth trees that sprouted from stumps clear-cut by the Russians 150 years ago.

Yes, there's plenty of romance in the story of our redwoods. An example was offered by a United States senator who signed a bill to create a redwood national park. At a public hearing last summer in Crescent City, he stated a common belief that the coast redwood was the oldest living thing. A forester in the audience straightened him out. The coast redwood is the fourth oldest living species in California. The oldest is the bristlecone pine at 4,600 years, more than twice as old as *Sequoia sempervirens*. It is followed in longevity by the Sierra redwood and the Western juniper.

Another popular myth concerns the size of the coast redwood. It is not the largest tree in America -- that honor belongs to the Sierra species. It is currently the tallest living thing in the world, though way up there the title gets a little shaky. The tallest tree ever verified by authorities was a Douglas fir near Mineral, Washington. It was cut and measured on the ground at 385 feet --



18 feet taller than the tallest verified redwood.

The nation's press and television media have been flooded recently with photographs distributed by park advocates that show clear-cut logging in the Redwood Region. The camera angle is usually advantageous to their point and the scene is usually labeled "devastating". One of these photos appeared in a book called *The Last Redwoods*. It was taken with a telephoto lens to heighten the effect of crowded stumps. Among the errors we found in the caption and photo was that there wasn't a redwood -- stump or otherwise -- in sight. It was a recently harvested forest of Douglas fir.

As you can see by looking about you, the worst impression that this kind of propaganda gives is that all redwoods are cut by the block-harvesting or clean-cut method. That's about 96 percent wrong. California's Forest Practices Act took effect in 1946. For the next 13 years, the state experimented with various cutting practices to determine those best suited to serve forestry and conservation needs. In 1959, the first alternate permits for clear-cutting in the Redwood District were granted. Such plans must be submitted by the landowner, approved by an inspecting forester from the Division of Forestry, and finally submitted to the State Board of Forestry. The reasons to vary from the traditional selective cutting practices must be sound, and not all requests are granted. In the first six years, a total of 22 alternate plans for redwood have been issued. These cover 54,000 acres, or about 2.6 percent of the Redwood District's commercial forest acreage. This amounts to 4/10th of one percent per year. And of this total, only 10 percent was old-growth. About 96 percent of the redwoods today are being harvested by the old take-some, leave-some method called selective logging. But close to 100 percent of the photos you see are of clean-logging.

You're beginning to see why we can claim that the redwood is the most publicized but least known tree in history.

Back in the market place, we find there is no disagreement on the outstanding qualities of redwood as a product. Around the world, California redwood is admired and sought like no other American soft wood. Nature has impregnated it with a natural preservative, making it highly resistant to decay. It contains no highly inflammable substances, such as pitch or resin, and so is resistant to fire. For workability, termite resistance, versatility and finish variety; for paint retention, grade dependability, light-weight strength and durability; for low shrinkage, chemical resistance and most of all, appearance, coast redwood is excelled by no other single species. It is as close as nature can come to the wonder wood.

This enviable collection of achievements for our product is not without its problems. According to the letters we receive at CRA woodpeckers in some areas also appreciate redwood's unusual qualities. We respond with advice from the Audubon Society on co-existence with the birds. Then there's the once-a-month letter from someone across the country who has applied a clear finish to redwood. And the Little Old Lady in New Hampshire who applied a totally unnecessary preservative -- not once every few years -- not once a year -- but once a month. She wanted to maintain the beautiful color of her wood but succeeded primarily in maintaining a preservative manufacturing company. In justice to our wonder wood, however, it must be pointed out that these things can and do happen to other species, too.

Even a State Board of Forestry can be wrong. Especially back in 1890 when the appointments were political and nobody knew much about forestry anyway. The board predicted then that "It is probable that all of California's coast redwood timber will be cut by 1930."



The predictions seem endless. In 1903 the U. S. Department of Agriculture's Forestry Bulletin asserted that "to continue to lumber the redwood forest is to annihilate it".

And here we find the universal point on which all the predictions have been proved wrong. Coast redwood is the fastest growing conifer in the nation. In fact, the American Forestry Association says there is only one tree that can out-grow it -- the eastern cottonwood. Annual growth rates of a foot in height and an inch in diameter are normal. On better than average sites, two feet and two inches a year is common. In the Redwood Region, commercial forests are growing at a rate 56 percent faster than in 1952, the date of the prior survey. Today's supply of standing redwood timber is expected to double in volume again by the year 2000. A National Park Service report in 1963 stated that total growth will equal cut by 1975.

In spite of the continuous dire predictions, redwood has never been in danger of extinction. On a qualitative and quantitative basis, no species in history has been better protected. The first unit of the State's coast redwood park system was acquired in 1905. Since that time, 29 units have been added for a total of 115,000 acres. The Society of American Foresters estimates that these parks contain fully a quarter of the best, lowland type redwoods that ever existed. The total amount of redwood type land now dedicated to park status by all levels of government is 142,000 acres. That's 220 square miles. Only Paul Bunyan could walk through that in a day.

From the beginning, the redwood lumber industry worked hand in hand with the Save-the-Redwoods League to preserve the best of the big trees. In 1922, John C. Merriam, then the League's president, said: "The League has done excellent work, not alone in the purchase of redwood areas and in the development of the park project in Northern California, but in furnishing evidence that an organization of this character can secure the widest cooperation of the agencies of the state and nation, including both the nature lovers and the men of business concerned with lumber operations."

The need facing our governments is not to take over more land, especially productive, privately held land, but to come up with sound and effective plans for using and developing the tremendous areas already held. Here is the real challenge to the national government in developing natural resources in this state. Federal funds, if they are available for acquiring additional land, could be used far more effectively to help the State of California carry forward a much-needed program for developing many of the present redwood parks. We see no reason why the large areas of redwood lands already in state and federal hands could not be seen and used by far more people without impairment of the beauty or permanence of the trees or land.

There has been so much said and written of the redwood park subject that it's hard to keep track of the various proposals. I'll try to give you a summary.

The so-called Administration plan would take over two existing state parks and join them with the Miller Redwood Company Tree Farm in Mill Creek. It would add the Tall Trees area of Arcata Redwood Company, many miles south along Redwood Creek. It would put Miller Redwood Company completely out of business. Under bills introduced in Congress last year, this proposal would form a park of about 43,000 acres. It is expected to be reintroduced this year, possibly with some modifications.

A second proposal, sponsored by the Sierra Club, calls for even more extensive condemnation of private land. Bills to establish this 90,000-acre park in the Redwood Creek watershed were recently introduced by 50 senators and congressmen, headed by Representative Jefferey Cohelan of California



and Senator Lee Metcalf of Montana. They are similar to a group of bills introduced in the 1966 Congress. In land area, the Sierra Club plan would more than double the Administration proposal. It would put Arcata Redwood Company out of business and cripple several other companies.

These are the only proposals that have actually been introduced as legislation.

Now, what does the industry itself think of these proposals? Which plan, if any does it prefer? Or does it have a plan of its own?

In the 48 years since the Save-the-Redwoods League was organized, we have formed a high opinion of the men who have conducted its business and the policies they have pursued. They have been given free access to lumber company lands to make whatever studies they wished. Then when they had determined the stands or groves they wanted to incorporate into the park system they would make this known to the owners. In every case the answer was the same; we will remove the tract from logging schedules and pledge it to you until such time as you can raise the money to buy it. Incidentally, the State Division of Beaches and Parks matches their gifts dollar-for-dollar.

In some cases it was a long time between the pledge and the transfer. The Avenue of the Giants waited 29 years for funding -- and all the while its owners paid the yearly timber and property taxes.

As of today, there are only about 4,000 acres still pledged but unredeemed. Step number one in the industry program is that these fine stands be bought. They are all that is needed to complete the high-quality acquisition program started in 1918, and will bring the state redwood park system up to 119,000 acres.

The second point of the industry program may display some prejudice. We have worked with the California Division of Beaches and Parks for nearly half a century. We know them and admire their handling of redwood parks. The National Park Service has had no experience in redwoods and is beholden to superiors 3,000 miles away. We would prefer to see the management of redwood parklands remain in the hands of Californians. Perhaps there's a bit of local pride in our attitude!

Third, we feel that funds should be made available for development of present parks so people can use them. The present ratio of one camp site for each 60 acres is certainly not intensive use.

Finally, the industry realizes that there are many types of recreation which parks, as they are presently operated, are incapable of satisfying. Recognizing this need, the industry last year made a trial run of opening some of its lands to recreationists. We haven't had experience in this sort of activity so we felt it wise to go slowly -- and opened up certain forest for hunting for the second part of the split season. Nine companies -- the eight I represent and their neighbor, the Masonite Corporation-- together put 260,000 acres into the Redwood Industry Recreation Areas.

We were very apprehensive. We'd heard tales of vandalism on other private lands and didn't know what to expect. But our basic faith in the Golden Rule was justified. Nearly 20,000 people visited our properties that first year. Of the 9,000 hunters, about one of ten got a buck. And our guests behaved as good guests should -- not one serious piece of willful damage. I think the entire loss amounted to a couple of shovels from a fire tool box and a broken gate.

Since that time anglers have visited our 410 miles of fishing streams, and heaven knows how many families have used our 5½ miles of beaches -- many of them taking the trouble to write us notes about how much they enjoyed the outing. Incidentally, there's no charge for any of these activities, although



it may be necessary to charge later for camping facilities.

The result of this attitude of cooperation from the public was the addition last year of 105,000 acres to the RIRA program. Total acreage open to the public without charge in 1966 was 365,000. This year it may go higher.

We believe CRA's recreation program is a sincere, useful and dramatic way of demonstrating the redwood lumber industry's belief in getting the most mileage out of the land.

We believe it fills a gap in the recreational picture that is not now available in the same areas.

We believe redwood parks are necessary, but strongly question whether more parks are needed beyond the present 50 units, embracing some of the finest forests that ever existed.

Working together, the state park system and the RIRA program provide a greater variety of recreational activities -- and a greater area in which they can be enjoyed -- than any or all other plans.

It is on this premise that the affected area's Congressman, Don Clausen, has made a third proposal. The Clausen concept -- not yet in the form of legislation -- calls for a vast sweep of parks and beaches, parkways and recreation areas across the five north coastal counties. It is bold and imaginative. It would make jobs, not take jobs. Support for this plan is building up and it will no doubt appear soon as a bill.

Here's an official voice from 1869. In that year, the California State Board of Agriculture warned that "if we are to continue consumption at the same rate in the future as in the past, it will require only 40 years to exhaust our entire present timber supply."

Well, 1909 has come and gone, too. And today wood has more uses and greater future possibilities than any other raw material. Unlike other building materials, it is a renewable crop. Man has never made a better bargain with nature than in the balance of cut and growth that now characterizes America's forest lands. In the Redwood Region, we can balance cut and growth in just eight years. But only if no more of the working forest land is placed in museum status. The unequalled promise of the redwood forest must be fulfilled.

Next to water, timber is our most usable renewable natural resource. With the coming pressures for both practical and esthetic benefits from the forests, we cannot afford to waste any of the land's potential. Let's keep the private redwood lands working for their highest social and economic values. Like no other land in America, these acres can produce scenery, jobs, recreation, watershed protection and products. To cause them to do less, at this point in our history, is anti-conservation.

I'm not here to make fun of the misguided, often sincere, people who have been predicting doom for the redwoods for the last century. Our matchless tree is one that has always been an inspiration to man -- whether viewed in the forest or as lumber in building. But the time has come to separate redwood romance from reality; to place seemingly conflicting values in their proper perspective.

Since crystal ball-gazing the redwoods seems to be one of America's popular pastimes, permit me now to make a few predictions of my own -- and you may quote me at any time in the future.

1. The demand for redwood as a product will not only remain constant in relation to other wood species, but will increase in the future.
2. Thanks to modern tree-farming and scientific forest management methods, the amount of redwood timber being grown will be adequate to maintain today's level of production forever.
3. Improvements in utilization technology -- in the woods and the mills -- combined with progressive marketing, will make hundreds of new redwood product applications possible, thus increasing the "mileage" we get out of each tree.

And that's not redwood romance; that's reality.